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After Conflict, Quiet

A STUDY OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY
IN RELATION TO HIS LIFE AND LETTERS

by Donald E. Hayden, Ph.D.

*Associate Professor of English
The University of Tulsa*



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TO MARY FRANCES:

"With something of angelic light."

Foreword

There are many good books on the subject of Wordsworth and his poetry. My apology for adding one more is that I feel a need for unitary scholarship in general, and an integrative study on Wordsworth in particular. Studies have been made on his youth, his radicalism, his conservatism, his love life, his statesmanship, and the like. My particular approach has been to consider the "total" Wordsworth as nearly as possible, rather than the poet or poems piecemeal. I have therefore been quite willing to use any interpretative aids available: economic, sociological, psychological assistances are used wherever they seem to clarify, and are rejected when they do not.

Because of this, it appears to me that I have been able to shed some new light on the "functional" meanings of many of Wordsworth's poems. To be sure, I do not claim the last word on the subject, but I do believe that the methodology is valid and merits further use. I have tried in so far as possible to avoid the jargon of any school of criticism, though whenever a term seems to communicate the idea effectively, I have felt free to borrow it.

Much of the research on this work was done for a doctoral dissertation at Syracuse University. A portion of it was also presented before the South-Central Modern Language Association and has appeared elsewhere, in somewhat different form. To my many friends and colleagues who have read and commented upon the manuscript in whole or in part, I should like to acknowledge my debt of gratitude.

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Introduction

My purpose in the following pages is to illustrate what I have found in reading "Wordsworth," not to prove what I had previously hypothesized. In so far as possible, I have tried to dismiss preconceptions and theories, turning instead to the available facts. In a way, it is like the story recorded by Francis Chisholm. A cartoon shows a group of soldiers under the watchful eye of a sergeant. As they stand at attention all the soldiers seem respectful enough except one cocky fellow who has scepticism written on his face. The sergeant bellows at him, "Wipe that opinion off your face."¹ To follow the advice suggested by this story means not to bring opinions to the data, lest we should find abundant proof of those opinions merely because we are looking for such proof.

What threads, then, we ask, do we find running through Wordsworth's life and writings? From this viewpoint, it is necessary to consider his poetry only as another mode of expression of the total situation, not essentially different though not essentially like other modes of expression. My reference here to "total situation"—perhaps the phrase "context of situation" as used by Ogden and Richards² is a more careful phrasing—would immediately suggest the usefulness of Gestalt psychology as a methodology. Although I am not particularly adopting the attitude of the psychiatrist in this study of Wordsworth, it would seem to be common sense to use whatever tools help us to understand the facts more clearly. Too often, it appears, we split Wordsworth up into various segments: his criticisms, his early poems, his letters, etc. In so doing, we are bound to miss the central unity—the integrative side—of his life;³ likewise do we fail to discover all the properties of this unit by merely noting segments.

For this reason I have largely reversed the ordinary process

of investigation: instead of adding parts together to obtain wholes, I have tried to illustrate first the characteristics of wholes, and then have applied that knowledge to parts.⁴ The primary realities thus become coherent, functional wholes—what we may call *patterns* or *forms* of the total context of situation. When it becomes necessary to separate data, we will suggest that the division is merely for convenience' sake and is not representative of actuality. For example, one cannot think of half an apple without implying the whole; it may be divided at any stage of its development only by beginning with the whole. Indeed, the very concept of "divide" is dependent upon larger units which are separated. Therefore, perception of objects does not arise from a synthesis of many elementary sensations; the complex perception comes first, and is then analyzed into simpler parts. In the study of the life-history of an individual, then, the most important point of departure is the over-all pattern, vague and ill-defined as it may at first be.

Wordsworth himself recognized the necessity of regarding *units* rather than *parts*, though of course he had not worked his observations into a psychology. One reason he distrusted analytical thinking, for example, was that he felt it could give no sense of the whole. It ignores organic unity: we misconceive things when we study them "in disconnection dead and spiritless."⁵ In other words, he believed that a part could only be understood by its relation to other parts, which determine not only its structure and function, but even its very existence.⁶ In formalized study the unity of this whole is referred to as "Gestalt" or "configuration," consisting of two parts: figure and ground, which are related in a sort of pattern-against-background manner. Because of the close relation of these two parts, any change occurring in one phase of an experience will affect the rest. The organism as a whole seems to have a sort of fixed or normal condition toward which it always strives whenever a disturbance occurs. The activity continues until the "goal" is reached, upon which the series is "closed." However, on later occasions, should one part of the process come up, there is a tendency for the whole pattern to repeat, something comparable to the subconscious completing of a musical phrase once the first notes have sounded.⁷ This idea becomes valuable because it emphasizes two points that are usually ignored: the learning process is not merely a linking

together of separately isolated facts, but involves the entire organism; and the "affective state" of an organism, the individual's drives—his emotions and feelings—are matters of primary importance in determining the "total context" out of which a particular expression emerges (such as a poem, for instance).⁸

Of the total context, then, we may say that the individual in perceiving certain situations as desirable and others as undesirable moves toward the one and away from the other. Many "objects" which he moves toward he fails to obtain, just as many objects which he moves away from he fails to avoid, because of resistances or frustrations in the form of biological, physical, or social limitations. Perhaps most revealing are the frustrated drives toward goals—that is, a situation which represents a conflict. The poet finds the outlet for such conflicts through sublimation, or expression in a disguised but socially approved form, the function of which is to reduce or partially resolve the original conflict.⁹

The total pattern with respect to Wordsworth seems to be from "rejection" through "ambivalence" into "acceptance." If this pattern is a true statement of the larger context, we would expect to find that pattern in smaller aspects. The most significant references would become the life facts, although stated opinions are also to be regarded closely in conjunction with "biography." Wordsworth was, in the early years, up to about the middle 1790's, in what we may call a context of rebellion against orthodoxy. Of this larger context, it becomes useful as a working device to make an arbitrary division into "religious context," "political-economic context," and "sexual context." Like the larger pattern, these too reflect the rejection of orthodoxy. This period is followed by one of ambivalence—neither one nor the other, but "on the border." Gradually this pattern in turn gives way to a total context of acceptance of orthodoxy. In consequence, the new contexts of religion, politics, and sex become orthodox modes or patterns, following the change from frames of rejection to frames of acceptance.

Acceptance and rejection, according to William James, are voluntary choices arising from the problem of evil. (This may be something of the sort of thing Schopenhauer meant by *Bejahung* and *Verneinung*.) Faced by disease, death, heartache, one must

adopt policies and shape attitudes. The poet as well as the scientist must "size up" the situation, recognizing some functions and relationships as friendly and others as unfriendly. If the one, he prepares to welcome them; if the other, either to "knuckle under" or to combat them if his resources are adequate. Though action may be desired, or even be demanded, we must remember that there are many kinds of action—and action must be preceded by plans, and plans call for verbalization. Therefore, to act "wisely" is tantamount to using words wisely. In part at least we meet the situation and form our characters in the names we use, since names symbolize attitudes, and from attitudes comes behavior. From this viewpoint we may use the term action to describe the attempt to change attitudes, either our own or those of others. Thus, for example, to name a person "criminal" involves attitudes that lead to the action of imprisonment. To label the same person "socially ill" means to act so that the illness may be remedied.¹⁰

Descriptive of general patterns of behavior are such terms as "acceptance," which represents those modes of action by which a man adopts his role to the situation; "rejection," which is a kind of by-product of acceptance—that is, the "heretical aspects of an orthodoxy"; and "ambivalence," an on-the-fence idea that is similar to passivity. "Ambivalence" thus partakes both acceptance and rejection; since there is good for every evil, the result may well become philosophical indifference. To be sure, however, it is not intended that these groupings should become static critical assumptions. The poet may go from one frame to the other at any time in his development, and perhaps the general direction may be Carlyle's movement from "the everlasting nay" through the "center of indifference" to "the everlasting yea," though I should not here acquiesce in the immutability which Carlyle grants these frames. (It may be noted, however, that even Carlyle leaves a loophole: the "nay" is hardly "everlasting" if it becomes either of the others in time.) We may now say that the poet moves from frames of rejection through the period of ambivalence into frames of acceptance by means of sublimation.

Immediately there arises the question of "Acceptance of what?" Perhaps the best term to use, as far as Wordsworth is concerned, is "orthodoxy." By this word, as I use it in the follow-

ing pages, I mean generally acceptable to one with Wordsworth's English background, moving in the sort of society he moved in. It should be remembered that no idea of *normality* is necessarily involved in treating the orthodox. The effect on Wordsworth of his rejection of orthodoxy, and the subsequent "swing back into the fold," are what we are here concerned with. It is obvious that any other standard might have been selected; but the idea of orthodoxy in society is that which is most generally accepted, and is therefore most likely to be important to Wordsworth as a measure of himself.

It thus becomes inaccurate, I believe, to look at what Wordsworth wrote in 1795 and again in 1835, and say, "What a change was here." The whole body of information about and by Wordsworth must be regarded as nearly as possible in connection with the total situation, and in the nearest possible chronological order. From this angle, in the early years he seems to have felt himself remiss in many respects: the affair with Annette, the failure to live up to family expectations in the church, the lack of definite direction to his life. It is perhaps only natural then that in society's rejection of him, he should see his rejection of society. At this time, however, the shame or remorse was personal, being reflected in the attitude of worry, dejection, nervousness, headaches, and general despair, as well as in long absences of any word from him to his relatives. Gradually the guilt ceased to be a personal matter as he wrote poems concerned with people in the same general situation he had been in—sexually, economically, politically. As these poems transferred, or sublimated, the remorse, he began to attach morals to his poems and letters. And as he increased his advice-giving, he assumed the role of one who justly should give advice, and thus built up a protective myth which left no room for personal reaction to his earlier "wrong-doings," as they would be regarded by his new attitude. Misdoings are less and less frequently hinted at; indeed, early hints are later changed in the light of his altered situation. He could even very truthfully come to say—and mean—that he had no need "of a Saviour."

Part One

Modes of Rejection



Political and Economic Liberalism

The general pattern of "rejection of the universe" is strictly a problem of formal philosophy; and while Wordsworth often comments philosophically, he is not to be considered a student of formal philosophy. It is more meaningful, at any rate, to start from the general pattern of rejection, then to become less abstract and describe specific situations. In concrete matters, Wordsworth's early political position is usually that of antipathy to the orthodox pattern—a position of the "revolutionary," which would be regarded as heresy in so far as those in political power were concerned. As a matter of fact, some critics consider that Wordsworth's revolt was initially political;¹ certainly, at any event, his revolt was also closely tied to the economic background.

To understand his position more clearly, we must take into account the sort of environmental situation Wordsworth had in his early years. What were the early shaping facts, particularly as Wordsworth himself saw them? Regardless of what *really* happened, since the result in the poet is what we are after, our emphasis should be on his own interpretation of the events. Thus a question such as, "Was rural England really liberal or conservative in 1780?" is of less importance than is the question, "What did Wordsworth feel?" He himself felt that the circumstances of his early years prepared him to embrace revolutionary doctrines. Forces social as well as personal combined to make him receptive to the freedom of individuals even beyond what his own country afforded. There were gross inequalities in the

law of England, heavily weighted in favor of landed property. The poor were unprovided for educationally; religiously, the dissenters were excluded from politics and university alike. The army and navy were ripe for revolution from within, and the press-gang system meant bitterness to the unpropertied. At the same time, however, such conditions were less outrageous in the North, where Wordsworth received his childhood experiences and his education. In Cumberland, he came to feel, one was much more likely to find rural traits of independence and equality of action than elsewhere in England. The result was a spirit which accepted liberty of the individual as granted. To be sure, this idea of liberty differed greatly from the later one of the "security-freedom" concept, whereby liberty is gained through collective action; whereby liberty is surrendered that other more vital liberties may be gained. Wordsworth's was the idea of freedom meaning "individual liberty in the economic sphere," not the new conception of "social duties and responsibilities."²

To this concept of liberty, family standing gave impetus. While his father, John Wordsworth, was not overly prosperous, the family had no financial worries during John's lifetime. On the other hand, the family lived plainly. Their native region was largely the center for sheep and wool trades; industry had not broken upon the peace of the rural scene, nor were there many great families to overshadow all others. Within the Wordsworth household the freedom granted to the children fostered the habit of self-reliance: they roamed pretty much as they pleased. Especially, as Wordsworth later recalled, his mother was kind in granting him immunity from meddling during these formative years.³ It was not her habit, he writes, to mistrust their nature, since she knew that minds are best when "left free . . . in the simplicities of opening life." Consequently, she was void of "anxious fear of error or mishap," and was not "selfish with unnecessary cares." He even came to consider that her love of freedom, like his own, came "from the times, perhaps, and spot in which she lived." In such manner, his "over-love of freedom," as he came later to call it, was bred in him from the very first years of his life.⁴ It is possible, of course, that Wordsworth's passion for political freedom for all men is closely akin to this love of personal liberty, as well as being a reflection

of his wilfulness, his self-confidence, his love of wandering, and perhaps even his sympathy for vigorous action.⁵

The laborers of the field, too, Wordsworth regarded as the most fortunate of men; he noted the characteristic independence of these men among whom he grew to youth, seeing in their unshackled lives examples of individual liberty. The typical worker of this region he considered later:

Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Cheerfully led to individual ends
Or social, still followed by a train
Unwooded, unthought-of even—simplicity,
And beauty, and inevitable grace.⁶

The extended description of the life of the north country shepherd in Book VIII of *The Prelude* (lines 223 ff.) pictures a free and independent laborer, in summer and winter following his flock, thoroughly enjoying all the varied aspects of the natural world around him. The description concludes:

A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear
To native man.

The phrase "majestic indolence" is perhaps as much characteristic of Wordsworth himself as it is of the shepherd.

From both the country and those who inhabited it, Wordsworth drew inspiration long after. These people and their ancestors had possessed the soil for many years; the region had thus become an independent settlement of hardy northern stock. The soil they tilled themselves and were deeply attached to it; they guarded jealously their rights of pasturage on the fells. Thus, for the laboring man in agriculture, Wordsworth held deep respect, and from him he gained basic ideas of freedom as individual liberty, equality, and personal decision. Mutual aid alongside of independence of action produced the type of individual whom Wordsworth admired:

Labour here preserves
 His rosy face, a servant only here
 Of the fireside or of the open field,
 A Freeman therefore sound and unimpaired:
 That extreme penury is here unknown,
 And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness
 Mortal to body and the heaven-born mind:
 That they who want are not too great a weight
 For those who can relieve; here may the heart
 Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering
 Dreadless, as in a kind of fresher breeze
 Of her own native element, the hand
 Be ready and unwearied without plea,
 From tasks too frequent or beyond its power,
 For langour or indifference or despair.
 And as those lofty barriers break the force
 Of winds,—this deep Vale, as it doth in part
 Conceal us from the storm, so here abides
 A power and a protection for the mind,
 Dispensed indeed to other solitudes
 Favoured by noble privilege like this,
 Where kindred independence of estate
 Is prevalent, where he who tills the field,
 He, happy man! is master of the field,
 And treads the mountains which his Fathers trod.⁷

From such basic attitudes as those expressed here, gathered in his youth, Wordsworth later drew to present "Michael" and other similar pictures, such as some of the characters in *The Excursion*. So unconscious, indeed, were the deep results of his early tutoring by country people that when he later came to choose a natural figure of speech to explain how he was let go unfettered, he immediately turned to the farmer's life: he ranged "happy pastures," in no wise "stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed," or "like a stalled ox debarred from touch of growing grass."⁸

School—teachers as well as fellow students—lent weight to the growing idea of liberty as individual independence. There was his headmaster, William Taylor, who apparently impressed

the young Wordsworth considerably; there were students with parentage similar to Wordsworth's: sons of clergymen, business and professional men of the north country, villagers and small farmers. Boldness of character and a spirit of adventure joined in those who were William's schoolmates, along with whom he found living simple and frugal at school—where all were treated as equals. The rules were generous, the people plain. Students at Hawkshead were valued realistically for the intelligence and morality of the poor; judgment here was less likely to be marred by sentimentality on the one hand or by ignorance on the other. He lived among these people, he ate at their tables, and he played with their children.⁹ Even though it may be possible that Wordsworth's statements about his childhood are later rationalizations, the evidence seems to point to an early *practice* of the idea of liberty among equals.

Out of this background came next the journey to Cambridge—"migration strange for a stripling of the hills, a northern villager."¹⁰ Here, too, at the University, general circumstances emphasized the previously ingrained ideas of freedom as individual liberty. While he may have come into contact with radical political opinions at Cambridge; while he could not likely have avoided the ideas which—about that time—made Coleridge the radical he became; while he was no doubt in sympathy with the group largely discountenanced by the authorities, nevertheless he remained aloof—as much alone almost as he had been in Cumberland: "He had grown up to be his own judge and master. Since his father's death he had been restrained by no authority save the mild rules of Hawkshead. He had lived much alone and out of doors, subject to a grander discipline."¹¹ Not that he didn't join social groups; he tells us that he was always inclined toward the throng:

If a throng was near
That way I leaned by nature; for my heart
Was social, and loved idleness and joy.¹²

But we have no evidence of any attempt to bind himself intellectually to any group—no effort to obtain security, and through security to obtain group liberty. His ideal of freedom continued in the direction of personal taste and desire, although in some

ways this was a time of nebulous change in his thinking. In spite of his confusion at times, he generally held to the ways he had adopted as an independent Cumberland lad, and if changes came, they came slowly:

Yet true it is, that I had made a change
In climate, and my nature's outward coat
Changed also slowly and insensibly.¹³

There were also moments of what he called "a treasonable growth of indecisive judgments," the effect of which was to shake the mind's simplicity.

In general, however, at Cambridge were fostered for him the very ideas and practices of that yeomanlike freedom and equality which he had earlier become so well acquainted with in the north. As he later came to regard these two levels of his education—Hawkshead and Cambridge—he saw their effect as a common one; the chief value to him of these experiences was the love of freedom gained:

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutions
And rules, that they held something up to view
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honour, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.¹⁴

It would be impossible, he adds, for one who was thus tutored, not to regard a government of equal right, of individual worth,

as the best government. In other words, the association—or cluster—is from personal experiences to political theory, the one a natural outgrowth of the other. He was therefore less astonished, and even less excited, with the early events of the French Revolution, since he regarded these happenings as “a gift that was come rather late than soon.”¹⁵

Hardly less important in the formation of hitherto vague and general ideas of political freedom was the trip with Robert Jones to Switzerland. The tour came during his third summer vacation, at a time when Europe

. . . was thrilled with joy,
France standing on top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.¹⁶

There was thus the double impact of a time given over to the personal liberty of wandering as heart desired over the Alps, and the time of revolutionary freedom bursting forth in France. The mood of the independent travelers paralleled closely the mood of the people they observed from Calais onward—a mood which saw clearly that faces are brightest “when joy for one is joy for tens of millions.” As they went through France, they

. . . found benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
Hath left no corner of the land untouched.¹⁷

That Wordsworth was not insensible to the progress of the Revolution and was indeed already sympathetic with the course of events in France is easily proved by the recollections in *The Prelude*, and even more clearly by the letters he wrote to his sister at this time:

My partiality to Switzerland, excited by its natural charms, induces me to hope that the manners of the inhabitants are amiable; but at the same time I cannot help frequently contrasting them with those of the French, and, as far as I have had opportunity to observe, they lose very much by the comparison. We not only found the French a much less imposing people, but that politeness diffused through the lowest ranks had an air so

engaging that you could scarce attribute it to any other cause than real benevolence. During the time, which was near a month, that we were in France, we had not once to complain of the smallest deficiency of courtesy in any person, much less of any positive rudeness. We had also perpetual occasion to observe that cheerfulness [*sic*] and sprightliness for which the French have always been remarkable. But I must remind you that we crossed it at the time when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the revolution. It was a most interesting period to be in France; and we had many delightful scenes, where the interest of the picture was owing solely to this cause.¹⁸

Though he undoubtedly did not at this time understand deeply the significance or the drama of the great Revolution, his attitude was definitely sympathetic; his political opinions were rapidly taking shape. It is likely wiser for us to take his statements about his attitudes from the references to France in the letter to Dorothy just quoted than from *Descriptive Sketches*, written a year or two afterwards, much colored by later events as even the first version of the poem is. Throughout this poem, it is impossible for one to determine factually what attitudes Wordsworth held during the actual tour, and what he later came to believe his attitudes then were. Of course, this is an obvious difficulty in getting at facts in all of Wordsworth's poetry. "Recollected in tranquillity" seems to mean, subconsciously—or even consciously at times—"changing in the light of present emotions." This is apparently an inevitable process, psychology suggests. Our best bet therefore is to compare on-the-spot statements with later ones, and particularly to compare all statements of opinion with records of *actions* wherever possible. His actions during the tour are "democratic" generally, though the verbalization of these actions to fit the social situation does not come until a year or so later.

Even in the still later reminiscences of *The Prelude*, which Wordsworthian critics generally believe is closer to the emotions of 1790 than was *Descriptive Sketches*, it is nearly impossible to delineate exactly how much the "battle in the cause of Liberty"

was advanced by the sight before the Swiss traveler.¹⁹ The letter to his sister, however, likely gives us a clear and accurate picture. The mood of despair, for example, which one finds in *Descriptive Sketches*, as numerous critics have pointed out, owes much more to Wordsworth's situation in 1792 than to the Swiss tour. The on-the-spot information we have of the trip leads us to believe he was happy, formulating certain beliefs, though only hazily. From this viewpoint, the continental tour is also significant in crystallizing his ideas, and hence his subsequent actions.

One possible result of his rambling and of his coming into contact with living examples of the fight for freedom was restlessness. The tour and the emotional excitement of his experiences made it difficult for him to settle down. Letters of both Dorothy and William during 1791 frequently recur to the theme of William's inability to accomplish anything.

A final fact that is significant in Wordsworth's "revolutionary phase" in his economic—hence social—background. His early economic experiences may not have *made* him a revolutionary, but they most certainly were of a sort to help him to prepare to accept the ideas of the Revolution. As Kirtlan suggests,²⁰ his father had suffered at the hands of the lords of the soil: five thousand pounds had been forcibly borrowed by Lord Lonsdale, and as yet had not been repaid; Wordsworth's family had been consequently reduced somewhat in circumstances, one result of which was that William received his education almost out of charity. As one would expect, there followed considerable social embarrassment on the part of the children. The evidence of Dorothy's early letters is unmistakable. Writing to her friend Jane Pollard, she relates all the woes of her sixteen-year-old heart:

Many a time have Wm, Jn, and C, and myself shed tears together, tears of bitterest sorrow, we all of us, each day, feel more sensibly the loss we sustained when we were deprived of our parents, and each day do we receive fresh insults. You will wonder of what sort; believe me of the most mortifying kind, the insults of servants, but I will give you the particulars. . . . The servants are every one of them so insolent to us as

makes the kitchen as well as the parlour quite insupportable.²¹

She goes on in the letter to enumerate their ills: their uncle did not send horses for her brothers when vacation began; the boys could not even get a pair of shoes cleaned without the servants' sarcastic remarks; they are all found fault with every day. All of this is the result of Lord Lonsdale's refusal to pay his debt to them. The children always finish their conversations, she says, with a melancholy wish that they had a father and a home. These same attitudes run through several of her letters in 1787 and 1788.²² Even discounting for the fact that Dorothy is very likely indulging in a bit of self-pity because of her own unhappiness, we must still recognize the underlying truth of her observations concerning the plight of the Wordsworth children. We have already seen that Wordsworth considered his love of personal freedom associated with political equality. Here again, his experiences in economics are paralleled by the French Revolution, which partly mirrored his own rebellious spirit: here was to rise the common man (Wordsworth) against the tyrannous lords of landed aristocracy (Lonsdale).

Already Wordsworth was beginning to react at this period of his life in two characteristic ways. One was in the mild rebellion against authority, illustrated by his walking tour when he should, as his uncles thought, have been preparing for some definite life-work. The other was through poetry. The feeling of being misunderstood, ill-treated, and unappreciated, the loss and frustration he felt, all these found "compensation in his early poetry, especially *An Evening Walk*, where—after sharing vicariously the perfect bliss and felicity of a family of swans whose domestic situation is ideal—he envisions a future day when he and Dorothy will be happily established in a cottage of their own."²³ This identification between his and Dorothy's situation and that of the family of swans is further evidenced by a passage of *The Recluse*, where Wordsworth compares the swans to himself and Dorothy:

But two are missing, two, a lonely pair
Of milk-white Swans; wherefore are they not seen
Partaking this day's pleasure? From afar

They came, to sojourn here in solitude,
Choosing this Valley, they who had the choice
Of the whole world. We saw them day by day,
Through those two months of unrelenting storm,
Conspicuous at the centre of the Lake
Their safe retreat, we knew them well, I guess
That the whole valley knew them; but to us
They were more dear than may be well believed,
Not only for their beauty, and their still
And placid way of life, and constant love
Inseparable, not for these alone,
But that *their* state so much resembled ours,
They having also chosen this abode;
They strangers, and we strangers, they a pair,
And we a solitary pair like them.²⁴

It is possible that these later lines also contain overtones of reference to Annette. At any rate they are similar to the themes of her letter of March, 1793. In either event, from *An Evening Walk* onwards, there seems to be clear evidence of Wordsworth's sublimation of conflicts.

During most of 1791, Wordsworth made two visits: one was to London, from February to May; the other was to Wales, from May to September. At this time his general theories were perhaps more carefully formulated, though *The Prelude* may lead us astray here. The effects upon his mind of London sights which he describes in Book VIII were very probably drawn from experiences not of this London trip alone, but of several such trips. We have all too few sources of the actual experiences of this particular trip, some of the sources we do have being misleading.²⁵ Probably our most accurate evidence is that of the few letters of William and Dorothy we have of this time. In a letter to his friend William Mathews, dated June 17, 1791, Wordsworth wrote:

I quitted London about three weeks ago, where my time passed in a strange manner; sometimes whirled about by the vortex of its *strenua inertia*, and sometimes thrown by the eddy into a corner of the stream, where I lay in almost motionless indolence.²⁶

The note of indolence at the close of this passage is echoed in Dorothy's letter to Jane Pollard dated June, 1791, where we learn that "William . . . lost the chance, indeed the certainty of a fellowship by not combating his inclinations." He did not succeed at Cambridge, she adds, because "he gave way to his natural dislike of studies so dry as mathematics."

Apparently, William as well as his guardians felt he was somewhat remiss in not preparing more seriously for a living. In his letter to Mathews quoted above, Wordsworth reflects on "how desirable an attainment would learning be, if the time exacted for it were not so great. Miserable weakness!" Again he wrote to Mathews from Plas-yn-Illan, where he was visiting his friend Jones, "The truth of the matter is that when in Town I did *little*, and since I came here I have done nothing. A miserable account."²⁷ A final letter of this series to Mathews shows definitely that Wordsworth was aware of the disappointment his family felt because of his action: he says he does not believe Mathews could ever be happy if he knew he were the cause of sorrow to his parents. As a matter of fact, much of this letter fits Wordsworth's situation more neatly than it does that of Mathews, to whom the emotions of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life are attributed.²⁸ He ends this letter by discouraging the tramping idea Mathews had apparently suggested. The reason Wordsworth offers for not taking a tour at this time shows how much the wishes of his family are present in his mind:

I cannot deny that were I so situated, as to be without relations, to whom I were accountable for my actions, I should prefer your idea to your present situation, or to vegetating on a paltry curacy. Yet still there is another objection which would have influence upon me which is this. I should not be able to reconcile to my ideas of right, the thought of wandering about a country, without a certainty of being able to maintain myself.

Of course, in spite of the moralizing tone of this passage, within three months he was in France, without any visible means of support except family funds.

The significance of this seems to me to be twofold: first, the evidence is that Wordsworth here has a feeling of "failure"—of

"remorse"—at not measuring up to the standards his relatives had set for him. To be sure, the remorse was not yet as great as it was to become, and can easily be overemphasized at this time; nevertheless, it unquestionably was playing a part in his thinking. Second, having met each successive problem he faced by "evading" or "avoiding" it through travel—walking—he finds it easier to meet each new problem in the same manner. Harper calls this trait "an unpremeditated natural piece of self-indulgence"—a yielding "to the impulses which always ruled him." At this time, for example, "sudden outbreaks of extreme and wayward impatience of restraint" accentuated Wordsworth's natural independence.²⁹

Thus the trip to France in the winter of 1791, coming just after his uncle had proposed a course of Oriental literature, with the purpose of providing William with a livelihood, should be no surprise.³⁰ It is just one more in a series of such reactions Wordsworth had characteristically built up. It is also evident that he associates a sense of blame with his actions. In a letter to Mathews, November 23, 1791, just as he is ready to sail for France, Wordsworth writes:

I expect I assure you considerable pleasure from my sojourn on the other side of the water, and some little improvement, which God knows I stand in sufficient need of. . . . I am doomed to be an idler through my whole life. I have read nothing this age, nor indeed did I ever. . . . My uncle, the clergyman, proposed to me a short time ago to begin a course of Oriental literature, thinking that that was the best field for a person to distinguish himself in, as a man of letters. To oblige him I consented to pursue the plan upon my return from the continent. But what must I do amongst that immense wilderness, I who have no resolution, and who have not prepared myself for the enterprise by any sort of discipline amongst the Western languages? who know little of Latin, and scarce nothing of Greek. A pretty confession for a young gentleman whose life ought to have been devoted to study. And thus the world wags.³¹

He was not, however, as we notice, so much bothered by "ought

to have been" that he refrained from making the trip to France.

Well, why not go to France? Given his habit of delaying a decision concerning his own future, where would he be more likely to go at this time, especially when France afforded an excellent rationalization for his action: "He means to pass the winter . . . learning the French language which will qualify him for the office of travelling companion to some young gentleman if he can get recommended."³² Added to that was the agreeable impression the French people had made on him during the earlier foot tour, as well as his sympathy with the spirit of the Revolution, and a "feeling that the air of France would be good for him at that particular time when he was hesitating and France was rushing confidently forward."³³

It is interesting to note in this respect that Wordsworth very likely turned to a reading of Rousseau about this time. If he did so, the function of Rousseau may not have been chiefly the explicit statement of revolutionary ideas, especially since such ideas could hardly have appeared novel to Wordsworth in 1791. Instead, he may have found in Rousseau the expression and the confirmation of the rightness of his own desire not to face formal preparation but to remain free and independent, unhampered in his pursuit of knowledge and life.

The total effect of all these experiences, generally, was to make Wordsworth ready to receive the events of the French Revolution during the next several years. As Cobban summarizes it:

Not only by his meditation on Nature, but also by his social environment, had he been prepared for the doctrines of the revolutionaries. Born and bred amid the rural democracy of the English Lakes, "a perfect republic of shepherds and agriculturists," departing thence for the "academic republic" of Cambridge, finally spending a considerable period in Revolutionary France, he had been given as democratic an upbringing as was possible in his day.³⁴

By one who believed that those related to the soil lead rational lives almost approaching an ideal of freedom, a revolution would be welcomed as the destroyer of social artificiality. Indeed,

Wordsworth himself recognized that his experiences in the main had prepared him to accept the French Revolution with open arms, as for instance in Book IX of *The Prelude*, previously quoted in part. Now, his experiences in France allowed him to formulate into the statement of a system what had until this time been only vague humanitarianism. Thus "his implicit republicanism" became an "explicit and outspoken political creed."³⁵

Indeed, the France of 1791-92 presented in many ways much of what Wordsworth had earlier come to admire and respect in northern English society: the object of the disciples of Montesquieu was to establish a state based on the model of the English constitution, especially with regard to the establishment of personal freedom. Feudal privileges had been abolished; power to wage war, to levy taxes, and to establish law had been transferred from the king to representatives of the people; many restrictions on agriculture and trade had been abolished; titles and therewith the class of the nobility had been eliminated; civil and military careers were opened to all, without respect to birth or religion; and the judiciary had been reformed. All of these Wordsworth had long since taken for granted as desirable, and within a short time he was to express his opinions on these reforms in letters to Mathews and in the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*.

Meanwhile, however, Wordsworth's own feeling of personal failure remained with him and was obviously connected with his financial situation: that is, he had taken this expensive journey to France when he should have been making his fortune, or at the very least preparing himself for some sort of living. He managed to dispose of his problem, at least temporarily—or so a letter to brother Richard would suggest. Writing on December 19, 1791, he gives Richard a list of his expenses, concluding that he feels he is living quite reasonably; furthermore, he has decided not to take a master to teach him the language since that would considerably increase his living expenses. One sentence of this letter is striking evidence of his attitude toward people of Lord Lonsdale's social and economic position: "I had imagined that there were some people of wealth and circumstance favorers of the revolution, but here there is not one to be found."³⁶

From home, family pressure continued toward stabilizing the young Wordsworth, through the renewal of the offer of a

curacy: "John would tell you that my Uncle offered to give him [William] a Title for Orders; he thanked my Uncle for his offer which he said he would accept at any time he should find most convenient." So writes Dorothy to her brother Richard in the spring of 1792.³⁷ She goes on to say that her uncle would keep the title open for William if he wanted to get ordained immediately; it would, she thinks, be charming for him to be placed at Harwich, even if the income would be only that of a curacy until the former occupant's debts were paid. Though his mind and body were occupied in events hardly appropriate for a would-be cleric, Wordsworth maintained during this spring his resolution to accept his uncle's offer, howbeit somewhat reluctantly; to Mathews he wrote on May 17, 1792, "It is at present my intention to take orders, in the approaching winter or spring. My uncle the clergyman will furnish me with a title. Had it been in my power, I certainly should have wished to defer the moment." Although he speaks here as if the decision is definite, his wish "to defer the moment" we have seen as thoroughly characteristic. And as a matter of fact with the approaching winter or spring, he does manage to defer the moment.

In the midst of all this turmoil, however, it would appear, at least to me, that Wordsworth remained essentially English, seeing in France a struggle to attain the middle-class liberty already possessed by his own country. For example, in this same letter to Mathews just quoted from, he says he sees no cause for despair, because ". . . you have the happiness of being born in a free country, where every road is open, and where talents and industry are more liberally rewarded than amongst any other nation of the Universe."³⁸ He was, at the same time, thoroughly awake now to the trend of events, and commented sanely upon what he observed. His letter to Mathews points out that people in London have a better chance of becoming informed than he has here in a small provincial town. The barbarous actions of the patriotic army are, he agrees, more in keeping with savages than with citizens of France. The coming summer will, he feels, decide the fate of the country; it is impossible that the patriotic army will withstand the greater discipline of the enemy. But even should the German army reach the gates of Paris, some gains of the Revolution will remain secure:

It will be impossible to make any material alteration in the Constitution, impossible to reinstate the clergy in their ancient guilty splendor, impossible to give an existence to the *noblesse* similar to that it before enjoyed, impossible to add much to the authority of the King: yet there are in France some [millions?]³⁹—I speak without exaggeration—who expect that this will take place.

In England, meanwhile, Dorothy was playing the good aristocrat, “indulging her transports on the merits of the Royal family.”³⁹ In a letter to Jane Pollard, October 16, 1792, she tells how the King stopped to talk with her aunt and uncle and to play with the children:

I think it is impossible to see the King and his family at Windsor without loving them, even if you eye them with impartiality and consider them really as *man* and woman not as king and princesses, but I own I am too much of an aristocrat or what you please to call me, not to reverence him because he is monarch more than I should were he a private gentleman, and not to see with pleasure his daughters treated with more respect than ordinary people.⁴⁰

After continuing with her complimentary remarks on the King's person, she adds: “Do not think that I am dazzled with the splendour of royalty when I say that I think I never saw so handsome a family.” This statement would appear to be an apt bit of negation on her part, though the negation itself is evidence that there is a hint of apology, hence doubt, in what she writes. Her loyalty is divided, too, though less strenuously than that of her brother in France.

This principle of “negation” is of considerable importance in evaluating many of Wordsworth's statements. Negation is a psychological term used to indicate statements which are diametrically opposite the true situation, usually employed by insecure individuals or groups, somewhat like the idea of “whistling in the dark.” Thus here Dorothy is obviously dazzled by the splendor of Royalty, but says she is not. This device should lead us to discount statements made in the face of contradictory evi-

dence. Indeed, we might even say it is wise oftentimes to read "not" into very positive statements, and to eliminate "not" from strong negative statements. Oftentimes is this true with Wordsworth. For example, in a letter to Coleridge, May 1801, he says that the "cake went in the oven red hot and came out black as a genuine child of the coal hole." Then he adds, "But I hate antithesis, in color especially."⁴¹ If this were actually true, we might justly expect few or no antitheses in his work; yet his poetry early and late abounds in them. As a critical device, of course, the concept of negation should be employed carefully. It should not merely allow the critic to call the writer's white, black, or vice versa. To prove that a statement is negation we should be able to show a psychological need for such denial and in addition some evidence that the opposite of the statement fits the situation more precisely. Surely this is true in the two instances given here.

During this spring and summer of 1792, a number of experiences Wordsworth had point to two conclusions: first, his interest in the turmoil in France was becoming ever more intense—he was becoming more and more a part of the very Revolution; and second, in line with all we have seen of his early background and development, we now note that Wordsworth is consistently the middle-of-the-road revolutionist, never the extremist. A summary of a few of his experiences will help make my meaning clear. In the letter to William Mathews of May 17, 1792, already quoted in part, Wordsworth suggests that even if the patriot armies are defeated, the gains of the Revolution cannot be entirely annulled: the clergy, the nobility, and the royalty will not regain their former unjust powers. Writing this with what appears to be considerable satisfaction, Wordsworth seems to identify himself pretty thoroughly with the revolutionary forces. There is also the evidence of his association at this time with the French officers. Though our only source of information of his actions here is the ninth book of *The Prelude*, there seems to be no reason for questioning its general accuracy:

A band of military Officers,
Then stationed in the city, were the chief
Of my associates . . . alike . . .
Were bent upon undoing what was done:

This was their rest and only hope . . . and I . . .
freely lived

With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
The wish to bring me over to their cause.⁴²

He was not won over to their side, however, for it seemed to him that the best ruled not, but ought to rule. Thus the arguments of the officers were impotent to shape his hopes to theirs. The fact, on the one hand, that he was not persuaded by them shows how much a Republican he had become; the fact, on the other hand, that he was associating with them—that indeed they were the *chief* of his companions—and that he listened to their arguments at all, shows that he was certainly no extremist in his democratic principles.

One of these officers was Beaupuy, with whom Wordsworth associated a good deal. Unlike the others, Beaupuy was an ardent Republican; Wordsworth's recollections in *The Prelude* of what he felt at this time constitute a mixture of republican and aristocratic emotions. As he walked along the Loire with Beaupuy, he heard and accepted revolutionary theories, Beaupuy's chief propaganda lying in concrete scenes such as the picture of "the hunger-bitten girl" leading the heifer. At times, however, other scenes recalled to him "some Hermit," or a "lone Monk," an Angelica or an Erminia. When he gazed upon some ruined convent, he could not help bewailing "a wrong so harsh." The site of Romorentin, home of kings of bygone years, moved in him visions of romantic love and royal knighthood. These emotions, he felt, mitigated the prejudice, the bigotry, of the "youthful patriot's mind." This passage in *The Prelude*, interestingly enough, is followed by reference to *Vaudracour and Julia*, a tale parallel to Wordsworth's relations with Annette. The association seems to be this: recollection of royalist and romantic emotions stirred in him by what he saw recalls his own personal experiences with a woman of Royalist tendencies. Indeed, I think it is quite possible that some of the walks which Wordsworth says in *The Prelude* were taken with Beaupuy may actually have been taken with Annette. The "romantic" allusions certainly fit his relations with her better than they fit his relations with Beaupuy.

Moreover, we know from other instances that emotions attributed in his poems to one situation, in actuality sprang from a different situation, as for instance in *The Excursion* and elsewhere in *The Prelude*. Concerning the expression here of aristocratic sentiments, one may point out that his environment had been similar to Dorothy's, and she was just now expressing avowedly aristocratic emotions. In other words, here again Wordsworth is the lover of the Revolution, but in a conservative way.

At Blois there was a revolutionary society known as *Les Amis de la Constitution*. Wordsworth may have joined the club along with Beaupuy, or at least attended its meetings. "On the whole, the society, while animated with the most uncompromising zeal for democracy, equality, and the rights of man, preserved a moderate tone. It appears to have sided with the Girondins, and its hero at Paris was not Robespierre, but Brissot."⁴³ We also know that nearly all of Wordsworth's associations were with the Girondins, the moderate party, and Bishop Wordsworth tells us that William was intimately connected with the Brissotins.⁴⁴ It is also possible that some of his ideas came from the moderate seventeenth century republicans.⁴⁵

During his stay in France, the first version of the *Descriptive Sketches* was written "on the banks of the Loire," according to the Fenwick note. The published version of 1793 shows unmistakable signs of his revolutionary tendencies, though some of the stronger passages were later omitted. During the course of the poem, he is clearly sympathetic with the dispossessed, while at the same time he maintains a somewhat melancholy tone which may be owing to emotions of this later period or to the travel books from which he derived much of the material. In either event, the gloom is dispelled toward the end when he turns to describe France:

And thou! fair favored region! which my soul
Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl
Till Death's cold touch her cistern-wheel assail,
And vain regret and vain desire shall fail. . . .⁴⁶

Since these lines were published after much of the horror of revolutionary extremists (after the September massacres and the

execution of the King), we may consider them as an expression of Wordsworth's firm conviction in the rightness of the Revolution.

Though the reason for the *composition* of *Descriptive Sketches* may have been the desire to create a poem, publication involves another point. Forced to return to England, "dragged by a chain of harsh necessity," Wordsworth was extremely unhappy. Homeless, he was forced to live with or at the expense of friends and relatives. Without a profession, growing less and less inclined toward the clergy, and for that reason a disappointment to his family, he had reason to be unsettled. His principles of republicanism were abhorrent to his uncles, who were irritated by his unorthodoxy as much as by his actual conduct.⁴⁷ Herein may very well lie the reason for his publication of both *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*: this would be a means of overcoming the necessity for his feelings of shame and guilt for not having made his mark in the world; it would help to prove to his family that his time had not been "wasted." This interpretation would explain why, in *Descriptive Sketches*, he seeks compensation in self-pity and fanciful creations of the ideal home. The poem reveals his attempt to "glorify the emotions, attitudes, and values essential to the ideal life which he and his sister hoped to share at some hypothetical point in the future."⁴⁸ There are the "soft affections that exist between parent and child"; the humanitarian interest he takes in the suffering of the poor; the troubles of the whole world which weigh heavily upon his shoulders; and the final hope of peace in a cottage with Dorothy. Further evidence of this interpretation of the poem is presented in Dorothy's letter to Jane, February 16, 1793, just after the poems had been published.⁴⁹ Echoing the sentiment of *Descriptive Sketches*, which is itself in part a restatement of the ideal life pictured in *An Evening Walk*, Dorothy describes her fantasy of future bliss for her friend:

When our Refreshment is ended I produce our Work,
and William brings his book to our table and contributes
at once to our instruction and amusement, and at intervals we lay aside the Book and each hazard our observa-

tions upon what has been read without the fear of Ridicule or Censure. We talk over past days, we do not sigh for any pleasures beyond our humble Habitation "The central point of all our joys."

Later in this same letter, she draws the definite parallel between the two situations when she says that the "little gilded Cottage in the Horizon" is their longed-for "happy habitation." The political interest at the end of *Descriptive Sketches* would thus illustrate Wordsworth's idea that the happiness of domestic bliss is first dependent upon "the basic requirement of political liberty."⁵⁰

Surely all of this seems evidence of the essential conflict in Wordsworth: the desire for peace and bliss as a goal; the actuality of poverty, shame, and disgrace for his views of society. This essential conflict was considerably aggravated by the outbreak of war between England and France. In a way the war became the macrocosm to his microcosm: the divergent points of view of Wordsworth and his family are now cast into a wider sphere, with his family symbolic of England, he of France. It is almost as though they could now say to him, "See, here is concrete evidence, backed by our whole nation, that we are right and you are wrong." So it was, from this view, that he rejoiced in the defeat and ignominy of the English: it was as though he had himself been in his turn vindicated by the succession of events.

The war itself, at the same time, constituted a basic conflict: his previous loyalty to England, which could bring him to look upon the early days of the Revolution as attaining for France what his own country had long possessed, could no longer be merged with the struggle in France. Loyalty to either one now meant disloyalty to the other. The result was the moral shock he was to picture years afterward in the tenth book of *The Prelude* (262-283): he had been a harebell fastened to the rock of his birthplace, but was now torn loose and tossed in a whirlwind. His idea of revolution, as we have already seen, was concrete equality; he had seen in the French Revolution an attempt on the part of the peasants to obtain freedom comparable to that enjoyed in northern England. In this way his sympathy with the Revolution had been identified with his attachment to his own countryside life and his own struggles for personal attainment and

freedom. Now, however, in dividing his loyalty, the war uprooted him, tearing apart his integrity—his unity: "His inward revolution came to him in the overwhelming sense that he was being uprooted from England; and that the England to which he was attached by innumerable fibers of his being . . . was not the real England at all."⁵¹

Indeed, the England to which he returned in 1792–93 was vastly different from the England he had left in 1791. Earlier, the country as a whole was favorable to the Revolution; now, however, the general attitude was not so unanimously sympathetic. Many of the erstwhile reformers began to see possibilities of a similar revolt at home. Radicals occupied a more isolated position, composed as they were of lower-middle-class workers, with a few young men from liberal professions. With the execution of the King, even the Whigs deserted; they had regarded the Revolution as similar to that in England of 1688, generally ignorant as they were of the deep-seated causes underlying the French disturbances. Now they became convinced they had been in error and withdrew their support.⁵² Although Wordsworth himself later believed these events did not weaken his republican sentiments and ideals, the very image he uses for England—*rock*—suggests that it is his country that is stable, and he—the harebell—who is the unstable one. It may have been for this reason—that he felt subconsciously insecure now—that he turned to hopeful news of French heroism to bolster up his own principles; for this reason he became closely associated with the English Jacobins; and for this reason he found it necessary to *write*, though not to *publish*, an answer to Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff.

It is only an *apparent* paradox that this answer should be Wordsworth's culminating statement as a republican, and at the same time the symbol of his self-preparation to abandon those very principles embodied in the letter to the Bishop: it had for him a sort of cathartic effect, for "the expression of indignation, however sincere, brings satisfaction. A heated controversy in a moment of anger affords seasonable relief."⁵³ The letter is important, moreover, as one of three records, along with a letter to Mathews and the poetic record of the manuscript version of *Guilt and Sorrow*, of Wordsworth's revolutionary principles. Unlike Edmund Burke, Wordsworth was in no wise drawn to

the sufferings of the King and his family ; he writes in the letter to Bishop Watson that he attaches small importance to the sufferings of Louis or Marie. He hopes, moreover, now that the King is gone, that neither the nobles nor the priests will be able to "raise his posterity to the ranks of his ancestors."⁵⁴ He believes that the time of revolution is the true season of liberty. So perverted is man that liberty often has to borrow the means of despotism, and "in order to reign in peace, must establish herself by violence." Nevertheless, even in such a situation some gain is made, for "political virtues are developed at the expense of moral ones." He believes that a republican government is far superior to a monarchical one. For one thing, twenty-five millions of Frenchmen have chosen a republic because "they could have no security for their liberties under any modification of monarchical power." Besides, a republic "contains less of an oppressive principle than any other form of government." The great desolating evils come from the fact that those governing have interests distinct from the interests of those governed. Whatever, therefore, tends to unite the interests of the two groups (governing and governed) promotes the general welfare. For this reason, a republic is best: by shortening the governor's term, the people may evict him when his interest differs from that of his constituents. Since in a republic a man will not remain in office for a succession of years, he will not become corrupt. In selecting their own representatives the people will use not merely wealth as a criterion of integrity; neither will they deem possession of property a qualification, but instead will look for "virtues, talents, and acquirements." In a republic, only laws which are acceptable to the vast majority will be enacted; there would therefore be less resistance to the laws of a country. As it now is, "our penal code is so crowded with disproportioned penalties and indiscriminate severity that a conscientious man would sacrifice, in many instances, his respect for the law to the common feelings of humanity." It is unfortunate when a man cannot help execute laws without losing self-esteem and gaining contempt from his fellow men.

Wordsworth goes on to say that he finds regal government in any form objectionable; it is unstable because the monarch is chooser of his ministers, so that his caprice becomes their sole

guide. No man is equal to the powers entrusted in a king; there must always be a "vast proportion between the duties to be performed and the powers that are to perform them." Wordsworth is also against the distinctions of wealth since these always contain an oppressive principle. Primogeniture is an evil monster; it protects property, but offers no security for a laborer "to provide food for himself and his family. I appeal to innumerable statutes, whose constant and professed object it is to lower the price of labour, to compel the workman to be *content* with arbitrary wages, evidently too small from the necessity of legal enforcement of them." A system of nobility also "has a tendency to dishonor labour . . . it binds down whole ranks of men to idleness"—men who are, ironically enough, rewarded more than those who are industrious. In passages such as this, there is surely an echo of the personal relations of Wordsworth to men of wealth like Lord Lonsdale. At this stage of his life he has all to gain by the changes here advocated and nothing to lose; he has obviously identified himself with the proletariat. And in this fact lies the seed of a possible change: once his situation alters, he may have a great deal to lose and nothing to gain by changes such as those he here advocates. Moreover, if the reason for his revolutionary attitude lies largely in his distasteful relationship to Lord Lonsdale, should that relationship be changed there is the likelihood of change in attitude. The tip-off comes in a passage a bit later in the essay. He comments on the courts of justice in England, by their nature weighted in favor of wealth: ". . . the consuming expense of our never-ending process, the verbosity of unintelligible statutes, and the perpetual contrariety of our judicial decisions"—surely this is all calculated to "tear your fleece from your back in the thorny labyrinth of litigation." As a means of redressing these evils and grievances, he calls for parliamentary reform, and for emphasis he uses bold capitals. The present war, he concludes, is wrong, as any war is wrong for that matter, because it is "an infatuation" which gives a large portion of the poor over to the sword and consigns the rest "to the more slow and more painful consumption of want." Most of these ideas were also echoed in *Guilt and Sorrow*, especially his attitude toward war, as we shall see.

Although there is no date on the manuscript of this *Letter*

to the Bishop of Llandaff—a letter which Wordsworth never published—most of the ideas in it are repeated in letters to Mathews. Writing on May 23, 1794, he considers a proposal of writing for a magazine; before undertaking such an enterprise,

of each other's political sentiments we ought not to be ignorant; and here at the very threshold I solemnly affirm that in no writings of mine will I ever admit of any sentiments which can have the least tendency to induce my readers to suppose that the doctrines which are now enforced by banishment, imprisonment, &c, &c, are other than pregnant with every species of misery. You know perhaps already that I am of that odious class of men called democrats, and of that class I shall forever continue.⁵⁵

Another letter the following month adds more political ideas:

I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement: hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution. Now, there are two causes which appear to me to be accomplishing the subversion of this Constitution; first, the infatuation, profligacy, and extravagances of men in power; and secondly, the changes of opinion respecting matters of government, which within these few years have rapidly taken place in the minds of speculative men.

He goes on to say that while a better civil policy might be established, the institutions he condemns are being destroyed too rapidly. In keeping with what we have already seen of his non-extremist position, he adds that he recoils from the idea of a revolution in England, and as a preventive he advocates administrative economy and a gradual reform of abuses. Moreover, he believes "every enlightened friend of mankind" should explain the rules of "political justice" which should guide the hand of reform, and if revolution should come, would mitigate its horror. "After this," he says, "need I add that I am a determined enemy

to every species of violence? I see no connection, but what the obstinancy of pride and ignorance render necessary, between justice and the sword, between reason and bonds."⁵⁶

Finally, there is the evidence of the early version of *Guilt and Sorrow*, which "was a bitter attack on English society and its conservative defenders. It was a document of revolutionary propaganda provided with a narrative illustrating the dire effects of monarchy upon the well-being of the individual."⁵⁷ Incident is piled upon incident to describe the evils of a social system which often forces poverty upon the most deserving. The victims of social injustice, the outcasts of the world here portrayed, are all essentially "good" individuals, forced by a monster too great for their ability to combat, into unemployment, poverty, and even murder. War is pictured throughout the poem as the ravager of the poor, and families are broken up by the harsh press-gang system. Many of the strongest lines were later removed upon publication, for by 1842 when the poem was first entirely published Wordsworth's position and attitude had changed considerably; but the earliest manuscript version is blunt and outspoken.⁵⁸

For example, there is this stanza on war, found only in Manuscript 1:

Oh! dreadful price of being to resign
All that is dear *in* being! better far
In Want's most lonely cave till death to pine
Unseen, Unheard, unwatched by any star,
Or in the streets and walks where proud men are,
Better our dying bodies to obtrude,
Than dog-like, wading at the heels of war
Protract a curst existence, with the brood
That lap (their very nourishment!) their brothers' blood.⁵⁹

He returns to this theme frequently in the rest of the poem, including a word of advice to governors of nations—a passage not found in later versions:

Say, rulers of the nations, from the sword
Can aught but murder, pain, and tears proceed?
Oh, what can war but endless war still breed?⁶⁰

But instead of heeding this cry of the poet, "The nations, forced at home in bonds to drink The dregs of Wretchedness, for empire strain." The misery forced upon individuals by poverty and injustice he also bitterly bewails, especially in the last stanzas of Manuscript 1, not found in the published edition of the poem:

For want how many men and Children die;
 How many, at Oppression's portal placed,
 Receive the scanty dole she cannot waste;
 And bless, as she has taught, the hand benign.
 How many, by inhuman toil debased,
 Abject, obscure and brute, to earth incline
 Unrespited, forlorn of every spark divine.

The poverty of those like himself naturally contrasts sharply with the plenty of people of wealth. He can hardly help thinking of his treatment at the hands of Lord Lonsdale when he writes:

Of those who on the couch of Affluence rest,
 By laughing Fortune's sparkling cup elate,
 While we of comfort reft, by pain depressed,
 No other pillow know than Penury's iron breast.

For this reason, because it held out some hope of material equality, he turned to the French Revolution. In a stirring stanza, again existing only in Manuscript 1, he salutes these heroes of the Revolution, bidding them pursue their battle against oppression:

Heroes of Truth, pursue your march, uptear
 The oppressor's dungeon from its deepest base;
 High o'er the towers of Pride undaunted rear
 Resistless in your might th'Herculean mace
 Of Reason, let foul Error's monstrous race
 Dragged from their dens start at the light with pain
 And die! pursue your toils till not a trace
 Be left on earth of Superstition's reign
 Save that eternal pile which frowns on Sarum's plain.

There can be little doubt, it seems to me, of the unorthodoxy of such utterances as those quoted above. Rejection of those in power stems largely, I believe, from his own position as "outcast."

The early Wordsworth was, then, the victim of

what modern psychologists would probably describe as maladjustment and emotional immaturity. The history of his life from his matriculation at Cambridge in 1787 to his settlement at Racedown in 1795 is the history of a long and painful effort to adjust unruly emotions and presuppositions to a world which he found to be more hostile than friendly.⁶¹

From a social viewpoint, Wordsworth's actions during these years were nearly all heretical: a rejection of orthodoxy. He went tramping through France and Switzerland when he "should" have been working; he delayed time and again in preparing himself for a livelihood, choosing instead the life of loafing while visiting in London, Wales, and France. His political opinions, vague environmental impulses at first, then systematized by his subsequent experiences, were increasingly unorthodox, culminating in two prose statements definitely revolutionary: his letter to Mathews in June, 1794, and the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. The political and social beliefs expressed in his early poems were likewise "liberal" if not extremist—all of them the natural result of one faced with the training and problems of Wordsworth.



Religious Heresy

In general, most comments upon Wordsworth's "religion" are inadequate because critics begin by detaching Wordsworth's religious utterances from the other events in his life. The resultant lack of integration between religious experience and other parallel experiences forces the critic to assume, subconsciously, that Wordsworth's religious views were held in a sort of vacuum, it would seem more fruitful to suggest the function his views had for the poet. Moreover, many critics assume a standard definition of "religion," "Christianity," "atheism," and "pantheism," and then proceed to determine in which group Wordsworth should be placed at a given period. Needless to say, such definitions are static, not dynamic, verbalizations. From my point of view, the religious experiences must not be considered as distinctly separate and apart from other experiences. Although the part "mystic" experiences played, for instance, is difficult to determine, that such moments are psychologically attached to other experiences is attested by the "clusters" accompanying the description of religious feelings.

Professor Havens has outlined what are generally referred to as Wordsworth's mystical experiences, as well as the circumstances which accompanied them.¹ Indicative of the possible relationships is the record of Wordsworth's "conversion" in the fourth book of *The Prelude* (lines 333-337):

. . . to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows

Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit.

There are two distinct associations which led up to this experience: the evening before had been one of joyous dancing accompanied by natural sexual reactions:

‘Mid a throng
Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, I had passed
The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,
With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
And unaimed prattle flying up and down,
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
And tingled through the veins.²

It was early morning when he turned his steps toward home, and the gloriousness of the natural scene provided the second element for his dedication

Magnificent
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as e'er I had beheld in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Gran-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn--
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds.³

So it was that after an evening of awakening emotions, in the dawn of a new morning, came the intellectual dawn of inspiration labelled by Wordsworth and by subsequent writers as "mystic." The point I wish here to emphasize is that the so-called religious or mystical experience is not divorced from other incidents of his life which we should certainly not label religious or mystic.⁴

Again from my point of view, the religious experiences are not to be classified under static categories of "pantheism" or

"Christianity," but are to be described as they function in the larger context of Wordsworth's life: that is, we should consider why, at one time, in one sort of situation, he held and expressed views not orthodox, and why in a different sort of situation, at another time, he held and expressed opinions that were orthodox.

There is no evidence that the Wordsworth family were inclined to be either more or less devoutly religious than the average middle-class family of their day. One of Wordsworth's earliest recollections, as he dictated it in the short autobiographical sketch of 1847, associates his mother and religious observance:

I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast when I was going to say the catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. I remember also telling her on one week-day that I had been at church, for our school stood in a churchyard, and we had frequent opportunities of seeing what was going on there. The occasion was, a woman doing penance in the church in a white sheet. My mother commended my having been present, expressing a hope that I should remember the circumstance for the rest of my life. "But," said I, "Mama, they did not give me a penny, as I had been told they would." "Oh," said she, recanting her praises, "if that was your motive, you were very properly disappointed."⁵

It must be kept in mind, of course, that this recollection comes in Wordsworth's old age and after he had become more interested in the established church. It may be dubious as evidence of what had taken place approximately seventy years earlier. Here again, however, it seems to me that the important point is what Wordsworth regarded as being "true." Apparently, the freedom which he recollects his mother gave him included religious tolerance without any annoying parental meddlesomeness.

This sort of freedom led Wordsworth to emphasize, especially in the early years, not formalized religion, but a close and devout communion with "nature" in all her aspects—an emphasis that was something like reverence and worship as of a deity. In this manner, during the first period—residence at home—there was

instilled in him a freedom of activity paralleled by a freedom of inquiry which, while not leading to disbelief religiously, nevertheless led to conventional acceptance amounting to little more than indifference. Gradually, he substituted nature worship for formal worship in the church.

Both the freedom from conventional religious restraints and the emphasis on a love of nature continued while he was at Hawkshead. Perhaps most significant in these formative years was the lack of any undue forcing into a religious mold; his was a healthy, happy, normal boyhood. For him the churchyard is in recollection a place of joy and gladness, even if it also contains a graveyard. He voices the wish that the church might long behold such a group of young people as he herded with:

A race of real children; not too wise,
Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds,
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon the earth.
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
May books and Nature be their early joy!
And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name—
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!⁶

The next step Wordsworth soon took when he became aware of nature as a moral agent, a sort of external conscience, yet living and "conscious" in her shaping influence. He came to regard nature as a monitor as well as a source of love; he felt himself pervaded by a power higher than himself. The pleasure in such moods as those that followed soon was transferred to the causative agent, and the joy in his heart produced a love for the source—which he saw as nature. In this manner, though we must remember that the verbal organization of his youthful experiences came much later, he apparently began to feel that the aspects of

earth spoke intelligibly to him since law and duty for man he saw as likewise law and duty for trees and stars.⁷

Whether such experiences should be labelled "mystical" or whether they were real or imaginary seems to me to be beside the point, even if there were any factual evidence at hand. The part they played in the psychology of Wordsworth is more important, and for this there is a factual record. In general, nature had the sort of moralizing force for him that religious precepts or conscience often has for others. A number of experiences he records suggest this conclusion; one of the most vivid is the boat-stealing episode: he relates how one summer evening he found a little boat in a cove and loosing the chain he pushed out on the water. "It was an act of stealth and troubled pleasure." As he rowed onward, he fixed his view on the top of the craggy ridge outlined against the sky. And as he looked, it seemed to him that the grim shape rose ever larger and larger, striding after him with "measured motion like a living thing."⁸ Trembling, he returned to the cove and left the boat; for many days thereafter his brain worked the incident into visions of huge and mighty forms that troubled his dreams. As with other instances, for example the bird-stealing record in Book I of *The Prelude*, the chief element here is the power of nature to affect him toward "good" through her use of terror images.

At the same time, however, there are in the schoolday poems, and continuing for several years thereafter, direct references to the acceptance of God in the orthodox Christian sense. From the "Lines," of 1785, we find such ideas as:

When pure Religion reared the peaceful breast
And lulled the warring passions into rest,
Science with joy saw Superstition fly
Before the lustre of Religion's eye.

Even as late as 1790 he wrote from the Alps this statement to his sister: "Among the more awful scenes of the Alps, I had not a thought of man, or a single created being; my whole soul was turned to him who produced the terrible majesty before me."⁹ Such passages may be partly explained by suggesting, as Legouis does,¹⁰ that everything in these early poems was shallow and artificial, the moral reflections trite, the expression of his own

feelings false, partly owing to his immaturity. In general this comment is also true of the very *style* of the early poems. The style is not free from hackneyed and fantastic phrases; the language is not only peculiar and strong, but *knotty* and *contorted*, as Coleridge pointed out long ago.¹¹ As Legouis suggests:

At twenty years of age, or thereabouts, Wordsworth wrote in a style which was perhaps more perverse and distorted than that of any other poet of his generation. With all his sincerity of imagination, and his desire to paint the nature which his ardent eyes have seen, he subjects both style and metre to the strongest torture in making them the vehicle of his actual sensations. And although these deformities may at times be set down to the awkwardness of a novice, they usually proceed from the ideal of poetic diction which young Wordsworth sets before him. Evidently it was not the most fantastic passages with which he was at first least satisfied.¹²

I should like to submit the possibility that these early poems, indeed the contorted style itself, are also partly owing to Wordsworth's own situation during these early years. Comparable to the style of his writing, he was himself misdirected, ill-defined as to his goal, vague as to his desires—a vagueness that was to continue for several years. Thus his writing was a poetic, stylized expression of his own growing liberalism and heresy as well as of his own confusion. That the style this took was one of grotesque adherence to prevailing forms is not surprising to anyone who has ever noticed the common psychological fact that the person most intoxicated is the most persistent in his denials that he is drunk; or the insane person, strictly regimenting himself formally, is the one who refuses to admit his insanity. To himself of course he is not drunk, or insane—and to himself Wordsworth's style in the early poems was not grotesque at the time, or he would not have published them that way. They are seen as contorted poems only from a later position and accordingly revised. The manner in which reactions to a situation are often opposite from what we would ordinarily expect is well illustrated in a study of Donne's poetry by Pierre Legouis. The free intellect of Donne, he shows, expresses itself not in free

forms, as we would expect, but in rigid stanza forms.¹³ In a similar manner, Wordsworth expresses his tendency toward unorthodoxy, confused as the tendency was, by resorting to grotesque conventionality in form and style. The verse form in most of his early poems, including *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, is the rimed couplet, either octasyllabic or heroic; the lines are predominantly end-stopped. And the diction is often formalized to the point of being grotesque and stereotyped.

At Cambridge, there was little chance of Wordsworth's returning in his actions to the orthodox religion of his family. The emphasis at the time he attended the University was upon training in Anglicanism: the school was a sort of nursery for the clergy. Theologians at Cambridge who taught and wrote during the latter part of the eighteenth century spent their time and efforts protecting the next generation of clergymen from what they considered dangerous influences. Freedom of thought throughout Europe might produce daring viewpoints harmful to the future clergy. So stereotyped a religion would be expected to exert little influence on the students; stagnation, self-interest, and self-perpetuation marked the religion of this period. Even the chief use of mathematics was to train for the priesthood men who could meet the enemies of the church by logical arguments. Functions like these were certainly not designed to imbue the "nature-religious" Wordsworth with a devout respect for orthodox Anglicanism.

Some courageous spirits were about now rebelling, however, against the static condition of theology at the University. Four outstanding examples suggest not only the rebellion, but also the reaction against the rebels by the authorities. There was the Reverend John Jebb, who attempted to reverse the rule which required students to subscribe to the "Thirty-nine Articles." He resigned his preferment and left Cambridge in 1776. Another was the Reverend Thomas Fyshe Palmer, who embraced the Unitarian doctrine. A convert of Dr. Priestley, he too left Cambridge and in 1783 went to a Unitarian Church in Scotland. Later still he was deported to Australia. A third was the famous William Frend, whose prosecution had such an effect upon Coleridge. Attempting to abolish subscription and becoming a Unitarian, he lost his position as tutor, was denied an appeal by the Bishop of

Ely, and left England. On his return, he renewed the struggle to regain his standing, but was banished from the University. Naturally, for they were young men, the undergraduates were sympathetic to his cause. A fourth was the Reverend Herbert Marsh, an associate of Frend. Refusing to testify against Frend, he left Cambridge for Leipzig because of the trouble caused by his attitude.¹⁴

While we have no record of Wordsworth's sentiments on these incidents, we may note that what sturdy independence of thought similar to his there was at the time was definitely not in line with the orthodox position. It may well have been that he was imbued with the radical religious opinions which it is usually supposed were the result of his sojourn in France. In support of this opinion is the evidence of Wordsworth's attitude toward compulsory chapel attendance. In his day, nonattendance was punished severely, and for that reason perhaps "there sprang up among the students a thoroughly irreligious spirit disguised under an outward show of piety."¹⁵ The practice seemed to Wordsworth, even long afterwards, to be especially unwise. "Was ever known," he asks, "the witless shepherd who persists to drive a flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked?" If one is forced to attend chapel against his will, "A weight must surely hang on days begun and ended with such mockery." Instead of compulsory attendance, at least until piety is taught at home, he would have the chapel bells quieted, "for 'tis a sound hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air." Within sight of such irreverence, even science suffers in losing her authority, since she too falls under suspicion through close association with religion. Wordsworth says he had looked for a somewhat more joyous and free religious observance at college—had expected the heron and the pelican, and found only butterflies and popinjays. To describe the situation he uses the words "trivial" and "gaudy."¹⁶

The overt actions of Wordsworth illustrating his position with regard to orthodox religion were mainly concerned with his preparation for a livelihood. His first intention just upon entering Cambridge seems to have been to select law, "if his health will permit."¹⁷ His difficulty seemed to be that he was troubled with "violent headaches and a pain in his side."¹⁸ Two years later the problem of a profession became more pressing as he neared the

end of college. Dorothy voiced her concern over William's difficulty:

My Brothers I hope are all well. I long to have an opportunity of introducing you to my dear Wm. I am very anxious about him just now, as he will shortly have to provide for himself: next year he takes his degree; when he will go into orders I do not know, nor how he will employ himself, he must, when he is three and twenty either go into orders or take pupils; he will be twenty in April.¹⁹

By September of 1790, William says that he had "given up all thought of a fellowship" before he started on the Swiss tour. The following June, however, a letter from Dorothy to Jane reports that William had just lost the certainty of a fellowship by not combating his inclinations—at least she writes as if the loss had just taken place. In September, 1791, William wrote to Mathews, reporting his departure from Wales on a summons from a Mr. Robinson, who wanted to talk with him respecting his going into orders and taking a curacy at Harwich. Apparently William was not too much impressed, for later in the same letter he referred to "vegetating on a paltry curacy," which is what the living at Harwich would have been. By October there is no mention of orders; instead, reports Dorothy, ". . . he is going, by the advice of my Uncle William, to study the Oriental languages." The fact that it was upon the advice of his uncle would seem to imply that William was none too enthusiastic. A letter to Mathews on November 23, 1791, just upon William's departure for France, would definitely indicate that he had chosen the study of language mainly from a sense of duty. As he said, it was merely to oblige his uncle that he agreed to study Oriental languages, and he himself had doubts as to his fitness to succeed in the field.

Had he decided to become a clergyman, his Uncle Cookson would undoubtedly have been of considerable assistance in helping him to obtain a church living. Part of Wordsworth's reason for rejecting this offer may have been natural inclination not to settle down as yet; part also may have been because of the dependence of the clergy upon the wealthy for patronage. This lat-

ter suggestion is certainly in keeping with the later record of Wordsworth's short stay in London early in 1791, where he observed the ostentation, the domineering attitudes, and the out-of-place harangues of the clergy:

There have I seen a comely bachelor,
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
And, in a tone elaborately low
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze
A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
From time to time, into an orifice
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
And only not invisible, again
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
The Death of Abel, Shakespeare, and the Bard
Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme
With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
And Ossian (doubt not—'tis the naked truth)
Summoned from streamy Morven—each and all
Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped
This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
To rule and guide his captivated flock.²⁰

If this is what being a curate meant, then it was not for this young satirist, Wordsworth. The religious conflict—between what he feels and what he thinks he should feel as the result of past training—is indicated in these lines. The same attitude is prevalent in his moralizing tone in the letter to Mathews of September, 1791, when he rejects the idea of a walking tour:

What then is to be done? Hope and industry are to be your watchwords and I warrant you their influence will secure the victory. . . . You know there are certain little courts in different parts of London, which are called bags. If you stumble into one of them, there is no ad-

vancing, if you wish to proceed on your walk, you must return the way you went in. These bags of Life are what every man of spirit dreads, and ought to dread. Be industrious, and you need never get your head into them, let hope be your walking staff, and your fortune is made.²¹

This in words; in action, in less than three months came the trip to France, where incidentally he was to run into just such a situation as he here metaphorically describes. His solution to the London "bags" situation—"you must return the way you went in"—suggests a similar solution to the difficulties of his French situation, as we shall see; that is, he found it necessary there, too, to retrace his steps, symbolically, through poetry. The conflict again between *ought* and *desire* is evidenced very clearly.

In other words, he hesitated to enter the clergy partly because of moral grounds. He felt that it might be impossible to attain intellectual liberty in that field. He could hardly have failed to observe that the established church was being seriously questioned by the most active minds both in England and on the continent; recent events in France made it difficult to accept any traditions placidly. The letters he wrote evidence his restive—and aroused—spirit, though from them we could hardly conclude that he either believed in Christianity or disbelieved.²² It seems quite certain, however, that he had come a long way toward religious scepticism if not toward atheism.

Such was his state of mind when he left for France in November, 1791. His growing enthusiasm for the political equality of the Revolution, as we saw in Chapter I, was also paralleled by his interest in religious reforms. The Constitutional Assembly had undertaken a reform of the ecclesiastical abuses, including the granting of freedom of worship to Jews and Protestants, admitting both groups also to civil office. It had also destroyed the right of the church to hold property, which nationalized the church's wealth; thus the clergy in France became public functionaries, and the charities of the church were maintained by the state. Moreover, the Catholic religion in France was henceforth to be independent of the Pope. Obviously, an Englishman who had radical ideas would welcome all such religious changes, es-

pecially if he were little more than lukewarm already toward the church. Consequently his stay in France tended to confirm Wordsworth's previous doubts concerning the truth or the value of his native religion.²³

We noted earlier that Wordsworth's sympathy politically was with the moderate, not the extremist, party. Here, too, with respect to religion, he never left completely the romance of his country's worship—Anglicanism. When, during his walks with Beaupuy beside the Loire, they came upon some convent in the meadow, dismantled as it was by the violence of the Revolution, in spite of his fervor for the movement he could not help bewailing the harsh wrong; he grieved for the lost matin-bell, for the haven of rest for the weary traveler—a haven now destroyed.²⁴ Such passages may also be compared with some lines in *Descriptive Sketches*, written during his residence in France. He mourns for example, the doom of Chartreuse: “. . . from Bruno's forest screams the frightened jay”; there are sighs from “the mystic streams of Life and Death”; and “Vallombre . . . deplores, forever broke, the sabbath of her bow'rs.”²⁵ Somehow, at the time, the revolutionaries seemed intruders. A comparison of this passage from *Descriptive Sketches* and the corresponding lines from *The Prelude* is of interest. The condemnation in the later poem is more outspoken although many of the same references are made. Bruno's pines wave in the later as in the earlier poem, and the streams of Life and Death are in both. Professor Havens concluded that it was the Revolution which made Wordsworth impervious, indifferent, and perhaps even hostile to such establishments as those described in this passage of *The Prelude* (VI, 418–488). This conclusion seems to me, however, to be somewhat altered by the parallel passage in *Descriptive Sketches*, which was written earlier and which also bemoans the destruction of the monastery. Probably, as I have suggested before, Wordsworth was at this time somewhat confused in his thinking: some lines refer to what he feels, while at the same time other lines refer to what he thinks he ought to feel. His sorrow is at a noble monument ruined, not for a form of worship discontinued. For example, in the 1793 version of *Descriptive Sketches*, in describing a pilgrimage to the shrine of Einsiedeln, he says he will watch the pilgrims make the sign of the cross on their brows,

Without one hope her written griefs to blot,
Save in the land where all things are forgot,
My heart, alive to transports long unknown,
Half wishes your delusions were it's [*sic*] own.²⁶

Harper believes that these lines contain "a distinct confession of religious unbelief."²⁷ Similar disbelief seems to be implied in Wordsworth's comment to Mathews already quoted in Chapter I, where we saw him writing his conviction that it would be "impossible to reinstate the clergy in their ancient guilty splendour."

The phrase "guilty splendour" as applied to the clergy of the eighteenth century may sound somewhat harsh, until we recall the function of such institutions as the Church of England at the time. It had largely become already the new medicine for poverty.²⁸ Pursuit of self-interest economically, a law of nature, increasingly came to be identified with the plan of providence, or the law of God. By this principle, the economic advancement of an individual was to be considered to the advantage of the nation; on the other hand, the poor were considered distressed because of their own improvidence and vice, and hence were not to be "pampered." Perhaps it is only natural that a society which considers the accumulation of wealth an all-important goal must regard the poor as damned in the next world, thus justifying the practice of making their life a hell in this world. Men of religion advanced the doctrine that it is dangerous to pamper the poor as a tonic for the soul; the doctrine was eagerly accepted by the rich and the political economists who were their apologists.

Changes up to the time of the French Revolution had meant increasingly the identification of the Church of England and the ruling aristocracy. In France, the lower clergy generally sided with the third estate; in England it was rare for an officer of the church not to echo the views of society accepted by the rulers of the state. From bitter experience Wordsworth knew that poverty is sometimes the direct result of ruthlessness from the aristocracy. He could hardly be expected, then, to welcome with open arms the philosophy of the church in direct contradiction to his personal experience. Until the debt of Lord Lonsdale was paid, Wordsworth would be unable to make the necessary step in the direction of acceptance of religious belief.

Two illustrations of the orthodox position of the church in the early 1790's may be cited. In his famous sermon, which Wordsworth took the trouble to write a reply to, Bishop Watson used as his title, "The Wisdom and Goodness of God in Having Made both Rich and Poor"; as his text he chose, "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is Maker of them all." Edmund Burke, also, in his famous treatise on the French Revolution elaborated this view into its economic implications. The poor must respect property, he says, even though they may not partake of it; they must labor when they can find labor, and when they cannot find it, "they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice."

In aligning himself with sympathizers of the French Revolution, Wordsworth alienated himself not only from his uncle, Canon Cookson, but also from the religion of his own boyhood. The quarrel with aristocracy, via Lord Lonsdale, is thus connected with the religious situation: by identifying himself with the anti-aristocracy group, he denied the orthodox clergy who served as the handmaiden of wealth. Apparently, however, he was never entirely cut off from the religion of the Anglican Church even during his stay in France. Dorothy reported to Richard in the spring of 1792 that William had been offered a curacy by their uncle and that William agreed to accept the offer.²⁹ Both the offer and its acceptance were confirmed in William's letter to Mathews for May 17, 1792, when he said, "It is at present my intention to take orders, in the approaching winter or spring. My uncle the clergyman will furnish me with a title." Though the acceptance was somewhat reluctant—he adds that he wished he could defer the moment—it is important to note that he at least agreed tentatively to the idea. Again the following February Dorothy wrote to Jane Pollard that she was looking forward to seeing her friend in "my little parsonage"; she speaks of it as though it were rather definite and goes on to draw a picture of her own and William's felicity.³⁰

In her letter of June 16, 1793, however, all such dreams have vanished: "I cannot foresee the day of my felicity, the day in which I am once more to find a home under the same roof with my Brother; all is obscure and dark, and there is much ground to fear that my scheme may prove a shadow, a mere vision of

happiness."³¹ Although the vision of her happiness seemed to return to probable reality by her next letter to Jane on July 10, there is no mention of a parsonage. Apparently William had in the meantime either definitely made up his mind not to accept the curacy, or more probably had felt it necessary to acquaint his uncle with the French affair and had found the clergyman not receptive. The evidence for this is contained in an additional remark Dorothy made in this same letter :

I have no time nor room to explain to you the foundation of the prejudices of my two uncles against my dear William ; the subject is an unpleasant one for a letter, it will employ us more agreeably in conversation, then though I must confess that he has been somewhat to blame, yet I think I shall prove to you that the excuse might have been found in his natural disposition.

The breach between Wordsworth and his uncle at this time indicates the extent of William's unorthodox beliefs and actions. His Uncle Cookson apparently even refused to let William visit Dorothy ; at least she reported that "My Uncle has not invited Wm to Forncett, but he is no favorite with him alas ! alas !" This event would only serve to make more bitter their cry against the plight of orphans. It was now obviously impossible to effect a reconciliation by William's entering the ministry : indeed, it was almost too severe a rupture for the suggestion even to be made again.

Unorthodox too was William's inability upon his return to England to join with the church congregation in their prayers for English victories ; it was perhaps because of "a conflict of sensations" that

When, in the congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
Or praises for our country's victories ;
And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owned, sate silent.³²

It is noteworthy that he is among the congregation at all ; but the choice of *their* before *Father* would seem to indicate that Words-

worth intentionally avoids *our*, and he clearly sets himself apart from the rest in "perchance I only . . . sate silent." This period, he adds, was a "time in which apostasy from ancient faith seemed but conversion to a higher creed." A clearer admission of his religious heresy could hardly be made. At the same time he also regarded this period as one in which were evidenced in himself two natures, joy and melancholy. He was happy to look upon things painful, but was also slow and somewhat stern in temperament.³³ Considering the disappointments and conflicts he faced, it would be amazing if his outlook on life at this point were sane and wholesome: he was discouraged about public affairs, he had lost much of his faith in God—and man, he was uncertain about his future occupation, he was considered a failure by his hostile family, and he was much concerned about Annette.³⁴ The melancholy and confusion were the normal result of his situation.

Perhaps the most outspoken record of Wordsworth's anti-orthodox position respecting religion is his *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. In it he proves himself in full sympathy with the revolutionary attitude toward a corrupt church and a corrupt clergy. At the beginning of the essay, Wordsworth refers to the famous allegory of Addison, comparing life's journey to the crossing of a bridge. The Bishop, Wordsworth points out, had seemed to be "unseduced and undismayed"; but now "you have at last fallen, through one of the numerous trap-doors, into the tide of contempt, to be swept down to the ocean of oblivion."³⁵ It is interesting to note the image Wordsworth here employs to condemn the Bishop's action: being swept into the ocean, which is equated with oblivion. Later, as I shall suggest in Chapter VI, the same image is used by Wordsworth to apply to himself, not in condemnation, but in solving the problem of mutability; the ocean then becomes equated with eternity—which may perhaps be to him the same as oblivion. But with regard to his attitude toward the Bishop, we should remember that Watson, and not Wordsworth, represented the orthodox position. He goes on to point out that the Bishop had stood almost alone as the defender of truth when "with a servility which has prejudiced many people against religion itself, the ministers of the Church of England have appeared as writers upon public measures only to be the

advocates of slavery, civil and religious." Wordsworth believes that by calling Watson "levelling prelate" and "Bishop of the Dissenters" the orthodox had intended a dishonor which was looked upon by his friends as an acknowledgment of his enlarged mind. Quite obviously, in thus praising the unorthodox utterances of the Bishop, Wordsworth includes himself in the group of "levelers" and "dissenters." Later, referring to the Bishop's pity and sorrow over the death of the King of France, Wordsworth comments: "The passion of pity is one of which above all others, a Christian teacher should be cautious of cherishing the abuse when, under the influence of reason, it is regulated by the disproportion of the pain suffered to the guilt incurred."

He comes to the heart of his heretical opinions in the discussions of the fate of the French priesthood:

The measure by which that body was immediately stripped of part of its possessions, and a more equal distribution enjoined of the rest, does not meet with your Lordship's approbation. You do not question the right of the nation over ecclesiastical wealth; you have voluntarily abandoned a ground which you were conscious was altogether untenable. Having allowed this right, can you question the propriety of exerting it at that particular period? The urgencies of the State were such as required the immediate application of a remedy. Even the clergy were conscious of such necessity; and aware, from the immunities they had long enjoyed, that the people would insist upon their bearing some share of the burden, offered themselves a considerable portion of their superfluities. The Assembly was true to justice, and refused to compromise the interests of the Nation by accepting as a satisfaction the insidious offerings of compulsive charity. They enforced their right. They took from the clergy a large share of their wealth, and applied it to the alleviation of the national misery. Experience shows daily the wise employment of the ample provision which yet remains to them. While you reflect on the vast distinction which some men's fortunes must have undergone, your sorrow for these individuals will

be diminished by recollecting the unworthy motives which induced the bulk of them to undertake the offices, and the scandalous arts which enabled so many to attain the rank and enormous wealth which it has seemed necessary to annex to the charge of a Christian pastor. You will rather look upon it as a signal act of justice that they should thus unexpectedly be stripped of their vices and their crimes.

A concluding sentence in this paragraph suggests that if Wordsworth has sympathy for any of the clergy it is for the overworked, underpaid, and neglected curés—a sympathy we might expect if we recall his sentiments about vegetating on a paltry curacy:

If you should lament the sad reverse by which the hero of the necklace [Prince de Rohan] has been divested of about 1,300,000 livres of annual revenue, you may find some consolation that a part of this prodigious mass of riches is gone to preserve from famine some thousands of curés, who were pining in villages unobserved by Courts.

Speaking of the use of titles, such as "Most Noble," "Most High," "Most Eminent," and so on, Wordsworth asks what service a man can render to society worthy of compensating for the "outrage done to the dignity of our nature" by the use of such terms. This remark is unconsciously, perhaps, pointed up by Wordsworth's practice throughout the letter of addressing the Bishop as "Your Lordship," or "My Lord." The next sentence gains in emphasis in the light of this fact: "It is more than probable that such unnatural flattery will but generate vices which ought to . . . make him the perpetual object of the finger of scorn." The conclusion of the letter returns to personal satiric remarks on the character of the Bishop. So carefully does Watson keep to his tortuous path, writes Wordsworth, that he is like a drunken man reeling towards home: he has business on both sides of the road. The liquor which the Bishop has drunk, he adds, may well have come from "Mr. Burke's intoxicating bowl."³⁶

Such statements as these definitely show Wordsworth in a position of rejection of orthodoxy. Moreover, as I suggested in Chapter I, they also had the effect of a cathartic religiously: in writing out the problem, he partially solved it, hence erasing the necessity for publication. When, consequently, Richard wrote that William must be cautious in expressing his opinions, especially since the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, Dorothy could truthfully reply: "I think I can answer for William's caution about expressing his political opinions. He is very cautious and seems well aware of the dangers of a contrary conduct."³⁷

In contrast to Wordsworth's opinions, we have those of a more orthodox position. An association for "Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers" suggested a connection between irreligion and the Whigs, and felt that the church was in danger. In other words, in this period in England of reaction against republican tendencies, "sympathy with France was considered to imply disloyalty, a levelling tendency, and infidelity to the Christian religion."³⁸ Wordsworth's attitude in the matter is expressed first in his letter of February 17, 1794, to Mathews: "All professions I think are attended with great inconveniences, but that of the priesthood with the most. . . . I cannot bow down my mind to take orders."³⁹ This opinion is echoed in his letter of June, 1794, also to Mathews, when in speaking of their proposed liberal magazine he points out that the clergy of England will certainly turn away from it. Religious condemnation is also implied in *Guilt and Sorrow*, when in the early version Wordsworth pictures the religious houses as offering no refuge or hope to the mendicants, who are friendless and forsaken. What aid the poor wayfarers do find comes not from the church but from the "lowly cot."⁴⁰

In such a manner, Wordsworth's conventional boyhood religion grew into a passionate love of "nature," until he considered natural objects and scenes as alive, majestic, deified. This was an easy stage towards neglect of formal religion for love and worship of nature, which made it all the easier to deny, or at least ignore, religious tenets during his period of the French Revolution. The function of this denial of religious orthodoxy was to reinforce his rejection of political and economic orthodoxy, considering the religion of his day as the "opiate of the masses," the handmaiden

of aristocratic wealth. Hence in his rebellion against economic, social, and political injustice because of the power of the wealthy upper class, he naturally came, as did many thinkers during the French Revolution, to reject the prop of aristocratic control: the Church of England. To those who accepted the orthodox modes of his day, he shared the views of traitors and infidels. Men whose opinions he reflected—Price, Priestley, Paine, and Godwin—were at this time “the bugbears of ‘well-disposed’ people, who then, as ever, made no mistake in associating orthodox standards of religion with safe and settled political principles.”⁴¹ Indeed, as I shall point out in later chapters, Wordsworth came to make the same association himself when his situation was somewhat altered.



Sexual Maladjustment

A discussion of Wordsworth's period of rejection—the modes he followed in denying the orthodox customs and beliefs of society—would be incomplete without an analysis of his sexual experiences in so far as we have records of them. Comments on this subject usually are limited to a discussion of the “influence” of the Annette episode upon Wordsworth's poetry: some critics admit no particular influence (as Batho, Sperry); others believe many of his poems are the result of his unhappy French attachment (Herford, Read); and a few try to keep a saner balance between these two views (Havens, De Selincourt). Since I am not interested here in “influences,” that problem need not concern us. Wordsworth's sexual life, however, is an important part of the total configuration, his early sexual maladjustment playing its role along with political unorthodoxy and religious heresy. It will perhaps be of assistance in understanding later events to present a summary of the data.

One of Wordsworth's earliest characteristics worthy of note by his family was the habit of reacting to situations “passionately”—in a heightened emotional manner. For example, he recalled years later in the autobiographical sketch of 1847 that he was the only one of the children about whom their mother was anxious—he would, she felt, be remarkable for good or else for evil. Her reason was that his temper was violent and moody. He also recalled in illustration of his temper the occasion when he struck his whip through a family picture. References in the early letters

lead us to the same conclusion. This trait of impetuous, passionate responses is an important one to remember in relation to later situations.

We should also, I think, include Wordsworth's early love poetry in this account. On returning to school in 1786, he wrote his first love poems, apparently to Mary Hutchinson—at least the name Mary is mentioned in them. One, called "Anacreon, an Imitation," is addressed to Mary, full of warm and tender love, though a rather conventional poem.¹ Another, "Beauty and Moonlight," is also addressed to Mary and contains pretty much the same emotions. One of the most interesting in the group is called merely "Ballad," which de Selincourt calls "a feeble ballad on a maid of Esthwaite deserted by her lover."² Mary, who is the fairest maid of Esthwaite, is loved by William, who deserts her and causes her death. He plucks a rose that grew in the garden and gives it to her. There are also associations of snow and December. Heaven warns her that he will be the cause of her death, and true to the prophecy she dies and is buried.³ The details of the poem are apparently intended to be symbolic, but it is suggestive that in this early poem Wordsworth connects love and tragic death. This poem is similar in many respects to the "Lucy" group and is the last of these early love poems. This "Ballad" is followed by "Dirge"; the bells call for a maid—his love is dead. Her grave will warn other maidens and perhaps some boy will start at the sight of her grave and fear will haunt him.⁴

Not too much significance should be placed on these early poems, since the young Wordsworth was rather easily stirred to such emotional utterances—for example as in the sonnet "On Seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep." Although in each of these poems the story is more suggested than elaborated, each one contains the same equation of love and tragedy. The guilt seems to be laid at the boy's feet. Whether or not any autobiographical significance is implied in these poems, they are interesting expressions of "clusters" commonly found in Wordsworth's poetry from this time on.

There was, as we have seen already, no rigid discipline in his native Westmoreland. At Cambridge there was still less, as loose morals prevailed. At the University, according to his own

report, he spent more time with the *bon vivants* than with the earnest students. The following lines say a good deal, especially "to those who have read to some extent the descriptions of college life in those days":⁵ "The weeks went roundly on, with invitations, suppers, wine and fruit . . . for my heart was social, and loved idleness and joy."⁶ An extended description to explain these lines follows:

Companionships,
 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.
 We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked
 Unprofitable talk at morning hours;
 Drifted about along the streets and walks,
 Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
 To gallop through the country in blind zeal
 Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
 Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
 Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.⁷

.
 In this mixed sort,
 The months passed on, remissly, not given up
 To wilful alienation from the right,
 Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
 And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
 Of a low pitch.⁸

Even clearer as a picture of these days is his summary in the eighth book of *The Prelude* of his change from the Lake region to the University:

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved,
 Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes
 Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
 Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
 Manners and characters discriminate,
 And little bustling passions that eclipse,
 As well they might, the impersonated thought,
 The idea, or abstraction of the kind.

An idler among academic bowers,
 Such was my new condition, as at large

Has been set forth; yet here the vulgar light
Of present, actual, superficial life,
Gleaming through colouring of other times,
Old usages and local privilege,
Was welcomed, softened, if not solemnized.
This notwithstanding, being brought more near
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
I trembled—thought, at times, of human life
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.⁹

The equation here expressed is not without later significance: he feels the same before guilt and vice as he does before storms and bad weather. Later, as I shall point out, many of his characters in poems like "Guilt and Sorrow," "The Female Vagrant," *The Borderers*, and so on, who are in a vice or guilt situation are thrown at the mercy of the elements, to the terror of storms. Thus the storm becomes symbolic in function as a representation of a vice situation: as vice is tempting and repulsive at the same time, so is the terror of storms fascinating and foreboding. In poetry, of course, storm and guilt are familiar eighteenth century associations. The important question, however, is why Wordsworth turned to this particular convention. The tie-up comes in his own expression which associates the two not only as conventional, but in his own personal situation: when he was brought near vice and guilt, he felt a terror comparable to that he had known from storms and angry elements.

At any rate, at Cambridge, as he himself puts it, he was "unchecked by innocence too delicate, And moral notions too intolerant, Sympathies too contracted."¹⁰ In keeping with this spirit of carefree joy and pleasure also was his summer vacation. Especially one occasion stands out in importance: he lingered with a throng of youths and maidens, dancing and shuffling up and down, with "slight shocks of love-liking interspersed, Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head, And tingled through the veins." The phrase "transient pleasure" as applied to these in-

cidents of love-shocks came only later. The earliest version was a bit more enthusiastic and less moralistic: they were pleasures "that mounted up like joy into the head."¹¹ Apparently the revelry was all night in duration, for he comments that the cock had crowed ere they retired. Naturally, in the light of these experiences, he bade fond farewell to the

Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
You and your not unwelcome days of mirth,
Relinquished, and your nights of revelry.

The second summer, he was back in the Lake region, this time with his sister and Mary Hutchinson, who became endeared to him and "shed a gladness o'er that season . . . By her exulting outside look of youth And Placid under-countenance, first endeared." Together they wandered over the paths and the field, through forests where "were scattered love, The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam."¹² It appears unlikely, however, that this interest in Mary ripened immediately into love. He was intense and impetuous enough at the time, so that had he really loved her, he would have likely expressed his feelings. Moreover, in such an event, there would surely appear more mention of Mary in Dorothy's letters to Jane Pollard.¹³ Wordsworth's phrase "first endeared" is confusing, since it refers to 1789, while we have already seen the schoolboy verses of love to Mary, written in 1786. It may be that the record of *The Prelude* is here inaccurate, or it may be that the earlier verses were not to Mary Hutchinson. In any event, we may note the fact of his turning here to Mary (again, or for the first time), as he was to do later in a period of misdirection and remorse over sexual difficulties.

Two other events seem significant. One is concerned with the tour of France and Switzerland during the summer of 1790. In a letter to Dorothy on September 6 of that year he wrote: "At the lake of Como, my mind ran through a thousand dreams of happiness, which might be enjoyed upon its banks, if heightened by conversation and the exercise of the social affections."¹⁴ The meaning of this sentence becomes clearer when we refer to the first version of *Descriptive Sketches*; it was at Lake Como that he observed the

. . . fair darkey'd maids
Tend the small harvest of their garden glades,
Or, led by distant warbling notes, surveys,
With hollow ringing ears and darkening gaze,
Binding the charmed soul in powerless trance,
Lip-dewing song and ringlet-tossing Dance,
Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illumine
The bosom'd cabin's lyre-enliven'd gloom.¹⁵

It is interesting to note this early expression of "distant warbling notes" which was to reappear in the much more famous lines of "The Solitary Reaper." It was here, too, that "Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs, And amorous music on the water dies." And in bidding adieu to Lake Como, he includes a farewell to these maidens who stirred amorous passions:

Farewell! those forms that, in thy noon-tide shade,
Rest, near their little plots of wheaten glade;
Those steadfast eyes, that beating breasts inspire
To throw the "sultry ray" of young Desire;
Those lips, whose tides of fragrance come, and go,
Accordant to the cheek's unquiet glow;
Those shadowy breasts in love's soft light array'd,
And rising, by the moon of passion sway'd.
Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams,
Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams.¹⁶

Legouis comments on the "voluptuous desires" stirred in Wordsworth by the Italian maidens. We may also note that though the experience came in 1790 the writing out of these lines came in 1792, a period which Legouis says was full of sensuous exaltation.¹⁷ In the later version of the poem, these lines were considerably altered—softened—with many of the voluptuous thoughts stirred in him by the Italian maids now omitted. Nevertheless, the experience was vivid enough to him to be recalled in *The Prelude*, though again in even less detailed language, with nearly all the allusions to love and sex themes ignored.¹⁸

The other event concerns his brief residence in London after leaving Cambridge early in 1791, a youth "from dangerous passions free." Of course, considering the evidence we have already

seen concerning Wordsworth at this time, his phrase here quoted from *The Prelude*, VII, 169, seems to be a negation. At any rate his family felt he had many "dangerous passions" at this time and thereafter for several years. His time was spent, he tells us, in general idleness, "where pleasure whirls about incessantly . . . living cheerfully abroad with unchecked fancy ever on the stir, And all my young affections out of doors." It was in London, he goes on to say, that he heard for the first time

The voice of woman utter blasphemy—
Saw woman as she is, to open shame
Abandoned, and the pride of public vice;
I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once
Thrown in that from humanity divorced
Humanity, splitting the race of man
In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.
Distress of mind ensued upon the sight,
And ardent meditation.¹⁹

It is also in the seventh book of *The Prelude* that he relates the story of the Maid of Buttermere, suggested to him when he recalls the dramas of living men he observed in London. The associations in this passage are extremely suggestive. The image of "some domestic incident Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame" brings up the recent (at the time of writing the passage in question) story of the Maid of Buttermere, who was deserted by her despoiler. Both the Maid and her child, however, are happy, living in peace at "the spot where she was born and reared," happy because of nature's kind influence. Then in the poem comes the contrast of the "ruined city woman," who stood beside her six-months-old boy, "upon her cheeks diffused, False tints too well accorded with the glare, From playhouse lusters thrown without reserve, On every object near." Finally, this child is compared with the Maid of Buttermere's child asleep beside the mountain chapel undisturbed. Whether the inclusion of the Maid's story (her name is Mary) with its associations is to be compared, in function, with the insertion of the story of Vaudracour and Julia later, I do not know. The clusters have definite points of comparison with later ones—"the curious props By

which the world of memory and thought Exists and is sustained."²⁰

The French Revolution was outspoken at this time in its attack upon the institution of marriage, and of course war years are notoriously immoral. The ideas concerning marriage that were to be formulated in Godwin's book were already observable in many other quarters. While there are no comparable statistics to indicate the actual degree of prostitution or illegitimacy, the period of the French Revolution was hardly one of refinement in sexual relations. With this in mind, and having traced Wordsworth's experiences up to the beginning of his stay in France, we should not be surprised that once there he "coasted round the line of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop." Neither is it unusual that he found at first less enthusiasm for the Bastille than for the "painted Magdalene of Le Brun, A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek Pale and bedropped with overflowing tears."²¹ In the light of all this, the affair with Annette Vallon should not come as a shock. In France he was obviously distracted by the conflict of his emotions, a stranger and perhaps lonely, given already to melancholy, and certainly full of idealistic generalities. Part of the reason for the affair may have also come from his ardent love of the Revolution—sympathy for humanity and passionate love for an individual woman thus becoming expressions of the same general pattern. It has long been assumed that Annette was an ardent Royalist at this time. As Legouis pointed out many years ago, however, there is no evidence that the Vallon family were all hostile to the Revolution. Some members of the family swore allegiance to its ideals, and Annette's eldest brother was named Jean Jacques. True enough, Annette later worked tirelessly for the Anti-Revolutionists, but there is no evidence concerning the exact time her attitude took form. Indeed, it is just possible that her actions against the Revolutionists were a symbolic rejection of William and what he represented.

At any rate, the friendship led to more than mere acquaintance, and Annette without "the name of wife Carried about her for a secret grief The promise of a mother."²² With each succeeding week his position became more desperate. Before he could marry Annette and provide a home for her and their child,

he had to secure some sort of income. His possibilities here were limited: the Lonsdale affair was moving badly; his guardians were already unsympathetic toward their wayward nephew; the clergy seemed far from satisfactory. In September he wrote to his brother Richard for money—twenty pounds—saying he would “be in town during the course of the month of October. . . . You will send me the money immediately.” But apparently he couldn’t leave France before his child was born, though why he should have been in Paris instead of with Annette is not clear. Perhaps he was seeking employment in the Girondist Party, though if so the wish was in vain.²³

The financial problem seems to have been the chief obstacle to their marriage, provided, that is, they desired to marry. Other difficulties may have lain in the fact that Wordsworth was a Protestant (in background and name at least) and a Revolutionary, while Annette was a Roman Catholic and probably tending toward the Royalist cause. Whether the new law which placed marriage ceremonies under the jurisdiction of civil, not religious, authorities would have been an advantage or a disadvantage is a matter of viewpoint.²⁴ The next information we have is that the baby was born in December, willingly acknowledged by the father, according to the birth record: “On the fifteenth of December, of the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two, the first of the Republic, by me the undersigned, was baptized a girl, born the same day in this parish to William Wordwodsth [*sic*], an Englishman, and Marie-Anne Vallon, her father and mother.” The document goes on to say that the baby was named Anne-Caroline by her Uncle Paul. William was absent but was represented as the father by a M. Dufour, recorder of Orleans.

Wordsworth has received considerable praise from some critics for his voluntary acknowledgment of his child. A resumé of the facts concerning the regard in which illegitimate children were held during the course of the Revolution might be instructive. Before 1789, bastards had the right to demand sustenance until their majority from either or both parents. There was, however, no claim of inheritance from either parent. To be sure, in practice it was usually milder; often bastards had a share in the mother’s estate, and in some regions bastards born *ex soluto et soluta* inherited one-sixth of the father’s estate if he had no

legitimate children. Filiation claims could be filed by either mother or father; if paternity was proved, the man was held responsible only for the sustenance of the child to majority, including the teaching of a trade and damages to the mother. The child had no rights to the father's name in most parts of France. Legitimation was possible through an edict of the king, though in practice this was usually limited to nobility and to cases where marriage was not possible, or through later marriage of parents who had been free to marry at the time of the conception of the child.²⁵

Hostility toward illegitimate children, or at least toward making them legitimate, was strong in the eighteenth century. There was, however, less hostility among aristocratic classes than among middle classes; and in the French Revolution the former were overthrown by the latter, who possessed a feeling of the sanctity of the home and the necessity for keeping a sharp line between legitimacy and illegitimacy. Acting against this tendency, on the other hand, was the romance clinging to bastardy, partly perhaps from the love of outlawry. This fact served at times to soften the harshness against the illegitimate child. Growth of humanitarianism also helped as did an increased interest in the ideal that all men are equal naturally—for this concept included bastards: nature knows no illegitimacy. Thus there were projects in 1791 to lessen the distinctions between legitimacy and illegitimacy. Again in 1793 further attempts were made, and in November of that year a law was passed: bastards were to have the rights of inheritance in estates since Bastille Day, July 14, 1789, with their rights being the same as those of other children, with the permission to prove fatherhood if there was any basis. Children born of parents engaged elsewhere were to receive only one-third of the portion as compared to legitimate children. The law was vague, however, with respect to the rights before the code should be finished. Almost at the same time as the "Law of November," legislators were also trying to protect the sanctity of the home; by legal tricks much of the former law was revoked and fought over. An article allowing the mother to name the father and insert his name on the birth certificate was defeated in the years 1801 and 1802.

The Napoleonic Code forbade equal rights, as well as "*la*

recherche de la paternité." The Code granted certain concessions, provided the children had become legally recognized, though even then they could receive only one-third as much as legitimate children. Actually, bastards were worse off than under the old regime: the unmarried mother would now have no claim against the father. Gains were made, however, when the father voluntarily gave paternity. Interestingly enough, the arguments against equality for illegitimates in 1797 and 1798 were about the same as those for equality in 1793, and indeed even were used by some of the same men! Thus, now, instead of being "love children," bastards became the "sad fruits of a moment of weakness," or "fruits of crime and debauchery." The Law of November was referred to as destructive of the marriage institution, which must be preserved by all means. To sum up, then: the law in 1789 distinguished between legitimacy and illegitimacy. A theory current in 1789 said they were the same in the eyes of nature and should be the same in the eyes of the law. After the Revolution, the law was altered to match the theory. In a year or two the law became so violated that the new code was harsher than the law in 1789. Perhaps the practical significance of all this was slight: a father who was willing to acknowledge the child was also usually willing to provide for it. It is important to note, however, that Wordsworth's position with reference to the Revolution, if consistent, would also have to include liberal treatments of bastard children, since in 1792 the tendency was toward erasing the differences between legitimacy and illegitimacy. Oddly enough, at the same time, the illegitimate child of Wordsworth symbolically allied him with the aristocratic class he was ostensibly fighting at this time. "Honor" was of greater force among the aristocracy than among the middle classes; and being "honor-bound" to take care of his daughter, he was accepting the code of the higher classes.

For Annette and Wordsworth, this was a time of "Domestic severings, female fortitude at dearest separation, patriot love And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope."²⁶ Coupled in his mind with his relationship to Annette was the horror of the Revolution—especially the September massacre, and he later described how he "conjured up From tragic fictions or true history, Remembrances

and dim admonishments." The trance he describes ended with a voice that cried, "Sleep no more," and in vain did "comments of a calmer mind" promise "soft peace and sweet forgetfulness." Small wonder that he remembered the day he left the Loire, a beautiful day given to "soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed."²⁷ These lines are more significant when we recall that this longing look is not only on the Loire, but on Annette and their child-to-be as well. He was, perhaps, not to see Annette for ten years, though he did not know that at this time; it was also for him the farewell to youth and carefree days of joy and pleasure.²⁸

There are a few critics who at this point have tried to make out a case for the ideal Wordsworth held by most of the later nineteenth century. One, for example, remarks that "Wordsworth did not desert Annette Vallon: he did not marry her, but that is a very different thing. It may even be doubted whether the first step of withdrawal was on his side." There is, the critic goes on to say, no assurance that Annette was anxious to marry him. Even had she so desired she might not have been able to in 1792, and later she had other interests such as the Royalist cause and the education of Caroline. "Of course she wrote in the early days, asking Wordsworth to return and marry her: it was the proper thing to say."²⁹ There is, however, no evidence in the character of Annette or in Wordsworth's relations to her for this assumption. The letter we possess from Annette to him and to his sister, while not "literary," nevertheless may be called simple and direct. There would be small purpose in writing as she does, pleading for William to come back and marry her—but only if he will undergo no risk because of the war—such pleas could have had small reason if Annette was being merely conventional. What little we know of her actions subsequent to 1792 indicates that she solved her many difficulties in a manner acceptable to herself and to her society. In 1816, for example, a petition was made to the king on her behalf. All signers give evidence for her courage, bravery, and staunchness; they also attest to the sacrifices of all sorts which she had made in the king's cause. She sheltered emigrants, soldiers, the persecuted, etc. Incidentally, we note that the friends whose names appear on the petition are all

aristocratic.³⁰ Dorothy too seems to have held her in high regard, and mere convention would hardly have been cause for the continued relations between William, Dorothy, and Annette.

It has generally been the custom in tracing the events of this momentous year to seek evidence of what happened by turning to *Vaudracour and Julia*. Legouis, for example, believes there is obviously a connection between the two situations. The only question he sees is where to draw the line between reality and fiction.³¹ The two statements Wordsworth himself made about the source of this poem are contradictory and confusing. According to the statement in *The Prelude*, he heard the story from Beaupuy. Later, in the Fenwick note, ignoring what he had earlier written but had not yet published, he remarked that the story was narrated to him by a French woman who was an eye and ear witness to all that had happened. Obviously, such an omniscient person could hardly have existed to *see all* that had happened. As Harper sees it:

Wordsworth's unhappy experiences in France . . . left a deep scar on his heart and a source of misery in his life. It was of himself and Annette, I believe, that he was thinking, and to some extent, though with many alterations of fact, it was their own story he was telling, when he wrote "Vaudracour and Julia." From a sort of conscientiousness which it is easy to understand, he inserted into "The Prelude" a passage on the same subject. He no doubt felt an uneasy desire both to confess his own fault and to record the extenuating circumstances.³²

As we now know, *Vaudracour and Julia* was originally a part of *The Prelude*, a fact which even more unmistakably joins the two poems. Certainly there is no evidence that the affair sapped Wordsworth's poetic vitality or corroded his thought. For one thing, the effect of the affair is difficult to evaluate here because of our lack of knowledge concerning many phases of the situation—though this is partly owing to the desire on the part of the Wordsworth family to suppress much that deals with the subject. We should not forget the matter-of-fact element in Wordsworth, nor should we ignore the possibility that this was not his first sexual experience. Beyond this, unanswerable questions make it

unwise to conjecture too far. He must have felt disquiet and remorse; that he inserted the story at just this point in the original version of *The Prelude* indicates that he felt he should make some allusion to Annette. Because the story was later omitted, we cannot believe in the autobiographical poem that "the discipline and consummation of a Poet's mind, In everything that stood most prominent, Have faithfully been pictured."³³ Havens goes so far as to admit that "There can be no question that the intimacy with Annette influenced his development more profoundly than did many of the episodes narrated in *The Prelude*." He goes on to say that Wordsworth wrote practically no love poetry anyway, even about Mary.³⁴ Of course, the influence is not to be limited to poems directly on love; we are here interested in seeing how the total situation was worked out through poetry. Because there is little love poetry written directly to Annette does not mean that Wordsworth's poetry does not represent a working out of the problem which the Annette situation is partly responsible for.

Havens continues:

The more one studies the inserted tale of "Vaudracour and Julia" the more amazingly inept and inexplicable it becomes. Presumably Wordsworth chose it because the first part was close to his own love affair while the latter part and the character of the hero were so clearly not autobiographical that the parallel would not be too obvious. Yet therein lay the cause of his failure, for most of the incidents and the personality of the hero lay outside of his experience and of his imaginative comprehension.

The story is quite involved, containing also much sentimentality, morality, prejudice, and many attacks on class privileges. The character of the hero is "impulsive, passionate, and stubborn in the first part of the story, meek and colorless in the remainder—he seems consistent only in his weakness and general futility."³⁵ At the same time, from Havens' description of Vaudracour, we might see considerable application to Wordsworth himself. One may well doubt that the personality of the hero lay entirely outside Wordsworth's experience: certainly he believed himself indolent

as well as impulsive, weak as well as passionate. He was also for some time yet to appear quite futile in solving his difficulties.

It seems to me, however, that the comments quoted above, as well as other similar ones, evidence the error of what we might call "transvaluation"—that is, they begin with the position of trying to find in *Vaudracour and Julia* evidences of what happened in the affair of Wordsworth and Annette. Actually, the starting point *in fact* was just the opposite. The poem came as a result of the experience and is therefore Wordsworth's working out of the problem situation that arose after those events. From this point of view it is erroneous to cite *Vaudracour and Julia* as parallel or not parallel to Wordsworth's own case. Placed in conjunction with other poems, *Vaudracour and Julia* becomes a functional poem for its author, not a record of facts, as he himself was later to acknowledge subconsciously in the Fenwick note: "The following tale was written as an Episode, in a work from which its length may perhaps exclude it. The facts are true; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed." To be sure, no facts needed to be invented: the story was not written to relate facts of an experience, but to solve the problem created by the author's own experience. The manner of this problem solution will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

After his return to England, Wordsworth was homeless, poor, perhaps lonely, and surely disturbed not only by the course of the Revolution but by thoughts of Annette and his child as well.³⁶ In January, 1793, he was working on *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, which were published early in February with high hopes of fame and profit—hopes doomed to disappointment. The outbreak of war between England and France meant that he was cut off from Annette; and at the same time it also meant less chance of his finding lucrative employment.³⁷ Meanwhile, he wrote the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, with some revealing remarks concerning situations like that between himself and Annette. The difficulty of marriage among the poor which he comments upon likely reflects his own position:

Your Lordship tells us that the science of civil government has received all the perfection of which it is capable. For my part, I am more enthusiastic. The sorrow I feel

from the contemplation of this melancholy picture is not unconsolated by a comfortable hope that the class of wretches called mendicants will not much longer shock the feelings of humanity; that the miseries entailed upon the marriage of those who are not rich will no longer tempt the bulk of mankind to fly to that promiscuous intercourse to which they are impelled by the instincts of nature, and the dreadful satisfaction of escaping the prospect of infants, sad fruit of such intercourse, whom they are unable to support. If these flattering prospects be ever realized, it must be owing to some wise and salutary regulations counteracting that inequality among mankind which proceeds from the present *fixed* disproportion of their possessions.³⁸

In this passage, then, sexual immorality and illegitimacy are seen as the result of the economic system, just as Wordsworth might blame his situation directly upon Lord Lonsdale: with the payment of the debt, Wordsworth could solve both his economic and his sexual problems. So sure is he that conditions of this sort are the result of inequalities that he would be willing to see the abolition of the Monarchy in England to improve morality:

Reflecting on the corruption of the public manners, does your Lordship shudder at the prostitution which miserably deluges our streets? You may find the cause in our aristocratical prejudices. . . . [I] am so strongly impressed with the baleful influence of aristocracy and nobility upon human happiness and virtue, that if, as I am persuaded, monarchy cannot exist without such supporters, I think that reason sufficient for the preference I have given to the Republican system.³⁹

To publish these remarks, however, would mean complete isolation from all those who could help him. Though he disliked taking orders, he apparently could find no alternative. At the same time, we conjecture that he could not accept his uncle's offer of a curacy until he revealed his French attachment. It appears that he related the story to Dorothy, hoping she might plead his cause better than he himself could—probably some time late

in February. At any rate, her letter to Jane Pollard, dated February 16, 1793, would seem to indicate that Dorothy was then ignorant of his trouble. It must have been soon after this letter that William unburdened his heart. Without doubt, the story must have distressed her. Though there had been other sorrows and disappointments, this story would strike the deepest part of her nature. Though she was completely loyal to him in the situation, she could hardly have thought lightly of his offense. To be sure, illegitimacy was frequently referred to at the time—more so perhaps than fifty years later. Dorothy was no prude, but neither was she a cynic: one could hardly expect such irregularity in one's own family. She shouldered as much of the burden as she could. Realizing the misery of Annette, Dorothy wrote her letters of affection and sympathy. She even assured this strange French woman a welcome whenever William should be able to provide a home for all of them. Annette's replies seem to indicate her awareness of Dorothy's difficult position and also of her affection.

It was, however, much harder to make peace for William with Uncle Cookson. William had always been difficult in the eyes of his family—a headstrong and obstinate boy, an idle and extravagant college youth. He had refused to write a funeral ode for the master of his college; instead of working on his final examinations he had gone to Europe on a walking tour. He had thrown away a scholarship merely because he was too lazy to study. Instead of applying himself to the Oriental languages, he had gone off to France, imbibed doctrines dangerously subversive to society and religion. Now came the culmination in this French affair, at just the time when the French were least regarded by orthodox Englishmen. Apparently Cookson refused to help with the curacy and declined to see William. Dorothy had failed in her mission, and with failure came the heavy strain of disagreement with her uncle, as well as dislike of being dependent upon his charity. And now there was no sign of a home for herself and William—and Annette.⁴⁰ Her misery and disappointment, reflective of the position of her brother, came to the surface in a letter to Jane, dated June 13, 1793: she can no longer see the day when she will have a home with William; her schemes seem to be compounded of nothing but vain wishes. She is, moreover,

much concerned about her brother, unsettled as he is, with the additional burden of a child and its mother to support. To her, however, he remains, in spite of all this, the dearest of brothers, the most affectionate and considerate person she knows.⁴¹

Her misery continued its expression in another letter to Jane, dated July 10, though her sadness is somewhat compensated for by her idyllic dreams of a possible home with William after all, and by her defense of his character. The letters of this time show not only much of Dorothy's opinion of William, but probably his opinion of himself:

In the first place you must be with him more than once before he will be perfectly easy in conversation; in the second place his person is not in his favour, at least I should think not; but I soon ceased to discover this, nay I almost thought that the opinion which I first formed was erroneous. He is, however, certainly rather plain than otherwise, has an extremely thoughtful countenance, but when he speaks it is often lighted up with a smile which *I* think very pleasing.

She goes on to tell of their planned meeting soon at Halifax, with a hint of the dislike her uncles hold of William, and a quoted description of him: "In truth he was a strange and wayward wight fond of each gentle,' etc., etc., That verse of Beattie's *Minstrel* always reminds me of him, and indeed the whole character of Edwin resembles much what William was when I first knew him—after my leaving Halifax." The love and tenderness with which William now turned to his sister may be explained in part as a natural desire, a compensation for his recent misery in France. This would also explain the warmth of his letters to her, which she quotes from to Jane:

"How my dearest friend [writes Wordsworth] could you dare apologize for writing me a second letter particularly when its object was to inform me of an addition to your happenings? How much do I wish that each emotion of pleasure and pain that visits your heart should excite a similar pleasure or pain within me, by that sympathy which will almost identify us when we have

stolen to our little cottage! I am determined to see you as soon as ever I have entered into an engagement: immediately I will write to my Uncle, and tell him that I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas! my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire, yet there are moments worth ages. . . . Oh, my dear, dear sister, with what transport shall I again meet you, with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight. I assure you so eager is my desire to see you that all obstacles vanish. I see you in a moment running or rather flying to my arms."⁴²

In his expression of a desire to see her again, coupled with his comment on the shortness of happiness, surely also is reflected a desire for Annette as well as worry over her situation and his own inability to do much about it all.

A good deal of his time he now spent under intense and protracted suffering; his day-thoughts were as melancholy as his night-images were miserable. Dreams of terror came, so vivid that he could recall them in detail as late as the writing of *The Prelude*:

The hour of sleep
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,
Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death;
And innocent victims sinking under fear,
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth
And levity in dungeons, where the dust
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
In long orations, which I strove to plead
Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
In the last place of refuge—my own soul.⁴³

All of these visions may be regarded as springing from his situation at the time, with respect especially to Annette and the course of the Revolution, which are represented in dreams of terror, guilt, and desertion. In the phrase "treacherous desertion," for instance, Read sees evidence definitely of remorse over Annette.⁴⁴

Partly, I think, to work off this remorse and terror, Wordsworth turned to the composition of *Guilt and Sorrow*. The immediate "inspiration" for the poem, he tells us in the Fenwick note, was his "rambles over many parts of Salisbury plain"—an experience which "left on my mind imaginative impressions the force of which I have felt to this day." The preface to the 1842 edition adds to our knowledge of his "mental" condition:

During the latter part of the summer of 1793, having passed a month in the Isle of Wight, in view of the fleet which was then preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war, I left the place with melancholy forebodings. The American war was still fresh in memory. The struggle which was beginning, and which many thought would be brought to a speedy close by the irresistible arms of Great Britain being added to those of the allies, I was assured in my own mind would be of long continuance, and productive of distress and misery beyond all possible calculation. This conviction was pressed upon me by having been a witness, during a long residence in France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country. After leaving the Isle of Wight, I spent two days in wandering on foot over Salisbury Plain, which, though cultivation was then widely spread through parts of it, had upon the whole a still more impressive appearance than it now retains.

The monuments and traces of antiquity, scattered in abundance over that region, led me unavoidably to compare what we know or guess of those remote times with certain aspects of modern society, and with calamities, principally those consequent upon war, to which, more than other classes of men, the poor are subject.⁴⁵

Here, then, are the elements of the situation: terror expressed in dreams, part of whose source was Annette; melancholy over the

thought of a long war, "productive of distress and misery"—surely this recalls in part personal misery and enforced separation from those he loved in France; and the wildness of the scene before him reflects the disturbance within himself. As I have already pointed out in Chapter I, these elements all appear most strongly in the earliest version. Wordsworth himself recognized these themes in the poem, as well as the changes he later made, when he answered the question Coleridge put to him regarding publication: "The mariner's fate appeared to me so tragical as to require a treatment more subdued and yet more strictly applicable in expression than I had at first given to it. This fault was corrected nearly fifty years afterwards, when I determined to publish the whole."⁴⁶

Some years ago appeared an article interesting in the light of our comments on *Guilt and Sorrow*. It attempted to explain the "emotions which the author [Wordsworth] sought to transmute into art." One emphasis of the poem, the quality of terror, may come in large part from the Gothic romances of the eighteenth century; another emphasis, sentimental morality, is also predominant in eighteenth-century literature: the portrayal of pity, aroused by undeserved suffering, becomes a moral agent. In other words, "the sight of virtue in distress softens the heart into virtue."⁴⁷ There are three main parts of the poem: the story of the Female Vagrant, the story of the Sailor, and the story of the maltreated child.⁴⁸ Emotionally, the story of the Female Vagrant "is a series of appeals to that pity which is evoked by the contemplation of undeserved suffering."⁴⁹

It has long since been noted that there are numerous evidences of Godwin's theories in the poem.⁵⁰ Much of this Godwinianism comes out in the Sailor's story, which fits well enough with the elements of terror in the Female Vagrant's story. What seems to me to be most important here is the *reason* for such Godwinian ideas. The elements of suffering fit the Wordsworth situation—in function if not in detail—in most of the aspects: his suffering, like that in the poem, seemed to be undeserved. This would also fit Annette's situation, as Wordsworth must have realized. Certain parts of the poem back up this idea, since some stanzas are perhaps more applicable to Wordsworth than to the Female Vagrant, for instance, written as these stanzas were in his period

of suffering over wounds made by his desertion of Annette. Stanzas XLIX and L (the last two of the Female Vagrant's story) thus become "of the sort to give release to the feelings of self-reproach, which must have lain as a perpetual weight upon his spirit." In this manner Wordsworth finds, perhaps unconsciously, a moment of emotional release and the lines referred to become "a form of emotional purgation which the artist can obtain with satisfaction only through his art."⁵¹

An objection, however, is raised to this interpretation. Havens believes the poem does not incite terror, but pity, especially pity for undeserved suffering which war brings to the poor. He thinks stanzas XLIX and L are applicable to the Female Vagrant, and that Wordsworth is trying to show that war drives women to sin; that is, we may assume that the woman had come to stealing, if not worse.⁵² It might be convenient to quote from the two stanzas in question:

"The roads I paced, I loitered through the fields;
Contentedly, yet sometimes self-accused,
Trusted my life to what chance bounty yields,
Now coldly given, now utterly refused.
The ground I for my bed have often used:
But what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth,
Is that I have my inner self abused,
Forgone the home delight of constant truth,
And clear and open soul, so prized in fearless youth.

"Through tears the rising sun I oft have viewed,
Through tears have seen him towards that world descend
Where my poor heart lost all its fortitude:
Three years a wanderer now my course I bend—
Oh! tell me whither—for no earthly friend
Have I."

But if one accepts anything of the Aristotelian view of tragedy, it is surely that both pity and fear are integral parts, and that art properly purges of both emotions. The significant point is that Wordsworth's misery is hereby transferred into guilt and sorrow for the created characters of the poem. How much relief it gave the author may be conjectured from the fact that he again (as

with the *Letter to Llandaff*) found no necessity to publish. Moreover, I hope to show in succeeding chapters that instead of finding particular lines to fit Wordsworth's situation, we might learn more by trying to see why he wrote as he did at all; that is, what specific functions did poems like "Guilt and Sorrow" have for him? The "love" element is definitely an important part in tracing these functions; associations he makes in the poems would indicate that. For instance, Wordsworth uses the word "love" for the condition when "to be young was very heaven"; his comrades in France are referred to as ones "who were strong in love"; and the declaration of war between England and France he regarded as the event that "threw me first out of the pale of love."⁵³ Instead, therefore, of separating this experience from others he simultaneously had, I would suggest that there is a unity among them all.

Certainly we may conclude that his experiences up to this time in the field of sexual relations would not be regarded favorably by the orthodox. Maladjustment here was personal, as was his political rebellion; the two are linked, since the poverty enforced by aristocratic tyranny prevented his marriage with Annette. Thus in the three aspects of his total situation so far presented, Wordsworth's actions and verbalizations were a rejection of orthodoxy.

Part Two

Ambivalence



The Borderer

We would, I think, be in error if we looked in Wordsworth for a sudden change in general actions or viewpoints. He moved slowly, with no sharp break in continuity, changing in expressed opinions as his total situation changed—not overnight, but during a period of several years. A particular event (he says himself that it was when France turned oppressor in her turn) may have helped crystallize his position, but in actuality it was gradually that he moved away from one position into another. Legouis poetically phrases it:

There was not, it is true, any sudden rupture, but rather a gradual loosening of a dear embrace, accompanied by a deeply painful surprise that the eyes of one [France] whom he had loved when her only desires seemed to be for peace and happiness should flame with fierce madness or vulgar ambition. And as his feelings grew steadily colder, the affection he could no longer bestow on France became transferred to his own theories.¹

A number of events as early as 1794 and 1795 indicate the beginnings of Wordsworth's altering situation; this period may best be defined by the term "ambivalence" as I explained it in the introduction. We have already seen in earlier chapters that Wordsworth was never the extremist in either action or word, but was merely perhaps a bit "left of center." Now came a period of gradual change toward a more acceptable-to-society position, but

still retaining enough of the earlier rebellion not to admit the name of conventional. For one thing, in matters "sexual" there is a poem called "Septimi Gades" in the notebook dating from 1794. The poem describes his love for Mary Hutchinson, inviting her to join him in some valley along the Rhone, such as he had visited on the Alpine tour of 1790, reminiscent perhaps of the time he had seen the "dark Italian maids of Lake Como." His reason for turning to Mary at this time would seem to be that she offered rest and compensation for failure elsewhere:

Think not, my friend, from me to roam,
 Thy arms shall be my only home
 My only bed thy breast. . . .
 Oh might we seek that humble shed
 Which sheltered once my pilgrim head
 Where down the mountains thrown
 A streamlet seeks, through forest glooms,
 Through viny glades and orchard blooms,
 Below, the solemn Rhone.²

If their dwelling place is not to be on the banks of the Rhone, he has an alternative to suggest: perhaps Grasmere would serve—and surely these lines echo Dorothy's desire (and Annette's?) for a home somewhere in northern England with her brother:

The lone grey cots and pastoral steep
 That shine inverted in the deeps
 Of Grasmere's quiet vale. . . .
 Yes, Mary, to some lowly door
 In that delicious spot obscure
 Our happy feet shall tend;
 And there for many a golden year
 Fair hope shall steal thy voice to cheer
 Thy poet and thy friend.

And although the storm and the tempest may come, "Love with his tenderest kiss shall dry Thy human tear and still the sigh That heaves thy gentle breast." Such warm lines of love to Mary, if they were written around 1794 or soon after, would seem to in-

dicare "that though for a time his passion for Annette had swept him off his feet, a year's absence had cooled his ardour, and brought him back to his old love."³

In the second place, there is Wordsworth's comment in a letter to William Mathews, dated December, 1794, concerning a fellow Republican: "I cannot say however that I entirely approve of the character of Tooke. He seems to me to be a man much swayed by personal considerations, one who has courted persecution, and that rather from a wish to vex powerful individuals, than to be an instrument of public good." The letter goes on to voice sentiments largely in keeping with Wordsworth's radical political position. It is significant, however, that he here expresses disfavor with one of the powerful English reformers of the time. Born in 1736, John Horne (Tooke) was the son of a poulterer, whose father was owed several thousand pounds by Frederick, Prince of Wales—a debt never recovered. Horne Tooke tried his hand at law, then applied to the field of ministry, and finally joined Wilkes' group. He was opposed by Fox in 1774 on the enclosure bill; in 1776 he joined with sympathizers of the American position. Thrown in prison, he wrote "Diversions of Purley." He applied, without success, for a bench at law in 1794; for several years he lived with his illegitimate daughters, and was a close friend of John Thelwall the reformer. As a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, he sympathized with the French Revolution, adding however that no violent measures of reform were required under the British Constitution. The Society had been in communication with the leaders of the French Revolution, as had other societies, such as that of Hardy. Horne Tooke made sham confessions of spying, which the Government fell for, and he was arrested on May 16, 1794, along with Hardy and Thelwall. They were tried the following winter and received a verdict of not guilty on the charge of high treason. It is this event that Wordsworth refers to in his letter to Mathews quoted above. In later years Tooke became less outspoken in his criticism of aristocracy, but at this particular time he was an ardent follower of events in France. The fact that Wordsworth does not approve Tooke's radical action, whatever the poet gives as his verbalization of that disapproval, shows the tendency of his

actions. By way of contrast, we note that Coleridge wrote a poem ardently praising Tooke as late as 1796; how much he admired the reformer is suggested by these lines:

Patriot and Sage! whose breeze-like Spirit first
The lazy mists of Pedantry dispers'd . . .
Thy struggles soon shall wak'ning Britain bless,
And Truth and Freedom hail thy wish'd success.⁴

We have furthermore the evidence of Dorothy that William was observing caution in the expression of his political opinions. This information is corroborated by the fact that Wordsworth failed to publish the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* at this—or at any other—time. He also decided to refuse the field of journalism; in a letter to Mathews, dated November 7, 1794, he wrote:

The more nearly we approach the time fixed for action, the more strongly was I persuaded that we should decline the field. I was not therefore either much surprised, or mortified, at the contents of your letter. It is true my distance from Town, unless we were once set forward, could not but be a great obstacle in our way; and at present it is absolutely out of my power to leave this place.⁵

He goes on to say he would like a position in journalism, preferably in an opposition paper, since he disapproves the present ministry. In his action, however, he here rejects a new project which would mean the opportunity of continuing his revolutionary principles.

There is also the evidence of his revision of *Guilt and Sorrow*, which was one of the first tasks he now turned to. Generally speaking, this revision meant a toning down and a softening of the harshest lines, including the omission of many severely outspoken passages, such as the "heroes of truth" stanza already quoted in Chapter I. Moreover, after the Girondists fell, June 2, 1793, the Reign of Terror caused him much suffering, though years later he said he still retained confidence at this time of better days ahead. As time went on, and as what he considered the evil events continued, he conceived an ever-growing hatred of the Terrorists, took a very strong stand against Robespierre, and

when that French leader died in August, 1794, Wordsworth says he felt great joy. Although he had been a follower of the Girondins instead of Robespierre, his emotional response on this occasion symbolically allied him with the enemies of the Revolution. He had made a response also acceptable to the staunchest aristocrat.

Professor Stallknecht has stated the shift in Wordsworth's position from a philosophical viewpoint. Leaders, Wordsworth came to feel, are not to be trusted—Robespierre for instance; therefore, the people ought not to follow leaders. But obviously the people cannot lead themselves, so the only conclusion possible is that "there should be no change in social and political life." It thus becomes inevitable that he should retreat from his earlier position, "for unless some individuals are recognized as possessing the right and the strength to consider themselves as prophetic reformers, distinct from the multitude, no philosophy of revolution or even of progress is possible." This would mean that eventually he would join in with the traditional supporters of the humble and gather "stoically beneath the orthodox and conservative strongholds of Church and State." There would therefore be no desire to tamper with these "great fortresses of security."⁶

This excellent explanation leaves out one important part of the change: the method by which Wordsworth moved—the means of his shift from one situation to another, or the frames in which these patterns are involved. This method is clearly discernible in *Guilt and Sorrow*. The poem is dismal, painful, and "the atmosphere of gloom which pervades it arises not so much from the incidents related as from the sombre light thrown upon them. The poem embodies not only Wordsworth's mental sufferings at the time he wrote it, but also the most tragic impressions of his childhood." The soldier, for instance, is the same one he met as a child at Hawkshead; the horror of the gallows for murderers is the same he experienced as a child; the scene for these melancholy stories is the same Salisbury Plain which to him was the most striking picture of desolation. The poem as a whole expresses "the full depth of his sadness," and in doing so it affords him valuable relief, if only temporarily.

Another part of this method of "problem solution" is shown in the evidences, especially in this poem, of Godwin's philosophy,

which was at this time of considerable concern to Wordsworth. The motivation of the Sailor's story is the same as that of the next composition of Wordsworth—*The Borderers*: sin and crime start oftentimes from their very opposite qualities. To this statement, Godwin would certainly have given assent, since it is easily conformable to his view of human nature. Political opinions similar to Godwin's are also expressed in the story of the Female Vagrant, when Wordsworth describes feelingly the oppression of the rich landowner toward his poor neighbor—an oppression which the law allows. Although these sentiments may very well stem from Wordsworth's own experiences, they are also in close agreement with the ideas of Godwin. It is worth noting here that in the light of a later situation this passage was changed to read more vaguely: "But through severe mischance and cruel wrong, My father's substance fell into decay." Many other similar passages were also softened later.

In connection with *Guilt and Sorrow*, Wordsworth wrote to Francis Wrangham on November 20, 1795:

Have you any interest with the booksellers. [*sic*] I have a poem which I should wish to dispose of provided I could get anything for it. I recollect reading the first draught of it to you in London. But since I came to Racedown, I have made alterations and additions so material as that it may be looked on almost as another work. Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law and the calamities of war as they affect individuals.⁸

This statement of the purpose of the poem would also meet with Godwin's approval, and illustrates how close the poem is to Wordsworth's personal experience, when we remember how as an individual he was affected by the calamities of war. There is, furthermore, a good deal of evidence of Godwin in the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. By citing parallel passages in the *Letter* and in Godwin, one author illustrates the depth of this influence.⁹ Others believe that it was Paine rather than Godwin and his group who was the chief influence on Wordsworth in this *Letter*.¹⁰ Many of these ideas, wherever derived, are also noted in the letters to William Mathews concerning the proposed magazine. The important question, however, remains: why did Wordsworth turn to the

writings of people like Godwin, Paine, and so on, at this time? The clue, I think, lies in the fact that their *writings* paralleled his own position in *actuality*. Here, as formerly in the French Revolution itself, was a ready answer to his economic, political, social situation: compensation for the years of "poverty" and "humiliation," or, to use a favorite expression of both Wordsworth and Dorothy in the early letters, "mortification." Furthermore, answers to Wordsworth's problem situation would lie in Godwin's attack on charity (especially the *necessity* for alms), his dislike of religious morality, and the attack on the privilege of property. Wordsworth would also find a ready answer to "sin," especially "sexual sin," in the idea of necessity. Since he felt himself disgraced by his past actions, he would also have found comfort in Godwin's statement on suicide: "The motive assigned for escape is eminently trivial, to avoid pain, which is a small inconvenience, or disgrace, which is an imaginary evil."¹¹ These words should certainly be remembered when we come to consider Wordsworth's position at the time of *The Borderers*.

As a matter of fact, in the poems, in the *Letter to Llandaff*, or in the letters to Mathews, Wordsworth affirms nearly all of the basic ideas of Godwin, especially those articles of Godwin's work dealing with the Revolution. Five basic examples may be cited: first, only a few favored minds are able to conceive a society different from the contemporary one, or to judge of its benefits; second, some orders of society gain advantage by injustice and therefore defend it; third, the common people submit to injustice from habit only and from want of reflection, but a short time would show them the advantage of liberty; fourth, to deny the right of subsistence or the right of intellectual attainments is as bad as to deny the right to live; fifth, the priesthood have biased minds and are enemies to freedom of inquiry.¹²

Wordsworth himself suggested that it was Godwin's idea of necessity which first won his attention and interest. Both *Guilt and Sorrow* and *The Borderers* indicate that Wordsworth accepted for the time being the Godwinian idea of the application of this theory even to guilt, crime, and desertion. Since the will is not entirely free, the guilty person cannot help himself and is therefore not responsible for his crime. It naturally follows that the criminal should not be punished—but should merely be pre-

vented from repeating his actions of injustice. It is perhaps impossible to determine how closely Wordsworth may have applied this system to his own actions. By accepting Godwinian principles, however, he would also likely accept this interpretation of desertion and crime, since the point of original interest was the idea of necessity.

Meanwhile, events in France were of a sort to make it all the easier for him to change—to enter a period of doubt, of questioning—of ambivalence. Become oppressors in their turn, Frenchmen, he felt, had now lost sight of what they had been fighting for. It was for him a time of “anger” and “disappointment sore,” and while his resentment rose he strove “to *hide*, what nought could *heal*. the wounds of mortified presumption.” In such a

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And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
Be little profited, would see, and ask
Where is the obligation to enforce?
And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,
As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime."¹³

This, then, was his period of "The Center of Indifference" which was his crisis; he was neither left nor right, but ambivalent. Feeling depressed and bewildered, he wished he might deal with the problem in "some dramatic tale, embodied with shapes Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words Than suit the work we fashion." The form, we note, would be *dramatic*, which would not have to be so guarded in its language and which would be exclusive of the purely personal:

Whatever else there be
Of power or pleasure, sown or fostered thus,
Peculiar to myself, let that remain
Where it lies *hidden*.¹⁴

The desire to write a drama which would *release* emotions, while *hiding* their personal nature, seems to tie this passage to the Annette episode. An interesting comment by Aldous Huxley illumines this idea.¹⁵ Sebastian suggests the desire to make some sort of dramatic expiation for the guilt he feels. The wise Bruno replies, "Remorse is pride's *ersatz* for repentance, the ego's excuse for not accepting God's forgiveness. The condition of being forgiven is self-abandonment. The proud man prefers self-reproach, however painful—because the reproached self isn't abandoned; it remains intact."

Apparently Wordsworth himself recognized this sublimation process, whereby personal problems are solved through dramatic art. As he says elsewhere, he had the hope

. . . that with outward life
I might endue some airy phantasies
That had been floating loose about for years,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.

Because his condition is one of being "on the fence," he adds that it is not so simple to create characters who will embody his own feelings, since

The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts; his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves.¹⁶

Although none of these lines may refer explicitly to *The Borderers*, I believe that the function of the play was what Wordsworth here himself suggests literature can do.

The most urgent of Wordsworth's problems was partly settled early in January of 1795; a bequest from Raisley Calvert meant freedom from economic distress. "No doubt William has informed you of the death of his poor friend Raisley Calvert, and that he has made an alteration in his will by which he bequeathed to him the sum of nine hundred pounds," Dorothy reported to her friend Jane on January 16. By September, Dorothy and William had made plans to live at Racedown. London had not, she remarks, agreed with William—it was unfavorable to mental exertion.¹⁷ With the legacy, plus income for taking care of two children (a natural daughter of Cousin Tom Meyers, and the son of Basil Montagu, who himself was a natural son about the age of Wordsworth), they would have about one hundred and eighty pounds a year. It was during the course of the following year, after they had settled at Racedown, that we first hear mention of *The Borderers*. Wordsworth wrote to Francis Wrangham, "I have been employed lately in writing a tragedy,—the first draught of which is nearly finished."¹⁸ At the same time he also turned to physical labor, and

when a fit of the spleen was on him, tried to work it off by composing some mediocre satire. He worked it off more effectively in hard manual labor, hewing wood,

rooting up hedges, and digging in the garden with such assiduity that his London friends predicted his metamorphosis into a cabbage. But like many another he found some taste of the penalty of Adam relief after the storm and stress of city life.¹⁹

He wrote to Wrangham on March 7, 1796: "I have been engaged an hour and a half this morning in hewing wood and rooting up hedges, and I think it no bad employment to feel 'the penalty of Adam' in this way."²⁰ The succeeding lines of this letter are revealing, if there is any validity in the principle of association. He speaks of exploring the country westward, going *à pied*. That is, after using the phrase, "penalty of Adam," he then thinks of a walking tour, which he had earlier regarded as "sinful," and even uses a French term tying the other associations to his French experiences. This view is enforced by the next addition of the letter: little Basil is well, but "*pour le moral il-y-a bien à craindre*. Among other things he lies like a little devil." Here again, the reference is to "guilt" and the language chosen to express it is French.

Wordsworth is often represented as "cured" of his despair immediately after he went to Racedown. Actually, it was here that the turning point came, but not the completed change. When he wrote, about 1795-1796,

Long months of peace (if such bold words accord
With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect,

the worst of the situation was past, though the change was not "completed" until 1797, two years later.²¹ His thoughts at Racedown were still largely on humanity, and for two years he was much concerned with thoughts of social evils and man's depravity. At the same time, the letters he wrote at this time indicate that his melancholy had somewhat abated. Thus there appear the two conflicting moods of joy and melancholy co-existing, competing for dominance, "the new hopes still baffled by the old distrust."²² Wordsworth himself recognized this conflict when he wrote of the "two spirits then at strife."²³ This dualism—this ambivalence

—appears most vividly concretized, I think, in the play he now wrote.

Few critics agree concerning the position of *The Borderers* with respect to Wordsworth's general political development, and most especially with respect to his relation to Godwin. The play has produced almost as many different interpretations as there are interpreters.²⁴ Legouis, for example, believes that like Marmaduke, Wordsworth could find no answer to Oswald's philosophy, though he might abominate it. By 1795, Wordsworth came to feel that evil and crime were no longer attributable to society alone. It might be possible that sin and crime were inherent in man's very nature, imperfect and limited as man is. Evil might even lie so deeply entrenched in the inmost recesses of the heart that all attempts at reform would fail. Even the intellect might be employed by evil for its own purposes of defense.²⁵ In passing, it is worth noting that if Legouis' interpretation is true, the play prepares the way for denial of reform, since reform is unavailing, and to deny reform is to deny Wordsworth's own earlier position as a Republican. Another critic believes Wordsworth's letter to Wrangham previously mentioned should be dated later—probably as late as October, 1796. This would be evidence that the play is a complete reaction to Godwin.²⁶ This would mean that the play was not of the period of subservience to Godwin, nor even of the crisis of the disease; but of the period when the poet was healed and restored, in the days of reasoned judgment.²⁷ It should be added, however, that this view ignores many passages of pure Godwinian content.

Professor Allen is less dogmatic, and probably nearer the truth in so far as the function of the play is concerned. He believes that Wordsworth wrote the play as a believer now bereft of his faith. Events both at home and abroad seemed to undermine his faith in humanity as well as in the progress of liberty; at this point Godwin's doctrines revived his waning hope for a regenerated world. But when rationalism turned out to be a blind alley, Wordsworth became all the more dejected and his faith sank still lower.²⁸ In facing this new problem of loss of faith, Wordsworth wrote the play in order to discover the ideas that had led him astray, and at the same time to understand more clearly his own difficulties by expressing them concretely.

The preface to the play, to be sure, seems to indicate that *The Borderers* was intended to be an exposure of Godwin; at the same time, the play is full of Godwinian motives, a fact which has led many to regard it as an example of Wordsworth's continued subjection to Godwin.²⁹ At the time of the Fenwick note, Wordsworth saw the purpose of the play as emphasizing

the passions and the characters, and the position in which the persons in the Drama stood relatively to each other, that the reader . . . might be moved, and to a degree instructed by lights penetrating somewhat into the depths of our nature. . . . As to the scene and period of action, little more was required for my purpose than the absence of established law and government; so that the agents might be at liberty to act on their own impulses.

Toward the end of this note, he writes:

In conclusion I may observe that while I was composing this Play I wrote a short essay illustrative of that constitution and those tendencies of human nature which make the apparently *motiveless* actions of bad men intelligible to careful observers. This was partly done with reference to the character of Oswald, and his persevering endeavour to lead the man he disliked into so heinous a crime; but still more to preserve in my distinct remembrance what I had observed of transition in character, and the reflections I had been led to make during the time I was a witness of the changes through which the French Revolution passed.³⁰

In other words, the play was written especially to portray *transition*, first in the character of the individual, and second in the course of the Revolution. We would, therefore, naturally expect two positions at least in the play, in order for there to be a transition from one to another. The essay Wordsworth refers to as having been written to explain his views has been published. A summary of the ideas will be helpful in understanding the play itself.³¹

Suppose, Wordsworth wrote, we imagine a young man, intelligent but without solid principles of morality, possessed of the

two outstanding passions of pride and fame, betrayed into crime. The basis of his earlier happiness is gone, his talents robbed; he quits the world with disgust, a misanthrope, and in retirement reasons out his problem. He takes pleasure and consolation in finding the good bad and the bad good. Two purposes are thus fulfilled: the intellectual action helps him forget his crime, and the conclusions he reaches reconcile him to himself. He becomes a moral skeptic, which makes him feel better toward himself, so that he is able to turn back to the world. "Pressed by the recollection of his guilt," he finds relief in action and meditation—very much as Wordsworth also did. The young man chooses actions which exhibit his own powers, and as he recovers his former sense of importance, his feelings of guilt are erased; he has, however, a strong tendency to vice, and commits new crimes to drive away the memory of the others; the principle of meditation returns when he tries to justify his new crimes: "He has a sophism for every crime." In his imagination, he pictures possible societies where his crimes would not be crimes. Next he turns easily to extraordinary actions, finding temptation in strangeness; he shakes off obligations of morality and religion and turns partly to superstition.

This, says Wordsworth, is the character he has tried to shape in the play. The motives of this character lie in the fact that there is no motive—which becomes motive itself: the love of the marvelous centers in the mind, and therein are the reasons for Oswald's actions. They lie in his character, in his pride, in his disturbed mind, his superstition, and his perverted reason. Moreover, Wordsworth considers that a small motive produces great action, so that we forget the immediate impulse, "and the whole is attributed to the force from which the first motion was received. The vessel keeps sailing on, and we attribute her progress in the voyage to the ropes which first towed her out of harbour." Surely this explanation is applicable to Wordsworth as well as to Oswald or Marmaduke: starting from his "crimes" at the time of the Revolution, he too might have progressed much as his dramatic characters do. Why he did not become enmeshed in crime I shall show later.

In the light of this essay, we may see in *The Borderers* an explanation of the interest Wordsworth had in the French Revolu-

tion: its leaders, he came to feel, progressed just as Oswald did, even into the Reign of Terror. Thus Oswald represents Godwin's position, but also parallels the situation in France. Reason, without a moral obligation for right, may become the handmaiden of crime—as in the play and also as in France where Wordsworth had himself seen such situations. The play is the expression, in other words, of how he had given everything to the French Revolution and had been stricken deeply at its failure:

He realized that he had himself but lately passed through that mental state which made colossal criminals of some of the revolutionary leaders. Had fate been less kind to him, he might himself have become a Marmaduke, if not an Oswald. The psychology of crime acquired a morbid hold upon his imagination. He had watched it at work in that hotbed of the orgy and action created by the Revolution,³²

where reason had been the name under which crime was committed.

Other critics believe the play should be regarded as throwing light on the transformation which took place in Wordsworth's aesthetic principles between 1793 and 1797. The original impulse for the play was the remorse he felt upon abandoning Annette. He endeavored to cleanse his mind of that remorse by turning to Godwin; that did not work, because the remorse continued. The natural ties from which he tried to escape, he saw, were deeper than Godwinian rationalism. Thus his mature poetic practice was largely "the result of a clash between Godwin's philosophy and his own bitter and searching experience."

In the play, Marmaduke, possessing compassion, is led by Oswald, who is guided by reason but is indifferent to compassion. Reason has shown Oswald how to escape from remorse to a moral eminence beyond good and evil; he leads Marmaduke to the same height, attempting to break down the latter's sentimental morality by leading Marmaduke through a similar experience. After accepting Oswald's philosophy, Marmaduke learns that Herbert was innocent, and he now repudiates reason; his natural compassion reasserts itself. Applied to Wordsworth, this would mean that "the remorse must have existed in the poet before he

sought the necessitarian cure."³³ That is, the emotion that lies behind the play is remorse over the abandonment of Annette and their child, followed by his turn to Godwin. The betrayed and abandoned mother, and the father-daughter relationship, arouse in Wordsworth emotions which become intrusions on the story. For example, in a manuscript copy of the play, the captain whom Oswald joined to go to Syria, and later wronged, had a daughter just as Herbert has, thus paralleling Marmaduke's story. De Selincourt thinks Wordsworth left this second father-daughter situation out later to avoid too close symmetry in the two plots.³⁴ One must ask, however, if there is any reason for the omission so strong as the original reason which forced Wordsworth to put the daughter there at all. That is, the question is not so much why the poet took the daughter out of the play, but what was the function of having her there in the first place. It is obviously another parallel to his own situation, and whatever the portrayal of Herbert-daughter does for Wordsworth, the captain-daughter does also.

By extension of the idea of synecdoche, whereby a part of the whole may represent the whole, we may suggest a possible synthesis of the apparently conflicting interpretations of the play. Because Annette, Godwin, and the French Revolution represent a *cluster* for Wordsworth, the play in symbolically portraying any one of the group may also include the others. Starting from either the political or the sexual interpretation, we see that Wordsworth may have become an Oswald. He did not, as we shall see, because he wrote the play. But looking upon the play as a whole, placed in relation to the rest of the still larger pattern of Wordsworth's situation at the time, we may thus propose a synthesis. *The Borderers* does not *reject* or *accept*: it is not entirely a welcome or a refutation of Godwin; it is not conservative or liberal politically. It is *on the border*. It is a clear expression of Wordsworth's period of ambivalence, and any comment will be partial which starts from the assumption that the play is an expression of either one viewpoint or the other, regardless of what two views are under question. Wordsworth himself has given us our best clue in the very name of the play, *The Borderers*. This clue is reinforced in his prefatory essay, wherein he

speaks of Oswald and "his pride which *borders* even upon madness."

One of the clearest examples of this ambiguity lies in the two ideas of property symbolically presented. For one, the characters are chiefly outlaws, foraging against the wealth and property of the rich. In fact, the first speech in the play represents Lacy as saying:

The troop will be impatient; let us hie
Back to our post, and strip the Scottish Foray
Of their rich Spoil, ere they recross the Border.
—Pity that our young Chief will have no part
In this good service.³⁵

That is, in the fight against privilege, even theft is dramatically acceptable—the Robin Hood motif—for the band is "collected for the noblest ends . . . to guard the Innocent." To more orthodox minds, represented by Herbert, the leader of the band is an outlaw,

A wild Freebooter,
Who here, upon the borders of the Tweed,
Doth prey alike on two distracted Countries,
Traitor to both.³⁶

To maintain dramatic unity, those who help the innocent should be allied to the cause of Herbert and his daughter Idonea, since their property has been wrongfully usurped. Because of the nature of Oswald, Marmaduke is opposed to Herbert and is ultimately responsible for Herbert's destruction. Lord Clifford, to be sure, is presented as the villainous aristocrat; but, on the other hand, Baron Herbert's property is restored to him. In these conflicting attitudes toward the possessors of property and wealth, hence of power, may be reflected Wordsworth's own conflicting position. To him, Lord Lonsdale remained representative of the cruel hand of aristocratic tyranny; at the same time, the Calvert bequest involved Wordsworth, however slightly, in the defense of possessions.

Further evidence of this ambivalent regard for property may be seen in the Juvenal satire Wordsworth was writing at this time. As Kenneth Burke suggests, the function of the satirist is

to attack in others the weaknesses and temptations that are actually within himself.³⁷ In this manner, the satirist exorcises his own sins by attacking the sins of others. The most significant portion of Wordsworth's satire is of course the section for which there is no parallel in Juvenal. Writing to Wrangham, November 20, 1795, Wordsworth sent twenty-eight new lines:

Ye Kings, in wisdom, sense and power, supreme,
 These freaks are worse than any sick man's dream,
 To hated worth no Tyrant ere design'd
 Malice so subtle, vengeance so refin'd.
 Even he who yoked the living to the dead,
 Rivall'd by you, hides the diminish'd head.
 Never did Rome herself so set at naught
 All plain blunt sense, all subtlety of thought.
 Heavens! who sees majesty in George's face?³⁸
 Or looks at Norfolk and can dream of grace?
 What has this blessed earth to do with shame?
 If Excellence was ever Eden's name?
 Must honour still to Lonsdale's tail be bound?
 Then execration is an empty sound.
 Is Common-sense asleep? has she no wand
 From this curst Pharaoh-plague to rid the land?³⁹

Then to our bishops *reverent* let us fall,
Worship Mayors, Tipstaffs, Aldermen and all.
 Let Ignorance o'er the monster swarms preside
 Till Egypt see her ancient fame outvied.
 The thundering Thurlow, Apis! shall rejoice
 In rites once offered to thy bellowing voice.
 Insatiate Charlotte's tears and Charlotte's smile
 Shall ape the scaly regent of the Nile.
 Bishops, of milder Spaniel breed, shall boast
 The reverence by the fierce Anubis lost.
 And 'tis their due;—devotion has been paid
 These seven long years to Grenville's onion head.

The three groups most severely satirized in these lines are the Monarchy, the Nobility, and the Clergy. If Kenneth Burke's remarks on the function of satire are valid, we may therefore look

to find Wordsworth next turning to personal defects, since satire on others prepares the poet to exorcise faults in himself. And true to expectations, a letter to Wrangham on March 21, 1796, includes several lines perfectly suited to Wordsworth's earlier situation:

But whence this gall, this lengthened face of woe?
We were no saints at twenty,—be it so;
Yet happy they who in life's later scene
Need only blush for what they once have been,
Who pushed by thoughtless youth to deeds of shame
Mid such bad daring sought a coward's name.
I grant that not in parent's hearts alone
A stripling's years may for his faults atone.⁴⁰

In other words the satire becomes a means through which the poet may come to accept that which he castigates; having lashed the evil, he may then be in a position to embrace it.

Additional evidence for this view lies in the poem called "The Convict." The prisoner's crime causes the convicted man intense suffering, or at least so the poet imagines:

'Tis sorrow enough on that visage to gaze,
That body dismiss'd from his care;
Yet my fancy has pierced to his heart, and portrays
More terrible images there.

His bones are consumed, and his lifeblood is dried,
With wishes the past to undo;
And his crime, through the pains that o'erwhelm him, described,
Still blackens and grows on his views.⁴¹

The last two stanzas of the poem symbolically ally Wordsworth to the criminal (since he comes as a "brother") and illustrate his continued use even at this late date—the poem was first published in 1797—of one of Godwin's favorite ideas—that criminals should be given a second chance instead of being executed:

Poor victim! no idle intruder has stood
With o'erweening complacence our state to compare,
But one, whose first wish is the wish to be good,
Is come as a brother thy sorrows to share.

At thy name though compassion her nature resign,
 Though in virtue's proud mouth thy report be a stain,
 My care, if the arm of the mighty were mine,
 Would plant thee where yet thou might'st blossom again.

The connection between this poem and *The Borderers*, as well as the relation of Wordsworth to the character of Marmaduke, is explained by the first publication of "The Convict." It appeared in *The Morning Post*, December 14, 1797, signed with the pseudonym "Mortimer." This date was the day before Wordsworth left London after the rejection of his play by Covent Garden; the name "Mortimer" was the original for Marmaduke.⁴²

Another clue is presented in the use of "ambivalent" terms in the play—and other related poems: that is, the terms that represent neither good nor evil, but both principles at once.

The analysis of equational structures within a work should reveal terms that "represent" sometimes one, sometimes the other, of the two principles, as dissociated, and sometimes their interlocking, as Coleridge says of Prometheus: in the old myths, and for the most part in Aeschylus, he is the Redeemer and the devil jumbled together.⁴³

For example, we find this suggestion:

OSW. This wood is rich in plants and curious simples.
 MAR. (*looking at them*) The wild rose, and the poppy, and the
 nightshade:
 Which is your favorite, Oswald?
 OSW. That which, while it is
 Strong to destroy, is also strong to heal.⁴⁴

These lines are especially significant since they are not an integral part of the action of the play. The same ambivalence is observable in Idonea's description of the character of Marmaduke:

His face bespeaks
 A deep and simple meekness: and that Soul,
 Which with the motion of a virtuous act
 Flashes a look of terror upon guilt,

Is, *after conflict, quiet* as the ocean,
By a miraculous finger, stilled at once.⁴⁵

This same characterization is indicated by Herbert in the third act; Marmaduke had been kind the evening before, and even this very morning. But now his voice is such that it terrifies the old man. The miraculous ability of one character to contain two opposing traits is reminiscent of Wordsworth's own note to line 32 of *Descriptive Sketches*: "The lyre of Memnon is reported to have emitted melancholy or cheerful tones, as it was touched by the sun's evening or morning rays." Other instances of this ambivalence may be found in *The Prelude*, Book X, 4, 5: "A day as beautiful as e'er was given to soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed"; or from Book X, 528-530:

But brightest things are wont to draw
Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
As even their pensive influence drew from mine.

He also writes in Book XIII, 246-248, of "Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight; And miserable love, that is not pain To hear of." These passages all fit this general time of ambivalence.

In the beggarwoman's supposed dream in the play are two more instances: in one she gives her child a foxglove, which had the power to please and thus to pacify him, until that same flower gave forth a bee, which the child put to its ear. The bee sting seemed to be the cause of the child's death.⁴⁶ The other instance is also concerned with the child: the woman fancied next that a strange dog came up to her sleeping child, "And, fondling, licked his face, then on a sudden Snapped fierce to make a morsel of his head." The other symbols in the beggarwoman's next speech are also revealing:

But two nights gone,
The darkness overtook me—wind and rain
Beat hard, upon my head—and yet I saw
A glow-worm, through the covert of the furze,
Shine calmly as if nothing ailed the sky;
At which I half accused the God in heaven.⁴⁷

Thus the blessing becomes a curse in her mind and the two values are transversed. By extension of the imagery used in this

speech, this description may also fit Wordsworth's own situation, especially with his emphasis on stormy, tempestuous scenes and the reference to the glowworm. Parallel to this is a poem called "The Glow-Worm," beginning, "Among all lovely things my love had been," and addressed to Dorothy. In it too the night was stormy when the poet found the glowworm; his "love" had already noted well the stars and the worm is placed under a tree. These images all return in the poem "The Pilgrim's Dream"—a wanderer seeks cover under a shady, showerproof tree, and sees with kindred look a star and a glowworm. The star is chastised by the worm for *pride*, which is also the dominant theme of "Lines on a Yew Tree," composed about the same time as *The Borderers*, in which Oswald is also guilty of pride. The incident upon which "The Glow-Worm" was based also occurred at this time.

Another example of the blessing turned curse occurs later on when the voice of Herbert, as Marmaduke leads him across the torrent, blesses the benefactor, but the "benediction . . . changed into a curse." Again, in his soliloquy at the beginning of Act III, Oswald toys with the contrary ideas of "passion" and "proof," each rising as its opposite falls, passion first a unit against us, then for us, until finally thoughts and feelings sink deep and have no substance: in other words, the good and the bad merge into one vessel.⁴⁸ Other illustrations lie in ambiguous statements like "shiver in the sunshine" and "to make mankind merry . . . to weep with," from the third act. The personal nature of the play is suggested when we remember that the action hinges largely on unrequited love, a lost inheritance, and a moral problem—all rather close to Wordsworth himself at this time.

The function of this pattern for Wordsworth, I think, is made clear in Oswald's speech to Marmaduke, the last lines of which also state explicitly the theory of "ambivalence":

As time advances either we become
 The prey or masters of our own past deeds.
 Fellowship we *must* have, willing or no;
 And if good Angels fail, slack in their duty,
 Substitutes, turn our faces where we may,
 Are still forthcoming; some which, though they bear

Ill names, can render no ill services,
 In recompense for what themselves required.
 So meet extremes in this mysterious world,
 And opposites thus melt into each other.⁴⁹

This speech is pointed up when we recall that Wordsworth felt "sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities," which is one of the main ideas in the play. It is thus also that *action* and *suffering* are opposed, but fused, in order to resolve the conflict of the drama, as well as the dramatic conflict of Wordsworth. That is, suffering is contained in an act; though the one is temporary and the other permanent, one comes out of the other:

Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
 The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
 'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy
 We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
 Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
 And shares the nature of infinity.⁵⁰

Just before this speech Oswald had pointed out that great actions move us mainly because they carry an earnest plea that "we can suffer greatly." In other words, the act contains its by-product, suffering. The speech just quoted was also used as the headnote to *The White Doe of Rylstone*, a poem intended to glorify the virtue of "abiding the shock," thus "securing over pain and grief a triumph pure."⁵¹ Marmaduke accepts Oswald's conclusion when he answers, "Truth—and I feel it"; and again at the end of the play he emphasizes more fully: "To endure, that is my destiny."

It is, then, for the poet, to use two speeches of Marmaduke, a period when "which way soe'er I turn, I am perplexed," and "there is something which looks like a transition in my soul."⁵² The original impulse may well have been, as earlier suggested, remorse—especially when we read Oswald's speech in the third act (lines 427-433):

Remorse—
 It cannot live with thought; think on, think on,
 And it will die. What! in this universe,

Where the least things control the greatest, where
The faintest breath that breathes can move a world ;
What ! feel remorse, where, if a cat had sneezed,
A leaf had fallen, the thing had never been
Whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals.

The sentiments expressed here, we may note, are similar to those already quoted from *The Prelude* referring to this period—when Wordsworth himself said he “yielded up moral questions in despair.” In other words, he had reached a stage where good and evil merged into one vessel, as seen here dramatically in *The Borderers*. For the very reason that this was a “transition in his soul,” he chose for once the dramatic form, a stylistic device suited to present attitudes not unified and clear-cut. Because he had no single viewpoint, he could not use a nondramatic form. With respect to the larger unity of Wordsworth’s poetry, this is a “watershed moment” such as Burke analyzes: “There are often ‘watershed moments,’ changes of slope, where some new quality enters. Sometimes these are obvious, even so obvious as to threaten the integrity of the work. There is such a moment in *Murder in the Cathedral*, where the medium shifts from verse to prose.”⁵³ Parallel with this example from Eliot is Wordsworth’s shift from nondramatic to dramatic form, with respect to the total context of his poetry. Burke suggests that in this watershed moment any weakness in motivation is revealing. And true enough, it is this very ambivalent play, *The Borderers*, which is usually regarded as picturing motiveless actions.

Finally, I believe *The Borderers* is Wordsworth’s representation of the possible modes of action before a person in his situation—patterns from which he must choose either consciously or unconsciously. In his note on the play, Wordsworth wrote that the general purpose of the play was to illustrate a truth of human nature :

The study of human nature suggests this awful truth ;
that as in the trials to which life subjects us, sin and
crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities,
so there are no limits to the hardening of the heart and
the perversion of the understanding to which they may
carry their slaves.

This general truth was also one of the basic themes of *Guilt and Sorrow*, especially with respect to the soldier's crime, which we note was also apparently motiveless like the crimes of *The Borderers*. This idea, we remember, came to Wordsworth from his experiences in France:

During my long residence in France, while the Revolution was rapidly advancing to its extreme of wickedness, I had frequent opportunities of being an eye-witness of this process, and it was while that knowledge was fresh upon my memory that the Tragedy of "The Borderers" was composed.

The alternatives he presents are these: in such situations of crime's aftermath, one may become an Oswald, seeking relief from emotions of remorse through contemplation or by tempting an innocent youth (such as the criminal had earlier been) into a similar crime:

Know then that I was urged,
(For other impulse let it pass) was driven,
To seek for sympathy, because I saw
In you a mirror of my youthful self;
I would have made us equal once again,
But that was a vain hope. You have struck home,
With a few drops of blood cut short the business;
Therein forever you must yield to me.
But what is done will save you from the blank
Of living without knowledge that you live:
Now you are suffering—for the future day,
'Tis his who will command it.⁵⁴

Or there are the other possibilities suggested in Marmaduke's final speech:

A hermitage has furnished fit relief
To some offenders: other penitents,
Less patient in their wretchedness, have fallen,
Like the old Roman, on their own sword's point.
They had their choice. [Italics mine.]⁵⁵

The manner in which this death-wish is associated with Wordsworth himself is suggested by another poem he wrote at this

time, in the first person, not in drama form; he calls it "Argument for Suicide":

Send this man to the mine, this to the battle,
 Famish an aged beggar at your gates,
 And let him die by inches—but for worlds
 Lift not your hand against him—Live, live on,
 As if this earth owned neither steel nor arsenic,
 A rope, a river, or a standing pool.
 Live, if you dread the pains of hell, or think
 Your corpse would quarrel with a stake—alas
 Has misery then no friend?—if you would die
 By license, call the dropsy and the stone
 And let them end you—strange it is;
 And most fantastic are the magic circles
 Drawn round the thing called life—till we have learned
 To prize it less, we ne'er shall learn to prize
 The things worth living for. ⁵⁶

This same death-wish is expressed in an early version of *The Borderers*, though the manuscript lines were later removed: "Would this body were quietly given back unto the earth from whence it came." The defense of suicide is also allied in theme to another alternative before the criminal—even if it is not a conscious choice: madness. We recall that in the essay for *The Borderers* Wordsworth had written of Oswald's pride which bordered on *madness*; the connection is again made in a manuscript version of *Guilt and Sorrow*: "On thy endless tortures scowl till very madness seems a mercy to thy soul." Later, also in a manuscript version of the same poem, Wordsworth wrote that "It would thy brain unsettle even to hear."⁵⁷ It was also at this time that the theme of insanity as the result of crime, found explicit form in the poem called "Incipient Madness," printed in the De Selincourt edition of the poems.

Linked with the alternatives of madness and suicide is another choice, symbolized by Marmaduke's speech and subsequent action:

A wanderer *must* I go,
 The Spectre of that innocent Man, my guide.
 No human ear shall ever hear me speak;

No human dwelling ever give me food,
 Or sleep, or rest; but, over waste and wild,
 In search of nothing, that this earth can give,
 But expiation, will I wander on—
 A Man by pain and thought compelled to live,
 Yet loathing life—till anger is appeased
 In Heaven, and Mercy gives me leave to die.⁵⁸

This conclusion is to be compared with that of *Vaudracour and Julia*, where the tale is followed by the poet to its last recess “of suffering or of peace, I know not which.” After the child died, Vaudracour never more “shared a smile with mortal creature.” His aspect grew savage, and he lived

Cut off from all intelligence with man,
 And shunning even the light of common day;
 Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
 Full speedily resounded, public hope,
 Or personal memory of his own deep wrongs,
 Rouse him: but in those solitary shades
 His days he wasted, an imbecile mind!⁵⁹

This wander-motif, furthermore, plays a large part in many of Wordsworth's poems, usually also involved in images of terror, storms, and crime. In later chapters I shall attempt to explain the function of the “wander” theme for him. One clue here should not be overlooked: speaking of Idonea, Marmaduke says, concerning his crime:

Nor let words—

Few must they be, and delicate in their touch
 As light itself—be these withheld from Her
 Who, through most wicked arts, was made an orphan
 By One who would have died a thousand times,
 To shield her from a moment's harm.⁶⁰

The parallelism here with Wordsworth's telling of his own “crime” to Dorothy seems sufficient to link this with the Annette affair.

There is also one other solution of the “crime-remorse” situation; one might turn vicariously to art—the path Wordsworth himself took—and write out the problem. Both here and in

Guilt and Sorrow he was sublimating his conflicts into art forms, resolving them in poetry when he could find only a partial solution in other kinds of action. As we shall see in later chapters, this device he returned to in many of his poems written after this period of ambivalence, a period which marks Wordsworth as *the borderer*. The play, then, becomes a working out of his problems, not a statement of their solution.

The subsequent history of the play furnishes an interesting series of negations on the part of William and Dorothy. In most of their letters of this time, they speak as if they have no hopes of the play's succeeding in London. Dorothy, as well as William, "persuaded herself that they had not the faintest expectation that it would be accepted." But probably "a more accurate estimate of her feelings . . . is to be found in a letter written by their cousin Elizabeth Threlkeld to Sam Ferguson"; she says William and Dorothy have been to London to show the tragedy to the manager of Covent Garden. The play "they were inclined to believe he would accept and that it would have a prodigious run." The letter goes on to say,

I received a very entertaining letter from Dorothy on the occasion. She says they are not disappointed with its rejection, but I cannot give *implicit* credit to her assertion. William is not determined whether he shall publish it or no. He expects a reform to take place in the stage, and then it may be brought forward to great advantage.⁶¹

Part Three

Modes of Acceptance



Political Conservatism

As I suggested at the beginning of Chapter IV, critics have too often considered Wordsworth's change in attitude as a sudden break in continuity. We are now in a position to explain this error: many writers have taken Wordsworth's *working out* of his problems for a *presentation* of his situation. Thus the fact that Wordsworth may have paid verbal respect, upon isolated occasions, to so-called democratic ideals in later life is not so important as his naming of situations along the way. His poetry is to be taken as his answer to questions out of which the poems arose in the first place; his writings are thus more than merely answers—they are stylized or strategic answers. In the products of his pen, he adopts attitudes which are strategies sizing up the situation and directing the line of subsequent action on his part. The poem may thus become a "symbolic act" even at times involving the entire physical body.¹ For example, Hazlitt reports of Wordsworth:

There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own 'Peter Bell.' . . . There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accomplishment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animating, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal.

The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*.²

How much of this is permissible as evidence, in view of Hazlitt's later attitudes toward Wordsworth, is conjecture. Since this passage is largely description, not judgment, it is perhaps accurate. I shall amplify this parallelism of "poetic attitudinizing" and bodily characteristics in Chapter VII; we may note in passing, however, that poets naturally write about what is most interesting to them—and rarely is anything more engrossing than one's burdens.³ Dorothy recognized this vividly in a letter to Jane Pollard in 1787: "I have read over my letter, and find it is only filled with my own concerns; pardon me, my dearest girl; what is uppermost in my mind I must write."

For the next several years after *The Borderers*, Wordsworth proceeded step by step, albeit most gradually, to an acceptance of orthodoxy; that is, further from his earlier "radicalism" which was the expression of rejection. So Wordsworth himself suggests in a letter to a Miss Taylor, April 9, 1801: "My opinions have grown slowly, and I may say insensibly." His early poems, he adds, would be of interest in showing how far his former opinions differed from those he now accepted. As his life situation changed from economic insecurity to economic security and family stability, so also his verbalizing—his name-calling—came into line. To be sure, however, just as we noticed isolated instances of acceptance in the midst of a general context of rejection, so in the later patterns we should expect to find isolated instances recalling earlier rejections even in the midst of a context of acceptance.

This path "back to the fold" Wordsworth has outlined, in part, for us. He describes the influence of Dorothy in preserving him still as a poet, turning him back to the nature with which youth had maintained "communion more direct and intimate"—or as he adds, "To nature then, Power had reverted."⁴ This power of nature to heal has often been noted by Wordsworth's critics—how, as he himself traces it in the last books of *The Prelude*, he was led by the threefold power of nature, Dorothy, and Coleridge, back to "health" and "sanity":

Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give,
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me.⁵

In other words, the function of "nature" for him was that of bringing a condition equivalent to sleep, of coming between himself and his outward troubles, even giving stillness to an uneasy heart. How this return to nature helped him conquer his own suffering is also suggested in many other passages in *The Prelude*, as for example here:

Then was the truth received into my heart,
That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
An elevation and a sanctity,
If new strength be not given nor old restored,
The blame is ours, not Nature's.⁶

That is, the affliction itself brings promise of relief from sorrow. It is less frequently pointed out, however, that in this idea lies a principle of "passivity." The thought here presented that out of evil comes good has been more popularly phrased in Emerson's "Compensation," where the writer faces evil cheerfully by accepting the doctrine of "polarity." The next step in these logical gymnastics is this: if out of evil comes good, evil is not to be abolished, for if it were removed, down also would come the polar term, good. Thus Wordsworth begins to size up the situation in labels which do not force him to act against what he had earlier conceived as evil. In this light, we get the two poems in 1798 of "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned." From the former:

The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

And from the other poem, these lines:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Then all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things—
We murder to dissect.

Here, then, Wordsworth names the situation in such a way that he does not have to *interfere*: "passiveness" is wise; things will

come right of themselves; wisdom comes from quietness, not study; our intellect meddles—it misshapes and murders by dissection; hence, we must have “a heart that watches and receives.” For Wordsworth, the condition of passivity is an essential “prelude.” One may now note a new meaning for his wife’s naming of the autobiographical poem of this title. It becomes not a prelude to a longer work—because that longer work was never completed—it would therefore in this sense be only an *intended* prelude. From my viewpoint, however, it is a prelude in a more complete sense, if by “prelude” we mean a prologue to new attitudes, to a new state of mind. We know, for instance, that he wrote the poem primarily for himself; and the fact that he never used this title does not alter its function. His image for the poem was “ante-chapel,” which is the same thing under a different aegis. It is interesting also to note that as he changed his attitudes he also changed “environmental clothes” in a trip to Germany. The only other time Wordsworth spent a year or more away from England was in the 1790’s, when his stay in France also marked a change of attitude. He himself recognized this parallelism of physical environment and mental attitudes:

Yet true it is, that I had made a change
In climate, and my nature’s outward coat
Changed also slowly and insensibly.⁸

Moreover, Wordsworth’s turn to a philosophy of “individualism” also tended to force him into a similar direction, that is, toward acceptance. As I pointed out in Chapter I, his “radicalism” sprang originally from his ideas of northern farmer independence, emphasized by his economic situation. The period of the early 1790’s broke partly in on this position when he held society as a whole responsible for social evils. In his later rejection of Godwin, however, Wordsworth also rejected the idea that criminals and those poverty-stricken are what they are, not because of their own characters, but because of a social system. This new position was abetted by an emphasis on individualism. Professor Grierson suggests that “the high hopes, the passionate agitations which the first movement of sympathy with a great effort to renew the life of a people arouses will be followed by an acute reaction, a profound sense of disillusionment.” He

believes that Wordsworth was finally "saved" by turning his hopes another way: to the belief that upon himself depends man's happiness; in other words, he would now advocate a revolution only within the individual.⁹ The function of this device seems to be the elimination of any need to do much with social evils; it is a means of transferring the focus of interest from the position of "'Tis against *that* That we are fighting," spoken of the hunger-bitten girl who crept along the road during the days of the Revolution, to the position of "To me the meanest flower that blows can give Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." The attitude demanded by the former labels is that some action be taken to alter evil social conditions; in the later attitude, no such action is demanded.

This, I think, would also explain Wordsworth's turn to the creation of characters like Michael and the Old Leech Gatherer—men who do not join as groups to fight a social system, but who fight courageously alone in solving their problems. Pierce has suggested that Wordsworth's emphasis in the earlier poems (*Guilt and Sorrow*, some of the earlier poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, and in recollection parts of *The Prelude*) is on the *pathos* of the poor.¹⁰ Later, in poems like "Michael," "The Brothers," *The Recluse*, and "Resolution and Independence," the emphasis is on the *dignity* of the poor. This shift in attitude symbolized by a new naming of the situation carries with it also a new mode of behavior: if the emphasis is on *pathos*, the behavior demanded is to alleviate the pathetic condition; if the emphasis is on *dignity*, one must admire the virtue of fortitude. As I pointed out in Chapter III, this was also the orthodox position of the Anglican Church at this time: one must bear his burdens and the reward is to be reaped in heaven. Hence, as this attitude allies Wordsworth symbolically with the Church, we should expect him to become more interested in the symbols of orthodox religion. Under his new attitude toward poverty, he "learns" from the example of the Leech Gatherer; there is less hint of trying to change a society which makes the condition of the man so horrible. How he regards the old man is made clear in his letter to Sara Hutchinson on June 14, 1802. After explaining his own melancholy thoughts on the reverses poets meet, he tells of how he pictures the old man in the

. . . most naked simplicity possible. . . . I cannot conceive a figure more impressive than that of an old Man like this, the survivor of a Wife and ten children, travelling alone among the mountains and all lonely places, carrying with him his own fortitude, and the necessities which an unjust state of society has entailed upon him.¹¹

Though Wordsworth still recognizes the source of the old man's ills as an unjust society, the stress is placed on fortitude. He is pious, self-respecting, and miserably infirm, and the reader should gain pleasure from "contemplating the fortitude, independence, perservering spirit, and the general moral dignity of this old man's character." Now, we notice, the thought of the old man gives him pleasure, instead of the earlier belief that such poverty "would in a little time be found no more."¹² From this time on we begin to get statements upholding the idea of the changelessness of human nature. Logically, the conclusion is that of "The Old Cumberland Beggar":

And let him, *where* and *when* he will, sit down
Beneath the trees, or on a grassy bank
Of highway side, and with the little birds
Share his chance-gathered meal; and, finally,
As in the eye of Nature he has lived,
So in the eye of Nature let him die.

These lines, in other words, sanction the meal that is gathered only by chance; they even go further: they represent Wordsworth's blessing on the old beggar's way of life.

To be sure, as Legouis points out, while the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* represent partly a reaction against rationalism and Godwin, still a good deal of both is retained. Attacks against the existing order with its injustice are to be found in *Lyrical Ballads*, more emphatic because Wordsworth took some pains to avoid what would shock his readers. For example, Goody Blake is cold until she steals from Harry Gill; Martha Ray is forsaken with her child by Stephen Hill; and in "The Last of the Flock," a father of ten sells his sheep one by one to gain food for his children.¹³ But this interest in the poor is "humani-

tarian"—a "social-worker" attitude, not a revolutionary one; Wordsworth maintains sympathy for maltreated and poverty-laden persons, but with a difference in point of view, in keeping with his turn to the "pastoral." This difference is clearly indicated in a letter he wrote to Charles James Fox on January 14, 1801. He sees in recent trends, he writes, "a rapid decay of the domestic affections among the lower orders of society"; this decay, however, he feels is caused by the increase in manufactures throughout the country. Moreover, these institutions are not regarded as mere palliatives to the disease, which would make the evil less. Instead, they are regarded as "great discoveries and blessings to humanity." What they actually do, he feels, is to separate parents from children; a wife is not able any longer to prepare with her own hands the meals for her husband. The people maintain independence of spirit as best they may, for they are convinced of its benefits; but if this spirit disappears, "no greater curse can befall a land."¹⁴ The sharp change in attitude may be suggested in the fact that the cause of misery is not now a monarchical government, or even a landed aristocracy, but rising manufactures.

The part Coleridge played in these alterations in the Wordsworth situation is a complex problem. Within ten years of their first intercourse, Wordsworth himself saw Coleridge's part as this:

Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
Her overweening grasp; thus thoughts and things
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
More rational proportions; mystery,
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of life and death, time and eternity,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition—a serene delight
In closelier gathering cares, such as become
A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent

From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
At every season green, sweet at all hours.¹⁵

With association of Coleridge, came a relaxing of "fear"; Wordsworth's spirit ceased to be "self-haunted"; and a reliance on "providence" brought equanimity. Dorothy's letter to Mary Hutchinson in June of 1797 illustrates the closeness even by that early date of the three—Dorothy, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Indeed the move she and her brother made on July 14 to Alfoxden was mainly to be near Coleridge, as she tells Mary in a letter dated August 14, 1797.

In addition to his "intellectual stimulus" there is the significance of Coleridge's hero-worship of Wordsworth. As early as 1796, in his *Poems on Various Subjects*, published by Cottle, Coleridge included a note on Wordsworth, whom he regarded as "unrivalled among the writers of the present day in manly sentiment, novel imagery, and vivid colouring." This admiration soon deepened, and June, 1797, found Coleridge writing to Cottle:

I speak with heartfelt sincerity and (I think) unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself *a little man by his side*, and yet do not think myself the less man than I formerly thought myself. . . . You know I do not commonly speak in such abrupt and unmingled phrases, and therefore will the more readily believe me.¹⁶

And to Southey, July, 1797, he wrote: "Wordsworth is a very great man—the only man to whom at all times and in all modes of excellence I feel myself inferior." Though the effect of this worship and exaltation by Coleridge (as well as by Dorothy and later by Mary) has never been studied thoroughly, one would suspect that it increased Wordsworth's tendency to ego-magnification, which would be of benefit in his task of overcoming "remorse." Further evidence of this interpretation is in early

remarks of Wordsworth concerning Coleridge; there is, I think, a bit of suspicious irony in his comment on the Wedgwood annuity, in a letter to James Tobin for March 6, 1798: "No doubt you have heard of the munificence of the Wedgwoods towards Coleridge. I hope the fruit will be as good as the seed is noble."¹⁷ He also refers to the same gift in a letter to James Losh, March 11, 1798: "Perhaps you have heard of the unexampled liberality of the Wedgwoods toward Coleridge; they have settled an annuity of 150 pounds upon him, for life." Remembering the Calvert bequest of nine hundred pounds, on which he expected to get nine per cent interest, he should hardly have referred to this gift to Coleridge as "unexampled"—it was merely "not quite equalled"! Hero worship does not usually work both ways simultaneously, and Wordsworth is no exception to those who willingly accept homage.

There were, at the same time, other influences at work tending to soften Wordsworth's attitude toward aristocracy. The Calvert bequest was one; Wordsworth himself recognized, though with perhaps a different meaning for the words, that this "cleared a passage" for him:

A youth—(he bore
The name of Calvert—it shall live, if words
Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief
That by endowments not from me withheld
Good might be furthered—in his last decay
By a bequest sufficient for my needs
Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk
At large and unrestrained; nor damped too soon
By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet
Far less a common follower of the world,
He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
A necessary maintenance insures,
Without some hazard to the finer sense;
He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
Flowed in the bent of Nature.¹⁸

Along with this, on the other hand, were some none-too-savory experiences with the poorer class of English and German

workers. Dorothy comments on the peasants of Racedown in a letter to Jane Pollard (now Mrs. Marshall) soon after William arrived there with his sister: "The peasants are miserably poor; their cottages are shapeless structures of wood and clay; indeed they are not at all beyond what might be expected in savage life."¹⁹ Experiences with the low-middle peasant class in Germany helped to strengthen this view. Two incidents, especially, stand out; they are recorded in Dorothy's journal, in William's handwriting:

Yesterday I saw a man of about fifty years of age beating a woman decently dressed and about 37 years of age. He struck her on the breast several times, and beat her also with his stick. The expressions in her face and attitude were half of anger and half of a spirit of resistance. What her offence had been we could not learn. It was in the public street. He was better dressed than she was, and evidently a stranger, and this brutal treatment did not excite the smallest indignation in the breast of the spectators. They seemed rather inclined to take the man's part. Called at a Baker's shop. Put two shillings [a coin then equal to about a penny in value] into the baker's hands, for which I was to have had four small rolls. He gave me two and I let him understand that I was to have four, and with this view I took one shilling from him, pointed to it and to two loaves, and at the same time offering it to him, again I took up two others. In a savage manner he half knocked the rolls out of my hand, and when I asked him for the other shilling he refused it, and would neither suffer me to take bread, nor give me back my money, and on these terms I quitted the shop. I am informed that it is the boast and glory of these people to cheat strangers, that when a feat of this kind is successfully performed the man goes from the shop into his house, and triumphantly relates it to his wife and family. The Hamburg shopkeepers have three sorts of weights, and a great part of their skill, as shopkeepers, consists in calculating upon the knowledge of the buyer, and suiting him with scales accordingly.²⁰

Though Dorothy might record that with the Lloyds they had "a pleasant conversation about the manners of the rich—avarice, inordinate desires, and the effeminacy, unnaturalness, and the unworthy objects of education," a new note was soon to be dominant.²¹ A letter from William to Richard, June 10, 1802, suggests the possibility of the payment of the old Lonsdale debt: "I am told that Lord Lonsdale has ordered in his will all his just debts to be paid. . . . Of course I am afraid ours will not be included in the list."²² Richard will, however, present their case. As I pointed out in Chapter I, the original emphasis of Wordsworth's anti-aristocratic views sprang largely from the misery entailed upon the Wordsworth children by lack of money. Most of the words like "lordly" and "aristocratic" are followed by "tyranny" in the early letters, usually also in connection with the Lonsdale debt, as also, for example, in the Juvenal satire already quoted. Now comes a possibility of restitution. And the point is this: remove the debt, and the cause for anti-aristocracy is removed, thus enabling him to embrace what he had earlier rejected. By September 29, 1802, Dorothy could write to Jane Marshall not only of her brother's marriage, but also of the debt: "No doubt you have heard that we have every prospect of settling our affairs with Lord Lonsdale entirely to our satisfaction. Our claim *in law* is as good as ever, and, what is of more consequence, Lord L. is a just man and disposed to repair as much as lies in his power, the damage done by his predecessor." By the following February, affairs were nearer a settlement: Richard was given full authority to settle for eight thousand pounds, if not for eighty-five hundred pounds. Before any deductions should be made, William would remind the debtor of the loss the Wordsworth children had already sustained—not merely in the form of hardships, anxiety, and the like—but "in the mere comparative value of the money to us now when set against the services it might have done us 15 years back."²³ The settlement of the debt shortly thereafter not only removed the stain of aristocracy, it also gave Wordsworth increased vested interests of his own.

It is not surprising, in view of this alteration in situation, that Wordsworth should now become a close friend of Sir George Beaumont, who was prominent among the London intelligentsia, a liberal patron of the arts, and a fine connoisseur of painting. He

had been a friend of Reynolds, had admired Claude, and recognized the genius of Wilson, Wilkie, and Landseer. Years later he presented to England his valuable collection of pictures and helped found the National Gallery. He was upright in character, generous, and took pleasure in discovering and aiding struggling artists, as friend rather than as patron, including young poets as well as painters in his benefits. He knew Coleridge for some time before. At Keswick, on his first visit to Greta Hall, he bought a piece of property at the foot of Skiddaw for Wordsworth, hoping it would bring the two poets closer together in distance.²⁴ These traits, all combined in a member of the nobility, served to alter some of Wordsworth's earlier opinions. It was doubly significant that this acquaintanceship came at the time when Lord Lonsdale was settling old debts. In the letter Wordsworth wrote thanking Beaumont for the gift of property, one may readily discern a new attitude toward nobility—an attitude of respect and deference, as he recognized the deep sense of Sir George's goodness.²⁵

My purpose is in no way to detract from what is usually considered a sincere and profitable friendship. I merely wish to point out Wordsworth's changed *actions* with regard to members of a group he had earlier disliked and had written against. He had never quite accurately stated the case against the wealthy in his early days; now confronted with evidence that men of wealth, men of the aristocracy, were often generous (Lonsdale paid the debt; Beaumont purchased a piece of property for him), he had much to retract of what he had felt and said. From this time onward he would be psychologically incapable of accepting his previously held ideas. Moreover, the generosity of the wealthy continued: there was a ten-pound note from Lady Beaumont for the new baby, Dora; there was an invitation to come for a visit with the Beaumonts; and at the time of John Wordsworth's death there was a kind offer of money which William accepted with this rationalization:

Let me say that it is no part of my creed that money may not be received from a Friend without a return equivalent in the way of bargain; I think it may, just as well as advice, consolation, preferment, recommenda-

tions to serve worldly advancements, or anything else; I go further than this and do not think that a Man of Letters or Science forfeits any thing of his dignity by receiving pecuniary assistance even from those who are not his personal Friends; I mean in this as in the other case if he can justify the thing to himself by the circumstances under which he is placed, and the end to be answered.—This much for my notion whether right or wrong upon the general position: next comes the application to particular instances: and here with regard to money received from strangers or those with whom a Man of Letters has little personal connexion, nothing can justify this but strong necessity, for the thing is an evil in itself; the right or wrong in this case will be regulated by the importance of the object in view, and the inability to attain it without this, or other means being resorted to.—With regard to personal Friends; according to the degree of love between them and the value they set upon each other, the necessity will diminish of weighing with scrupulous jealousy and fear whether such gifts should be received and to what amount: nevertheless in this as in every other species of communication, good sense, strict moral principle, and the greatest delicacy on both sides ought to prevail.—As to myself who see much that I think amiss in the habits, practices and moral notions of the world, and whose life I may say with modesty, has been like that of my late Brother altogether unworldly, it would be strange if I should think that money poured out from so pure a cistern as the heart of a Friend could taint me, or if I should be afraid of it. You love me, respect me, know my situation, what my views have been and are; therefore I should detest myself could I have any uneasiness on this account or any thing but pleasure connected with it.²⁶

While there is no necessary “taint” on such monetary gifts, it would obviously be more difficult for the recipient to attack the class of society or the ideals of the benefactor.

As a matter of fact, out of this relationship grew some of Wordsworth's extreme political and social conservatism—what we may call a rather complete acceptance of orthodox positions in these fields. Far from crying shame at landed aristocracy and corrupt nobility, Wordsworth now wrote to Sir George describing large estates similar to medieval manors:

I know nothing which to me would be so pleasing or affecting, as to be able to say, when I am in the midst of a large estate, this man is not the victim of his condition; he is not the spoiled child of worldly grandeur, the thought of himself does not take the lead in his enjoyments; he has a true relish of simplicity, and therefore stands the best chance of being happy; at least, without it there is no happiness, because there can be no true sense of the bounty and beauty of the creation, or insight into the constitution of the human mind.

He goes on to say that a man of wealth and influence should show his good sense by making the right appearance in the country, by making improvements in agriculture, and surrounding his estates with "tenants living comfortably, which will always bring with it the best of all graces which a country can have—flourishing fields and happy-looking houses." If the chief figure of the country is a great mansion, all else must be in keeping.²⁷ So it is that the following two years found Wordsworth planning just such surroundings for the Beaumonts as he here outlines.

Other letters to Sir George show the direction of Wordsworth's thinking. On the death of Lord Nelson, he wrote to tell Sir George of some "verses" on the subject: "You will find that the Verses are allusive to Lord Nelson, and they will shew that I must have sympathized with you in admiration of the Man, and sorrow for our loss." Though he goes on to point out that the loss was not so great as it might have been, it is for the reason that Nelson was in poor health. This same letter also refers to the death of Pitt; Wordsworth admits he has never been of the foremost of Pitt's admirers and apologizes for believing Pitt's character not so great as Beaumont thinks. Even here, however, he is willing partially to acquit his former antagonist: "I believe him . . . to have been as disinterested a Man,

and as true a lover of his Country as it was possible for so ambitious a man to be.”²⁸ Another letter, August 5, 1806, refers to Lord Lowther as “a person who had shown to me so much kindness, treated me with such respectful delicacy, and given such striking proof of his desire to apply his property to beneficent purposes.” The occasion for this comment was the assistance of Lowther in the purchase of land on Place Fell for Wordsworth. The regard he now had for nobility is well suggested in the letter to Lord Lonsdale for August 19, 1806. He thanks his benefactor for the honor of the gift, and adds that the beauty of the place “will be greatly endeared by being connected in my mind with so pleasing a remembrance of your particular kindness towards me, and of your general benevolence.” With his increased land-possession, Wordsworth became gradually in imagination at least something like his own Michael: “Applethwaite, I hope, will remain in my family for many generations. With my will it should never be parted with, unless the character of the place be entirely changed. Unfortunately, there is the possibility that a cotton-mill may be placed nearby.”²⁹ But the sentiments here expressed as associated with Applethwaite (the gift of Sir George) and Place Fell (in part the gift of Lord Lonsdale) are those of the “property-owner.”

Small wonder, then, that Wordsworth declined a proposal by Francis Wrangham to publish their satire in imitation of Juvenal, including as the poem does the disrespectful lines on the former Lord Lonsdale. In a letter of November 7, 1806, Wordsworth is quite definite in his resolution not to publish—but to destroy if possible—his former satire:

Now for the subject of your last; I am afraid what I have to say will not be welcome to you. I have long since come to a fixed resolution to steer clear of personal satire; in fact I never will have anything to do with it as far as concerns the *private* vices of individuals on any account; with respect to public delinquents or offenders I will not say the same; though I should be slow to meddle even with these. This is a rule which I have laid down to myself, and shall rigidly adhere to.

We notice that here again in sizing up the situation, Wordsworth chooses the label "meddle," which carries with it a "let-alone" attitude. Certainly this verbalization is much different from that of ten years earlier, when Wordsworth said he was determined to finish the satire speedily and under no circumstances to give it up. He now asks Wrangham to destroy what verses of the satire he possesses; Wordsworth himself has no copy—or at least can find none. He would give up to his friend any fame or profit the satire might bring, if only no one knew he had a hand in it; but, as several persons would know the author and his name would be mentioned in connection with the poem, it would be best to destroy it. This would also, at the same time, symbolically destroy what Wordsworth had earlier stood for.

His relation to the gentry is completely settled, I think, by the "Green tragedy." Owing to the tragic death of both parents, the Green children were left homeless and penniless. The Wordsworths were instrumental in starting a collection to assist the orphans. Many friends contributed, and Wordsworth wrote to Richard Sharp on April 25, 1808, to say that the gentry had taken up the business with zeal: "The Bishop of Llandaff and Lord Muncaster have each subscribed 10 guineas, Sir Daniel and Lady Flening and Lady Diana each 5."³⁰ To have even the Bishop of Llandaff join the contributors seems an ironic comment on Wordsworth's letter written a decade earlier. The effect of all this was definitely to modify his attitude toward society. And this modified attitude will be reflected in his poetry.

The succeeding events in France after Wordsworth's crisis made it all the easier for him to change: under Napoleon, liberty seemed now to have become aggressor. At first, to be sure, Wordsworth said he held to his theories of liberty-equality, and only turned against France. In the light of Kenneth Burke's information on "clusters" and "synecdoche," however, since Wordsworth's concept of "liberty" was also tied in with "France," a rejection of one would symbolically involve the other.³¹ And so, "indignation at French ambition aroused in Wordsworth, as it had in many of his friends, a burning patriotism combined with a violent hostility to France."³² The trip to Germany also helped reinforce this love of home and

country in much the way similar residence abroad affected the "expatriate" group in the 1920's (see for example the excellent portrayal of Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return*). In Germany Wordsworth wrote some of his most characteristic *English* poems: "There was a boy"; "Nutting"; the "Lucy" group; and "Ruth." The letters written from Germany suggest this same conclusion. Coleridge also reflected this longing for England in his letters and in "Something Childish, but Very Natural," and "Homesick."

By 1803 Wordsworth had so far forgotten his early pictures of the calamities and horrors of war that he volunteered his services. He had just returned from a tour of Scotland with Dorothy and Coleridge and was greatly agitated about the French wars, though with a different anxiety from that he had felt some years before. A peace signed at Amiens lasted only little more than a year; possibilities of an invasion had aroused a feverish pitch of patriotism. Of course, among Wordsworth's friends, Sir George was much interested in these events. He had raised a corps of infantry at Coleorton and was partly responsible for another at Haverhill, as well as for a corps of pioneers at Essex. William went off to volunteer his services with the rest of the men at Grasmere; Dorothy's letter to her friend Mrs. Clarkson, October 9, 1803, voices the troubled spirits of the whole family concerning the war and William's relation to it:

Mary and I have no other hope than that they will not be called upon out of these quiet far off places except in the case of the French being *successful* after their landing, and in that case what matter? We may all go together. But we wanted him to wait till the Body of *the people* should be called. For my part I thought much of the inconvenience and fatigue of going to be exercised twice or thrice a week, however if he really enters into it heart and soul and likes it, that will do him good, and surely there never was a more determined hater of the French nor one more willing to do his utmost to destroy them if they really do come. We do not know at present whether the Grasmere Volunteers are all to be accepted

or not, nor anything about the time and place of their being exercised.

It may be suggested that Wordsworth is here willing to fight because he has something to protect—a home and family—and identifying himself with his community, he goes with the Grasmere Volunteers. At the same time, Wordsworth regretted the remissness at Keswick concerning the defense of England, as he wrote to Sir George, October 14, 1803, adding that “at Grasmere, we have turned out almost to a man. We are to go to Ambleside on Sunday to be mustered, and put on, for the first time, our military apparel.” The group remained prepared during the year, as we learn from Dorothy’s letter to Mrs. Clarkson for January 15, 1804, even though the danger of invasion seemed to be past: “We have given over even thinking of Invasion though our Grasmere Volunteers do walk past the door twice a week in their Red Coats to be exercised at Ambleside.”³³

The sonnets written during this time reflect these other actions, showing how far Wordsworth has now gone toward the Edmund Burke position of 1792. The Poem called “October, 1803,” speaks out bitterly against France, who in “phrensy and in drunken mirth” is “impatient to put out the only light of liberty that yet remains on earth.” Another sonnet, “England! The Time Is Come,” refers to the abject enemy and sees earth’s best hopes resting with England. “To the Men of Kent” calls for “no parleying now”; instead, “to France be words of invitation sent.” This is a theme continued in “The Pass of Killicranky,” where the foe is invited to come to English soil that the men of England might send them to an inglorious grave. The culmination comes in the “Lines on the Expected Invasion,” which ends with a plea for all Englishmen to unite against the common foe:

Come ye—whate’er your creed—O waken all,
Whate’er your temper, at your Country’s call;
Resolving (this a free-born Nation can)
To have one Soul, and perish to a man,
Or save this honoured Land from every Lord
But British reason and the British sword.³⁴

These lines are not cited to prove Wordsworth's "apostasy" from anything. I merely wish to point out that because of a different situation Wordsworth's symbolic actions in his poems are here also different from his verbalization of a decade earlier. The conflict was largely resolved by this time, and consequently his thoughts and actions derive from a different direction. The blessings of the upper class have been given to his poetry: some of the short pieces of this year were sent by Sir George Beaumont to the newspapers.

Wordsworth was now in his middle years; he was a husband and a father as well as a property owner. Parallel to this was the fact that his poetry was beginning to affect the lives of his fellow men more widely. Obscurity was in the past; he could look forward to intellectual leadership, a future of some influence.³⁵ To think and write and act now as he had earlier, when he was a dispossessed unfortunate of the earth, would be to destroy those institutions which upheld his own vested interests. While he retained some of his former ideas, many were much altered. He no longer believed so heartily in the goodness of human nature; his sympathies became identified with those of the privileged classes; though the poor and the humble still figure in his poetry, it is with a difference, as I have already pointed out; though he still uses the abstraction *liberty*, he is not so much interested in literal applications of the idea of *equality*. It may be that this change in viewpoint is a result in part of the natural shift at middle age, or in part the result of his disappointment at the course of political events, and in part from his association with new friends with conservative views.³⁶ It would seem to me, however, that these reasons are symptomatic of a more fundamental function: he was disappointed in political events, and he sought conservative friends because his situation had altered so that he now had more to gain by these actions. From now on his opinions have a definite and a marked trend.

This trend is clearly evidenced in the nationalistic pamphlet he wrote on the "Convention of Cintra." The Convention itself was signed August 30, 1808; on September 4, Sir Hew Dalrymple sent off a dispatch containing the Convention and the Armistice, which were published on September 16. At Allan Bank the news was received badly; in general, they all felt it had betrayed Spain

and Portugal—had, as Southey put it, degraded into a common war that which was the struggle of a nation against a foreign usurper, a war of virtue against vice, of light against darkness. Also from Southey came news of a meeting about the Convention; the plans fell through, however, and on November 6 Wordsworth decided to write his pamphlet.³⁷ There is no need here to record the difficulties of publishing, which involved the whole Wordsworth family as well as young De Quincey. The story is recorded in the letters of this time. They show Wordsworth to be intensely interested in the work; several letters remark that he has never before been so saddened by a public event. He was also fearful of libel; he writes about one libel whose author spent four years in prison. Interestingly enough, the libel was against the Bishop of Llandaff. The women in the family, however, continued to fire the furnace.³⁸

From the first, the campaign in Spain and Portugal had been the work of the Tories, opposed strongly by the Whigs.

It was the work of the inheritors of Burke, opposed by the successors of those who in defense of the American Colonies had been his allies. Wordsworth was in the Tract supporting a Tory policy by arguments addressed to all vindicators of freedom, and in part identical with those applied by Burke himself against the Tories of that day.

Thus the Tract was significant in performing "the momentous service of bringing into line the vindicators of national freedom and the opponents of Napoleon in united prosecution of the War."³⁹ Wordsworth argued that Napoleon could be defeated only by arousing the national spirit of the subject nations of his empire. The Convention allowed Junot and his army to go free from Portugal with their booty. In the Tract, however, Wordsworth goes deeper than the Convention; he attempts "to define the moral basis of nationalism, to show that nationality has a mystical justification that makes it the true outward mark of the general will of a society, and that renders the nation-state the ultimate political result of the return to Nature." He felt that "patriotism springs from the common homely feelings that fill the hearts of all men"; from this are derived our higher principles

of benevolence. The problem of politics is "to provide *social* life for intensely *personal* instincts." The nation thus becomes an exalted being, made up of common men, but greater than they; nationality must equal the state and form the basis of the political organ; the highest political entity is the nation, which is an organic union of independent beings. At the same time, he still holds to some of the earlier ideas, as when he says he believes the Napoleonic system is a child of noble parents, though the child may be perverted; it is a fallen spirit out of a blessed angel.⁴⁰

The pamphlet was finally published in May-June of 1809, without, it may be added, much sale. To Wrangham, Wordsworth wrote, "I am aware it will create me a world of enemies, and call forth the old yell of Jacobinism." But there is an added suggestion that he is not too much afraid his essay will displease orthodoxy: he sent it to the ambassadors of Spain and Portugal and to three or four other public men. Included in this group—or perhaps added to it—was Lord Lonsdale: a letter to De Quincey, May 24, 1809, asks that a copy be sent to Lonsdale either by De Quincey or by Longman. Wordsworth then changes his mind and asks De Quincey first to correct a copy with his own pen. The next day Wordsworth himself wrote to Lonsdale, indicating how little he actually feared displeasing high places: if the pamphlet interests his Lordship, Wordsworth is sure of a fair and thoughtful judgment on it, and in that case he fears no censure except that any man is likely, with good intentions, to fall occasionally into error. At the same time Wordsworth tells Lord Lonsdale that the principles of the pamphlet "must have the sanction of a mind distinguished, like that of your Lordship, for regard to morality and religion and the true dignity and honour of your country."⁴¹ It is interesting to compare Wordsworth's use of "Your Lordship" with his comments upon such usage some fifteen years earlier in the *Letter to Llandaff*.

One of Wordsworth's most interesting letters in the light of what we have just seen of his actions at this time was one written to a Captain Pasley, March 28, 1811. Pasley had written an essay on the military policy of the Empire and had asked Wordsworth for comments. Wordsworth agrees that England ought not to make peace with France on any account until France is humiliated; he adds, "It is our duty and our interest, to be at

war with her." In other words, he is here fortunate enough to make duty and interest coincide. More important, however, are his reasons for desiring war—which he had earlier called the ravager of the poor of all nations; his thought now is that war is advisable "because I think our naval superiority may be more cheaply maintained, and more easily, by war than peace." He would like to see a British army march from Calabria to the heart of the Alps and from Holland to the center of Germany. England, moreover, has the right to retain any country she has conquered, not because of her might, but "because a great and noble Nation, like ours, cannot prosper or exist without such possession." He adds the hope that the governments of Europe, once the tyrant is defeated, will place themselves under the guidance of England and follow her example "as far as they are capable."⁴²

In so far as he recognized these changes in viewpoint, Wordsworth usually attributed them to a fear of rising industrialism. At the same time, it is to be remarked that the institutions he now spoke and acted for were ones which bolstered claims to the inviolability of property rights—and Wordsworth increased his own property holdings during these years. An interesting comment is recorded by Crabb Robinson for May 8, 1812: Wordsworth "expatiated . . . on his fears lest a social war should arise between the poor and the rich, the danger of which is aggravated by the vast extension of the manufacturing system." Robinson also remarks that he attended an evening party, during May of this year, where he was uncomfortable because democratic guests were present and he feared they would arouse Wordsworth.⁴³ These reports are definitely in keeping with the other facts about Wordsworth at this period, but are a far cry from his own statement to Mathews, May 23, 1794: "You know perhaps already that I am of that odious class of men called democrats, and of that class I shall for ever continue." The final comment on this change relative to the term "democratic" came in 1833, in a sonnet to "Lowther" (Cambridge ed., p. 721). Cathedral pomp and grace are seen in accord with the baronial castle: "Union significant of God adored." If these disappear, it will be because "hourly the democratic torrent swells"; the airy promises and hopes of the democrats scorn "the strength of backward-looking

thoughts." Wordsworth feels, moreover, that if these towers and pinnacles disappear, so also does England's glory.

These verbalizations of his attitudes are paralleled by his turning at the same time to nobility for aid: on several occasions this year he applied to Lord Lonsdale for assistance in obtaining a government position which would add to his income without overmuch using his time. In a letter to Lonsdale, February 6, 1812, he inquired if there were any office at Lonsdale's disposal, whether "it might be in your Lordship's power to place me in a situation where, with better hope of success, I might advance towards the main object of my life"—that is, he would not want the office to interfere with his poetry. Since no office was available at the moment, Lord Lonsdale did the next best thing in offering Wordsworth an annuity until such office might be vacant; Wordsworth wrote his note of acceptance on December 27: "I feel no scruple in saying that I shall with pride and pleasure accept the annual sum offered by Your Lordship until the office has become vacant, or any other change takes place in my circumstances, which might render it unnecessary."⁴⁴ The following March, through Lonsdale's influence, Wordsworth received the office of Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland, with an income of from four hundred to eight hundred pounds. Most of the work was done by a clerk; Wordsworth salved his own conscience (for receiving the income without expending any effort) by thinking of the responsibility of keeping the stamps in his house. The effect of this appointment on his political and social views was not, as some have assumed, to lead him to orthodox conservatism; as we have already seen, he was well along the road by this time. Its function was rather to serve as one more economic tie to the group which was receiving more and more of his allegiance.

Again in 1813, he favored war with Napoleon and wrote that he was in principle a supporter of the present ministry. In a letter to Lonsdale on February 9, 1814, he calls for armed force to keep a "balance of power."⁴⁵ The same letter also calls for the proper curbing of the press. In poetry, this friendship was reflected in the dedicatory sonnet of *The Excursion* to Lord Lonsdale. Symbolically compensating for the thoughts of his early days on the then Lord Lonsdale, he now recalls how happy

as a lad he was to roam through the "fair domains . . . on youthful pleasures bent." As of yore, a turn to the pastoral again aided him in eradicating old evil spirits. In November of that year he visited Lowther Castle, where he just missed seeing the Duke of Devonshire, who wished to meet him.

The renewal of French hostilities found Wordsworth much agitated and without any sympathy—indeed with a good deal of bitterness—for any Englishman who gave countenance to the Napoleonic tradition. How complete a readjustment he had made to his situation is suggested by the poems of 1816 on the fall of Napoleon. France he sees as having daunted the earth and defied God, spreading pollution wherever she went. But England is victorious, not by the "vengeful sword," but by "dint of magnanimity."⁴⁶ The "heroes" are English soldiers prepared for instant sacrifice "to God and Nature true."⁴⁷ This may be compared with the earlier "Heroes of Truth" stanza later rejected in *Guilt and Sorrow*, where the heroes were the French Revolutionists fighting against oppression. The function of this change is definitely associated with the rights of property and security: "The nation would err grievously if she suffered the abuse which other states have made of military power to prevent her from perceiving that no people ever was or can be independent, free, or secure, much less great, in any sane application of the word, without a cultivation of military virtues."⁴⁸ For this reason, even in times of peace, Wordsworth advocates that "a reasonable proportion of the youth of the country . . . be instructed in military science."

Corresponding action with respect to domestic politics came in 1818 when Wordsworth devoted the greater part of a year to election matters.⁴⁹ Henry Brougham and the Whigs were making their first attack on the Lonsdale interests and on the Tories in the County of Westmorland. Wordsworth was active as one of Brougham's foremost antagonists. One task was the manipulation of the local franchise in such a way as to increase the Tory vote. On February 12 he wrote to Lord Lonsdale:

I wish much for your opinion as to the propriety of precautionary measures in augmenting the numbers of trustworthy freeholders. An offer has been made to me of an estate which would divide into *twelve* small free-

holds; and, with your Lordship's sanction, I would purchase it, being able to reckon on as many persons—gentlemen, my friends and relations—who could be depended upon. If it be found that your adversaries adopt the plan of increasing the numbers in their interest, it will be necessary to keep pace with them, and I don't think that the matter can be safely left to casualties.

Apparently the plan was carried out, since December found him writing to a friend that the Whigs were procuring freeholds, which was the excuse of his purchasing an estate and dividing it into seven parts, most of which were taken by his own relations—they were of course votes of the right kind. By now Wordsworth was decidedly against reform, believing that the "feudal power yet surviving in England" was the best counterweight to this popular tendency to reform. He even goes so far as to express fear of a possible revolution over these issues. Another letter to Lonsdale quite frankly repudiates the ideas connected with Jacobinism:

What else but the stability and might of a large estate, with proportional influence in the House of Commons, can counterbalance the democratic activity of the wealthy, commercial, and manufacturing districts? It appears to a superficial observer, warm from contemplating the theory of the Constitution, that the political power of the great landholders ought, by every true lover of his country, to be strenuously resisted; but I would ask a well-intentioned native of Westmorland or Cumberland, who had fallen into this mistake, if he could point to any arrangement by which Jacobinism can be frustrated except by the existence of large estates continued from generation to generation in particular families and parliamentary power in proportion.⁵⁰

Brougham had advocated voting rights for all payers of direct taxes; he also stood for annual elections of Parliament, and these seemed to Wordsworth to constitute great danger. Vote manipulation was not enough; he also undertook to pen "Two addresses to the freeholders of Westmorland." The addresses are on the

whole ordinary in their defense of orthodoxy in matters political; as Harper says, the line of argument is that followed by those "everywhere and in all times, who defend the 'machine,' the 'boss,' and 'things as they are' in politics."⁵¹ The real crux of the matter, however, Wordsworth comes to later in the addresses: since there is no absolute guarantee of integrity and discretion, men should turn to the best substitute which human nature affords, in other words to *property*. These addresses, as well as the letters of the family, show marked antipathy to democratic ideas; as for Dorothy, "the contempt with which she visited the rank and file of her opponents shows nothing of the democratic sympathies which characterized her normal life, and with which she had entered into the distress of the workers at Halifax."⁵² She writes that there is no supporter of Brougham except "Towers the Apothecary who looked in the least like a gentleman." She could not even walk in the streets of Kendal without hearing "numbers of disgusting females shouting Brougham and independence."⁵³

The Lonsdales won the election, and that gained new friends for the Wordsworths: "Their zeal for the Tory cause had raised their status higher in the eyes of the country than a wilderness of Excursions."⁵⁴ The Norths came; Lord Lonsdale spent a few days as their guest; Colonel Lonsdale and Lady Elinor paid a friendly call. Mrs. Clarkson regretted that her friends were becoming "so thoroughly Torified," and she admitted to Crabb Robinson, though not to her husband—he had written for Brougham—that it dampened the pleasure of their intercourse. Some of the consequence came in 1820 when Wordsworth procured the aid of Lonsdale in helping his brother to the Mastership of Trinity College.⁵⁵

Along with the majority of the Tories in the early 1820's, Wordsworth was opposed to the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts, detrimental as such a move would have been to property and other vested interests. To James Losh he wrote on December 4, 1821:

When I was young giving myself credit for qualities which I did not possess, and measuring mankind by that standard, I thought it derogatory to human nature to set

up Property in preference to Person, as a title for legislative power. That notion has vanished. I now perceive many advantages in our present complex system of Representation, which formerly eluded my observation. This has tempered my ardour for Reform.⁵⁶

This denial of his position of the early years recalls that in the 1790's a similar motion was made to repeal these Test Acts—a motion backed by believers in the French Revolution. Along with his desire now to retain the Test Acts was his feeling that the press should be vigorously restricted; he carried this idea into practice by prohibiting current magazines in his own household. Here, too, he had previously held the opposite idea: freedom of inquiry he had thought essential; nothing should restrain the liberty of the press. Of course, Wordsworth's own changed economic position is vitally important in understanding these new attitudes: in February, 1820, he consulted Lord Lowther about a two thousand pound investment.

In connection with Wordsworth's position in these and similar matters, Crabb Robinson wrote to Dorothy in 1826 that, "It is a sort of moral and intellectual suicide in your brother not to have continued his admirable series of poems 'dedicated to liberty'"—because, as it is, Robinson fears future critics may be able to say that Wordsworth was indifferent to many tyrannies during his life: the Spaniards, the Germans, the Greeks, the American Negroes were all fighting for freedom while Wordsworth remained silent throughout all their battles. Robinson says he is mortified to be unable to repel bitter and scornful attacks on Wordsworth by low-minded adversaries and is also much pained to hear the lamentations of excellent persons. Edith Batho believes this letter by Robinson implies that he knew Wordsworth to be not indifferent on these subjects, and that he grieved to have no answer for the critics.⁵⁷ The evidence of the letter, as well as other remarks of Robinson already referred to, would indicate the opposite. He feared the comments only because he could not point to any expressions of Wordsworth's on these subjects. For a letter to Wordsworth's own sister, who felt as nearly like her brother as possible on all these points, this is a fairly strong statement—and Robinson softens the blow with

assertions of his own personal affections. To stretch it into a proof of Wordsworth's *liberalism* is to ignore all the facts involved and to wrench statements out of context. Most of the fears and prophecies of Robinson were fulfilled during these years. Wordsworth had little to say about domestic problems and policies, and when he did speak it was from a narrow position.⁵⁸ It may be possible that after *The Excursion* Wordsworth saw man as "churchman," "party man," and so on. That is, he tended to place man in institutional categories. The function of so doing was to allow him to ignore the struggle of the Spanish patriots against the restored king in 1820, to remain indifferent to the fight of the Risorgimento in Italy, and to withhold his comment on the Greek war for independence in which Byron was so much interested.⁵⁹

Though Robinson and Mrs. Clarkson might wish for less conservatism in their friends, other honors served to ensconce the Wordsworths in their position. To the John Kenyons, Wordsworth wrote in 1831 that he had dined with two several magistrates, and at Busted had been five times at the table of an earl and twice in the company of a prince.⁶⁰ To George Huntley Gordon he wrote in 1828, "I am upon as intimate terms of intercourse with Lord Lowther, as our very different pursuits will admit."⁶¹ As if aware of the distinction these affairs gave him, he wrote again during the same year, "My friends of the Lowther family have the best disposition towards me." One of the tangible evidences of this affection came in 1829: Lord Lowther granted John Wordsworth, who had taken orders, the living at Moresby, near Whitehaven. To the Reverend William Jackson, Wordsworth wrote: "It is a great honor to be brought so near such a man as Lord Lonsdale by his own choice."⁶² This contrast in viewpoint is well highlighted by the addition sometime in the 1820's of the eulogy to Edmund Burke in *The Prelude*:

Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced
By specious wonders, and too slow to tell
Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men,
Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides,
And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,
Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—

Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave.
 I see him—old, but vigorous in age—
 Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start
 Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe
 The younger brethren of the grove. But some—
 While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
 Against all systems built on abstract rights,
 Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims
 Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
 Declares the vital power of social ties
 Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
 Exploding upstart Theory, insists
 Upon the allegiance to which men are born—
 Some—say at once a froward multitude—
 Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)
 As the winds fret within the Aeolian cave,
 Galled by their monarch's chains. The times were big
 With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked
 Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;
 But memorable moments intervened,
 When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,
 Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,
 Startling the Synod. Could a youth, and one
 In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved
 Under the weight of classic eloquence,
 Sit, see, hear, unthankful, uninspired?⁶³

These lines, adequately summing up the situation in 1825, were completely misrepresentative of what Wordsworth actually felt at the time over a quarter of a century earlier. Like Burke, Wordsworth now saw institutions and laws as hallowed by time into vital ties of society; like Burke, he would now explode upstart theory, if that theory stood for reform. In the early 1790's, however, Wordsworth had responded differently, largely because his economic-social situation was different. He had then been not only unthankful for Burke, but had even condemned him. In the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*, Wordsworth made two disrespectful references to Burke: "Mr. Burke, in a philosophic lamentation over the extinction of chivalry, told us that in those

times vice lost half its evil by losing all its grossness. Infatuated moralist!" Later he alludes to Burke's remarks on the British Constitution:

Mr. Burke roused the indignation of all ranks of men when, by a refinement in cruelty superior to that which in the East yokes the living to the dead, he strove to persuade us that we and our posterity to the end of time were riveted to a Constitution by the indissoluble compact of—a dead parchment, and were bound to cherish a corse at the bosom when reason might call aloud that it should be entombed.⁶⁴

This statement, denying nearly all that he wrote in the later eulogy, was supported by the letter to Mathews in 1794: "I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution."

Another liberal movement in domestic politics which he had earlier written for in the *Letter to Llandaff* and in letters to Mathews, he now denounced: the Reform Bill. Robinson records in 1832 that he had a "melancholy letter from Wordsworth. He gives a sad account of his sister, and talks of leaving the country on account of the impending ruin to be apprehended from the Reform Bill." Wordsworth felt that any enlargement of the franchise would lead to universal suffrage, which he saw as an evil, preferring instead "an England ruled forever by a benevolent aristocracy."⁶⁵ In thus resisting reform, he would naturally first have to negate his early feelings on the subject; this he does in a letter appropriately written to Lord Lonsdale, the symbol now of benevolent aristocracy: "I resided fifteen months in France, during the heat of the Revolution, and have some personal experience of the course which these movements must take, if not fearlessly resisted, before the transfer of legislative power takes place."⁶⁶

One of his most revealing letters is that to Reverend James Rose, in December, 1828. Wordsworth says he is opposed to any sort of educational system for the poor at public expense; his reason—perhaps a weak sort of rationalization—"Can it, in a *general* view, be good that an infant should learn much which its parents do not know? Will not the child arrogate a superiority unfavourable to love and obedience?" The statement is true from

Wordsworth's position of wishing to maintain the *status quo*. He feared too much knowledge on the part of the mass of people and held that "Mechanics' Institutes make discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptuous workmen."⁶⁷ He was also therefore opposed to the establishing of unions as an answer to labor's problems, and considered such organizations enslaving: "being enrolled in a union" means that the worker "must be left without a will of his own, and therefore a slave."⁶⁸ Consequently, he saw in the France of the 1830's only deplorable leveling tendencies. To Gordon he wrote in 1830 that the stupidity and crimes of the King of France and his ministers had "given an impulse to the revolutionary and democratic spirit, throughout Europe, which is premature, and from which much immediate evil may be apprehended, whatever things may settle into at last." He felt that France was aiming at the impossible: the union of a monarchy and a democracy without an intervening aristocracy; he could not see how, he adds, an hereditary monarchy could exist without an hereditary peerage— and nothing could maintain its ground under the Napoleonic Code, which compelled an equal division of property by will.⁶⁹ Instead of starting revolutions and reforms, he wrote to the Reverend J. K. Miller, "Men who are anxious for social improvement" should "wait patiently for God's good time." He pessimistically awaited the drastic changes he felt were coming: "I forbode the not very distant overthrow of the Institutions under which this country has so long prospered. The Liberals of our neighborhood tell me that the mind of the nation has outgrown its Institutions; rather say, I reply, that it has shrunk and dwindled from them, as a body of a sick man does from his clothes."⁷⁰

The success of the advocates of Reform did not weaken Wordsworth's political opinions. To Crabb Robinson he wrote on November, 1833:

My opinion is that the people are bent upon the destruction of their ancient Institutions; and that nothing since, I will not say the passing, but since the broaching of the Reform Bill could or can prevent it. I would bend my endeavours to strengthen to the utmost the rational portion of the Tory party, but from no other hope than this,

that the march towards destruction may be less rapid by their interposing something of a check; and the destruction of the monarchy thereby attended with less injury to social order. They are more blind than bats or moles, who cannot see that it is a change or rather an overthrow of social order, as dependent upon the present distribution of property, which is the object of the Radicals.⁷¹

Subsequently, he also opposed the secret ballot and wrote a stirring sonnet on the subject, ending with the fear that

If the State comply,
From such Pandorian gift may come a Pest
Worse than the Dragon that bowed low his crest,
Pierced by thy spear in glorious victory.⁷²

Forgetful of his early sympathy with criminals, of his defense of transportation instead of capital punishment, and of his poem "The Convict" where he was a brother to the criminal, he now wrote a series of sonnets on the theme of the death penalty. In one of the group he sees life imprisonment as worse than death and "life-long exile on a savage coast" prevented by "thoughtful mercy" which "sanctions the forfeiture that Law demands."⁷³ Several of the sonnets cry out against humane banishment as a solution, since that would only lead to other crimes.

Again, these conservative opinions were accomplished by visits from and to nobility. In the summer of 1840, the Queen Dowager and her sister called on Wordsworth at Rydal, where he accompanied them through the park and through his own grounds. Two years later Robinson found occasion to remark that Wordsworth had "dined every day, except when he condescended to wander into the *terra incognita* of Russell Square, with bishops and privy councillors; peers, and archbishops."⁷⁴ Two years more and Lonsdale, Gladstone, and Lord Monteagle were seeking a pension on the civil list for Wordsworth—an attempt that was successful. This was followed by the offer and finally the acceptance of the Laureateship, April 4, 1843. A final significant scene is described in a letter to Reed in 1845:

The reception given me by the young Queen at her ball was most gracious. Mrs. Everett the wife of your minister among many others was a witness to it; without knowing who I was. It moved her to the shedding of tears. This effect was in part produced, I suppose by American habits of feeling, as pertaining to a republican government like yours. To see a grey-haired man 75 years of age kneeling down in a large assembly, to kiss the hand of a young woman is a sight for which institutions essentially democratic do not prepare a spectator of either sex, and must naturally place the opinions upon which a Republic is founded, and the sentiments which support it, in strong contrast with a government based and upheld as ours is.⁷⁵

The effect of this changed situation on Wordsworth's later poetry is important. Views on democracy in the early years paralleled simplicity in style of poetry. To give up the one, and accept reactionary politics, was equal to giving up the other and hence meant a turn toward restriction in the purpose and method of poetry.⁷⁶ Of considerable interest in this respect are the alterations Wordsworth made in later years in his earlier compositions. There is no need here to make a detailed comparison of various versions. In most instances the tendency was towards softening or toning down strong passages. Miss Batho, however, believes that the later version of *Descriptive Sketches* at the end is stronger than the conclusion of the earlier version. He is not, she thinks, a disbeliever in a better world ahead, according to the later version; she sees no evidence that he has lost faith in "justice" and its ultimate triumph.⁷⁷ To be sure, throughout his life Wordsworth believed in "justice"; he was also consistent in his love of "liberty." But abstractions such as these may refer to many different things.⁷⁸ In what actions, in what groups, at the various stages of his development, did Wordsworth place his hopes of achieving "freedom" and "justice"? As in Abraham Lincoln's story, the wolf condemned the shepherd who had driven him away from the sheep as the destroyer of liberty, but the sheep thanked the shepherd as the preserver of liberty. In Wordsworth's case, in the earlier versions of poetry his hopes

were placed unqualifiedly in the French Revolution—in the “fair favoured region! which my soul shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl.” Later this became a trust in the “Great God! by whom the strifes of men are weighed in an impartial balance.”⁷⁹ A more accurate estimate than Miss Batho’s is that of Harper; some alterations he says, “were attempts to moderate, discreetly if not prudishly, one or two passages of glowing description, and to take the very heart out of pages pulsing with ardent enthusiasm for liberty.”⁸⁰

The general trend of all the revisions is that found excellently illustrated in *Guilt and Sorrow*. Professor de Selincourt, who was perhaps in a better position to speak than anyone else, after editing the poems which include all manuscript versions, traced the changes, and concluded:

Manuscript 1 shows him an ardent humanitarian, keenly alive to the horrors of war and to the wrongs of a social system in which the lot of the poor and oppressed compares unfavorably with that of the primitive savage, but with his optimistic faith still undimmed in the ultimate triumph of reason: in MS 2 (Oct. 1795) this faith has vanished, he is at the “lowest ebb” of his moral crisis; and whilst his humanitarianism is as passionate as ever, his picture of the injustice of social conditions is drawn in still darker colors. . . .

All this is smoothed away on publication in 1842: the vagrant’s story, in print since 1798, had already, in 1805, undergone some modification, e.g., the injustice suffered by her father at the hands of the wealthy landlord is softened and the praise accorded to the gypsies, as rebels to society, is cut out; and Wordsworth, as a strenuous supporter of the war against Napoleon and himself a volunteer, could hardly leave standing his denunciation of soldiers as “a brood” who “doglike . . . lap (their very nourishment!) their brothers’ blood.”⁸¹

Though it was begun at a later period, *The Prelude* is also revealing in its yearly alterations. Miss Burton, in a comparison of the changes, finds that in the “revisions of passages dealing with politics there is no sign of weakening.”⁸² Again, the judgment-

term "weakening" is misleading: it implies strength to radical opinions and weakness to reactionary ones as used here. As for observable facts, there were countless changes. To be sure, even the earliest sections were written after the "crisis"; but between 1805 and 1850, there is a definite tendency toward a more orthodox position. I have already referred to enough of these changes (such as the 1820 addition of the eulogy to Burke) to illustrate the point. Another writer in a recent article sees no real apostasy from revolutionary doctrine, no subsidence into orthodoxy: "There is no clear-cut contrast between the early and late Wordsworth; there was a natural, orderly evolution, spiritual and artistic. His calm had to be struggled for and for the most part he burnt his own smoke."⁸³ Miss Batho agrees and sees in Wordsworth in his later years "a man of strong passions and feelings, strong and vigorous intellect, clear and independent thought and judgment in life, letters and politics, in the last as in the first half of his life." He did, she acknowledges, change some of his political opinions, but did not adopt views in contradiction to those he held in his early years.⁸⁴ I think, however, that I have shown sufficient contradictions to deny this conclusion. The important point is not to label one of the positions good and the other bad, but to note the function of poetry in each period. Most of the judgments like these just quoted are highly abstract; they ignore life facts—such as what did Wordsworth *do* parallel to what he *said*. One final illustration of my point may be given. In 1848, Wordsworth remarked to Crabb Robinson, half in joke and half in earnest, "I have no respect whatever for Whigs, but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me."⁸⁵ This statement is quoted by Edith Batho to prove Wordsworth's liberalism in later years. But coming down to specific points in action, we find an entirely different story. The Chartist movement set forth six points which its friends advocated: universal manhood suffrage, the secret ballot, abolition of property qualifications for membership in the House of Commons, payment of salary to members of the lower house, equal electoral districts, and annual parliamentary elections. To Wordsworth, each of these points was objectionable in the extreme; against each of them he worked during the latter part of his life, as I have illustrated throughout this chapter: he was opposed to the Reform Bill, he wrote a sonnet against the

secret ballot, he disliked annual elections, and above all he hated universal manhood suffrage. Moreover, the very origin of the Chartist movement was repugnant to him: it had its beginning in a Workingman's Association founded by William Lovett in London in 1836. Such unions Wordsworth spoke and wrote against. On the level of action, then, it is hardly fair to accept at face value Wordsworth's statement.

The pattern of acceptance of orthodox political and social actions, accompanied by the appropriate verbalizations, emerges clearly after 1805. This pattern was not primarily a sudden political change so much as it was a shift in his total situation. The sources of republicanism were removed one by one; as he became more securely attached to prevailing British institutions, he altered his expressions to fit the situation.



Religious Orthodoxy

The trend, or pattern, of Wordsworth's movement toward religious orthodoxy in the years after the French Revolution is also significant as a part of his total context of situation. "Nature," the all-powerful verbalization of the eighteenth century, is for Wordsworth a vehicle which bridges the gap between the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. In many of his poems after 1793 and 1794 the images connected with "nature" are wild, tempestuous, terrible in the face of the misfortunes of men. In *Guilt and Sorrow*, for instance:

The gathering clouds grow red with stormy fire,
In streaks diverging wide and mounting high; . . .
Hurtle the clouds in deeper darkness piled,
Gone is the raven timely rest to seek;
He seemed the only creature in the wild
On whom the elements their rage might wreak. . . .
All, all was cheerless to the horizon's bound.¹

Much also of the setting for *The Borderers* is tempestuous and stormy. Both poem and drama repeat to some degree certain conventional phases of the Gothic novel of terror.² Again, however, it is important to note why Wordsworth turned to this convention. Functionally, the awfulness of nature largely parallels the tempestuousness in Wordsworth himself during these years. Gradually, however, in successive years, nature became to him generally calmer, more healing. Childhood scenes of nature in

recollection are regarded as full of moral teaching. The famous scene in Book I of *The Prelude* (lines 357-400) of the huge and black peak uprearing its head is not described for the quality of terror it possessed, but for the moral lesson derivative from it: nature thus purifies the elements of feeling and of thought.

Having reached this position, Wordsworth found it easy enough to turn to nature with joyousness, successively seeing less and less of the brutal in her and more and more of the "Presences of Nature in the sky and on the earth."³ One may note that nature is an ambivalent (amoral) term, containing both good and evil. It is thus possible, keeping the same term dominant, to move from an emphasis on its "terror" qualities to its "healing" qualities. For example, he came to find in nature a counterpoise, "which, when the spirit of evil reached its height, Maintained for me a secret happiness."⁴ He began to feel that nature brings right conduct, "because she exemplifies gradual development and permanence and so teaches patience, distrust of rapid or radical changes and of mere theory."⁵

This would, of course, also tie in with growing political conservatism, since change there too would be distrusted. As he turned to nature, he recovered the love of humble men he had early been taught, while at the same time he ignored matters which disagreed with his teaching. After all, there are many instances of radical changes in nature, too, and one may there find flux as well as permanence. His emphasis, however, is on the strength of nature, which lies in her ability to bring calmness as well as emotion, peace as well as excitation. The significant point is not the true character of external nature, whatever that may be; rather, since we are viewing the poem as symbolic act, the important item becomes the effect of nature on the poet. And that effect on Wordsworth seems to be about what he here presents—nature brought to him at this period a "happy stillness of the mind."⁶

Out of this attitude, there later grew the magnificent apostrophe to nature—"Tintern Abbey." Here, in what actually constitutes a "hymn" so far as function is concerned, is the essence of the "pastoral." Nature is to be praised, even worshipped, because she brings comfort from the ills that beset Wordsworth; neither scorn (which he felt from his family), nor rash judgments (which he felt with his few published poems), nor even evil

tongues (which could have talked of his French radicalism) had the power to invade the sanctity of his bower, where all was quietness:

'Tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk.

By implication, since he prays that nature will be to Dorothy what it has been to him, there is also the power to heal "fear, or pain, or grief." In a way this poem becomes a "pre-prelude"—it establishes a condition necessary for the writing of the autobiographical poem, a condition perhaps best described by the term "pastoral" as that word is used by William Empson.⁷ It has been noted, for instance, that the "flower poems" come largely between 1800 and 1802.⁸ This function I think Wordsworth himself recognized in *The Prelude* when he wrote that he would bend in "reverence to Nature," and under the aegis of the "mountain chapel," in "truth and sanctity of passion," would select

Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
And miserable love, that is not pain
To hear of.⁹

That is, in nature's presence, sorrow is transformed as is also miserable love—a metamorphosis necessary in Wordsworth (because of his past experiences with both emotions) before he could turn to the next phase: "Thus haply shall I teach."¹⁰ This famous "teaching" characteristic of Wordsworth is of course a transfer of the office of the priest to that of poet; or, to put it differently, it is a "priestly conception of the poet." From this time onward,

Wordsworth more and more considered the function of the poet as teacher—a pietistic practice.¹¹

Thus the fourteenth book of *The Prelude* becomes a fitting conclusion in that it treats of abstract “imagination”—and Wordsworth thereby solves real problems in highly abstract language. This last book of the poem may be described as a hymn of praise to the healing power of nature upon imagination; it is a fitting “prayer” ritual of thanksgiving for restoration of direction to life. With such a regard for the beneficent qualities Wordsworth now saw in nature (and whether such qualities are “really” there or not is an irrelevant question), one may easily understand how he came to “worship” nature as a deity. It is not necessary here to repeat his various “pantheistic” passages. We may conclude of them, as does Havens:

For utterances like these there is but one explanation: animism, the belief in spiritual beings who, like the dryads and nymphs of classical mythology, are associated with certain places, together with the belief in the possession of individual consciousness by each animate and perhaps each inanimate object. Such beliefs are universal and potent among primitive peoples; from them spring the gods of the various mythologies and many of the superstitions, the dim fears, and unrecognized credulities of civilized man. Wordsworth is unusual in avowing them and the strength with which—owing to the vividness of his imagination and to his early life in a wild, mountainous country—he held them.¹²

This idea of *anima mundi* may have come from seventeenth and eighteenth century writers possibly known by Wordsworth.¹³ Though nature is a kind of goddess, there is a transcendent deity, and “nature” is regarded as a spirit which pervades the universe and acts as God’s agent. In general, however, this concept is not worked out so elaborately and completely by Wordsworth as by his critics. To force a unique individual into a category labelled “pantheism” (predefined) or “animism” is to ignore too many of that individual’s characteristics. The use Wordsworth makes of these conceptions is more significant in following the patterns of his behavior: the passages on nature, 1795–1800, lead

him more closely to an acceptance of Deity in an orthodox sense. That is, as his total situation became one of acceptance, his attitude toward religion shifted from the position of the French Revolution to the recognition of a higher power, whether labelled "nature" or "God."

The next step in this evolution came at the time of his marriage, when Christian imagery in his poems and letters increases, natural enough in view of his altered situation. There is, for example, the prominent part the priest plays in "The Brothers"; there is the Christian character of Michael, who asks that God strengthen his son; in "To Joanna" Wordsworth picks out the image "Runic priest" to describe himself; and in "Resolution and Independence" not only does he suggest that the old man appeared to him "by peculiar grace, A leading from above," but he also concludes the poem with the appeal, "'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure.'" In commenting on this poem in a letter to Sara Hutchinson, June 14, 1802, Wordsworth wrote:

I describe myself as having been exalted to the highest pitch of delight by the joyousness and beauty of Nature and then as depressed, even in the midst of those beautiful objects, to the lowest dejection and despair. A young Poet in the midst of the happiness of Nature is described as overwhelmed by the thought of the miserable reverses which have befallen the happiest of all men, viz. Poets—I think of this till I am so deeply impressed by it, that I consider the manner in which I was rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence.¹⁴

There is also, soon after this, the interesting poem on his daughter Caroline, which contains lines like "The holy time is quiet as a Nun Breathless with adoration," and

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Along with this is the belief expressed in the lines, "Even so doth God protect us if we be Virtuous and wise."¹⁵

It comes as no surprise, if we follow Wordsworth's poetic

imagery, that little John was christened and Mary church'd; or that, on returning from the Scotland tour of 1803, William wrote to Scott: "We reached our little cottage in high spirits and thankful to God for all his bounties."¹⁶ In his "Thoughts" at the residence of Burns, Wordsworth turned to God for forgiveness, not only of his fellow poet, but for all mankind:

But why to Him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail hearts the purest share
With all that live?—
The best of what we do and are,
Just God, forgive!¹⁷

The fact that these utterances coincide with Wordsworth's position as a "family man," careful of the home and of property, the security of the home, is no accident. He has now vested interest in the right to name God as protector and guide—an interest which increasingly led to acceptance of orthodox verbalism in religion. Miss Elizabeth Geen suggests that "The final congruence with orthodoxy had not been an easy achievement for Wordsworth. It represents above all the unceasing laboring of his mind to fit the complete data of experience into an intelligible whole." In noting his use of the word "grace," for example, Miss Geen discovered that it appears much more frequently in his verse after 1822, and by 1845 it paralleled the primary theological meaning.¹⁸

This acceptance pattern is also motivated by an event apparently of the opposite sort from family conservation—the death of his brother John in February, 1805. I say "apparently" opposite because actually a reliance on supernatural powers when an individual faces a problem created by death of a member of the family is a plea for continued family conservation—even beyond the grave. Wordsworth himself recognized part of this fact in his letter to Richard, February 11, 1805: "God bless you my dear Brother. . . . We wish you were with us. God keep the 'rest of us together! the set is now broken. Farewell." Or again, the letter to Richard for March 19: "I am sometimes half superstitious, and think that as the number of us is now broken some more of the set will be following him." Wordsworth's letters

to Sir George Beaumont at this time, after reflecting on the instability of human life and picturing the grief of the stricken family, evidence a reliance on religious aphorisms and on thoughts of God:

Alas! what is human life! This present moment I thought this morning, would have been devoted to the pleasing employment of writing a letter to amuse you in your confinement. . . . And now I am called to this melancholy office.

The next day after this letter he wrote to Southey:

Oh! it makes the heart groan, that, with such a beautiful world as this to live in, and such a soul as that of man's is by nature and gift of God, we should go about on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste; and ninety-nine of us in a hundred never easy in any road that travels towards peace and quietness! And yet, what virtue and what goodness, what heroism and courage, what triumphs of disinterested love everywhere; and human life, after all, what is it! Surely this is not to be forever, even on this perishable planet!

One common note in several letters of this trying time is the desire to show forth "fortitude"—the necessity of bearing pain and grief that cannot be remedied. To Southey, in the letter just quoted from, Wordsworth also writes: "As to fortitude, I hope I shall show that, and that all of us will show it, in a proper time, in keeping down many a silent pang hereafter." Again to Christopher, a day later, he wrote, "Hereafter I hope we shall shew a proper fortitude." And a week later this idea was repeated to Sir George: "I trust in God that I shall not want fortitude." He took much comfort, at the same time, in the idea of fatalism: "It was the will of God that he should be taken away."¹⁹

The general effect of his brother's death was to turn Wordsworth's thoughts more and more toward personal immortality. In trying to answer the question of why John was so suddenly lost, Wordsworth approached nearer still to an orthodox Christian interpretation of death. The letter to Sir George (who was

very much interested in the Church) of March 12 shows the trend of Wordsworth's thinking:

As I have said, your last letter affected me much. A thousand times I have asked myself, as your tender sympathy led me to do, "why was he taken away?" and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact, there is no other answer which can satisfy and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the supreme governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be His notion and rule, if everything were to end here? Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being destroyed by death, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things, we have *more of love* in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of *another and a better world*, I do not see. As to my departed brother, who leads our minds at present to these reflections, he walked all of his life pure among many impure.

He continues to point out that John was a model among men in morals, temper, and ideals—yet see what was his end; therefore, "so good must be better; so high must be destined to be higher." It also seems clear that these thoughts on immortality include the idea of Wordsworth's own death—for example, the evidence from the letter to Richard quoted above that he fears someone else will go, now that the set is broken. Moreover, the comments on John's character, Wordsworth felt, also applied to himself. In the letter to Sir George just quoted from, he wrote that his life had been "like that of my late Brother altogether unworldly."²⁰

Wordsworth's idea of fortitude, accompanied by hope of a better world after death, is reflected in several poems of this

year—1805. For one, there is the conclusion of “Elegiac Stanzas” (On a Picture of Peele Castle):

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

That hope, if we recall the expressions of the letter to Sir George (and it was also Sir George’s painting which inspired “Elegiac Stanzas”), lay in a growing belief in immortality. The imagery of another poem also called “Elegiac Stanzas” (in Memory of John Wordsworth) suggests the same thing; the poem concludes with the advice that none should rely “On any earthly hope, however pure!” Most striking of all, however, in this search for a power higher than earth and self, is the “Ode to Duty.” Duty becomes here the “daughter of the voice of God,” wearing “the Godhead’s most benignant grace.” This power of duty Wordsworth invokes as his guide. It was also, I believe, the necessity of finding a solution to the problem of death—of mutability—that turned him to the conclusion of the “Ode on Intimations of Immortality,” which he had begun two or three years earlier. The end of the poem—the expression of a necessity for finding reason for hope—becomes the motivating force for all the final seven stanzas, clearly stated as that motivation is in line 186: “In the faith that looks *through* death.” This faith continued to grow, until years later, on the death of Charles Lamb, Wordsworth could write:

The sacred tie
Is broken; yet why grieve? for Time but holds
His moiety in trust, till Joy shall lead
To the blest world where parting is unknown.²¹

It is interesting, if perhaps cynical, to notice that Wordsworth now has something to gain by a belief in immortality: John’s resurrection, as well as his own and his family’s—whereas earlier “Wordsworth the sinner” had all to lose by a life after death (punishment).

The position which Duty now occupied in Wordsworth’s thinking—recalling that Duty is associated with God in the clus-

ter—is made clear in 1807 with *The White Doe of Rylstone*, where duty and fortitude are clearly equated. As Wordsworth said in a later note:

The Heroine of the Poem knows that her duty is not to interfere with the current of events, either to forward or delay them, but

“To abide
The shock, and finally secure
O'er pain and grief a triumph pure.”²²

It is significant, as a sequel to “The Tables Turned” which emphasized our “meddling intellect,” to notice that here duty is the same as noninterference. The line preceding the ones Wordsworth quoted here from *The White Doe* was: “Her duty is to stand and wait.” That is, again duty equals fortitude.

Campbell has traced Wordsworth's progress during this period in this manner: after 1805, Wordsworth's ideas on the aesthetic experience underwent changes as a result of several sorts of crises.²³ Questions on the origin and destiny of man were unanswered by his former philosophy. He faced the problem of mutability—of change ending in death, especially brought home by the death of his brother. To counteract this, there came the idea of immortality, which would preserve the dignity and authority of the human mind. That is, if nature is change, and if change destroys man's cherished beliefs, he must turn somewhere outside nature. In the “Ode to Duty,” he longs for a “repose that ever is the same,” a desire that is to be more strongly repeated in *The Excursion*:

The universal instinct of repose,
The longing for confirmed tranquillity,
Inward and outward; humble, yet sublime:
The life where hope and memory are as one;
Where earth is quiet and her face unchanged
Save by the simplest toil of human hands
Or seasons' difference; the immortal Soul
Consistent in self-rule; and heaven revealed
To meditation in that quietness!²⁴

We recall that in *The Borderers* Wordsworth had Oswald point out that "suffering is permanent, obscure and dark"; man's efforts to escape are therefore futile. It is the task of the poet to learn how to sublimate the suffering and thereby "spiritualize" pain and anguish.²⁵ This passage on suffering from the play is quoted at the beginning of *The White Doe* as a symbol of the problem which Wordsworth has faced and has now solved. The second quotation at the beginning of *The White Doe* suggests that the solution lies in the way of Christian orthodoxy; the quotation from Lord Bacon points out that "They that deny God, destroy Man's nobility": in his body, man is kin to the beast and is therefore perishable; but the force and faith of man rest on the Divine and are therefore not perishable. In the poem, the Doe is a "child of the eternal prime," and the spiritual certainties which she teaches Emily help Emily to go from grief, desolation, and death to the serenity beyond:

At length, thus faintly, faintly tied
To earth, she was set free, and died.
Thy soul, exalted Emily,
Maid of the blasted family,
Rose to the God from whom it came!²⁶

The last three lines of this quotation definitely tie the theme of this poem to that of the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." In function, both of these poems overcome "pain and fear" in order to conquer mutability by "The Eternal Prime."

Thus it is that the quotation from *The Borderers* at the beginning of *The White Doe* ("Action is transitory. . . . Suffering is permanent") may now become metamorphosed into its exact opposite. In his note to the "Ode, the Morning of General Thanksgiving," Wordsworth could now write, "If I have given way to exultation, unchecked by these distresses, it might be sufficient to protect me from a charge of insensibility, should I state my own belief that the *sufferings will be transitory*." This same equation also appears in an essay about this time: "The land of transitory things—of sorrow and of tears."²⁷ In other words, sorrow and tears (suffering) are transitory. It also appears as an idea in an early manuscript version of the poem called "George and Sarah Green":

Our peace is of the immortal Soul,
Our anguish is of clay;
Such bounty is in Heaven, so pass
The Bitterest pangs away.²⁸

Having conquered the idea of death by his philosophy of immortality, Wordsworth was able to turn to a theme commemorating his victory: epitaphs. Printed first in *The Friend* for February 22, 1810, this essay has several links with the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" and *The White Doe*. Two instances may be given here. Wordsworth points out that "without the consciousness of a principle of immortality in the human soul, Man could never have awakened in him the desire to live in the remembrance of his fellows." It is necessary, he feels, that there be some "intimation or assurance within us, that some part of our nature is imperishable." In childhood, especially, this assurance is strong, when the question concerning the *whence* necessarily includes the corresponding one of *whither*. "Origin and tendency are notions inseparably correlative." All of these ideas had already found poetic expression and are here repeated by the poet as a sort of paean. At the same time, Wordsworth also applies the idea here expressed to his own personal situation:

I confess, with me the conviction is absolute that, if the impression and sense of death were not thus counterbalanced, such a hollowness would pervade the whole system of things, such a want of correspondence and consistency, a disproportion so astounding betwixt means and ends, that there could be no repose, no joy.²⁹

Thus "repose" comes from a belief in immortality—as it did also in the "Ode to Duty"; joy is another attribute, as in the conclusion to the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." Most of these images appear in the "Epitaphs, Translated from Chiabrera," where through a transvaluation similar to that of Milton in "Lycidas," Wordsworth transposes death into "life—and peace."

With this representation of his solution of religious problems, Wordsworth now began to move toward conformity in the Church of England. It appears that the Convention of Cintra shows some evidence of how he was beginning to accept and wel-

come religion more and more as a bulwark of the state.³⁰ He began also to respect "the specific means by which Christendom has attained and embodied religious conceptions."³¹ This acceptance may have been largely because of political considerations, but personal needs and national welfare happily coincided to direct him toward Anglicanism. His support of a system, his acceptance of a tradition, it may be noted, came at about the time a similar course began to be observable in the writings of Coleridge. While there may have been no interchange of influence, some of the reasons that moved one also prompted the other.

Symbolizing these changes, on the physical side, the Wordsworth family generally became involved as church attendants. Even as early as 1800, religion was a part of the healing power of nature. In the poem beginning "On Nature's invitation do I come," we learn that for the calm, fair region where Wordsworth lives with Dorothy, he gives thanks to God. Then

Embrace me . . . ye hills, and close me in.
Now in the clear and open day I feel
Your guardianship: I take it to my heart;
'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.³²

In other words, the effect of the hills and vales of Grasmere on him was to make the day equal to the night's shelter. And a few lines further on comes the image of the church as a portion of the rest. Dove Cottage was only about six hundred yards from the church; church attendance was generally only occasional, though Wordsworth defended the church establishment vigorously. During the early years at Grasmere, there was little to attract them—the rector was an imbecile and the curate a drunkard. As Wordsworth put it to Crabb Robinson, "All our ministers are so vile."³³

Acquaintance with the Beaumonts led Wordsworth towards regularity in church attendance. It may have been perfunctorily, as a means of pleasing their hosts while the Wordsworths were at Coleorton. At any rate, Wordsworth could apply what sense of humor he had to the church, as in a letter to Sir George in 1806:

Miss Hutchinson and I were at church yesterday. We were pleased with the singing; and I have often heard a far worse preacher I mean as to reading. His sermon

was, to be sure, as village sermons often are, very injudicious: a most knowing discourse about the Gnostics, and other hard names of those who were *hadversaries* to Christianity and *henemies* of the Gospel. How strangely injudicious this is!—and yet nothing so frequent. . . . I don't know that I ever heard in a country pulpit a sermon that had any special bearing on the condition of the majority of the audience.

The Wordsworth women proposed a solution to the wretched sermons: William should take orders: "My sister and I are very fond of the parsonage-house, and should like to live there, as we said to each other one morning when we were walking beside it—if we could but persuade William to take orders; and he being a very 'delightful creature,' you know, it would suit you, and we should all be suited." On a subsequent occasion Dorothy went to church with William: "William and I went to Grace Dieu last week. We were enchanted with the little valley, and its rocks, and the rocks of Charnwood upon the hill, on which we rested for a long time." Wordsworth was himself much impressed with Grace Dieu, finding it important enough to mention to Scott as an attraction to Coleorton.³⁴ The Wordsworths had by now become regular churchgoers—at least regular by turns, though Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson not to impair her health by too regular attendance:

I wish you would not go to Church so often (I am not going to disturb your religious sentiments, or to argue against going to church in general; for we are become regular churchgoers, that is, we take it by turns, two at a time, and always two every Sunday when the weather will permit) but I do think that you have no business at Church in winter, and that you are more likely to catch cold there than anywhere else.

In a long letter to Lady Beaumont in 1807, concerning his *Poems in Two Volumes* just published, Wordsworth indicated the religious nature of his work: "To be incapable of a feeling of Poetry in my sense of the word is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God." Wordsworth, as we have already

seen, began about this time to attach to himself the role of "moral teacher" through his poems: "I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings . . . will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier." During the next few years increasing attention is called in the Wordsworth letters to this characteristic of Wordsworth's poems; for instance, Dorothy wrote to Lady Beaumont early in 1808 that someone had in old age been soothed from pain and sickness by Wordsworth's poems: "I had always a firm conviction that such would be his power over the innocent and pure." William was much affected by the story of the power of his poems. Again, to Sir George, he wrote at this time: "Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing."³⁵

It was also in this capacity of "advice-giver" that Wordsworth recommended to Wrangham the use of religious books among the poor, though they have but little time to read anything. His recommendation he would qualify, however, by adding that they should not read religious works exclusively, merely chiefly. He defends this opinion:

I will allow with you that Religion is the eye of the Soul, but if we would have successful soul-oculists, not merely that organ, but the general anatomy and constitution of the intellectual frame must be studied: farther, the powers of that eye are affected by the general state of the system. My meaning is, that piety and religion will be best understood by him who takes the most comprehensive view of the human mind, and that for the most part, they will strengthen with the general strength of the mind; and that this is best promoted by a due mixture of direct and indirect nourishment and discipline.

For example, he believes *Paradise Lost* or *Robinson Crusoe* might be as important as most religious books. In another letter to Wrangham, toward the end of 1808, he disagreed with his friend on the Catholic question. He was not prepared to see the Catholic Church the established religion of Ireland, yet did not see how that could be refused if the majority wanted it, especially if other

things were granted the Irish on the basis of majority desire. Perhaps Wrangham was not fully convinced of Wordsworth's position; at any rate Wordsworth returned to the question the following April, when he restated his earlier objections, evidencing this time even more of a Church-of-England view:

With the Methodists on one side, and the Catholics on the other, what is to become of the poor Church and people of England, to both of whom I am tenderly attached; and to the former, not the less on account of the pretty little spire of Brompton Parish Church, under which you and I were made happy men, by the gift of Providence of two excellent wives.

By March, 1811, he was decidedly against making further concessions because "The Catholic Emancipation is a mere pretext of ambitious and discontented men. Are you prepared for the next step, a Catholic Established Church? I confess I dread the thought." He goes on to say he is against the distribution of Bibles by the Bible Society because such an unnatural alliance of the sects would foster discord, artifice, pride, and ambition.³⁶

These letters were written, it is well to recall, about the time of the *Convention of Cintra* pamphlet, an essay indicating his turn toward the Church of England. It was at this time also that he wrote the "Essay upon Epitaphs," which uses the word "revelation" with respect to the teachings of the Bible, marking a distinct movement on Wordsworth's part towards religious conformity. About this time too, we recall, Christopher became prominent in ecclesiastic affairs. The family moved into the Rectory in May, 1811. Dorothy wrote to Lady Beaumont in 1810 that "the wood behind it, the rocks, the view of Easdale from them, the lake, and church and village on the other side—is sweeter than Paradise itself." It was, however, "a coincidence, and not the result of their occupation of the Rectory, that during this spring the family became regular attendants at the Grasmere Parish Church." Mr. Jackson, the rector, they regarded as a good man, but "totally unfit to preach or read prayers." But in 1811 he secured Mr. Johnson as curate, an amiable and inspiring man. They also thought church was good for the children. Before long, the Wordsworths were teaching in Sunday School,

though not regularly, since there was much work at home; but the curate wanted them to encourage others by example. While church was still not a vital part of their lives, it was making a gradual revolution partly owing to church awakening; men like Johnson and brother Christopher were finding "in an orthodox faith and practice a real spiritual inspiration, the growing consciousness which she [Dorothy] shared with William of the support that such a faith had to give."³⁷

The trend of Wordsworth's developing ideas on religion is well summarized by *The Excursion*, which he worked on during these years. In the preface to the 1814 edition, he himself gives us the clue by which to approach not only this poem, but all his poetry as well. His autobiographical poem and *The Excursion*, as a part of the proposed philosophical poem to be called *The Recluse*, were to

have the same kind of relation to each other . . . as the ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.³⁸

The first stage—that of dejection and disappointment—is represented by the Solitary: ". . . his languor and depression of mind, from want of faith in the great truths of Religion, and want of confidence in the virtue of Mankind."³⁹ At the end of the third book, the Solitary himself records his plight:

Here am I—ye have heard
What evidence I seek, and vainly seek;
What from my fellow-beings I require,
And either they have not to give, or I
Lack virtue to receive; what I myself,
Too oft by wilful forfeiture, have lost
Nor can regain.

The means of restoring the faith which the Solitary has lost, Wordsworth says in the Fenwick note, he had planned to be a return to his native country,

where, as I hoped, he might witness, in the society of the Wanderer, some religious ceremony—a sacrament, say, in the open fields, or a preaching among the mountains—which, by recalling to his mind the days of his early childhood, when he had been present on such occasions in company with his parents and nearest kindred, might have dissolved his heart into tenderness, and so have done more towards restoring the Christian faith in which he had been educated, and, with that, contentedness and even cheerfulness of mind, than all that the Wanderer and Pastor, by their several effusions and addresses, had been able to effect.

In other words, “Christian faith” equals contentedness and cheerfulness of mind, and Christian faith may be restored by communion with nature similar to the scenes of one’s early childhood. Both of these facts were also true of Wordsworth’s own experience. For him, the scenes of Grasmere led gradually back to a reaffirmation of his childhood religion, the religion of his family:

Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays
The mystery, the life which cannot die;
But in the mountains did he feel his faith.⁴⁰

The answer to the search for security in the face of mutability is given by the Wanderer: it is true, he says, that

Man is of dust: ethereal hopes are his,
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,
That with majestic energy from earth
Rises; but, having reached the thinner air,
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.⁴¹

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Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,
That with majestic energy from earth
Rises; but, having reached the thinner air,
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.⁴¹

Change—mutability—he sees everywhere:

Powers depart . . .
Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat.

There is, however, something eternal, as Wordsworth had already discovered in the "Ode to Duty"; this eternal verity he restates in the speech of the Wanderer:

But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists;—immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.⁴²

Equally imperishable he regards the "Prime, self-existing cause and end of all That in the scale of being fill their place." It is interesting to note Wordsworth here echoing one of the pet ideas of the eighteenth century—the scale of being.⁴³ There is some evidence that this idea continued well into the Romantic Period. In addition to this reference by Wordsworth, there is a phrase in Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 3, lines 683–686:

I can see
Nothing to loathe in Nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshy chain,
Classed among creatures.

These lines are from Shelley's *Queen Mab* (II, 102–108):

How wonderful! that even
The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of Nature.

Again in section VII of *Queen Mab* Shelley returns to the idea (lines 17–19):

Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term!

As late a Victorian writer as Aubrey De Vere also includes a nearly orthodox statement of the idea of the chain of being:

Yet girt by Nature's pretty pale
Each tenant holds the place assigned
To each in Being's awful scale—
The last of creatures leaves behind

The abyss of nothingness; the first
Into the abyss of Godhead peers,
Waiting that vision which shall burst
In glory on the eternal years.⁴⁴

These illustrations are given as possible examples of the continued importance of this great idea well into the nineteenth century.

To Wordsworth, God alone is now everlasting; God is the source of all that exists. The Wanderer is therefore able to conclude:

One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists—one only; an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.
—The darts of anguish fix not where the seat
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
By acquiescence in the Will supreme
For time and for eternity; by faith,
Faith absolute in God, including hope,
And the defence that lies in boundless love
Of his perfections; with habitual dread
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured
Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone,

To the dishonour of his holy name.
 Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world!
 Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart;
 Restore their languid spirits, and recall
 Their lost affections unto thee and thine!⁴⁵

I believe it has not been pointed out that part of this passage—"The darts of anguish . . . in the Will supreme"—is a restatement of the Dante formula: "*In la sua voluntade e nostra pace*" Several other speeches of the Wanderer also have the same general idea. And many of these ideas of the Wanderer are also those of Wordsworth; indeed, according to the poet himself, the character of the Wanderer was partly a self-portrait: "I am here called upon freely to acknowledge that the character I have represented in his person is chiefly an idea of what I fancied my own character might have become in his circumstances." Or as the Cambridge note puts it, "To one familiar with *The Prelude*, it will be evident that in creating this character the poet has repeated much of his autobiography; the Wanderer is another Wordsworth."⁴⁶

The Wanderer's firm expression of belief in personal immortality, and his other theological opinions as well, are also Wordsworth's. At any rate, he writes concerning the Wanderer's speech beginning with line 205 of Book IV: "This subject is treated at length in the Ode—Intimations of Immortality." In such manner Wordsworth prepared himself to consider the Church of England as the bulwark of the nation itself. Thus Book VI appropriately begins with an address to England and to her church:

Hail to the crown, by Freedom shaped—to gird
 An English Sovereign's brow! and to the throne
 Whereon he sits! Whose deep foundations lie
 In veneration and the people's love;
 Whose steps are equity, whose seat is law.
 —Hail to the State of England! And conjoin
 With this a salutation as devout,
 Made to the spiritual fabric of her Church;
 Founded in truth; by blood of Martyrdom
 Cemented; by the hands of Wisdom reared

In beauty of holiness, with ordered pomp,
Decent and unproved. The voice, that greets
The majesty of both, shall pray for both;
That, mutually protected and sustained,
They may endure long as the sea surrounds
This favoured Land, or sunshine warms her soil.⁴⁷

It was this same reverence for the Church of England which Wordsworth referred to in his *Convention of Cintra* pamphlet, and in his remark recorded by Crabb Robinson in 1812: "Wordsworth defended earnestly the Church Establishment. He even said he would shed his blood for it." Especially do the later books of *The Excursion* affirm this faith in God and the Christian Church. The general picture of the poem represents a threefold doctrine: the ruler of the universe is a person, spiritual, but like human beings at their best with a will and with affections; human life is moral, admirable, and worthwhile, especially in view of a belief in immortality; there are correspondences between human beings and external nature by means of which mankind may enjoy a kind of communion with God through all things beautiful and fair.⁴⁸

From *The Excursion* onwards, Wordsworth saw in the maintenance of the English Church the spiritual well-being of his country; therefore he defended it against all opposition. He felt the need of something more than "nature"; and the answer came in part from revealed religion and in part from the established institutions of his country.⁴⁹ Thus it is that, in the Fenwick note concerning the character of the Pastor in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth later says:

It has ever appeared to me highly favourable to the beneficial influence of the Church of England upon all gradations and classes of society, that the patronage of its benefices is in numerous instances attached to the estates of noble families of ancient gentry; and accordingly I am gratified by the opportunity afforded me in the *Excursion*, to portray the character of a country clergyman of more than ordinary talents, born and bred in the upper ranks of society so as to partake of their refine-

ments, and at the same time brought by his pastoral office and his love of rural life into intimate connection with the peasantry of his native district.

Recalling Wordsworth's association, increasing through the years, with nobility, and his "priestly conception of the poet," this description would seem to fit himself about as well as it does the Pastor.

A further reflection of Wordsworth's interest in the church is his revisions of *The Prelude*. Miss Burton has attempted to prove that there are no alterations in "the fundamental philosophy of the early version and much proof that he is intensifying and re-affirming it. He is clarifying and unifying all that was vague."⁵⁰ One should be wary, however, of such *judgments* offered by critics under the name of *statistics*. Miss Burton finds in all versions, for instance, references to Reason, God, Nature, Supreme Power, Faith, and so on. These are, of course, highly abstract words which may be used to describe any number of actual life experiences, even of mutually contradictory ones. The important question is, "What do these words concretely refer to in the world of actions?" Moreover, a second difficulty of this method is that it is largely quantitative and fails to take into account qualitative analysis. By referring the revisions of *The Prelude* to Wordsworth's total situation, one recognizes clearly many differences in viewpoint between earlier and later versions. While it is unnecessary to go into all the details here, the general changes religiously evidence a tendency toward softening of passages that savored of "pantheism," along with the addition of other passages with a "smug, sanctimonious flavor."⁵¹ It is, of course, natural for a poet to change attitudes over a period of years; yet one could wish that Wordsworth had expressed new points of view in new poems rather than by fostering them on an old one.⁵² There seems to be little doubt that earlier religious radicalism was considerably softened in revisions of *The Prelude*.⁵³

After 1815, most of Wordsworth's poems, including even the the shorter ones, reflect some phase of orthodox Christianity and the Church of England. Personal immortality is echoed in one called "Lines": good men take joy with them from earth into

heaven.⁵⁴ He recalls the principle of duty at the conclusion of "Artegal and Elidure," the latter of whom counts a crown as "a thing of no esteem when weighed against *duty*, and faithful love." The power of God's hand in victory runs through as a theme of the "Ode, on the Morning of Thanksgiving": in stanza two

He . . . fixed immovably the frame
Of the round world, and built, by laws as strong,
A solid refuge for distress—
The towers of righteousness;

in stanza four this day of thanksgiving is set apart rightly

For Him who lifteth up and layeth low;
For that Almighty God to whom we owe;

in stanza nine it is God who should preserve the memory of His favor in our hearts; it is He who "has brought our warfare to an end"; and in stanza ten those who pray are assured that God will hear in his omniscience.

Another "Ode" records God's anger with his enemies (recalling the letter to Sir George Beaumont, one is tempted to say *henemies*), who are also the enemies of England:

For Thou art angry with thine enemies!
For these, and mourning for our errors,
And sins, that point their terrors,
We bow our heads before Thee, and we laud
And magnify thy name, Almighty God! . . .

Thy presence turns the scale of doubtful fight,
Tremendous God of battles, Lord of Hosts!⁵⁵

To God, the father and judge of all, to the just God of Christianized humanity, praises are given that the warfare is at an end. This is a theme echoed many times in succeeding poems. In "The French Army in Russia," it is God who called forth the frost of winter to defeat the invader; the same idea occurs again in "By Moscow Self-devoted to a Blaze":

But now did the Most High
 Exalt his still small voice;—to quell that Host
 Gathered his power, a manifest ally;
 He, whose heaped waves confounded the proud boast
 Of Pharaoh, said to Famine, Snow, and Frost,
 "Finish the strife by deadliest victory!"

Christ is brought into "The Siege of Vienna":

"—Chant the Deliverer's praise in every tongue!
 The cross shall spread, the crescent hath waxed dim;
 He conquering, as in joyful Heaven is sung,
 HE CONQUERING THROUGH GOD, AND
 GOD BY HIM."

In the poem called "To Dora," Christ is "the sun of righteousness"; in "Venal Ode," we are introduced to "nightly on human kind" a "vision of endurance and repose." "The Longest Day" presents an analogy of departing day with departing human life, and

He who governs the creation,
 In his providence, assigned
 Such a gradual declination
 To the life of human kind.

The "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots" includes as Mary's final words:

Farewell desire of human aid,
 Which abject mortals vainly court!
 By friends deceived, by foes betrayed,
 Of fears the prey, of hopes the sport;
 Nought but the world-redeeming Cross
 Is able to supply my loss,
 My burthen to support.

Some of the clearest of Wordsworth's statements regarding his relation to God are in Numbers 4 and 5 of the "Inscriptions." The first stanza of the fourth one, "Near the Springs of the Hermitage," records how,

Troubled long with warring notions,
Long impatient of thy rod,
I resign my soul's emotions
Unto Thee, mysterious God!

The concluding two stanzas of number five are equally clear :

But Thou art true, incarnate Lord,
Who didst vouchsafe for man to die;
Thy smile is sure, thy plighted word
No change can falsify!

I bent before thy gracious throne,
And asked for peace on suppliant knee;
And peace was given—nor peace alone,
But faith sublimed to ecstasy!

In such a spirit, he came in 1819 to compose a poem on Easter Sunday, with acceptance of the idea of the Resurrection of "The Saviour in his human frame"

Many religious references in the "Memorials of a Tour of the Continent" contrast sharply with Wordsworth's earlier continental experiences and expressions. There is a hymn for the boatman, praising Jesu as guardian and guide; there is a recollection, in "Afterthought," that though Eden has been lost, "Mercy has placed within our reach a portion of God's peace"; there is a stanza on the "Meek Virgin Mother, more benign than fairest star"; there is a memorial poem to "The Church of San Salvador"; there are moving lines on "The Last Supper" of Da Vinci:

The love deep-seated in the Saviour's face,
The Mercy, goodness, have not failed to awe
The Elements . . .

and there is acceptance of One born to free mankind with His final sacrifice.

An interesting equation runs through many of Wordsworth's later religious poems, clearly culminating in the conclusions of *The River Duddon* and the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*: the image of the river representing the immutable, the eternal forces. As a matter of fact, in many of Wordsworth's later poems, *nature*

represents the permanent, *man* the temporal. There is this stanza quoted from the *Notebooks*:

While Man delights in shattering and undoing
His noblest works or leaves them to decay
Nature puts forth her gentle powers to stay
And to adorn where there is no renewing.⁵⁶

The idea here expressed is also similar to that of the first lines of the sonnet called "Furness Abbey":

Here, where, of havoc tired and rash undoing,
Man left this Structure to become Time's prey
A soothing spirit follows in the way
That Nature takes, her counter-work pursuing,
See how her Ivy clasps the sacred Ruin
Fall to prevent or beautify decay.

As early as the "Epitaphs," the idea of a river had appeared as a symbol of eternity.⁵⁷ After tracing the river from its source to its mouth, Wordsworth connects this same symbol with himself as poet:

And may thy Poet, cloud-born Stream! be free—
The sweets of earth contentedly resigned,
And each tumultuous working left behind
At seemly distance—to advance like Thee;
Prepared, in peace of heart, in calm of mind
And soul, to mingle with Eternity!⁵⁸

The function of the river as he sees it is "to heal and to restore, to soothe and cleanse, not madden and pollute."⁵⁹ The eternal quality of the river, as opposed to the temporality of man, he calls up in the last sonnet:

For, backward, Duddon, as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish.

This same image of the river symbolic of eternity, incidentally, also occurred in "The Longest Day," where he tells his daughter to turn her eyes to the sea, which absorbs time, space, and number: "Look thou to Eternity! Follow thou the flowing river."

Many of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* also employ this equation: the life of the church, as the High-Churchman views it, will also be regarded as a river. As early as *The White Doe* Wordsworth had connected religion and the river (by process of synecdoche):

A moment ends the fervent din,
And all is hushed, without and within;
For though the priest, more tranquilly,
Recites the holy liturgy,
The only voice which you can hear
Is the river murmuring near.⁶⁰

Now, in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* he seeks to trace the *flow* of the Church of England from its beginning to the present, just as he had traced the River Duddon from its source to its mouth. In fact, the first sonnet of this new group suggests the comparison: having traced the Duddon from its "cloud-fed spring," and having traced the "nobler Stream of Liberty," he now comes to a "HOLY RIVER," on the banks of which there are "sweet pastoral flowers, and laurels," as well as "Immortal amaranth and palms." In other words, just as the river went from its "cloud-fed spring" to a "final resting-place," so does the church come from early "uncertainty" into final security. Parallel with both the river and the history of the church was the early turmoil in Wordsworth himself, giving way finally to the placidity of the seas. For example, in one sonnet (Part III, number xii) Wordsworth explains that the course of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* thus far has been as though "down a swift stream"; but now the stream is less rapid:

Henceforth, as on the bosom of a stream
That slackens, and spreads wide a watery gleam,
We, nothing loath a lingering course to measure,
May gather up our thoughts, and mark at leisure
How widely spread the interests of our theme.

Surely these lines apply not only to the poem, but to Wordsworth as well. In this light, the concluding sonnet suggests that both the Church of England and Wordsworth reach ultimately the Eternal City:

Look forth!—that Stream behold,
 THAT STREAM upon whose bosom we have passed
 Floating at ease while nations have effaced
 Nations, and Death has gathered to his fold
 Long lines of mighty Kings—look forth my Soul!
 (Nor in this vision be thou slow to trust)
 The living Waters, less and less by guilt
 Stained and polluted, brighten as they roll,
 Till they have reached the eternal City—built
 For the perfected Spirit of the just!

In general, the tone of this group of sonnets is narrowed to one approved by the Church of England. There is little tolerance for any other position, especially that of the Roman Catholic Church, which is criticized in many of the lines. The rituals of the Church of England are all now acceptable to Wordsworth—baptism, the catechism, even confirmation, the sacrament, communion, and the funeral service which portrays death and the grave as conquered by Christ. Historically, it is significant that Wordsworth approves the position of Archbishop Laud of the early seventeenth century: revenge was the motive of the attackers of Laud, who was as innocent as “a poor bird entangled in a snare” (Part II, number xlv). This opinion of Laud, Wordsworth felt the necessity of defending several years later in the Fenwick note:

Let me observe that the opinion I pronounced in favour of Laud . . . is not in the least changed. . . . I am persuaded that most of his aims to restore ritual practices which had been abandoned were good and wise, whatever errors he might commit in the manner he sometimes attempted to enforce them. I further believe that, had not he, and others who shared his opinions and felt as he did, stood up in opposition to the reformers of that period, it is questionable whether the Church would ever have recovered its lost ground and become

- the blessing it now is, and will, I trust, become in a still greater degree, both to those of its communion and to those who unfortunately are separated from it.⁶¹

In view of all this, it is small wonder that when Wordsworth returned to the Catholic emancipation problem in 1829, he was definitely opposed to any tolerance. Writing to George Huntly Gordon, he says there is much danger in the affair and asks if it is possible that protestantism and popery can be "coordinate powers in the constitution of a free country—and at the same time *Christian belief* be in that country a vital principle of action?" Again that same year he wrote that he disagreed with the favorers of concession, believing they "are influenced by principles too abstract for the present state of knowledge." In fact, as another letter says, he did not wish to give up the Protestant establishment in Ireland without a struggle—of *force* against *force* if necessary.⁶² Should Catholics unite with "other dissenters and infidels," Anglicanism might be overthrown. Considering this increase toward intolerance, it could hardly be expected that he should see much spiritual value in the movements of Quakerism, Methodism, or Calvinism. As a High-Churchman, he has become incapable of accepting a broad or tolerant outlook.⁶³

All the evidence during the remainder of his life suggests that he maintained this position. An interesting note by Dorothy appended on October 4, 1832, to the *Journal of the Scotch Tour* taken years earlier illustrates part of this change:

I find that this Tour was both begun and ended on a Sunday. I am sorry that it should have been so, though I hope and trust that our thoughts and feelings were not seldom as pious and serious as if we had attended a place devoted to public worship. My sentiments have undergone a great change since 1803 respecting the absolute necessity of keeping the Sabbath by regular attendance at Church.⁶⁴

That Wordsworth agrees with this opinion is proved by his Fenwick note to his own *Memorials of the Scottish tour*:

How much is it to be regretted that, instead of writing such Poems as the "Holy Fair" and others, in which

the religious observances of his country are treated with so much levity and too often with indecency, Burns had not employed his genius in describing religion under the serious and affecting aspects it must so frequently take.

Wordsworth looked upon the Oxford Movement sympathetically, suggesting that "much of the work they are undertaking was grievously wanted, and God grant their endeavours may continue to prosper as they have done."⁶⁵ This remark is also substantiated by Crabb Robinson's report in 1839 that Dr. Arnold did not like the Tract men, while Wordsworth was friendly inclined. At the same time, Wordsworth was always careful to assure his readers that he was not sympathetic with Catholicism. "My own repugnance to the spirit and system of Romanism has been . . . repeatedly and, I trust, feelingly expressed."⁶⁶ In a letter to Reed, Wordsworth writes highly of Keble, who had written a dedication to Wordsworth. The poet says he has tried to do in his writings what Keble says he has done—and who would be a better judge. His *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* he hopes will exert a deep and lasting influence on churchmen; the sonnets are fitted to guide right feeling in the study of British church history, "and what is remarkable evidence of this, is the fact that it is found adequate to the deeper church feeling which has been awakened of late years." His position is summed up in his remarks on Cambridge University, where he had been visiting and found the morals much improved. "In the matter of religion . . . I was pleased to learn that what is commonly called low church, is quite in disrepute, without any tendency to Popery."⁶⁷ In 1842 he wrote to W. E. Gladstone suggesting his sympathy for the Oxford movement, but adding that he has a "horror" of Romanism.⁶⁸

When Wordsworth was granted the degree of D.C.L. by Oxford University in June of 1839, the presentation by the Reverend John Keble shows clearly that the recognition and honor were mostly to fit Wordsworth's character as a *religious* poet. A letter to Benjamin Haydon on July 8 comments, "I have received from you a letter of warm congratulation upon my reception at Oxford. The tribute of applause was far beyond any thing of which the Papers gave account."⁶⁹ Another letter to a

friend on August 30, 1839, relates how Wordsworth "was told by a Fellow of University College that he never witnessed such an outburst in that place, except upon the occasions of the visits of the Duke of Wellington." In 1843 Robinson wrote to his brother:

The Church, as you are aware, is now, much more than Religion, the subject of general interest; and the Puseyites are the body who are now pushing the claim of Church Authority to a revolting excess. The Poet is a High Churchman, but luckily does not go all lengths with the Oxford School. He praises the Reformers (for they assume to be such) for inspiring the age with deeper reverence for antiquity and a more cordial conformity with ritual observances, as well as a warmer piety; but he goes no further. Nevertheless, he is claimed by them as *their* poet; and they have published a selection from his works, with a preface, from which one might infer he went all lengths with them.⁷⁰

Most of these new attitudes of Wordsworth seem to rise in part from his sympathy with the church in opposing reforms.

Thus it was that Wordsworth, confronted with the necessity of finding greater security than that offered by ambivalent nature, turned from animism toward Christianity. This change was greatly emphasized by the problem of John's death in 1805, with a subsequent need to overcome the idea of mutability. The search for immortality and the desire to support conservative institutions meant a return to his childhood religion—the Church of England. In later years, his views were those of the intolerant High Churchman.



Sexual Adjustment

It is not my purpose to attempt, as some writers have done, to prove that Wordsworth's poetry was the result of his sexual experiences. The simple fact that he had written considerable poetry before the Annette episode would seem to deny that assumption. It is necessary, however, to consider the sexual aspects of a poet as related to his larger context. As Galsworthy has aptly pointed out in the preface to *The Forsyte Saga*,¹ where sexual attraction is lacking there can be little adjustment. What I wish to do here is to illustrate the means by which Wordsworth attained sexual adjustment, and what that adjustment meant in his total context. Of course, the term "sexual" is used in the widest psychological sense, pertaining not only to the sex act itself, but also to all reactions arising from any sexual situation.

Wordsworth was, as we have seen in Chapter IV, despondent and melancholy in the years after 1792 and the Annette episode. Part of his answer to this maladjustment, this extreme dejection, was the revision for publication of *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. A comparison of earlier and later versions of these poems reveals the process whereby Wordsworth was attempting to solve this problem. The insertion of the story of the beggar mother and her pitiable plight is only one of many such passages; but in the earlier version the passage was longer, more vivid, and more personal. It may be detached from the context very easily—and quite likely was written soon after

his return from France.² For this passage of the later version of *An Evening Walk*, lines 250–255:

Fair Swan! by all a mother's joys caressed,
Haply some wretch has eyed, and called thee blessed;
When with her infants, from some shady seat
By the lake's edge, she rose—to face the noontide heat;
Or taught their limbs along the dusty road
A few short steps to totter with their load,

the 1793 version read, after the first two lines:

Who faint, and beat by summer's breathless ray,
Hath dragg'd her babes along this weary way;
While arrowy fire extorting feverish groans,
Shot stinging through her stark o'er-labour'd bones.
With backward gaze, lock'd joints, and step of pain,
Her seat scarce left, she strives, alas! in vain,
To teach their limbs along the burning road
A few short steps to totter with their load,
Shakes her numb arm that slumbers with its weight,
And eyes through tears the mountain's shadeless height;
And bids her soldier come her woes to share,
Asleep on Bunker's charnel hill afar;³

For hope's deserted well why wistful look?
Chok'd is the pathway, and the pitcher broke.

Again, lines 261–267 were removed in the later version:

I hear, while in the forest depth he sees,
The Moon's fix'd gaze between the opening trees,
In broken sounds her elder grief demand,
And skyward lift, like one that prays, his hand,
If, in that country, where he dwells afar,
His father views that good, that kindly star;
—Ah me! all light is mute amid the gloom,
The interlunar cavern of the tomb.

In a manuscript version of 1794, these lines are spoken to a wanderer over Stanemoor. Some new lines are also added—

all more horrible, telling how the swain found the mother and her infants dead the following morning. There is also a Wordsworth note: "These verses relate the catastrophe of a poor woman who was found dead on Stanemoor two years ago with two children whom she had in vain attempted to protect from the storm in the manner described."⁴ The extra lines of the earlier version, especially the description of the soldier father on Bunker Hill, definitely tie this part of the poem to *Guilt and Sorrow*, where in the Female Vagrant's story, "We reached the Western world." It would seem likely that Wordsworth received some sort of vicarious relief in telling of the extreme suffering of the Female Vagrant and her children, else why the excessive horror to their situation, a theme recurrent in his work during the next few years? Even after the passage was finished, however, "Yet still the tender vacant gloom remains; Still the cold cheek its shuddering tear retains," and April-May of 1794 found Wordsworth "partly occupied in 'correcting and considerably adding to' the *Evening Walk*."⁵

Much of the same air of despondence is also reflected in *Descriptive Sketches*. The dedication to his friend Jones gives a hint of this: "You they must certainly interest, in reminding you of moments to which you can hardly look back without a pleasure not the less dear from a shade of melancholy." This tone of melancholy is also in the poem itself—which is vastly different from the spirit during the actual tour. Part of the melancholy may be owing to convention of such travel poems, but surely more of it belongs to Wordsworth's state of mind while he wrote the poem—his love for Annette and his enforced separation from her.⁶

There is a hint, already suggested in Chapter IV, in Marmaduke's final speech of *The Borderers*, of the methods which Wordsworth was taking in the solution of his maladjustment: some offenders, he says, retire to a hermitage; some commit suicide; Marmaduke will be a wanderer, alone and at the mercy of the elements. In the opening lines of the 1793 version of *Descriptive Sketches*, Wordsworth calls up the image of just such a retreat for himself. That his own wandering at this time is tied in with maladjusted love he acknowledges in the 1793 version (lines 42-46):

The maidens eye him with inquiring glance,
Much wondering what sad stroke of crazing Care
Or desperate Love could lead a wanderer there.
Me, lur'd by hope her sorrows to remove,
A heart that could not much itself approve,
O'er Gallia's wastes of corn dejected led.

The picture here presented is of a youth attempting to "remove the sorrows of love." The later version omitted the phrase just quoted, substituting instead the idea of "desperate" love and "bewilderment." In *Descriptive Sketches* the outcast woman appears again, this time a wandering gypsy. Like the vagrant woman of *An Evening Walk* the gypsy woman "solitary through the desert drear Spontaneous wanders, hand in hand with Fear." She seeks shelter from the storm which rages, hears the wolf on the "mountain forest's brow," and wildly listens to "her babe's small cry" that leads the wolf to his human prey (lines 225-242).

Another vivid picture of frustrated love comes in a later passage of the 1793 version (lines 309-316):

There might the love-sick maiden sit, and chide
Th' insuperable rocks and severing tide,
There watch at eve her lover's sun-gilt sail
Approaching, and upbraid the tardy gale,
There list at midnight till is heard no more,
Below, the echo of his parting oar,
There hang in fear, when growls the frozen stream,
To guide his dangerous tread the taper's gleam.

In the later version, most of this picture was omitted, including the *insuperable rocks* and the *severing tide*. In such a mood as that expressed in these lines, Wordsworth asks, "When the poor heart has all its joys resign'd, Why does their *sad* remembrance cleave behind?" When despair sets her seal on one's heart, he adds, the young head bows with sorrow to the grave. In other words, at this time, in this context, remembrance is sad; later, as in "I wandered lonely as a cloud" remembrance is pleasant because of altered context. Now, however, he asks that the "lost fragrance of the heart return," but he also sees (lines 636-643) that

Soon flies the little joy to a man allow'd,
 And tears before him travel like a cloud.
 For come Diseases on, and Penury's rage,
 Labour, and Pain, and Grief, and joyless Age,
 And Conscience dogging close his bleeding way
 Cries out, and leads her Spectres to their prey,
 Till Hope-deserted, long in vain his breath
 Implores the dreadful untried sleep of Death.

The "death-wish" here expressed is to be compared with the Marmaduke speech quoted above, and the "Argument for Suicide" referred to in Chapter IV. The desire for death, we here notice, is brought on by Penury, Pain, Grief, and *Conscience* with her fear-inspiring spectres. Surely these lines and the emotions they describe reflect Wordsworth's situation at this time.

The conclusion of *Descriptive Sketches* in the 1793 version is a fitting prayer: "Tonight, my friend, within this humble cot Be the dead load of mortal ills forgot." In other words, freedom from "scorn and fear" (as the later version expresses it) comes *after* the writing of the poem. This function of "story telling" Wordsworth put in the mouth of one of the characters in *Guilt and Sorrow*. In Manuscript 2 he wrote:

Your heart is kind,
 And if no wish for sleep should intervene
 Till we by morning light some track can find,
 I will relate the rest; 'twill ease my burden'd mind.

In *Guilt and Sorrow* we also meet again the vagrant woman, whose life has been painful and miserable largely because of war and poverty. She reappears once more as the beggarwoman in *The Borderers*. In *Guilt and Sorrow* misery is actually three-fold: that of the Sailor, that of the Soldier's widow, and that of the woman and the child who is beaten by his father. The storms reappear in this poem, just as we saw them in *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*—their purpose is to augment the horror and suffering of the characters (stanzas 3 and 12):

The gathering clouds grow red with stormy fire,
 In streaks diverging wide and mounting high.

He seemed the only creature in the wild
On whom the elements their rage might wreak.

The presence of such terror from the skies in Wordsworth's poetry may be partly explained by a comment of Edmund Wilson: "I believe that the only cases in which the obsessive horror is connected with any kind of guilt are those in which a man is hounded to death by the vision of a woman he has wronged."⁷ At any rate, the moral lesson which the Sailor draws from his observations of the world brings peace to his soul (stanza 57):

"Bad is the world, and hard is the world's law
Even for the man who wears the warmest fleece;
Much need have ye that time more closely draw
The bond of nature, all unkindness cease,
And that among so few there still be peace;
Else can ye hope but with such numerous foes
Your pains shall ever with your years increase?"—
While from his heart the appropriate lesson flows,
A correspondent calm stole gently o'er his woes.

Apparently, it likewise brought calm to Wordsworth—as he indicates such verse can do when he says, "I would give utterance in . . . verse . . . [of] melancholy Fear subdued by Faith."⁸ There is also added the evidence of his 1805 note to "The Thorn": "Poetry is passion: it is the history or science of feelings."

During this period, then, Wordsworth's thoughts were dark and gloomy, not only for public reasons, "but also from private griefs and pangs of conscience." Already he had established an attempted solution of his remorse: "He purged off his melancholy, his feelings of pity and remorse by writing a number of poems on poor forsaken wives or unwedded mothers."⁹ It is possible that art, to Wordsworth, was in this manner similar functionally to the opium of Coleridge—"He used the famous Goethean recipe and turned his memories into verse." The device, like opium, had to be repeated periodically, though unlike the drug, in ever-decreasing amounts. In the poems of the years after 1795, there are seduced maidens, forsaken wives, wretched women whose lives the war, and-or men, ruined. At times, the details closely resemble Annette's; sometimes they do not. In

all instances, however, there is a recurrence of pathos "issuing from a heart tormented by remembrance and remorse."¹⁰ The significant point which we shall consider in these poems is what they do for Wordsworth, not especially how the details do or do not compare with his own situation. Obviously, he could receive the same effect from a poem whose dominant emotion was the same, even though the details differed. It will perhaps be best next to look at this group of poems.

During part of 1796 and 1797, Wordsworth was at work on a poem then referred to in the letters as "The Ruined Cottage." After writing that William had nearly finished *The Borderers*, Dorothy says that as soon as Coleridge came, the first thing they read was "William's new poem The Ruined Cottage."¹¹ This poem was to become a part of *The Excursion*; Wordsworth was at work on it, we note, about the time of *The Borderers*—in which Idonea, in love with Marmaduke, is deserted by him after he has caused the death of her father. There is a hint that he even considered a similar fate of death for Idonea: "Why! if I loved this woman I would take care she never woke again."¹² In "The Ruined Cottage" the forsaken woman is Margaret. Her story is related by the Wanderer in *The Excursion* (I, 511 ff). Margaret was a "Woman of a steady mind, Tender and deep in her excess of love." Her happiness in her marriage and her child was shattered by war. After a severe illness, the husband never recovered his former health or happiness, and finally disappeared, leaving his wife and children penniless. A note told Margaret that he had joined a soldier group destined for a foreign land. One child Margaret parted with to a distant farmer; the other she kept, though unable to take care of it. In "bleak December" the child died, and Margaret, after nine years of widowhood, grew sick and also died. As he listens to this story, the Poet identifies Margaret as one whom he recognizes:

In my own despite,
I thought of that poor Woman as of one
Whom I had known and loved.¹³

There are deep traces of painful emotions also in the poem called "The Affliction of Margaret" and its pendant "The Forsaken." These poems Wordsworth purposely dated six to eleven

years later than was actually the date of composition.¹⁴ In the light of this misdating, it is significant to remember that the period of suffering from remorse and anxiety is centered from 1793 to 1802. As we know now, these poems were in existence as early as 1798 at least. Both treat again the theme of the deserted woman, the latter poem with lines peculiarly applicable to Wordsworth:

Heaven grants even to the guiltiest mind
An amnesty for what is past;
When will my sentence be reversed?
I only pray to know the worst;
And wish as if my heart would burst.

The last line here again expresses the death-wish. Perhaps it cannot be inferred that Wordsworth reproached himself for disloyalty to Annette; he was in correspondence with her during these years as well as for many years afterward. It would appear, however, that Wordsworth is touched by remorse for the "sad error of his youth."¹⁵ It would be impossible to explain his constant reference to this theme of desertion unless one accepted the fact that these poems were functional for the writer in overcoming his difficulties of remorse.

The conclusion of "The Affliction of Margaret" is also revealing of Wordsworth's reactions. He imagines Margaret as saying:

My apprehensions come in crowds;
I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass:
I question things and do not find
One that will answer to my mind;
And all the world appears unkind.

The imagery here employed is strikingly similar to that of *The Prelude* passages which refer to childhood experiences of Wordsworth in a context of "guilt": Book I, when he speaks of the trapped woodcock; when he speaks of the theft of the birds' eggs; and when he describes the theft of the rowboat. The reaction in each case is expressed through imagery like that which

Margaret here uses. The manner in which the loneliness of Margaret is allied to "nature" is a frequent theme in Wordsworth. He was attracted by mists, clouds, bad weather, and storms. Apparently these things intensified the awe and fear nature held for him; thus he was impressed by the terror in nature.¹⁶

He also uses words pertaining to "alone" several hundred times, and many of his poems treat lone individuals: the leech gatherer, the solitary reaper, the wanderer, the solitary, Margaret, the forsaken Indian maiden, and the characters in "The Thorn," among others. Many of these persons in solitude are also "remorse" characters: Peter Bell may even be included in this group through the process of "cluster"; that is, the suffering mother theme is also "in with" the cluster of terror in nature, and Peter Bell is also a character in the terror group. In fact, the quality required to bring Peter out of the "brute" family into the "lover-of-nature" family is a scene of terror similar to those scenes in Book I of *The Prelude* just cited. It is also interesting to note how "alone" most of Wordsworth's children in the poems are: the character in "Characteristics of a Three-Year-Old Child," Alice Fell, Lucy Gray, the character in "We are Seven," and so on. Oddly enough, since his child by Annette was a girl, many of his "deserted-woman" poems picture the infant as a boy: "Her Eyes Were Wild," "The Complaint," *Vaudracour and Julia*, *The Excursion* (I, 533). Associated with this may be the remark of Thomas Hutchinson, in the 1890's, of a "well-established tradition in the Coleridge family that William Wordsworth, during his stay in France, had by a young French lady a son."¹⁷

Margaret's misery is repeated in "The Thorn." This time the name of the forsaken woman is Martha Ray, who loved Stephen Hill and "gave her company" to him:

And they had fixed the wedding day,
The morning that must wed them both;
But Stephen to another Maid
Had sworn another oath;
And, with this other Maid, to church
Unthinking Stephen went—
Poor Martha! on that woeful day
A pang of pitiless dismay

Into her soul was sent;
A fire was kindled in her breast,
Which might not burn itself to rest.

Six months after this, Martha would often go to the mountaintop—"she was with child, and she was mad." She regained her senses as the time of her child's birth drew near; we are left to conjecture that the child died and was buried on the mountain peak, where henceforth Martha retired to moan,

"Oh misery! oh misery!
Oh woe is me! oh misery!"

For the guilty father, Wordsworth's judgment is that death would have been better than such breach of faith:

O guilty Father—would that death
Had saved him from that breach of faith!

The death-wish, in other words, is again associated with remorse—and not far off, as Edmund Wilson's remark would lead us to expect, is the imagery connected with storms.

Motherhood, madness, and misery are again associated in "Her Eyes Were Wild." All of this poem save the opening stanza is the song of the mother to her child. As before, it is the story of a woman forsaken by her husband, with the child left as her only joy. As for the father, "He poor man! is wretched made." The theme here, and some of the very words, are almost identical with the ones in Annette's letter to William of March, 1793.¹⁸ The same theme also recurs in "The Complaint" of a forsaken Indian woman, who is left alone to die; her complaint is that she is separated from her child.

These poems are all tied in with "Ruth"—still another picture of the forsaken woman. We meet once more the overseas soldier, with whom Ruth sailed across the sea. One stanza,

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a Youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood,¹⁹

Grierson believes applies to Wordsworth himself: "The youth thus described is doubtless the young Wordsworth himself; but it was not tropical skies and storms that fired his blood, it was the strong air of a revolutionary epoch, an era of emancipation." An added comment suggests how matters sexual may be related to morality and politics: "France of the Revolution his mistress was; England and her morals, customs, prejudices became his wife."²⁰ Ruth was eventually left deserted, only to wander aimlessly about until she came to rest at the Banks of Tone. Lack of food often led her to beg from the passing horse-men, and there is a hint that her days will soon be told.

Along with this poem is a passage from Book VI of *The Excursion* probably written somewhat later. Lines 786-1073 tell the story of Ellen, parallel in many instances to the story of Martha in "The Thorn." As before, this passage begins with the image of an infant's grave, over which the mother

Oft was seen to stand or kneel
In the broad day, a weeping Magdalene.

This image touches the listeners of the story much the same as Wordsworth himself was touched by a similar picture: in *The Prelude*, IX, 77-80, he recorded that "the painted Magdalene of Le Brun" was of greater importance to him at the time than was even the Bastille. Like the other distressed maidens, Ellen had loved a youth, had been deserted and left with child:

—The road is dim, the current unperceived,
The weakness painful and most pitiful,
By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,
May be delivered to distress and shame.

The thorn tree on the mountainside is exchanged for an ash tree by the cottage door, but Ellen's sorrow is the same as Martha's. One cannot help wondering of whom Wordsworth was thinking when he had Ellen say:

"Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge;
And nature that is kind in woman's breast,
And reason that in man is wise and good,
And fear of him who is a righteous judge;

Why do not these prevail for human life,
To keep two hearts together, that began
Their spring-time with one love, and that have need
Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet
To grant, or be received."

Poverty forced Ellen to leave her child in the care of her mother, while she became a servant. Her sorrow was increased when she was not allowed to see her child. After a short illness, the baby died, and the burial spot Ellen often visited:

A rueful Magdalene!
So call her; for not only she bewailed
A mother's loss, but mourned in bitterness
Her own transgression; penitent sincere
As ever raised to heaven a streaming eye.

As for her deserter:

The Youth was fled;
The rash betrayer could not face the shame
Or sorrow which his senseless guilt had caused;
And little would his presence, or proof given
Of a relenting soul, have now availed;
For, like a shadow, he was passed away
From Ellen's thoughts; had perished to her mind
For all concerns of fear, or hope, or love,
Save only those which to their common shame,
And to his mortal being appertained.

When the tale was concluded, the Wanderer broke the silence with this remark.

"Blest are they
Whose sorrow rather is to suffer wrong
Than to do wrong, albeit themselves have erred."

This Wordsworthian sentiment recalls the passage in *Guilt and Sorrow* where the Sailor offered a comment on the poor boy who was beaten by his father:

"Yet happy thou, poor boy! compared with me,
Suffering not doing ill—fate far more mild."

Ellen's story in *The Excursion* is followed briefly by that of Wilfred Armathwaite, whose offense was greater even than hers: he broke the marriage vow, and

That which he had been weak enough to do
Was misery in remembrance; he was stung,
Stung by his inward thoughts, and by the smiles
Of wife and children stung to agony.
Wretched at home, he gained no peace abroad;
Ranged through the mountains, slept upon the earth,
Asked comfort of the open air, and found
No quiet in the darkness of the night,
No pleasure in the beauty of the day.

The end of the story comes with the judgment that Wilfred died through "remorse and grief." Though he was absolved by God, and was pitied by men, he could not find forgiveness in himself or endure the weight of his sins.

Similar to these also is the story of the Solitary's felicity and subsequent afflictions related in Book III of *The Excursion*. The beginning of his story, like that of *Vaudracour and Julia*, is the springtime of youthful lovers. Indeed, the same phrase, "O happy Time," is used in opening both stories. In all of these, it may be well to ask if there is not some personal ground behind this reiteration of the deserted-mother theme. While Wordsworth's abandonment of Annette had not apparently been voluntary, and while they exchanged letters for some length of time, we know that many of the letters did not reach their destination; surely he could not have written these poems, including many of the lines I have quoted above, without thinking of Annette and their baby. "The Ruined Cottage," for instance, probably owes some of its poignancy to the "anguished image of Annette with her little babe looking vainly along the road for the figure of the husband who does not return."²¹

Miss Bartlett, however, argues against any deep "influence" of Annette on Wordsworth's poetry. She does admit that "the tales of deserted women, the mother and child poems, which occupy a place, recently made conspicuous, in his productive output of 1798 to 1805 may very well stem back to the sense

of guilt with which he was burdened after his forced abandonment of her." Possibly, she adds, these poems were written as compensation, thus cleansing out the cobwebs of regret, leaving his mind clear to write his long poem *The Prelude*. Hence, when he wrote the autobiographical poem, he felt that Annette had nothing to do with his poetic development. The fact that he alludes to the Annette episode in this long poem, however, would seem to indicate that he did not know just what the situation was. Moreover, that he could omit even partly the Annette story in *The Prelude* is an indication that he had also partly solved the problem she raised—he had solved it through these poems (if we consider the poem as symbolic act), so that he could go on with his "imaginative" work. Miss Bartlett believes that Annette had to be forgotten before Wordsworth could go on with his work; until she was forgotten, he could not write, and when she was forgotten, he could start to write.²² Again, however, he obviously did not *forget* her—he went to see her in France in 1802 and wrote to her during this period. What happened is that he was able to solve the problem through these poems on the deserted-woman theme, so that Annette ceased gradually to loom so important in his "sexual" life, though complete adjustment was to come only after many years.

Just what was happening to Wordsworth psychologically is made clear, I think, by some remarks in Auden's *The Double Man*:

Forgiveness of sin does not mean that the effect of an act is annulled, but that we are shown what that effect is. This knowledge, that we have been punished but not judged, removes our burden of guilt, for guilt is, in part, ignorance of the exact effect of our act upon others and, in part, a dread that upon ourselves it has had no effect at all, that we are so unimportant as to be beneath the notice of the Divine justice, that, as we have not been punished, we must do what God never does, judge the past.

To judge is to take a decision, and we made the wrong judgment once and for all in the instant of com-

mitting the act. Once committed, the act is an irrevocable part of our past, and can no longer be regarded ethically, but only aesthetically, that is understood and endured.

Auden goes on to distinguish between what may be labeled "tribulations" (troubles from without which can be endured only), and "temptations" (internal conflicts which are not to be endured, but solved by action through the will). At times, it is possible to classify under the heading of "tribulations" even such items as "feelings of guilt that rise from the subconscious." Moreover, the function of an act is to transform tribulations into temptations, thus turning an insoluble problem of endurance into a soluble one of action. In this manner, "since the way to cure tribulations is to treat them aesthetically, that is, not to repress them by will but to admit them and examine them, temptation can be dealt with in the same way by yielding to them."²³ This, for Wordsworth, seems to me to have been the function of the "poem as symbolic act": by giving vent to his expression of "tribulation," he gradually became freed from his remorse. In poems written long afterward, as we shall see, Wordsworth returns to the theme he so often used now, drawing his inspiration largely from "hiding places ten years deep." When he wrote that he was haunted "with familiar face, Returning, like a ghost unladen," we can be rather sure whose face he refers to.²⁴

In attempting to solve the problem of the absence from *The Prelude* of any direct mention of Annette, critics have met a puzzling dilemma. Generally, they explain the omission on the grounds that the affair had no effect on Wordsworth's "mind," which is the subject of this poem. Burton says, for instance, "It is his experience as a poet and a philosopher rather than as an individual that he is relating. A man's love for a woman is a private matter; his love of nature may be universal."²⁵ I find it difficult to see the distinction here implied; if either Gestalt psychology or semantics has any validity at all, we cannot accept a language division where no division is in *fact*. Where does Wordsworth's "poetic" material begin, and where does his "non-poetical" influence leave off? How is it possible to separate his experience of "love for woman" and other experiences that belong with the same cluster?

Havens arrives at this solution :

It is quite possible that he may have extricated himself from a very embarrassing situation by ignoring a significant element in his development. Yet it must be remembered that she was not his first love and may not have been his most ardent, that he tried to suggest the affair by inserting into *The Prelude* the Vaudracour and Julia story, that his failure here shows how difficult it would have been for him to handle such a situation with the brevity and deft ease it required, and that he may have come to believe (or have persuaded himself) that this passion had contributed little to the growth of his imagination and so had no place in *The Prelude*.²⁶

This idea gains weight with Havens when he remembers that "tumult" did not seem to Wordsworth a source of the imaginative. But if this interpretation is true, why did Wordsworth try to suggest the incident at all in his long poem, through the story of Vaudracour and Julia? That is, the critic's dilemma is this: if Wordsworth omitted dwelling on the incident because he believed it had little or no contribution to make to the growth of his mind, why did he suggest the whole affair at all?—which he surely did in Book IX, lines 553 ff. Perhaps like the critics Wordsworth did not know how to handle the situation. One clue lies in what Wordsworth himself said the tale was intended to illustrate at this particular point in *The Prelude*. The sad events of the story, he wrote, will

. . . prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree
Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
And black dishonour, France was weary of.²⁷

We should keep in mind, however, that lines expressive of the function of a poem may in themselves be a part of that function. It is obvious that *Vaudracour and Julia* is parallel in its theme with all the other poems I have referred to above, and that whatever their function was, *Vaudracour and Julia* had a similar one.

Other references in *The Prelude* also suggest Wordsworth's

use of the Annette situation in his poetry. There is the story of the Maid of Buttermere, who was wooed by a deserter and a deceiver, a man unfaithful to a virtuous wife—the same theme as that in the story of Wilfred Armathwaite. This deserter took the Maid “in cruel mockery of love and marriage bonds.” The Maid’s newborn infant was buried beside the mountain chapel. The images here used are all similar to those of “The Thorn,” “Margaret,” and so on. Interestingly enough, this story is followed by Wordsworth’s own recollections of a blasphemous woman, of prostitutes, and abandoned women.²⁸ In this light, Havens has an interesting comment on the line, “Swayed in part by fear to shape a way direct”:

Even the first happy months in France were unpleasant to dwell upon because of the concealment they involved and the political disillusionment that followed. Furthermore, in his relations with Annette, in his absorption in abstract theory, and in the uncertainty of mind and life which characterized the later years of this period he found much to regret.²⁹

Havens also points out that Wordsworth’s feeling for Annette and about his treatment of her, regardless of what they may have been, “may have profoundly affected his general outlook on life, and thus his attitude towards matters with which she had no direct connection.” Another interesting passage on this phase of the situation is the following:

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed,
Alas! to few in this untoward world,
The bliss of walking daily in life’s prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook,
Deep vale, or anywhere, the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir.³⁰

Surely these lines on walking with the maid he loves suggest the walks on the banks of the Loire with Annette, even though the phrase “the home of both” may at the same time well include a reference to Mary or Dorothy. The significant point in any

event is that after writing a number of poems on the idea of desertion, Wordsworth had been relieved of his "tribulation" to the extent that he could remember days of young love with pleasure, not with the sadness of *Guilt and Sorrow* and other earlier poems.

Wordsworth's physical condition during this period is also of considerable interest. Quite frequently we find recorded in Dorothy's *Journal* a note to the effect that William has been ill—and usually the same entry also records that he was composing or altering one of his poems. For instance, August 26, 1800: "Wm not quite well"—he had been revising a poem. For October 5, 1800: "Wm went to bed, very ill after working after dinner." There are many similar entries for October and November of this year as well as during the winter months of 1801; added to comments on illnesses in several entries for 1801 and 1802 are notes like "Wm wrote to Annette." The *Journal* for 1802 records work on the Pedlar (*The Excursion*), letters to and from Annette, and bad spirits, headaches, and stomach upsets. In several of the entries, Dorothy recognizes that there is some connection between their "emotional states" and physical illness.

For example, on April 30, 1802, William worked on a poem, and "had a bad headache owing to his having been disturbed the night before, with reading Coleridge's letter." The relationship of the two poets in the respect of illness is interesting. For instance, Dorothy records for December, 1800, that Coleridge came and was very ill, rheumatic, and feverish—and his state of health caused them much sorrow. His ill health increased during the summer and autumn, and when he left for London in November to work on the *Morning Post*, the entries in the *Journal* more frequently record Coleridge's bad health and low spirits (see December 13, 21, 25, of 1801; January 29, February 6, 8, of 1802). This was perhaps also part of the difficulty of Wordsworth's own health, plus his approaching marriage and worry over Annette, which naturally revived at this time, associated with work on his poetry. Coleridge's morbidity and melancholy, as well as his intense psychological interest in guilt, affected Wordsworth, who, in Coleridge's opinion, possessed "hypochondriac" tendencies.

There was a definite relationship, then, between composition

or alteration of poems, with attendant "worry," remembered remorse, and physical illness like headache, stomach upset, and sleeplessness. Wordsworth himself very clearly expresses this association of mental state and physical condition in the Fenwick note to *The White Doe of Rylstone*:

The skin having been rubbed off my heel by my wearing too tight a shoe, though I desisted from walking I found that the irritation of the wounded part was kept up, by the act of composition, to a degree that made it necessary to give my constitution a holiday. A rapid cure was the consequence. Poetic excitement, when accompanied by protracted labour in composition, has throughout my life brought on more or less bodily derangement.

From such a viewpoint, we might consider Wordsworth's poems in this group as symbolic action which is parallel to his "illness" on the physical plane, with both levels becoming partially a solution to problems of maladjustment. As Kenneth Burke suggests with respect to the correlation of "mental" states and "bodily" actions, "The poet will naturally tend to write about that which most deeply engrosses him—and nothing more deeply engrosses a man than his *burdens*."³¹

Adjustment also began to come with a returned interest in Mary Hutchinson. Dorothy's letter to Jane Marshall for March 19, 1798, tells that Mary was visiting with them; the letter also implies that in the period at Halifax three years earlier William had not been impressive, owing to the mental torment he was suffering. Now, however, she says that "he is the life of the whole house." Part of the change, as we have seen, came from the composition of poems; part also came from the influence of time, of Dorothy, and of Mary Hutchinson. Mary and William were friends of years past, perhaps former lovers, though the earlier affection "had been swept from his memory by his passion for Annette." The affection for Mary apparently began now to revive; the exact time of his turning to her is unknown. The poem "Septimi Gades" gives us some information on this point, as I suggested in Chapter III. It may have been written

before his trip to France and his meeting with Annette; if, however, it was written after his return—that is in 1794—"it would prove that his absorption in Annette was even shorter-lived and his return to Mary even more rapid than would otherwise be assumed."³²

By 1797, the passage of more than four years had likely brought changes in his feeling for Annette, and in hers for him. We know that they were in correspondence during this time, though we have only one of the letters. There is no reason to believe that Annette still loved him, or even wished now to marry him. Earlier, to be sure, her letters voiced a plea for him to return to her, but that was long ago. She had adjusted to her world as a widow and had made her own life. Most probably she no longer cared to share an English cottage with him, and even had he now been willing and able to marry her, both must have realized that marriage would make neither happy, nor would it be conducive to poetic composition.³³ Unquestionably, her adjustment to the situation would make his adjustment all the easier and more rapid. Thus he could repudiate her poetically by the time of the "Lucy" poems, in which he passes Annette by for an English love. Much of the feeling of these poems, regardless of the identity of Lucy, sprang from his love of Dorothy and thoughts of Mary. It is significant to note that upon their return from Germany in the summer of 1799, William and Dorothy went to see the Hutchinsons at Sockburn.

Dorothy, apparently, had a good deal to do with bringing the lovers together.

She must have realized that, though he was everything to her, his life was still incomplete. He must have a wife, and a family, for she knew no less than he that "wisdom doth live with children round her knees." His marriage, indeed, would not entail separation from him—that was unthinkable—but though in love "to divide is not to take way," the thought was not the less bitter that at no distant future she would have to share with another a companionship which had been all her own. Yet there was no trace of selfishness in her; and in her inevitable sadness there was the exultation of sacrifice."³⁴

Perhaps also she understood that such a union would help him solve this troublesome problem of Annette. Two items in her *Journal* for this spring indicate the nearness of the relationship between brother and sister. On March 4 she records that William had just left for a day or two, and adds, "O the Darling! Here is one of his bitten apples. I can hardly find it my heart to throw it in the fire. . . . I was full of thoughts about my darling Blessings on him." Again, for April 29:

William and I lay in the trench under the fence—he with his eyes shut, and listening to the waterfalls and the birds. There was no one waterfall above another—it was the sound of waters in the air—the voice of the air. 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 as sweet thus to lie so in the grave to hear the peaceful sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near.

While I do not wish to imply sexual perversion in these instances, the evidence certainly warrants the conclusion that Dorothy, too, played a part in the problem of sexual adjustment. For one thing, we notice here again the death-wish, expressed in Wordsworth's own character this time, instead of through the person of someone in a poem. Noteworthy also is the fact that death here is associated with "peace"—which would seem to indicate that by this time the Annette problem was largely solved, especially when we remember (from Chapter VI) that Wordsworth was about now beginning to believe in personal immortality. Unless he had solved the problem of "remorse" in poetry, death could only mean "punishment for sins." The association of the grave and the sounds of earth also recalls the "Lucy" poems, with again a possible tie-up with Dorothy. The use of the image of "dying" is fairly common for sexual climax, though we need not accept the idea of "fixed imagery." To this may be added Dorothy's quite severe upset at the time of William's marriage. From all of this it would appear conservative enough to say that Dorothy served as a sort of bridge between sexual maladjustment and sexual adjustment. Her effect on William was to draw him from Annette toward Mary.

As the marriage approached, Annette also came into the picture again. William wrote to her more frequently and by March 22 resolved to go to see her. Earlier despondence apparently returned momentarily, for in May he began "The Leech Gatherer," a poem reflecting many fears—of poverty, futility, and even madness.³⁵ Wordsworth's alternate title of the poem is suggestive: "Resolution and Independence"—*resolution* brings *independence*, not only to the old leech gatherer, but to Wordsworth in the Annette situation. The resolution to visit Annette held, and late in July William and Dorothy started for France. Little information concerning the visit is recorded; Dorothy tells us in her *Journal* that they walked every evening by the seashore with Annette and Caroline, or by themselves. The result of one of these walks was the sonnet beginning "It is a beauteous evening," a poem illustrative of how far towards adjustment Wordsworth had gone by this time. Kenneth Burke has given an excellent analysis of the manner in which the two parts of the sonnet are blended.³⁶

In addition to his comments, I should like to point out that most of the terms used are not so much descriptive of the scene as they are of Wordsworth himself. "Free," "Calm," and "beauteous," are not particularly fitted to "evening," especially when we recall that another person might use entirely different terms; they are adequate terms, however, with respect to Wordsworth's reaction to the situation. Thus the sonnet again becomes the means for solving certain problems. The poet is now free of a troublesome situation—he had gone to France with the expressed purpose of gaining Annette's consent for his marriage with Mary. The words "calm, quiet, gentle, and tranquil" fit Wordsworth, since he has solved the immediate problem. The fact that the solution was only temporary, however, is suggested by contrasting terms: "breathless" usually means quite the opposite of calmness; and the sound of the sea, like thunder, is the opposite of quiet, which makes an excellent dialectic which is resolved in the sestet where the poet transcends earthly problems by identifying his daughter, by means of synecdoche, with Abraham and God, whereby Caroline thus becomes legitimized in a higher sense than earth holds. The idea that a child is particularly near to God also recurs, we remember, in Wordsworth's poems and

prose a bit later, as for instance in the "Ode on Immortality" and the "Essay on Epitaphs." Legouis suggests that this "almost sacerdotal blessing offers a striking example of the way in which Wordsworth was apt to solemnize the most profane passages in his life. . . . There is indeed a wonderful forgetfulness of contingencies, a rare lack of self-compunction in the father, a fragile sinner, who transforms himself into a sovereign pontiff."³⁷ Rather than adopt this moralizing tone, it is more appropriate for my purposes to point out the function of the poem. It marks a definite stage in the process of readjustment; such images as there are in the sonnet could appear only after Wordsworth had reached a solution—had solved a knotty problem.

Four weeks after their arrival in France, William and Dorothy sailed back to Dover, where they "looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought."³⁸ They arrived at the home of the Hutchinsons on September 24, and on October 4, Mary and William were married. This event marks, for all practical purposes, the final adjustment of Wordsworth in matters sexual. From this time onwards, especially with regard to morals, he is to be found the "sovereign pontiff." During the tour of Scotland in 1803, for instance, he was shocked at the looseness of morality. Dorothy records the story of one Hatfield, who had seduced a maiden. People "seemed utterly insensible at the enormity of Hatfield's offenses."³⁹ Again, Wordsworth's dislike of Byron and "Byronism" may well have sprung partly from his remorse over his own Byronic period of youthful unrestraint and random impulse.⁴⁰ There is also his attitude of "advice-giver" developed about now, as in the admonition to "The Sons of Burns":

But ne'er to a seductive lay
 Let faith be given;
 Nor deem that "light which leads astray,
 Is light from Heaven."

The last line and a half of this passage, which is quoted from Burns, clearly applies to what Wordsworth now thought of his earlier passion. In a letter to De Quincey, Wordsworth says he hopes that the young student has not "been seduced into unworthy pleasures or pursuits," mindful, says Professor Eaton,

of his own days at Cambridge. Wordsworth adds that he believes there is no true dignity but in virtue, temperance, and charity. De Quincey's response to this is worth repeating for the recollections it must have brought to Wordsworth. De Quincey had been restrained from dissolute conduct by his mother's influence and had managed to build up other pleasures:

Even though I should meet with these debauched habits in the person of a man of genius, it would be difficult for me to be so much seduced as lightly to exchange the high and lasting pleasures which I have found in other paths for such as, exclusively of their vast intrinsic inferiority and the train of evils which attend them, bring along with them the seeds of their own destruction.⁴¹

This same attitude of Wordsworth is also present in some of his letters to George Huntly Gordon concerning the poet's son. In 1828 he wrote about a place for William the younger on the continent: "You name Brussels—I fear it is too gay a place. . . . I have said nothing of the continental morals—but of course one would wish as much safety on this point as could be had—and above all—one would be anxious, for what it is so difficult to obtain: a fair and open account of the use he was making of his time." Again the following year he wrote that young William with Mr. Papendick would be protected "from improper society." He would also gain an advantage if he were the only Englishman in the house, from not being tempted to use his own tongue.⁴² One recalls that it was this same desire to learn a foreign language that took Wordsworth to Orleans and Annette.

A similar attitude occurred at the time of his daughter's proposed marriage. Wordsworth objected to Quillinan's position on several grounds: Dora's weak health; her lover's lack of means of support; his attempt to persuade Dora when she was away from her parents (this objection Wordsworth underscored); and finally Quillinan's attitude that "something must turn up in our favor."⁴³ In these objections, one notes, Wordsworth was on the exactly opposite side from that which he took in a similar situation, when similar objections did not prevent his affair with Annette.

The question has often been asked, "Why is there no love poetry from Wordsworth?" One critic believes it was because his ideas of passion were associated with something in his life he didn't wish to remember—something unpleasant. The period when his French daughter was begotten was a time of great hopes later disappointed, and "it may be that all sexual love was associated in his mind with those days."⁴⁴ As a result, he would naturally flinch from mention of the subject in poetry. Another critic believes it was for reasons of concealment; he wished to forget a sorrow and conceal a false step in his past. Thus he expunged a number of glowing passages on the fair maids to whose charms he was not indifferent during his tour of the Italian lakes.⁴⁵ It is only fair to add, however, that with those who had any business knowing about the affair, Wordsworth was not secretive. His family—including Mary before they were married—knew the facts; and as late as 1817, when Southey went to Europe he visited Annette and her daughter, now Mrs. Baudouin, at the specific request of Wordsworth. Southey's letter gives a charming picture of the household, of Annette, Caroline, and the little baby.⁴⁶

A more adequate explanation of Wordsworth's lack of love poetry is suggested, I think, in one of his later poems. Considering the question of why he kept aloof from "lays of love," he replies that "Love, blessed Love, is everywhere the spirit of my song."⁴⁷ That is, having solved his conflict situation (the Annette problem) through his poems, he came to consider, Plato-wise, a divine, all-permeating love. In *The Prelude* he had described the levels of love in this manner:

By love subsists

All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields
In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is,
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there

The One who is thy choice of all the world :
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe ;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired ; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty Throne.⁴⁸

Here, then, he considers "passionate" love insufficient, unless it be accompanied by a higher, more hallowed love. The lines quoted above on physical love are strikingly similar to these in *Vaudracour and Julia* (lines 107-111) :

Bride and Bridegroom then would flee
To some remote and solitary place,
Shady as night, and beautiful as heaven,
Where they may live, with no one to behold
Their happiness, or to disturb their love.

Now, however, this sort of love is deemed important only as leading to a spiritual love which exists through the powers of the "imagination" :

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.⁴⁹

In turning to Platonism, Wordsworth obviously overcame the "earthly love" he earlier had experienced, so that when he came to write "Laodamia" he could present what might be considered his last words on the subject of man's love for woman. Rebellious passion, he says, must be controlled, for "the Gods approve the depth, and not the tumult, of the soul"; that is, love must be "fervent, not ungovernable" and transports must be "moderated." One should

Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
 Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
 Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
 For this the passion to excess was driven—
 That self might be annulled: her bondage prove
 The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.⁵⁰

Surely no evidence need be clearer than this statement: excessive passion (Annette) was given for the purpose of self-annihilation, except this time the death-wish is symbolic of the attainment of a "higher love."

Even though the maladjustment was thus overcome, the later poems of Wordsworth do not entirely exclude references to the Annette situation. In such poems as "The Armenian Lady's Love," "The Russian Fugitive," and "The Egyptian Maid," he surely recalls his earlier poems on similar subjects. Annette died in 1841; a year later Wordsworth published a translation of a short French poem which had appeared in a volume called *La Petite Chouannerie, ou Histoire d'un Collège Breton sous l'Empire*. The last lines of his translation refer to the fight of the "beardless boys" against the soldiers of the French Emperor. Legouis, as well as Gordon Wordsworth, believes the reference recalls Annette's fight of years earlier.⁵¹ In any event, Wordsworth surely indicated that he still retained some feelings of remorse when, from Salzburg, he wrote to his wife in 1837, "Absence in a foreign country, and at a great distance, is a condition for many minds, at least for mine, often pregnant with remorse."⁵² In the area of sexual relationships, too, Wordsworth was able to adjust himself to a changing situation, largely through the symbolic actions involved in writing poetry. Not only was he generally able to remove the major portion of remorse over his earlier actions on the physical level, but he was also able to assume the moral position of the orthodoxy he had earlier rejected. By following his "clusters" we have seen how he was able to sublimate his conflicts in a manner acceptable to society.

Throughout this study, no attempt has been made to explain the "decline" of Wordsworth's poetic powers. Books like that of Willard Sperry⁵³ start from a fundamentally invalid basic

assumption—that Wordsworth's "anti-climax" is actually a *fact*, whereas it is certainly only a value judgment on the part of the critic; and the number of readers or critics who agree that there is an anti-climax does not make that judgment a fact. The shift from one position to another, over a period of years, explains nothing except that such was Wordsworth's symbolic action: that there was a unity in these symbolic acts which we call his poems, and that part of their purpose was problem-solution. It might be well argued that once the main problem was solved through writing poetry, there was not the urgent *necessity* for such symbolic action—that later poems were the result of "stylistic habit" rather than continued need of the poet to solve situations through verse. But the whole problem of a decline—an anti-climax—is based first of all on a judgment value: that the poems after 1815 are "poorer" is not descriptive of facts. The total "context of situation" as I have discussed it may best be described by suggesting that through poetic, stylized, symbolized action, Wordsworth moved from "rejection" of society's orthodoxy to "acceptance" of society's orthodoxy.

Notes

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. *Introductory Lectures on General Semantics* (Lakeville, 1945), p. 5.
2. C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York, 1930).
3. Devere Higginson, *Psychology* (New York, 1936), p. 11.
4. K. Koffka, in "Gestalt," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, VI, 645, declares: "The chief content of Gestalt as a category is this view of the relation of parts and wholes involving the recognition of intrinsic, real, dynamic whole-properties."
5. *The Excursion*, IV, 962, Cambridge ed. (Boston, 1904), p. 459.
6. Raymond Havens, *The Mind of a Poet* (Baltimore, 1941), p. 138.
7. The many experiments recorded in W. Kohler, *The Mentality of Apes* (New York, 1925), and K. Koffka, *The Growth of the Mind* (New York, 1927), well authenticate these conclusions.
8. Florence Goodenough, *Developmental Psychology* (New York, 1934), pp. 146-147.
9. J. F. Brown, *The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior* (New York, 1940), pp. 19-21; 405.
10. An extended discussion of these and related ideas may be found in Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (New York, 1937), I, 1-4.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. George Harper, *William Wordsworth* (New York, 1923), I, 12-15.
2. Julian Huxley, "Towards a New British Democracy," *Yale Review*, XXXI (1941), 236.
3. *The Prelude*, V, 256-293, Cambridge ed., p. 155.
4. See, for example, *The Prelude*, "A" version, VI, 45, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1926), p. 172.
5. See Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 407.
6. *The Prelude*, VIII, 104-110, Cambridge ed., p. 180.
7. *The Recluse*, lines 359-383, *ibid.*, p. 226.
8. *The Prelude*, V, 237 ff., Cambridge ed., p. 154. As yet, there has been no exhaustive study of Wordsworth's imagery. My own impression is that he chose a preponderance of his images from agrarian occupations.

9. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 36-40, summarizes this period of Wordsworth's life, and calls it his "good fortune" to be brought up here.
10. *The Prelude*, III, 34 ff.
11. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 63.
12. *The Prelude*, III, 231-233.
13. *Ibid.*, 204-206.
14. *Ibid.*, IX, 215-232.
15. *Ibid.*, 238 ff.
16. *Ibid.*, VI, 339-341.
17. *Ibid.*, 357-359.
18. *Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1935), W. W. to D. W., September 6, 1790, p. 35.
19. The closing lines of Book VI of *The Prelude* (766-778) may be fairly close to his actual position of 1790: he was touched by what he saw, but seemed to move among the events like a bird through the air, unconcerned though joyful.
20. E. J. B. Kirtlan, "Did Wordsworth Recant?" *Contemporary Review*, CXIV (1918), 88.
21. *Early Letters*, pp. 2-4.
22. See *Early Letters*, pp. 7, 9, 15.
23. George Meyer, *Wordsworth's Formative Years* (Ann Arbor, 1943), p. 13.
24. *The Recluse*, lines 238-255, Cambridge ed., p. 225.
25. So at least according to Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 105 ff.
26. *Early Letters*, p. 48.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 56. The letter is dated August 13, 1791.
28. *Ibid.*, September, 1791, p. 58.
29. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 107.
30. *Early Letters*, D. W. to J. P., October 9, 1791, p. 60: "He is going, by the advice of my Uncle William, to study the Oriental language."
31. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
32. *Ibid.*, D. W. to J. P., December 7, 1791, p. 64.
33. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 123.
34. Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1929), p. 139.
35. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 125.
36. *Early Letters*, pp. 66-67.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
39. Ernest de Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth* (London, 1933), p. 34.
40. *Early Letters*, p. 79.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
42. *The Prelude*, IX, 125-197, *et passim*.
43. George Harper, "Wordsworth at Blois," in *John Morley and Other Essays* (Princeton, 1920), p. 116.
44. Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of Wordsworth* (London, 1851), I, 76.

45. Z. S. Fink, "Wordsworth and the English Republican Tradition," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XLVII (1949), 107 ff.

46. Since the expression here is emphatically positive, and perhaps even exaggerated, we might not be amiss in looking for negation in these lines. At any event, several years later he was to denounce France bitterly:

Yet, yet rejoice, tho' Pride's perverted ire
 Rouze Hell's own air, and wrap thy hills in fire.
 Lo! from th' innocuous flames, a lovely birth!
 With it's [sic] own Virtues springs another earth.

Descriptive Sketches, 1793 version, lines 740-783, Oxford ed. (London, 1926), p. 615.

47. Harper, *William Wordsworth*, I, 198.

48. Meyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41; 49.

49. *Early Letters*, pp. 84-85.

50. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

51. John Murry, *Heroes of Thought* (New York, 1938), p. 267.

52. Notable among this group of "liberals" for instance was Bishop Watson. See Emile Legouis, *The Early Life of Wordsworth*, trans. J. W. Matthews (2d ed.; London, 1921), pp. 222-226.

53. Legouis, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

54. This and succeeding quotations are taken from *Prose Works of Wordsworth*, ed. William Knight (London, 1896), I, 6-26.

55. *Early Letters*, pp. 115-116.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-121.

57. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

58. Ernest de Selincourt, *The Early Wordsworth* (London, 1936), p. 22.

59. *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1940), I, 111.

60. This passage and the following ones are printed in the De Selincourt ed., pp. 335-341.

61. Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, pp. 155-178.

2. *The Prelude*, IV, 309-319.

3. *Ibid.*, 323-331.

4. Havens, *op. cit.*, p. 171, comes to a similar though not identical conclusion.

5. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, 20.

6. *The Prelude*, V, 411-425.

7. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 41-42.

8. *The Prelude*, I, 357 ff. Emile Legouis, *The Early Life of Wordsworth*, pp. 45-46, compares Wordsworth's actions on this occasion with primitive moral teaching: nature conceals terrible beings by day; at night they come out to punish evildoers. "The earliest remorse of childhood, in the infancy of

humanity as in that of individual man, is accompanied by, and even confounded with, physical terror."

9. *Early Letters*, dated September 6, 1790, p. 33.
10. Legouis, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
11. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (Oxford, 1907), chapter IV.
12. Legouis, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
13. Pierre Legouis, *Donne the Craftsman* (Paris, 1928).
14. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 57-59.
15. Legouis, *The Early Life of Wordsworth*, p. 90.
16. *The Prelude*, III, 298-446, *et passim*.
17. *Early Letters*, Dorothy to Jane Pollard, summer, 1787, p. 4.
18. *Ibid.*, Dorothy to Jane, August 6, 1787, p. 7.
19. *Ibid.*, March-April, 1790, p. 28.
20. *The Prelude*, VII, 551-572.
21. *Early Letters*, p. 59.
22. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, 121.
23. *Ibid.*, 125; 136.
24. *The Prelude*, IX, 465-478.
25. Lines 53-79, 1793 version, Oxford ed., p. 603.
26. *Ibid.*, 676-679, p. 615.
27. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 196.
28. The conclusions of this paragraph are taken from R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Penguin Books, 1938), pp. 227-248.
29. *Early Letters*, p. 69.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
32. *The Prelude*, X, 293-298.
33. *The Prelude*, "A" version, X, 886-873, ed. De Selincourt, pp. 408-410.
34. Havens, *op. cit.*, p. 548.
35. *Prose Works*, I, 3. The other quotations in this and the following paragraphs are from pp. 4-8.
36. Quotations in this paragraph are from *Prose Works*, I, 20; 26-27.
37. *Early Letters*, dated May 28, 1794, p. 117.
38. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, 234.
39. *Early Letters*, p. 109.
40. *Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt, I, 338-339.
41. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 221.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. *Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt, I, 261.
2. *The Early Wordsworth*, p. 7.
3. *Poetical Works*, I, 265 ff.
4. *Ibid.*, 267.

5. Emile Legouis, *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon* (London, 1922), p. 3.
6. *The Prelude*, III, 42-43; 232-233.
7. *Ibid.*, 246-255.
8. *Ibid.*, 321-326.
9. *Ibid.*, VIII, 495-517.
10. *Ibid.*, XIV, 339-341.
11. *The Prelude*, "A" version, ed. De Selincourt, IV, 326, p. 124.
12. *The Prelude*, VI, 224-236.
13. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, 86.
14. *Early Letters*, p. 23.
15. *Descriptive Sketches*, 1793 version, lines 94-101, Oxford ed., pp. 603-604.
16. Lines 148-157.
17. *Wordsworth and Annette Vallon*, p. 6.
18. The comparable passages are *Descriptive Sketches*, 127-136, Cambridge ed., p. 12; and *The Prelude*, VI, 660 ff.
19. *The Prelude*, VII, 385-393.
20. The two passages quoted in this paragraph are from *The Prelude*, VII, 292-347; 463-465.
21. *Ibid.*, IX, 53-54; 77-80. We should remember that even if Wordsworth saw the picture on his first arriving in France—if it was then—he nevertheless wrote this passage after later experiences, which these lines surely reflect.
22. *Vaudracour and Julia*, lines 66-68.
23. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 35.
24. George Harper, *Wordsworth's French Daughter* (Princeton, 1921), pp. 25-26.
25. The information in this paragraph and the two paragraphs that follow are from Crane Brinton, *French Revolutionary Legislation on Illegitimacy, 1789-1804* (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 6-81.
26. *The Prelude*, IX, 271-273.
27. *Ibid.*, X, 75-77; 87-90; 5.
28. Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 517.
29. Edith Batho, *The Later Wordsworth* (New York, 1933), p. 107.
30. Legouis, *Wordsworth and Annette Vallon*, p. 137.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
32. George Harper, "Wordsworth's Love Poetry," *John Morley and Other Essays*, pp. 131-132.
33. *The Prelude*, XIV, 303-306.
34. Havens, *op. cit.*, p. 510.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 512.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 516.
37. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 35.
38. *Prose Works*, I, 19-20.
39. *Ibid.*, 21-22.
40. De Selincourt, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

41. *Early Letters*, pp. 89-92.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-99.
43. *The Prelude*, X, 400-415. The original of these lines, the "A" version in De Selincourt's ed., p. 382, was simpler and less impersonal:

(I speak bare truth,
As if to thee alone in private talk)
I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep
Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death,
And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
Before unjust Tribunals, with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Of treachery and desertion in the place
The holiest that I knew of, my own soul.

44. Herbert Read, *Wordsworth* (London, 1930), pp. 101-102.
45. "Advertisement" to *Guilt and Sorrow*, Cambridge ed., p. 20.
46. Fenwick note, Cambridge ed., p. 19.
47. Oscar Campbell and Paul Mueschke, "'Guilt and Sorrow': A Study in the Genesis of Wordsworth's Aesthetic," *Modern Philology*, XXIII (1926), 295-296.
48. Wordsworth says in the Fenwick note that much of the Female Vagrant's story was composed as early as 1789-1790. He adds, however, that he is unwilling to be unnecessarily particular in dating the poem—which for him is definitely unusual.
49. Campbell and Mueschke, *op. cit.*, p. 298.
50. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, chap. XI; H. W. Garrod, *Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays* (London, 1923), pp. 83 ff.
51. Campbell and Mueschke, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305.
52. Raymond Havens, "Wordsworth's Guilt and Sorrow," *Review of English Studies*, III (1927), 71-73.
53. Murry, *Heroes of Thought*, p. 268.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. *The Early Life of Wordsworth*, p. 258.
2. *Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt, I, 296 ff.
3. De Selincourt, *The Early Wordsworth*, p. 18.
4. Coleridge's *Poems*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1935); "Verses," pp. 150-151.
5. *Early Letters*, p. 126.
6. Newton Stallknecht, "The Tragic Flaw in Wordsworth's Philosophy," in *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs (Princeton, 1939), pp. 57-58.
7. Legouis, *Early Life*, p. 241.
8. *Early Letters*, p. 145.
9. C. W. Roberts, "The Influence of Godwin on Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," *Studies in Philology*, XXIX (1932), 588-606.

10. E. N. Hooker, "Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," *Studies in Philology*, XXVIII (1931), 522-531.
11. William Godwin, *Political Justice*, 1st ed., I, 92.
12. See Harper, *William Wordsworth*, I, 257-258.
13. The passages in this paragraph are from *The Prelude*, XI, 212-216; 234; 270-271; 279-282; 302-320.
14. *The Prelude*, "A" version, V, 194-197 ed. De Selincourt, p. 144.
15. *Time Must Have a Stop* (New York, 1944), pp. 287-288.
16. *The Prelude*, I, 119-123; 135-143.
17. *Early Letters*, pp. 131; 137.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 161. The date of this letter is usually given as April-May, 1796. It may have been later. Oddly enough, Wordsworth goes on to say by implication that he does not care for "Godwinian promises": that is, mention of the play brings to mind Godwin, with a context of rejection.
19. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 66.
20. *Early Letters*, p. 153.
21. *The Prelude*, ed. De Selincourt, p. 586.
22. C. H. Herford, *Wordsworth* (London, 1930), p. 76.
23. *The Prelude*, XI, 25.
24. Meyer, *Wordsworth's Formative Years*, p. 174.
25. Legouis, *The Early Life of Wordsworth*, p. 276.
26. J. R. MacGillivray, "The Date of the Composition of *The Borderers*," *Modern Language Notes*, XLIX (1934), 105.
27. J. H. Smith, "Genesis of *The Borderers*," *Publications of Modern Language Association*, XLIX (1934), 922.
28. B. S. Allen, "Analogues of Wordsworth's *The Borderers*," *PMLA*, XXXVIII (1923), 269.
29. Herford, *Wordsworth*, p. 73.
30. Note to *The Borderers*, Cambridge ed., p. 33.
31. Ernest de Selincourt, "The Hitherto Unpublished Preface to Wordsworth's *Borderers*," *Nineteenth Century*, C (1926), 723-741.
32. *Ibid.*, 733.
33. Oscar Campbell and Paul Mueschke, "*The Borderers* as a Document in the History of Wordsworth's Aesthetic Development," *Modern Philology*, XXIII (1925-6), 465-482.
34. De Selincourt, "The Hitherto Unpublished Preface to Wordsworth's *Borderers*," p. 726.
35. *The Borderers*, I, 1-5.
36. *Ibid.*, 61-63; 207-210.
37. *Attitudes Toward History*, I, 62.
38. It may be, as Wordsworth says later in this letter, that these lines on George III were suggested to him by Southey. We may note, however, that it was for this same George that Wordsworth asked heaven's mercy in 1813 (Cambridge ed., p. 403) and for whom he wrote a memorial sonnet in 1820 in which he called George the "Ward of the Law" and "Dread Shadow of a King" (Cambridge ed., p. 573). Southey, too, wrote differently about George in 1820, as Byron has assured us.

39. The preceding four lines illustrate the unquestionably personal impetus of the satire—the unpaid debt of Lonsdale to the Wordsworth heirs. It is he who is the Pharaoh-plague of the land—he and his propertied class who curse the land.

40. *Early Letters*, pp. 143-144; 156-157.

41. Oxford ed., pp. 620-621.

42. *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, I, 343.

43. Kenneth Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge, 1941), pp. 58-59.

44. *The Borderers*, I, 44-47. If Wordsworth knew of Coleridge's affliction this early, one would suspect a more personal allusion in these lines.

45. *Ibid.*, 168-173.

46. *Ibid.*, 401-406.

47. *Ibid.*, 410-414; 422-427.

48. *Ibid.*, III, 11-24.

49. *Ibid.*, 387-396.

50. *Ibid.*, 405-410.

51. The Fenwick note, Cambridge ed., p. 361.

52. *The Borderers*, II, 328; 85-87.

53. *Philosophy of Literary Form*, p. 78.

54. *The Borderers*, IV, 212-223.

55. *Ibid.*, V, 323-327.

56. *Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt, I, 316. The conjectured date the editor gives is 1796-1797. He adds that the poem is similar to some of Oswald's speeches.

57. The preceding three quotations are from *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, I, 148; 100, 111.

58. *The Borderers*, V, 327-336.

59. *Vaudracour and Julia*, 281-282; 284-285; 300-306.

60. *The Borderers*, V, 310-315.

61. These quotations are taken from De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp. 83-84.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, pp. 1-9.

2. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, 347-348.

3. Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

4. *The Prelude*, XI, 27-32; 347.

5. *Ibid.*, XII, 9-31.

6. *Ibid.*, X, 464-470.

7. Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, I, 21.

8. *The Prelude*, III, 204-206.

9. H. J. C. Grierson, *Milton and Wordsworth* (New York, 1937), pp. 147; 152.

10. E. L. Pierce, *Currents and Eddies in the English Romantic Generation* (New Haven, 1918), p. 65.

11. *Early Letters*, p. 306.

12. *The Prelude*, IX, 520-521.

13. Emile Legouis, "Some Remarks on the Composition of the Lyrical Ballads of 1798," in *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, ed. Leslie Griggs (Princeton, 1939), pp. 9-11.
14. *Early Letters*, pp. 260-261.
15. *The Prelude*, XIV, 280-301.
16. *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (Boston, 1895), I, 221.
17. *Early Letters*, p. 188.
18. *The Prelude*, XIV, 354-369.
19. *Early Letters*, p. 148.
20. *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (New York, 1941), I, 27. Similar views are expressed in letters to Poole, October 3, 1789 (p. 200 of *Early Letters*); to Gardiner, also October 3 (p. 210); to Christopher Wordsworth, February 3, 1799 (p. 213); and to Coleridge, February 27 (p. 217).
21. *Journals*, I, 63, entry for October 2, 1800.
22. *Early Letters*, p. 310.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 311; 315.
24. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 158.
25. *Early Letters*, p. 339.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 412; 423; 458-459.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 525.
28. *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Middle Years*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1937), I, 6; 7.
29. *Ibid.*, I, 55-56; 59; 60.
30. *Ibid.*, 206.
31. Burke, *Philosophy of Literary Form*, pp. 20; 77-78.
32. Cobban, *Edmund Burke*, p. 146.
33. *Middle Years*, I, 335; 341; 358.
34. Cambridge ed., pp. 306-308.
35. Cf. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 10; 73; 129.
36. *Ibid.*, 132-134.
37. J. E. Wells, "The Story of Wordsworth's Cintra," *Studies in Philology*, XVIII (1921), 19-21.
38. *Middle Years*, I, 243; 257; 296; 301.
39. Herford, *Wordsworth*, p. 171.
40. Crane Brinton, *Political Ideas of the English Romanticists* (London, 1926), pp. 56-58.
41. *Middle Years*, I, 290; 312; 315-316.
42. *Ibid.*, 432-439.
43. Harper, *op. cit.*, II, 200-202.
44. *Middle Years*, II, 486; 527.
45. *Ibid.*, I, 569; 585.
46. "Ode," lines 30-34, Cambridge ed., p. 549; "Ode," lines 57-58, p. 542.
47. "Occasioned by the Battle of Waterloo," Cambridge ed., p. 551.
48. Prefatory note for "Ode—the Morning of Thanksgiving," Cambridge ed., p. 879. Wordsworth remarks at the beginning of this note, "If I have

given way to exultation, unchecked by these distresses, it might be sufficient to protect me from a charge of insensibility, should I state my own belief that the sufferings will be transitory." The interesting point is that Wordsworth uses the same symbols he had used in *The Borderers* and had also prefaced to *The White Doe*, except that earlier, "Action" was "transitory" and "suffering" was "permanent"; here, however, it is "suffering" which is "transitory"—at least as applied to someone else.

49. W. W. Douglas, "Wordsworth in Politics: the Westmorland Election of 1818," *Modern Language Notes*, LXIII (1948), 437-449, is a complete record of Wordsworth's activities in this respect.

50. *Middle Years*, II, 804-807; 830-831.

51. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 290.

52. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp. 309-310.

53. *Middle Years*, II, 807.

54. De Selincourt, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

55. Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 438, prints a letter to this effect, not included in De Selincourt.

56. *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Later Years*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (London, 1939), I, 57-58.

57. Batho, *The Later Wordsworth*, p. 135.

58. Walter Graham, "The Politics of the Greater Romantic Poets," *PMLA*, XXXVI (1921), 66-67.

59. Herford, *Wordsworth*, pp. 192 ff.

60. *Later Years*, I, 547.

61. *Some Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, ed. L. N. Broughton (Ithaca, 1942), p. 6.

62. L. N. Broughton, "Some Early Nineteenth Century Letters Hitherto Unpublished," in *Nineteenth Century Studies*, ed. Davis, DeVane, and Bald (Ithaca, 1940), p. 84.

63. *The Prelude*, VII, 512-543.

64. *Prose Works of Wordsworth*, I, 9.

65. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 374-376.

66. *Later Years*, II, 596.

67. *Ibid.*, 331; 334.

68. "Postscript," *Poems*, 1835, Cambridge ed., p. 824.

69. Broughton, *Some Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, p. 41.

70. *Later Years*, II, 591; 595. It might not be amiss to point out that young William the son was at this time sub-distributor of stamps at Carlisle, but there was a possibility that his salary would be reduced by the radicals if the Reform Bill passed.

71. *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson With the Wordsworth Circle*, ed. Edith Morley (Oxford, 1927), I, 251.

72. "Protest against the Ballot," Cambridge ed., p. 761.

73. "Sonnet upon the Punishment of Death," number xi, Cambridge ed., p. 763.

74. Harper, *op. cit.*, II, 411; 414.

75. L. N. Broughton, *Wordsworth and Reed* (Ithaca, 1933), p. 143.

76. Harper, *op. cit.*, II, 391.
77. Batho, *The Later Wordsworth*, pp. 123-125.
78. For example, see Irving Lee, *Language Habits in Human Affairs* (New York, 1941). Chapter II is especially pertinent.
79. *Descriptive Sketches*, 1793 version, lines 740-741; later version, lines 652-653.
80. Harper, *op. cit.*, I, 95-96.
81. *Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt, I, 333.
82. Mary Burton, *The One Wordsworth* (Chapel Hill, 1942), p. 76.
83. W. J. Blyton, "Wordsworth's View of Europe in 1837," *National Review*, CIX (1937), 645.
84. Batho, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.
85. Harper, *op. cit.*, II, 434.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. *Guilt and Sorrow*, lines 19-20, 100-103; 109, Cambridge ed., pp. 20-22.
2. Campbell and Mueschke, "Guilt and Sorrow: A Study in the Genesis of Wordsworth's Aesthetic," pp. 293 ff.
3. *The Prelude*, I, 464-465.
4. *Ibid.*, XII, 41-43.
5. Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 586.
6. *The Prelude*, XIII, 1-9.
7. *English Pastoral Poetry* (New York, 1938).
8. Herford, *Wordsworth*, p. 131.
9. *The Prelude*, XIII, 224 ff.
10. *Ibid.*, 238.
11. Havens, *op. cit.*, p. 292, points out the pertinent passages: *The Prelude*, I, 52-54, III, "A", 82-93, XIII, 251-3; XIV, 139-141; *The Recluse*, I, i, 700; *The Excursion*, IV, 43-44.
12. *The Mind of a Poet*, pp. 76 ff.
13. J. W. Beach, *Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry* (New York, 1936), chapter III.
14. *Early Letters*, pp. 305-306.
15. "Near Dover," lines 9-10, Cambridge ed., p. 287.
16. *Early Letters*, pp. 329, 342.
17. Lines 61-66, Cambridge ed., p. 296.
18. "The Concept of Grace in Wordsworth's Poetry," *PMLA*, LVIII (1943), 691; 714.
19. *Early Letters*, pp. 446-452.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 459-461.
21. "Written after the Death of Charles Lamb," lines 128-131.
22. Fenwick note, Cambridge ed., p. 361.
23. Oscar Campbell, "Wordsworth's Conception of the Esthetic Experience," in *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs (Princeton, 1939), p. 26.
24. Book III, 397-405.
25. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

26. *The White Doe of Rylstone*, VII, 314-318.
27. "Essay upon Epitaphs," Cambridge ed., p. 870.
28. *Early Letters*, p. 194.
29. "Essay upon Epitaphs," *op. cit.*, pp. 869-870.
30. Walter Graham, "The Politics of the Greater Romantic Poets," p. 68.
31. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 130-131.
32. Lines 28-31, Cambridge ed., p. 123.
33. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp. 110; 267.
34. *Middle Years*, I, 77; 80; 83; 106.
35. *Ibid.*, 117; 125; 131; 168; 170.
36. *Ibid.*, 22; 225; 250; 291; 429; 430. It is interesting to note Wordsworth's reference to the church where he was married: he suggests a point I mentioned earlier in this chapter—that he was drawn more to the church at the time of his marriage; by means of synecdoche, the happiness he has with his wife is also associated with the church where the ceremony was performed that made her his wife.
37. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp. 267-268.
38. Cambridge ed., p. 410.
39. Argument to Book III, Cambridge ed., p. 435.
40. *The Excursion*, I, 223-226. Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 181, says these lines show "the difference between his attitude towards revealed religion and toward the religion of nature." That difference in the function of the two ideas seems to be slight—Wordsworth accepts the truth of the Bible as evidence of the mystery of undying life, and "nature" only made him feel that mystery more deeply.
41. *The Excursion*, IV, 140-145.
42. *Ibid.*, 66-70; 71-76.
43. Cf. Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936).
44. From "Turris Eburnea" in the *May Carols*.
45. *The Excursion*, IV, 10-31.
46. Cambridge ed., pp. 403; 864.
47. *The Excursion*, VI, 1-16.
48. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 200; 223.
49. Herford, *Wordsworth*, p. 195; Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 200.
50. Burton, *The One Wordsworth*, pp. 47 ff.
51. Havens, *op. cit.*, p. 200. Havens points out that this distinctly Christian position does not appear much before 1805 in Wordsworth's poetry.
52. *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, ed. De Selincourt, I, vi.
53. G. M. Harper, "The Crisis in Wordsworth's Life and Art," *Queen's Quarterly*, XL (1933), 1 ff.
54. Cambridge ed., p. 534.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 546, lines 101-113.
56. George Healey, *Wordsworth's Pocket Notebook* (Ithaca, 1942), p. 26.
57. Campbell, "Wordsworth's Conception of the Esthetic Experience," p. 42.

58. No. 33, Cambridge ed., p. 601.
59. No. 8, *ibid.*
60. I, 43-48.
61. Cambridge ed., p. 604.
62. Broughton, *Some Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, pp. 15-17.
63. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 324-326.
64. *The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. De Selincourt, Appendix II, p. 440.
65. Fenwick note, Cambridge ed., p. 743.
66. Cambridge ed., p. 906, note for line 372.
67. Broughton, *Wordsworth and Reed*, pp. 83; 123; 128; 136.
68. *Later Years*, III, 1136.
69. *Ibid.*, II, 978.
70. Quoted in Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 409.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga* (New York, 1906), pp. xliii-xliv.
2. Harper, *Wordsworth*, I, 191.
3. This phrase, according to the Oxford ed. note, p. 596, was substituted in the *errata* for the words in the text: "Minden's charnel plain." That phrase calls to mind a possible reference for these lines, as well as for the total picture of the woman. In John Langhorne's "The Country Justice" appeared the lines

Cold on Canadian hills or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that parent mourned her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew
Gave the sad presage of his future years—
The child of misery, baptized in tears.

According to Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, I, chapter IV, Scott and Burns were both affected by these lines. Wordsworth also likely knew them. It is obvious why such lines would touch him.

4. *Poetical Works*, ed. De Selincourt I, 28-29.
5. *Ibid.*, 319. The later version, however, contains only 378 lines as compared with 446 in the 1793 version—so that "adding to" seems hardly the expression, unless De Selincourt has something else in mind.
6. *Ibid.*, 325.
7. *The Wound and the Bow* (Boston, 1941), p. 166.
8. *The Recluse*, lines 766-768, Cambridge ed., p. 231.
9. E. Legouis, *Wordsworth in a New Light* (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 26-27.
10. Legouis, *Wordsworth and Annette Vallon*, pp. 58-59.
11. *Early Letters*, p. 169.
12. *The Borderers*, V, 255-256.
13. *The Excursion*, I, 612-614.
14. Harper, "The Crisis in Wordsworth's Life and Art," pp. 1 ff.
15. Harper, "Wordsworth's Love Poetry," pp. 129-132.

16. Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 46.
17. Legouis, *Wordsworth in a New Light*, p. 7.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
19. "Ruth," lines 121-126.
20. Grierson, *Milton and Wordsworth*, p. 154.
21. Herford, *Wordsworth*, pp. 101-102.
22. Phyllis Bartlett, "Annette and Albertine. A Comparison of Wordsworth and Proust," *Sewanee Review*, XLV (1937), 14.
23. W. H. Auden, *The Double Man* (New York, 1941), p. 119.
24. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 35.
25. *The One Wordsworth*, p. 92.
26. *The Mind of a Poet*, p. 285.
27. *The Prelude*, IX, 549-552.
28. *Ibid.*, VII, 296 ff.
29. Havens, *op. cit.*, p. 496.
30. *The Prelude*, XIII, 120-127.
31. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, p. 17. Indeed, most of Burke's treatment of the poem as symbolic act in the lead article is a consideration of this very correlation. Another essay in this book, "Freud—and the Analysis of Poetry" also adds considerably to the subject.
32. De Selincourt, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp. 70-71.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
35. Harper, *Wordsworth*, II, 25.
36. *A Grammar of Motives* (New York, 1945), pp. 473-477.
37. *Wordsworth in a New Light*, p. 38.
38. *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, I, 175.
39. *Ibid.*, I, 196-197.
40. H. T. Baker, "Wordsworth and Annette," *North American Review*, CCVII (1928), 435.
41. Horace A. Eaton, "The Letters of De Quincey to Wordsworth, 1803-1807," *English Literary History*, III (1936), 24-25.
42. *Some Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, pp. 7; 12.
43. Ernest de Selincourt, "Wordsworth and His Daughter's Marriage," in *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, pp. 62 ff.
44. A. Clutton-Brock, "The Problem of Wordsworth," *London Mercury*, II (1920), 702.
45. Harper, "Wordsworth's Love Poetry," p. 126.
46. Kenneth Curry, "Southey's Visit to Caroline W. Baudouin," *PMLA*, LIX (1944), 599 ff.
47. "The Poet and the Caged Turtledove," Cambridge ed., p. 681.
48. *The Prelude*, XIV, 168-187.
49. *Ibid.*, 188-192.
50. Lines 73-76; 145-150, Cambridge ed., pp. 526-527.
51. *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon*, pp. 111-112.
52. *Later Years*, II, 876.
53. *Wordsworth's Anti-Climax* (Cambridge, 1935).

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