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THE DISINTERIORIZED SELF: ASPECTS AND EXTENSIONS OF THE IDEA OF FAMILY IN WORDSWORTH.

The City University of New York, Ph.D., 1975
Language and Literature, modern

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1975

THE DISINTERIORIZED SELF

Aspects and Extensions of the Idea of Family in Wordsworth

by

BERNARD JOURDAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1975

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 12, 1975 — Thomas McFarland
date — Chairman, Examining Committee

August 13, 1975 — John T. Hazeltine
date — Executive Officer, Deputy

Coleman O. Parsons

Irene Taylor

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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PERSPECTIVES AND DEFINITIONS

"I love a public road . . . "

--William Wordsworth, The Prelude

Pascal's dictum, "il est juste que Dieu refuse à quelques-uns . . . ce qu'il accorde aux autres par une miséricorde qui ne leur est pas due,"[1] is theocentric and takes a conservative, pessimistic view of human prerogative. Wordsworth's,"higher minds . . . build up greatest things from least suggestions,"[2] is anthropomorphic and takes a liberal, optimistic view. Man for Wordsworth is lord of creation, arbiter of his fate and own redeemer,[3] not a speck at the mercy of an inscrutable deus absconditus disdainful of merit and need. Things pass in his conception as in life, rise, fall, their glory, good and evil, soon forgotten. Man abides, adds knowledge and power, recreates himself, and pursues his way in perpetuity.

> . . . the mind of man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
> On which he dwells, above this Frame of things
> . . . . . .

1. "Pensées," Oeuvres Complètes de Pascal, ed. Jacques Chevalier (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1954), p. 1227.

2. The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd ed. rev. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), Book XIII, lines 98-99; all references to The Prelude are to the 1805 text.

3. For Wordsworth's disavowal of the need for a redeemer, see Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, ed. Edith J. Morley (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1938), I, 158.

> In beauty exalted, as it is itself
> Of quality and fabric more divine. 4

God is present, attends man's works. Man is the image of God. Life is merciful and just, not vile or absurd. Like Milton's, Wordsworth's creed and key emphasis in art are theodetic, mindful of God but in the service of man.

The conservatism of his later years, decline in poetic power, Christian orthodoxy and egotistical sublime, and the conflict and irresolution that mar as recent commentators note even the best of his verse, are problematic. But the debate waged over his imperfections for many decades heightens more than impairs his stature. As man is when most himself, a prey to confusion and doubt, but with sudden flashes of introspection forging his personality and fate, and only when in despair or infirmity given to forbidden contemplation of extraterrestrial grandeur, such is Wordsworth. His ambivalence, occasional failure of conviction, even mawkishness and indelicacy, are irreducibles of his intense, brooding vitality as a man. First and last, Wordsworth is a narrative, dramatic poet; it speaks well for his art that the same vitality is observed there.

That he did not retain inviolate for fifty years the supreme belief in the goodness of man expressed in his more moving lines and that perhaps he did spoil under the effect

4. The Prelude, XIII, 446-48, 451-52.

of advancing age are painful; if we cannot do with poets, however, except they be all peace and serenity like the gods and communicate with them hourly, we shall be in a paradoxical way, having exchanged human imperfection for divine silence. The poets we wished for will speak a language inaudible to mortal ears. For discerning readers the fact that Wordsworth's cathedral[5] is unstable and unrefined means that it is unfinished, life-like, and true. It surpasses its architect, is still in progress and likely to remain so for some time to come, until men cease and are transformed to angels.

Progress and resolution for Wordsworth are aptly never more than tentative. Stasis manifests itself late in his years and is gradual, not absolute or final, even then. As did Milton, whom he frequently echoes, Wordsworth ascribed to his profession prophetic meaning, conceiving of himself above all as a teacher of men. His poetry is doctrinal, moral, and affirmative; and we have on this score the testimonies of competent nineteenth-century writers, including John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, and Leslie Stephen, and of modern critics as well. Wordsworth would help man be or help him perfect what he is, would instruct him in the ways of the heart and management of perceptions, and formulate in

5. See "Preface to The Excursion (1814)," The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (5 vols., Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940-49), V, 2; hereafter cited as P.W.

his behalf, as well as his own, the principles fittest to favor his growth. He is a craftsman intent on shaping a fresh view of history and of man's power to vanquish time, and his poetry in its espousal of an ideal of human balance, world order, and growth bears kinship with great art from earliest times to the present, and especially Christian.

Whether or not Wordsworth is a Christian is a complex, controversial question more suited to the theologian than to the critic. But along with his historicism, apocalypticism, Platonism, ethics, and stoicism, characteristic of early Christian teaching, cardinally significant and heretofore accorded scarce critical notice, and also Christian in provenience, is the importance Wordsworth attaches to the idea of family.

As Philippe Ariès has shown in his monumental Centuries of Childhood (1962), this idea with its implicit reordering of influences on self-realization from the public to private domain and back again, instead of exclusively public, culminates a transition in European social structure spanning three-hundred years, from the end of the Middle Ages to the close of the eighteenth century. No longer in ascendance when Wordsworth composed his major poetry, its effect was, however, then still novel. If not altogether an original thinker, Wordsworth is the precursor of a dynamic vein of inquiry in artistic letters and, until Dickens' Great Expectations later in the nineteenth century and the advent

of the Bildungsroman in England as a distinct literary genre, without peer.

The concept sorts perfectly with his Romantic sensibility and organicist convictions. It binds man vertically in time and horizontally in place. In the solution to archetypal violence between parent and child, or father and son, it shifts emphasis away from ritualism and theology and makes the solution dependent on the law of social contract and the ratification of informed reason, and it provides, among still other benefits, a tangible context for the construction of a meaningful evolutionist theory.

Man cannot survive in isolation. To grow and justify creation and a role in the scheme of things, he must have nourishment, beneficent attention, dialogue, and love, first manifest in his home and setting of his birth and early experience. He then prospers, and contributes consciously to livening his community, village, city, or nation. He savors the goodness of living, subscribes intimately to sustaining a social principle, knowing in depth its material and temporal value and transcendental implications, and vouchsafes the way for the members of generations to come to be circumstanced as he is. That the child is father of the man is not, as has been intimated, an upside-down relationship or a riddle.[6] An instance of its meaning may be had by glancing

6. See Marion Montgomery, The Reflective Journey Toward Order (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1973), p. 39.

at the writings of Jacqueline Pascal, the philosopher's younger sister, whom it is doubtful Wordsworth read (or would have much cared for) but whose work in the education of children contributed to the general store of ideas instrumental in shaping his thought. There are, among her regulations for her young boarders at Port-Royal, two prayers, which read in part:

> Be like new-born children . . . Grant, O Lord, that we may always be children in our simplicity and innocence, as people of the world are always children in their ignorance and weakness. Give us a holy childhood, which the course of the years may never take from us, and from which we may never pass into the old age of old Adam, or into the death that is sin; but which may make us increasingly new creatures in Jesus Christ and lead us to His glorious immortality. 7

Elsewhere in the regulations, she writes:

> Looking after children is so important that we are bound to prefer that duty to all others when obedience imposes it on us, and what is more, to our personal pleasures, even if these are of a spiritual nature. 8

Deprived of the sound of loving speech, of touch and affection, particularly in infancy, man sickens, grows vicious, acquisitive and proud. So discountenanced, an individual is a flagrant menace to himself and to mankind. Whether death

7. "Réglement pour les enfants (Appendix to the Constitution of Port-Royal, 1721)." Quoted by Ariès, p. 122.
8. Ibid., p. 114.

remove him swiftly, or he linger, he is a predator and condemned man, retards the progress of his race, and gives renewed substance to the metaphor of the Fall.

This reading of Wordsworth deepens the meaning of his sober words to the statesman Charles Fox, when, scoring the malevolence of England's expansionist economics, for instance, he cautions, in 1801,

> . . . the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed. . . . In the meantime parents are separated from their children, and children from their parents; the wife no longer prepares with her own hands a meal for her husband, the produce of his labour; there is little doing in his house in which his affections can be interested, and but little left in it which he can love. 9

This, together with the conviction that

> From love, for here
> Do we begin and end, all grandeur comes,
> All truth and beauty, from pervading love,
> That gone we are as dust, 10

is the center of his doctrine and will be explored in detail in the following chapters.

9. The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805, ed. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 313-14. The latter, along with The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, 1806-20, ed. Mary C. Moorman and Alan G. Hill (2 vols., Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969-70) and

Wordsworth, in any event, for whom a dominant article of poetic faith was to "shrink back / From every combination that might aid / The tendency, too potent in itself, / Of habit to enslave the mind,"[11] is not a revisionary thinker, as it is possible perhaps to surmise on the basis of older studies of him still cited now and then by modern critics. His objective is not to revive the defunct hierarchies and references of the medieval order or to regret their passing. Nor for all his aloofness and desire for equanimity, which he wisely perceived to be the foundation of all true compassion, charity, and justice, is he a despiser of men, incapable of knowing or sharing their feelings (as David Perkins in The Quest for Permanence /1959/ and David Ferry in The Limits of Mortality /1959/ have conjectured in criticism reminiscent of Coleridge's stricture of Wordsworth as spectator ab extra). His work is timely, concerned with problems germane to the pursuit of consciousness and indeed survival by man in the modern world. Other aspects of it, the supremacy of the imagination, ministry of Nature, Prometheanism of art, have commanding importance but are ancillary to this.

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (3 vols., Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939), will be cited hereafter as E.Y., M.Y., and L.Y.

10. The Prelude, XIII, 149-52 (the 1850 version of these lines reads, "By love subsists / All lasting grandeur, by pervading love; / That gone, we are as dust" /XIV, 168-70/).

11. Ibid., XIII, 136-39.

If this appraisal of Wordsworth's intent seems facile or mechanical, the reader may recall:

> If the time should ever come when what is now called science . . . shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet shall lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. 12

The sentiment in these lines may be of anticipation. But as he wrote them Wordsworth was already in fact engaged in aiding that transfiguration and reconciling science and art. It may not be inapropos here to cite three iconoclastic successors of his in the sciences, Darwin, Freud, and Einstein, and to venture the thought that if their method or idiom differed from Wordsworth's, their ideas are not so inartistic nor his so unscientific as utterly to invalidate comparison, their intent, to liberate man from bondage to time, being in the last analysis equivalent to his own.

Lastly, Wordsworth is not, on the strength of "The Ruined Cottage" or any other of his work, "among the very few great English tragic writers."[13] His fable probes deeper than into tragic affliction, into the very springs of human existence; for that reason, until we know more of who we are and where we are headed, it is also rather too soon, as several

12. P.W. ("Preface to the Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 397.

13. Jonathan Wordsworth, The Music of Humanity (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 153.

writers in the last decade have attempted,[14] to speculate with either fairness or comfort on whether his vision, or more generally that of the Romantics as a whole, was a deception. There is small distinction between the great and the lesser critic finally: for the one, certainty nearly always involves error as a normal reflection of the true course of things, while for the other a life without a point of view is a fate as shameful and inadmissible as a life of sin. Considered over the last ten years or last five years, the literature of environmental and behavioral scientists, not inferior in quality to the writings of Wordsworth critics, suffices alone to be a measure of the firmness and contemporaneity of this thought and to suggest on the basis of a balanced reading of his work by even a moderately-learned reader that there is infinitely more there than windy moralizing and superannuated ideas.

1.

In the Foreword to The Reflective Journey toward Order,

14. I am alluding, inter alia, to Edward E. Bostetter, "Wordsworth," in The Romantic Ventriloquists (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1963), pp. 12-81; David Perkins, Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964); Geoffrey H. Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814 (1964; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Marion Montgomery, op. cit.

Marion Montgomery writes:

> the development of English and American literature . . . may be considered as one movement. Those disturbing problems of separation and alienation which so concern us are an expected consequence of the direction chosen by that spirit emerging from the Middle Ages which we so proudly name the Renaissance. Indeed, one might consider the twentieth century as the lag-end of the Renaissance /and/ go so far as to call the whole of this period, from Dante to the present and perhaps beyond, the romantic age. 15

The most critical, pivotal poet for him of that age, at "the halfway house of English letters, between Chaucer and Pound, Shakespeare and Eliot,"[16] is Wordsworth. The same view without detailed allusion to antecedents or successors underlies Geoffrey Hartman's argument in Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814. He observes in his analysis of "Nutting," which forms a key chapter of his book, that it was to Wordsworth "as if the poetic spirit had to become conscious of its autonomy and transcend its archaic modes in order to engage human nature."[17] "Yet the great imaginations of the past," he continues,

> far from being bound by the human, had dealt with both men and gods, with the whole cosmos. . . . Wordsworth came under the joint imperative of English Protestantism and the Enlightenment . . . and though he tried to obey their injunction he found no way to humanize his

15. Pp. xiii-xiv.
16. Ibid., p. 32.
17. P. 74.

> spirit without renouncing it, and . . . his problem became his subject. 18

Hence in Hartman's view, Wordsworth finally "can turn to no one in his desire to save nature for the human imagination. He is the most isolated figure among the great English poets."[19]

The positions advanced by Montgomery and Hartman are complex and deserve close reading. But the point, still, is that in focusing their appraisal of Wordsworth on historic phenomena the consequence themselves of much earlier Greek and Hebrew ideas centrally relevant to his work, they narrow down and distort the reach and integrity of his thought. Carl Jung's statement that the more a work of art is personal and a question of idiosyncrasies the less it is a matter of art, is unexceptionable.[20] But Wordsworth is not, despite appearances, a personal, idiosyncratic, or reductive poet with a mission specifically to save nature for the human imagination. This assumption confuses means with ends. His mission is to regenerate and save man, from whom (as in Baudelaire's "mon semblable, -- mon frère!"[21]) he knows himself not materially to differ, nor from whose destiny is he exempted.

Nor is the period marked with the greatest burst of

18. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
19. Ibid., p. 338.
20. See Modern Man in Search of a Soul (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 194.

creative activity and genius since Athens in antiquity, which "we so proudly name the Renaissance," a greater or smaller bane culturally than either Athens or Christianity; nor does it merit in especial the denunciation of pride. Wordsworth is particular and explicit at the end of The Prelude, as he addresses Coleridge:

> . . . though, too weak to tread the ways of truth,
> This Age fall back to old idolatry,
> Though men return to servitude as fast
> As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
> By Nations sink together, we shall still
> Find solace in the knowledge which we have,
> Bless'd with true happiness if we may be
> United helpers forward of a day
> Of firmer trust, joint laborours in a work
> (Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
> Of their redemption, surely yet to come.
> Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
> A lasting inspiration, sanctified
> By reason and by truth; what we have loved,
> Others will love; and we may teach them how . . . 22

The reverberation of meaning and tonality of these lines sums up the conjunction of elements comprising the grand symphony that is The Prelude, and testifies to considerably more than simply Wordsworth's disappointment over the failure of the French Revolution or collapse in astonishingly short time of virtually every nation in Europe. Their confidence, vision, and optimism are unmistakable. The fervor of Isaiah's admonition of Israel is felt in them, "Ah sinful nation . . .

21. Les Fleurs du Mal, "Au Lecteur," line 40.
22. XIII, 431-45.

laden with iniquity, / the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (1:4-5), and also St. Paul's satisfaction and peace in II Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (4:7). The knowledge Wordsworth ascribes to himself and to Coleridge is of the insufficiency of political action as a viable means of progress and of the need instead for renewed purity and wholeness of human perception. The lines recall significantly another passage in Book X where, addressing Coleridge again then in Italy for his health, Wordsworth writes:

> Thus, O Friend!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> /Who now/ dost make abode
> Where Etna looketh down on Syracuse,
> The city of Timoleon! Living God!
> How are the Mighty prostrated! they first,
> They first of all that breathe should have awaked
> When the great voice was heard from out the tombs
> Of ancient Heroes. If for France I have griev'd
> Who, in the judgement of no few, hath been
> A trifler only, in her proudest day,
> Have been distress'd to think of what she once
> Promised, now is, a far more sober cause
> Thine eyes must see of sorrow, in a Land
> Strew'd with the wreck of loftiest years, a Land
> Glorious indeed, substantially renown'd
> Of simple virtue once, and manly praise,
> Now without one memorial hope, not even
> A hope to be deferr'd; for that would serve
> To chear the heart in such entire decay. 23

Idolatry, servitude, decay are a dominant motif in the mosaic of these lines and those quoted earlier. The quality

23. Lines 942, 949-66.

of man patently in need of preservation and cultivation, and sine qua non of his identity and growth, is freedom; and the conviction attested here is of the necessity for a form of action sustained within the periphery of mind and self but oriented and terminable without, and exhibiting as its chief components revolution, reconstruction, and the pursuit of millennium. By "Prophets of Nature," Wordsworth means prophets of the fully reconstructed, disinteriorized self, a notion not at variance with the exercise or needs of the imagination, and envisages a more sweeping change, more penetrating "reduction of myth,"[24] than affecting either the mannered diction of the late eighteenth century or the Christian cosmological imaginings of the past, the implications of whose demise in literature Hartman, Montgomery, and others deplore.

The identification of Wordsworth as a Romantic, so considered, or indeed the very meaning of the term as often employed, to denote fundamental distinctions of outlook between writers of a certain temperament or era and those of another, or between the Romantics and their detractors among the New Critics several decades ago, becomes misleading. The consequence of this practice until very recently was a misconstruing of the nature of the Romantics' radicalism and of the scope of their vision, a situation abetted in part in the

24. This is Montgomery's phrase, from the subtitle of the first chapter of The Reflective Journey Toward Order.

years after the First World War by the dogmatic but influential pronouncements of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, which deprecated the Romantics as innovators in either language or ideas, and relegated Wordsworth to a secondary rank as a poet. This debate has ceased since then for the most part and settled into the annals of critical warfare. But suffice it to note since I cannot detail here the controversy or dwell on its amusing ironies,[25] that distinctions are feeble. Sometimes among the staunchest of revolutionaries is concealed an arch reactionary, and sometimes the other way around.

"Old sheepy Wordsworth,"[26] as Pound called him, stands in small need today of vindication. His own political activities of later years aside, Wordsworth did not accommodate

25. For a sampling of the New Critics' assessment of the Romantics, the reader may wish to refer to the following (for publishers and dates of publications, see "Selected Bibliography," below): T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism; Ezra Pound, Literary Essays; I.A. Richards, Principles of Criticism; T.E. Hulme, Speculations; William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity; J.C. Ransom, The World's Body; and Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition. More recent studies, seeking to demonstrate the New Critics' Romantic roots, include Murray Krieger, The New Apologists for Poetry; Richard Foster, The New Romantics; and Frank Kermode, Romantic Image.

26. Guide to Kulchur (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1938), p. 284; see also A B C of Reading (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), "Wordsworth vibrates to a very limited range of stimuli" (p. 59), and Literary Essays (New York: New Directions, 1968), "The cult of the innocuous has debouched into the adoration of Wordsworth. He was a silly old sheep with a genius . . . for imagisme, for a presentation of natural detail . . . and this talent, or the fruits of this talent, he buried in a desert of bleatings" (p. 277).

Napoleon with his pen (the pen mightier than the sword), as Pound regrettably did Mussolini and the Axis. And while he may be "as eighteenth-century as anybody,"[27] as Eliot said of him disparagingly, that goes some way to illustrate or to suggest that he was a balanced individual engaged in his time, a public, not private or isolated, figure as far as his perceptions and ability to distinguish right from wrong were concerned, and his doctrine as a poet consonant with his practice as a man. This is the concrete meaning of his confession,

> I never, in quest of right and wrong,
> Did tamper with myself from private aims;
> Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe
> Of selfish passions; nor did wilfully
> Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits;
> . . . . . .
> /or/ substitute a universe of death,
> The falsest of all worlds, in place of that
> Which is divine and true . . . [28]

The significance of the key words private, selfish, and wilful, and how they relate to a universe of death or differ from that which is divine and true, will be examined below. But the point, finally, in the brief glance at the New Critics and at the use of labels more particularly, is that the relevance of the latter is generally in inverse proportion to the complexity and stature of the poet under scrutiny. Horace is not a Romantic, and Wordsworth not a Neo-Classicist; yet

27. The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933; rpt., London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948), p. 72.
28. The Prelude, XIII, 131-35, 141-43.

Wordsworth's objective, "Of building up a work that should endure,"[29] approximates the contention, "Exegi monumentum aere perennius,"[30] and his ideal of Nature itself is not impossibly remote from the celebrated "carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero"[31] (nor the latter from the Nicomachean Ethics). Thomas Aquinas' "categories of temptation" --contemplativa, activa, voluptaria--are at the antipodes of Wordsworth and the idea of man locked in privacy of self and alien to the world. Nevertheless, it is of use, for their sake as well as an indication of the effect of the critical passion for compartmentalization in diminishing great writers' integrity and community of mind, to ponder carefully the lines in "A Poet's Epitaph,"

> A Moralist perchance appears;
> Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod:
> And he has neither eyes nor ears;
> Himself his world, and his own God; 32

in "Resolution and Independence,"

> . . . soon with this he other matter blended,
> Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
> But stately in the main; and when he ended,
> I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
> In that decrepit Man so firm a mind; 33

29. Ibid., 278.
30. Carminum, Liber III, xxx, 1.
31. Ibid., Liber I, xi, 8.
32. P.W. (lines 25-28), IV, 66.
33. Ibid. (lines 134-38), II, 240.

in "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle,"

> Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
> Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
> Such happiness, wherever it be known,
> Is to be pitied, for 'tis surely blind; 34

in "Laodamia,"

> 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. 35

Once more (as Satan says, who is an unmatched authority on pride, and knows and speaks true without, however, the smallest disturbance of pride or ruffle of conscience) "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n."[36] If we allow that Aquinas' categories are a theological construct comparable to Wordsworth's metaphor of the dissociated self, descriptive of a similar malfunction of the will and abuse of truth, with the equivalent effect of guilt and craving for destruction and the annihilation of life, as evidenced for instance in the narrative of "Peter Bell," we become conscious of how far the fellowship of great minds attenuates attention to periods or shifts in

34. Ibid. (lines 53-56), IV, 260.
35. Ibid. (lines 145-50), II, 271.
36. Paradise Lost, I, 254-55.

methods of intellectual inquiry and of the possible service, in the critique of letters and interpretation of Wordsworth as in the conduct of life, of a negative capability.

Juxtapositions of earlier writers with Wordsworth, of Milton and Shakespeare, Chaucer and Dante, of both Testaments of the Bible, and of Homer, are numerously possible and edifying. But le plus ça change le plus c'est la même chose. Man's mind is ever alive and fertile, constructing one fiction, fable, myth after another with idiom to suit. But the meaning within--the Word within the word--calmly survives, like the relief on Keats' Grecian urn, impervious to human flux. This is what Wordsworth means when he speaks of the "years that bring the philosophic mind"[37] or wishes that his days might be "Bound each to each by natural piety."[38] "Eighteenth-century as anybody," his roots reach deep into the subsoil of Western thought and, as M.H. Abrams in Natural Supernaturalism maintains, semi-atheist in youth though he was, are full of the spirit of primitive Christianity;[39] and he is of course, in intention and fact, insofar as his desire

37. P.W. ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," 187), IV, 284.

38. Ibid. (epigraph, line 3), 279; the epigraph was added by Wordsworth in 1815 from lines 7-9 of "My Heart Leaps Up" (ibid. I, 226).

39. New York: W.W. Norton, 1971. See pages 392, 396-97, and 32, 65, and 90. Abrams' thesis, that "the writings of Wordsworth and his English contemporaries reflect not only the language and rhythms but also the design, the imagery, and many of the central moral values of the Bible" (p. 32), that as evident in the major literature of the period, "including the work /The Recluse/ whose argument Wordsworth announced in his Prospectus as the possibility of an earthly paradise

to revive the perceptions of the past and enlarge man's store of options is concerned, a revolutionary and innovator.

2.

The key question which the elaborate history of the idea of Nature, of which Wordsworth's poetry is the climactic expression, poses is one of ethics. In brief, if God is good, how is one man blessed, another not, one master of himself, the other the nemesis of himself, one rich, another poor? The answer formerly as in Calvin, Pascal, or Pope was that some beings are born elect, more fit and favored than others by divine fiat, that just and loving as God is, God is hidden, His mercy mysterious, and that "Whatever is, is right."[40] Wordsworth is the first major English poet to take these views aggressively to task with an interpretation of man as actor, sovereign in his estate, and the dynamic image of God. He is also the last in a sense, every important poet since his day having, let alone not superseded him, engaged in one

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which would be a simple produce of the common day . . . Romantic thinking and imagination remained apocalyptic thinking and imagination" as the Romantics' bases of hope shifted "from political revolution to the powers inherent in human consciousness" (p. 65), and that "characteristic concepts and patterns of Romantic philosophy and literature are a displaced and reconstituted theology, or else a secularized form of devotional experience" (loc. cit.), is closely relevant to my own theme and will be considered in later discussion.

40. "Essay on Man," Epistle IV, 145.

variation or another on his theme.[41] The crucial difference between his doctrine and earlier ones is that for him every man is either a prophet or subject to the prophetic call and the material of revelation, in mind or in Nature, at hand. Hence the decisive measure of a man's worth and final index of his capacity for freedom are attested by the promptness of his answer and pitch of devotion to this call:

> Here calling up to mind what then I saw
> A youthful Traveller, and see daily now
> Before me in my rural neighborhood,
> Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
> To Nature, and the power of human minds,
> To men as they are men within themselves.
> How oft high service is perform'd within,
> When all the external man is rude in shew,
> Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold
> But a mere mountain-Chapel such as shields
> Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
> Of these, said I, shall be my Song . . . [42]

41. Among Abrams' numerous comparisons of Wordsworth with Eliot, Auden, Yeats, and others, consider, for instance, his identification of Wordsworth's "audacious . . . undertaking to shift his haunt and the main region of his song from heaven, Jehovah, and hell to 'the Mind of Man'" with Wallace Stevens' definition of "the aim 'of modern poetry' as the attempt to convert the setting and the agents and language of Scripture into 'The poem of the mind in the act of finding / What will suffice'" (op. cit., pp. 68-69); and note the echo, in Stevens' latter clause and the word suffice, of Aristotelian and Christian moderation similar to that in Shakespeare's "Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither; / Ripeness is all" (King Lear, V, ii, 9-11 /my italics/), and similar in turn to Wordsworth's conception (The Prelude, X, 724-28) of men as living

> Not in Utopia, subterraneous Fields,
> Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where,
> But in the very world which is the world
> Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
> We find our happiness, or not at all.

42. The Prelude, XII, 220-31.

Ultimately, by natural piety and the philosophic mind, Wordsworth is contemplating a modus vivendi close to the Hebrew notion of the circumcised heart or, in Christian context, to the ideal of caritas.[43]

The problem of election does not utterly vanish, to be sure. But where Wordsworth is particularly innovative is in the democracy of his thought. No longer is election a priori, shrouded in darkness or resolved irremediably at birth; nor are the sins of the fathers a bane to the children for all their generations. Man's fate still is collectively in the hands of God; but each man participates now actively in his own. Each man is similarly endowed in principle as the next and on the same footing at the start, heir, as says Wordsworth, to a "great birthright"[44] of sensibility, assuring a comparable prospect of salvation. Along with this recasting of man's image, implicit in fact is a reformulation of the image of God. God ceases to function as Yahweh, lord of hosts and destruction, and assumes his role as Jehovah, father of love and author of the laws of civilization. Biblically, that is, we move with Wordsworth from the early, ritualistic injunctionalism of Leviticus to the more rational and ethical order of Deuteronomy. Existentially, we are absolved of the dubious necessity to search for a solution to the alleged dilemma of how to live with nothing.

43. See Deuteronomy 30:6 and I Corinthians 3:1-13.
44. The Prelude, II, 286.

Ritualism and ethics, savagery and polity, being of kindred ground, however, and the grace of Jehovah reconstitutable in an instant to the wrath of Yahweh, the purpose served heretofore with arbitrary finality by divine fiat, deemed now answerable according to the notion of felix culpa, preserves its original force. There is still, albeit under man's aegis, a process of selection at work.

> By uniform countroul of after years
> In most abated or suppress'd, in some,
> Through every change of growth or of decay,
> Pre-eminent till death [45]

--Wordsworth's birthright is a probationary reprieve. Indeed he admits as much, as well as obliquely hints how, when in Book II of The Prelude, for instance, recalling his impressions of early youth, he breaks off and says unexpectedly:

> Yet is a path
> More difficult before me, and I fear
> That in its broken windings we shall need
> The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing:
> For now a trouble came into my mind
> From unknown causes.
>
> (Lines 287-92)

He does not articulate what that trouble was (The Prelude being designed in part to meet this purpose and in part to furnish a prescription to remedy the trouble) but goes on in

45. Ibid., 277-80; my italics.

the following lines to say only that

> I was left alone
> Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
> The props of my affections were remov'd,
> And yet the building stood, as if sustain'd
> By its own spirit!
>
> (Lines 292-96)

The passage containing these lines expounds on the significance of the relation between mother and child and includes a tribute by the poet to the memory of his mother; his being left alone and the props of his affections removed can be interpreted in addition to its more figurative meaning as an autobiographical allusion to the effect upon him at that time of her loss. We shall learn as we proceed that Wordsworth's building stood then neither wholly by its own spirit (rather as if) nor by Nature's aid, but at least equally with strength

> From early days
> Beginning not long after that first time
> In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch,
> I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart. 46

In Book XI, composed nearly four years later and as if with the lines of Book II in mind, he confesses at any rate of his experience now as a man,

46. Ibid., 280-83.

> The days gone by
> Come back upon me from the dawn almost
> Of life: the hiding-places of my power
> Seem open; I approach, and then they close;
> I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
> May scarcely see at all . . .
>
> (Lines 334-39)

To glance once more at the meaning of Jacqueline Pascal's Port-Royal regulations, between the simplicity and innocence of childhood which are the path to Christ's immortality through the agape of I Corinthians, and the old age of Adam which signifies the denial of love and perpetuation of human conflict and stasis, is potent antithesis. Critics of Wordsworth, being themselves human and engaged in their struggle with time, provide modest assistance, as may be expected, in precisely identifying his trouble.[47] Something in man, at any event, initially potent and redeeming, perishes generally with age, yielding in the late stages but glimpses of order and lastly nothing at all. Man, in Wordsworth's system, is still a creature of darkling fate, still mortal and fallible, if newly invested with hope.

47. As an illustration, see Raymond D. Havens in The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1941 /II, 324-28/), whose discussion of lines 287-96 is the most complete. Thus, "Here, as often in The Prelude, Wordsworth seems to be describing as clearly and honestly as he can a state of mind or feeling which he does not understand. In the present instance this is the less surprising because he was apparently dealing with a condition far less generally recognized in his day than in our own--with the tremendous physical and mental changes incident upon puberty" (p. 325). If so, which is still far from an adequate explanation of his trouble, he would have been aptest indeed to suffer the

The "broken windings" and "trouble . . . from unknown causes," and need of "the chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing," the former images of perplexed passivity and apprehension, the latter of solidity and soaring flight, are subtle and intriguing, however, and warrant the reader's raptest and most able judgement. J.H. Van den Berg strikes a persuasive chord, in the excerpt from his book The Changing Nature of Man[48] in Harold Bloom's anthology of Romantic criticism, even though the excerpt contains not a single reference to Wordsworth and has nothing whatever to do with him. Van den Berg's method is an appraisal of successive modifications of man's consciousness of Nature, from Augustine to Rousseau, to the emergence and climax in Freud of consciousness of self. He proposes at the outset that

> the factualization of our understanding--the impoverishment of things to a uniform substantiality--and the disposal of everything that is not identical with this substantiality into the "inner self" are both parts of one occurrence. The inner self became necessary when contacts were devaluated. 49

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effect of the loss of his parents most sharply then (as in a sense he was to do the death of his father again, following the death of his brother John by drowning in 1805), even though "Mrs. Wordsworth died when her son was only eight--before the Hawkshead period with which these lines clearly deal--and her husband was not close enough to his children to be termed one of 'the props of my affections'" (p. 324). Besides, to suppose, as Haven does, that because "the two deaths were separated by nearly six years," or that Wordsworth uses the phrase "'from unknown causes'" to describe his trouble, "they could not have produced the single impression implied in these lines" (loc. cit.), argues a curious view, to say the least, of the tenacity and the reality of death as a fixed ingredient not only of Wordsworth's art but of the human mind.

His "reconnaissance," as he styles it, into the phenomenology of ideas is of critical value to my argument. Since it is woven of a number of closely reasoned and internally connected but on the surface independent parts, however, several brief quotations will be required to set it effectively into focus. The very wide distinction between Augustine's Confessions and Rousseau's is that

> Augustine, believing that the approach to himself is an aspect of his relation to God, wishes to speak of God and not of himself; Rousseau means to speak of the self of the individual, the "self" which is of significance because of itself. Augustine has no knowledge of this self, he does not know the self of this self-satisfied individualism. 50

Luther, commendably, sought to reform the Church but came too late. He is scored, along with Savonarola and Thomas a Kempis, for having parted, in his essay "About the Freedom of a Christian" (1520), the "'inner' man from the outward and physical man" and contributed to the intellectual framework that eventuated in "the personification of religion and its disappearance from public life."[51] It should be noted in

48. "The Subject and His Landscape," in Romanticism and Consciousness (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), pp. 57-65.
49. Ibid., p. 57.
50. Loc. cit.
51. Ibid., p. 58 and n. 8; Van den Berg is here using the word personification in the same way as W.R. Inge: "I do not like the quasi-personification of our faculties . . . Men champion the cause of the Will, or the Intellect, or the Feeling, as if they were three rival powers contending for the supremacy over our lives. The unity of our personality is often lost sight of." Quoted by Havens, II, 320; my italics.

passing that the beginning of the Reformation also coincides, as Philippe Ariès has shown,[52] with the start of the reorientation of the setting of the individual's growth from the public to private sphere of society. The child starts then to be considered gradually less a man in diminutive size and dress and enters, as it were, upon its career to childhood in the modern sense--subject to the anxious and solicitous cares of its elders and to the risk, equally, of persevering too nearly in that calling and being immobilized as a child, incapable of accession to manhood without superfluous yet sizeable turmoil and pain.

The core of Van den Berg's study is his characterization of the atrophy of Nature and overcrowding of the self. It provides a rich clue to the causes of Wordsworth's "Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why," as well as to the "broken windings" of his search of wherewithal for reconstruction and assertion of his identity. By Wordsworth's time the counters of knowledge formerly of use for that purpose without need of laborious heavings of mind, transcending the self's simple, material consciousness of itself, have been dissipated. Man has managed somehow to bewilder his senses, estranged himself from creation and from his more vital and inherent self, and switched places with the inanimate world, performed a wondrously exacting, entropic work, become him-

52. See Centuries of Childhood, pp. 365 ff., 403-04, 411-15.

self inert.[53] Lycidas, who "knew / Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme," is "dead, dead ere his prime,"[54] the Theocritean pastoral vanished, and Nature accordingly hostile to man.

At this juncture in the process of man's isolation as Van den Berg defines it, "it could not be expected," he observes, "that things would be quiet in the inner self;"[55] whether or not orphaned young, that is, henceforth for men there would be trouble along the way. To exorcise the ghosts of their forgotten perceptions and regain their compromised selves, men would have to bide with unknown causes, created and concealed by their prerogative, and negotiate a darkness. Before they might again enjoy freedom and light and learn anew the colors of the rainbow, loveliness of the rose, the sunshine as a glorious birth,[56] they would have to experience tyranny and be humbled before exalted.

Why does Mona Lisa smile, Van den Berg asks of the figure in Da Vinci's famous painting, identical for him with Luther's manuscript. Her smile is emblematic of her withdrawal from the objective world and of her self-satisfaction.

53. For a highly interesting discussion of the idea of entropy in Great Expectations, predicated on similar assumptions as Van den Berg's study and with a like bearing on Wordsworth, see Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (1953; rpt. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 125-38.

54. Lines 8, 10-11.

55. Op. cit., p. 62.

56. See "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," 10, 11, 16 (P.W., IV, 279).

She is possessed of (and possessed by) an inner self, deposited into which is

> everything that the world has to offer . . . She holds that which is known, and she hides it. After this, that which is known will be that which is hidden, that which is unknown. And as time goes on everything will be within her, at once known and unknown. 57

Mona Lisa is the precise opposite of Wordsworth's Leech-gatherer, General Beaupuy, the Happy Warrior, and the Wanderer, and not least-- "I, too, have been a Wanderer . . . " [58] --of whom Wordsworth himself, in The Prelude and throughout his work, to 1814 and later, professes to want to be. The landscape behind Mona Lisa is the first ever to be painted

> because it was a landscape. A pure landscape . . . an exterior nature closed within herself . . . an exterior from which the human element has, in principle, been removed entirely. It is things-in-their-farewell . . . the strangest landscape ever beheld by human eyes. 59

To become visible, hence objective and alien, a focus of ecstasy and agent of regeneration, Nature had first to be estranged from human consciousness. Petrarch's delight on ascending Mont Ventoux in 1335 (and Wordsworth's as well on Mount Snowdon in a sense) "was caused by his seeing a reduc-

57. Op. cit., p. 60.
58. The Prelude, VI, 261.
59. Op. cit., p. 61.

tion. (Otherwise he would have seen nothing.)"[60] The same was true of Rousseau's emotions recorded in La Nouvelle Héloise (1761). "Their discovery was the discovery of a loss . . . "[61]

Wordsworth was aware of this truth. At the climax of his pedestrian journey in 1790 with Jones through France and the Alps, informed of having reached his objective, he writes of his disappointment:

> A Peasant met us, and from him we learn'd
> That to the place which had perplex'd us first
> We must descend, and there should find the road
> Which in the stony channel of the Stream
> Lay a few steps, and then along the Banks;
> And further, that thenceforward all our course
> Was downwards, with the current of that Stream.

There is no mistaking the allegorical drift and precision of this verse.

> Hard of belief, we question'd him again,
> And all the answers which the Man return'd
> To our inquiries, in their sense and substance,
> Translated by the feelings which we had
> Ended in this; that we had cross'd the Alps. 62

God dwells on the mountain, invisible and ineffable, and also in the heart of man. What Wordsworth's mind would have preferred to have been a fiction, roused by the peasant's timely intel-

60. Ibid., p. 63
61. Loc. cit.
62. The Prelude, VI, 513-19, 520-24.

ligence (the peasant a type no doubt of the Leechgatherer, also there gratuitously at the side of the pond at a critical moment in the poet's life[63]) his feelings in sense and substance confirmed as true. Man manages his cares and cultivates his "paradise within . . . happier far"[64] below in the valley. The normal path of human gravity is downwards with the current and in the stony channel of the stream and after, in the "narrow chasm" and "gloomy Pass" where "brook and road" join and become "fellow-travellers"[65] and the wilderness subsumes into civilization, along the banks. For God to be God, vouchsafe freedom to and surpass his creation, and merit the name of the "Ancient of days,"[66] he must be paradoxical, inferrable but inapprehensible, accessible and aloof. He must, alternately or at once, be Yahweh and Jehovah and, to be adjudged nonetheless as loving and a fit object of adoration, must be present, but his presence incommensurate with the conscious processes of human desire.

The same holds true of his labor. It, too, as inalienable guarantee of unpredictability and hence freedom, assuring a hierarchy of judgement and learning and the discernment of transcendent and just order, must exhibit paradox. Cole-

63. Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, interestingly gives among the definitions of the word gratuitous: "3. Econ. Designating goods, or utilities, which are the free gift of nature and not the products of effort."

64. Paradise Lost, XII, 587.

65. The Prelude, VI, 553, 554, 553, 554.

66. Daniel 7:9.

ridge's stately edifice in "Kubla Khan" is a "sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice;"[67] Blake's tiger, "burning bright / In the forests of the night," reveals a "fearful symmetry" wrought by the same "immortal hand and eye" as "made the Lamb;"[68] and the press of humanity in Wordsworth's London, vulgar, nefarious, and anarchic, opposing to men's passions "differences / That have no law, no meaning, and no end,"[69] and reducing all to one identity, also has value. Withdrawn from the source of validation of their perceptions in cities, men become objectionable to one another, their proximity oppressive and injurious. The normal propensity of things to pall when placed before the senses in great confusion and numbers is magnified there. But for some men,

> . . . though the picture weary the eye,
> By nature an unmanageable sight,
> It is not wholly so to him who looks
> In steadiness, who hath among least things
> An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
> As parts, but with a feeling of the whole. 70

Luther, Da Vinci, Petrarch antedate the eighteenth century, English Protestantism, and the Enlightenment. In distinguishing in the "prism and silent face" of his scientific predecessor at Cambridge the "marble index of a mind for ever / Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone,"[71]

67. Line 36.
68. "The Tyger," 1-2, 4, 3, 20.
69. The Prelude, VII, 703-04.
70. Ibid., 707-12.
71. Ibid., VI, 61, 62-63 (1850 version).

Wordsworth is reacting in this magnificent image not to Newton solely, or to Locke, Hartley, Priestley, or Godwin; he is not focusing on the eighteenth-century rationalist movement, to which he is himself substantially indebted. The image could be read in another sense, as expressing praise for the man of genius who, destined to compass the unknown and create new knowledge, must proceed alone, and it could also therefore be descriptive of Wordsworth. But the difference then between the shema and Christ's successive revisions of it,[72] implicit in the distinction between "strange seas of thought" and Wordsworth's feelings on crossing the Alps, would need reviewing with the benefit of the meaning of Coleridge's "ancestral voices prophesying war,"[73] as well as of the admonition, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."[74] Included in Wordsworth's stricture are all minds regardless of time or place who, while they have professed to be speeding human progress, have raised a curtain of obscurity between the brook and road, made broken windings of men's wanderings, and slowed the process of civilization.

The suppression of sense by reason, or substitution of a "universe of death . . . in place of that / Which is divine

72. The shema (Deuteronomy 6:5) enjoins man to love of God with heart, soul, and might, Matthew 22:37 with heart, soul, and mind, and Mark 12:30 with heart, soul, mind, and strength.

73. "Kubla Khan," 30.

74. Matthew 10:34.

and true,"[75] is more than an epistemological blunder. Regardless of agent or objective, it is first and last an act of aggression and violence, born of the anxiety of guilt and desire for punishment and self-annihilation, and not least an act of compulsion. The Cartesian cogito ergo sum posits a method of rational inquiry; it does not mean remotely that man must kill God and become at once the measure of all things and measure of none. If "le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis"[76] is unsettling for Pascal, the prospect of "Great Tracts of Land . . . Enricht with Fields and fertil Ground," where

> . . . many num'rous Hosts,
> In those far distant Coasts,
> For other great and glorious Ends,
> Inhabit, my yet unknown Friends, [77]

has the reverse effect for Traherne. Man may practice his mind, improve his masonry and farming, build engines to facilitate labor, and commit his thoughts to paper in the language of calculus and verse. When it accords with the needs of flesh and blood, science belongs, along with all the arts of peace and war, in the household of man.

What causes man to turn in upon himself and war with his senses and to appear the victim of tragic irony, his actions

75. The Prelude, XIII, 141-43; quoted above, p. 22 (q.v.).
76. Op. cit., p. 1113.
77. Poems of Felicity, "Shadows in the Water," 51-52, 53-54.

patterned by a cycle of guilt and retribution, is that, while he can never hope utterly to possess power within him over creation or wholly to contain the unknown, he likewise cannot, as Wordsworth's Solitary in The Excursion pretends to be doing, efface himself from the world, transform his identity, or abolish the fact of his birth. Yahweh and Jehovah are inseparable and everywhere, on mountain and in valley, without and within the heart of man. The compulsion to build or to destroy is an integral and permanent element of human nature. Man cannot evade the necessity for growth, banish the jungle, domesticate or expel God, with impunity; nor should he.

> Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages,
> And all the drop-scenes drop at once
> Upon a hundred thousand stages,
> It cannot grow by an inch or an ounce; 78

or, as Wallace Stevens put it, "Reality is not that external scene but the life that is lived in it. Reality is things as they are. The general sense of the word proliferates its special senses;"[79] or Wordsworth still better,

> The eye--it cannot choose but see;
> We cannot bid the ear be still;

78. W.B. Yeats, "Lapis Lazuli," 21-24.
79. The Necessary Angel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 25.

> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against or with our will. [80]

The business of man is to discern in "Winds thwarting winds, bewilder'd and forlorn" and "torrents shooting from the clear blue sky" the "Characters of the great Apocalypse" and "types and symbols of Eternity,"[81] to seek "similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude,"[82] and to confirm the life of sense. Spectacular and ambitious as mortal rage may be, compared to Yahweh's it is as nothing. Mortal wrath against God is abortive, arrogant, absurd. God dwarfs man, dwarfs man's rage. Compelled at the last extremity by the aridity and despair of his heart as by God's final grace, man must avow his identity and atone: in "pageantry of fear," "single sheep" or "whistling hawthorn," perceive the way to righteousness and love, and drink "As at a fountain," and "To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower, / Even the loose stones that cover the high-way," give a "moral life," see them "feel," or link them "to some feeling."[84] Because he cannot best God, but only victimize himself, he must crave God in life or be gathered unto him in death, either imitate God, after his example create and pursue pleasure with unified mind and feeling, and be renaturalized, or else precipi-

80. P.W. ("Expostulation and Reply," 17-20), IV, 56.
81. The Prelude, VI, 560, 561, 570, 571.
82. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 400.
83. Ibid. ("Elegiac Stanzas . . . Peele Castle," 48), IV, 260; The Prelude, XI, 359, 360, 385.
84. The Prelude, III, 124-25, 126, 127.

tate the vengeance of merkabbah[85] and his doom. Guilt and anger, propensities the reverse of wisdom and love, make mockery of proud philosophical passivity or fortitude and have also a purpose finally. They must elicit action and be suffused into creative energy, or man die by his own hand.

Among the cornerstones of Wordsworth's doctrine, defining the poet and by implication furnishing the distinction between the sound and the flawed man, and corroborating much of the substance of the foregoing discussion, is the pronouncement familiar to most if not all of his readers:

> /A poet/ is . . . a man pleased with his own passions and volitions . . . who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them . . . affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present . . . conjuring up in himself passions, which . . . (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves . . . 86

The significance of this excerpt speaks for itself, and only the briefest comment is called for. Pleased with, delighting in, impelled, rejoicing--depending on perspective, these

85. See Ezekiel 1, 6:3-6, 7:23-27, et passim; merkabbah, which in Hebrew means chariot, refers to the four-headed, fiery engine of war in Ezekiel's first vision (1:4-6) and is regarded by writers as a prefigurement of the Four Horses of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation (6:1) and symbolic both of Christ's victory over the rebel angels (see Paradise Lost, VI, 750-59, for instance) and of apocalypse in general.

86. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 393.

words could describe equally either specimen of humanity, the man of robust physical and moral stamina and consummate creative energy, as they do here, or his counterpart, the ravaged and ravaging neurotic. The wish for personal power and pleasure in either is the same, and both choose freely. Here, however, their fellowship ends. The labors of the one proceed from and exhibit wholesome desire, most finely rendered as the will to be, while of the other--again Wordsworth's Solitary, Peter Bell, and the Moralist in "A Poet's Epitaph" are apt examples--they issue from perverseness and hostility and the will to die. The one glories in Nature and self, communes with God and enjoys dominion over creation,[87] and prospers as one among the fraternity of living prophets.

> Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
> Of things for ever speaking,
> That nothing of itself will come,
> But we must still be seeking? 88

87. See Genesis 1:26 ("And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over . . . the earth"); in responding to divine decree and fulfilling the responsibility inherent in dominion over the earth, and in the process committing qualities of mind and sense in a degree analogous to the divine in the act of creation, the man of faith vindicates his likeness to--hence communes with--the divine and acquires as reward for his devotion and labor possession of the earth. This is illustrated in part in the story of Joseph (Gen. 37-50), in his ability to read dreams and his ascent to power and wealth under Pharaoh, even though only a Hebrew slave and in an establishment with a culture superior to his own, and is an important element of Wordsworth's emphasis on simplicity and service in the lines, "How oft high service . . . Of these, said I, shall be my Song" (The Prelude, XII, 226-31; quoted above, p. 27 /q.v./). (With the latter, compare Matthew 5:5 and 5:8 on the meek and pure of heart--or circumcised and charitable heart--inheriting the earth and seeing God.)

Nothing in Nature, self, man or God, unless perfectly plain with all answers given and mysteries resolved, suffices the other. It is logical therefore, foretold, aesthetic, and just, that as he looks into himself he is aghast and wretched. He discovers nothing to suit his malign, degenerate pleasure but images of disorder and waste; were he to prevail and have his way, he would soon transmute these to fact and despoil the world. He parodies the goodness of divine intent, thrives on envy and pride, and ("Have I not reason to lament / What man has made of man?"[89]) is a descendant of Cain.

An orderly, durable, creative vision ("Theme this but little heard of among men"[90]) is the nurtured treasure of a master spirit, freed from the preponderance of the flesh on the one hand, yet aware on the other of its worth and of the necessity reasonably to respond to its needs. Nature, as Wordsworth adapts and refines it, supposes the continuity of all human functions and the prevalence of reciprocity between the human interior and the world without, subject, however, in practice to anxiety, stress, or even failure, and to all

88. P.W. ("Expostulation and Reply," 25-28), IV, 56; contrast line 27 and its expression of the disinterestedness of love and being with the irony of Lear's impatient rejoinder to Cordelia's tacit confession of love, "Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again" (King Lear, I, i, 90).

89. P.W. ("Lines written in early Spring," 23-24), IV, 58.

90. Ibid. ("Preface to The Excursion /1814/," 67 /"Home at Grasmere," 820/, V, 5; the concluding 107 lines (754-860) of "Home at Grasmere," the latter intended as Part I, Book I of The Recluse, Wordsworth appended in 1814 to the Preface to The Excursion, intended as Part II, to serve as a Prospectus of the whole work (see P.W., V, 475-76).

the mischief and degradation of the cardinal sins.[91] "Wings have we, -- and as far as we can go / We may find pleasure," he cautions, but "Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes, / He is a Slave; the meanest we can meet!"[92]

To return to his need of the chamois' sinews and the eagle's wing, this then, in the abstract, is the trouble Wordsworth infers in Book II of The Prelude, and so skillfully resolves in the figure of the Leechgatherer, the sight of whom, "body . . . bent double" as if by a "more than human weight," yet kind demeanor, stateliness, and smile, prompts the poet to thoughts of laughter both human and divine ("I could have laughed myself to scorn"), purges his morbid fear ("the fear that kills"), and restores his equilibrium and hope.[93] Behind it, causing him in Book II to seek without apparent reason the visible world and in Book XI to confess his diminution of poetic vigor, are a hint in one instance and confirmation in the other of the ambivalence and polarity of spirit and flesh and of the crisis that sooner or later

91. The "seven cardinal sins" are pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth; the "cardinal virtues," prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude; and the "theological virtues," faith, hope, and charity.

92. P.W. ("Personal Talk," 29-30, 27-28), IV, 74; on this ancient and important distinction between knowledge by the eye and knowledge by the ear, the reader may wish to consult profitably: Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar," in Mimesis, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 3-23; Thorleif Boman, Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek, trans. Jules L. Moreau (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 205-08 et passim; and James Muilenberg, "The Biblical View of Time," Harvard Theological Review, LIV/4 (Oct., 1961), 225-52.

93. P.W. ("Resolution and Independence," 66, 70, 137,

overtakes every man and every epoch (as it did Wordsworth's and has ours) and, by eroding the primordial bases of satisfaction in mind, feeling, and Nature and the social and religious institutions founded on them, militates against faith and ever threatens, as though something that had never been, to extinguish and reduce the human race to dust.

> . . . the libido leaves the inner self when the inner self has become too full. In order to prevent it from being torn, the I has to aim itself on objects outside the self; " . . . ultimately man must begin to love in order not to get ill." So that is what it is. Objects are of importance only in an extreme emergency. Human beings, too. The grief over their death is the sighing of a too-far distended covering, the groaning of an over-filled self. 94

There is no evidence of Freud's having read Wordsworth. But if he had, he would have found the elements of his Zur Einführung des Narzissmus (1914) suggested in such a statement by Wordsworth as, "By love subsists / All lasting grandeur, by pervading love; / That gone, we are as dust,"[95] as well as in "The Ruined Cottage," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," "Tintern Abbey," "The Brothers," and "Michael," or virtually anywhere else in his work; and he might have explored further

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113), II, 237, 240, 239; also see Wordsworth's letter to Sara Hutchinson of 14 June 1802, "' . . . an old man was, far from all house or home'--not stood, not sat, but 'was'-- . . . in the most naked simplicity possible" (E.Y., p. 366).

94. Van den Berg, op. cit., p. 65, and see n. 7.

95. The Prelude, XIII, 149-52 (1850 version); quoted above, p. 12 (q.v.).

the depths and tensions of human sensibility and discovered, as Wordsworth did, that aesthetic activity differs from narcissism and, rather than being independent of reality, rescues man from the bane of idle repetition, sterility, and counterfeit, and makes reality real and the ideal setting for the staging of human actions and growth.

3.

My purpose in the next chapters is to detail the role of family in Wordsworth. I mean by family not only the persons connected with an individual by ties of blood and marriage but also the greater family of man at large, far and near, past and present, and to come; I mean also family as ecology, as in an ecology of morals, affections, or experience; and lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I mean family as in Paul's sense in Ephesians. Conceiving of man as in a spiritual partnership, and exhorting wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters to obedience and love, Paul defines the union between a man and his wife as a "great mystery," analogous to that between Christ and the Church, and likens their love to consummate love of self and God,

> For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 96

96. 5:29-30; cp. Galatians 3:28, "there is neither male

My thesis is that Wordsworth distinguishes in family a multiplicity of related meanings and functions. At the most modest, temporal level, the family is the dispenser of the basic, material necessities of shelter and board. It sustains the young individual alive to traverse the precarious years from birth to manhood, then swiftly passes out of his presence and consciousness. At the most complex level, the family discharges a covenantal mission. It not only assists the individual in his uncertain, initial trials in the world but abides with him as a ministering power throughout his years, dispensing affection and strengthening his desire to perceive in the most disparate experience unifying relation, and thus enables him to give and receive and to repeat in his mind "the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM,"[97] and gradually to vindicate man and God. In either instance, whether absent or present, for bad or for good, the family has transcendental force. It contributes to the nature and course of final things, mediates between them and their antecedents, and deliberately or not serves to advance or defeat a universal, anagogic plan. The fate of the individual and by extension that of the human race are at any time apparent in the quality of their concourse with the real and unreal,

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nor female . . . in Jesus Christ."

97. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (1907; rpt. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), I, 202; and see The Prelude, XI, 333-34, "from thyself it is that thou must give, / Else never canst receive," which echoes Coleridge in "Dejection: An Ode," "we receive but what we give" (line 47).

which in turn is determined by the care accorded the child and the youth in their formative years.

That so many of Wordsworth's poems in his most fertile years, from "The Ruined Cottage" in 1795-98 to as late as "Laodamia" in 1814, are family narratives, stress childhood and youth, or, like The Prelude, his masterpiece, are concerned with the foundations and growth of identity is not indication alone of his intense preoccupation with the ontology of self or with domestic ethics; it is evidence also of his intent to build up a metaphor apt at once to give credence to his organicist faith in the processiveness and totality of being and to be a tangible instance aesthetically of this persuasion in practice.

The capacity to be, to beget and to disseminate love, to transact moral decisions freely, or to submit to Nature and the grace of the imagination, and by creative human fiat "see into the life of things"[98] and testify to God-like power, are advanced virtues, predicated on a "primal sympathy"[99] granted all men equally at birth, but dependent thereafter on influences concrete or abstract of which the family is at once the perfect expression and the source.

98. P.W. ("Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," 49), II, 260.

99. Ibid. ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," 182), IV, 284.

THE POET

" . . . the pervading grace
That hath been, is, and shall be."

--William Wordsworth, The Prelude

> Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakspeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. 1

The poet, according to Wordsworth, is exemplar among men of the good signified in the idea of the family, and prototype of the being envisaged in the verse "Prospectus" to The Recluse for whom "Paradise, and groves / Elysian" will be "A simple produce of the common day." 2 One would expect that a study of the family in Wordsworth would manifest attention to his notion of the poet, to several of his key poetic figures, and to their author.

1.

Faith in the resolvability of man's disjunctiveness into a whole richly serviceable to his needs is the paramount in-

1. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 396.
2. Ibid., V, 4.

gredient of Wordsworth's thought. Early and late, in poetry and in prose, his dominant concern is with separation, mortality, and death and the effect upon them of imagination and love. His early testament, including "Michael," "The Ruined Cottage," "The Brothers," or "The Old Cumberland Beggar," for instance, may seem sparer, purer, and more poetic than his late. It may be, among other reasons, that the energies of youth displayed here are more potent and abundant, hence patently more attractive and poetic, than maturer ones generally are; or, as likely, it may be a predictable, normal function of age, indicative of good health and the gradual acquisition of wisdom and the philosophic mind, for even a great man to discover that the task ordained by him as his life's labor in his youth is inordinately complex and beyond possibility, and to allocate then his resources with more pause than formerly and be suspicious of spontaneity.

This seems in part the intent of Wordsworth's statement in the Immortality Ode,

> What though the radiance which was once so bright
> Be now for ever taken from my sight,
> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
> We will grieve not . . . 3

"Another race hath been, and other palms are won." [4] M.H.

3. Ibid. (lines 176-80), IV, 284.
4. Loc. cit (line 200), 285.

Abrams' "correspondent breeze," Valéry's "Le vent se lève! ... Il faut tenter de vivre!" and Milton's "Tomorrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures new," with all their disparate meanings, are edifyingly relevant to the conclusion of this great poem.[5] "I only have relinquished one delight,"[6] says Wordsworth. As Lionel Trilling demonstrated long ago, the Ode does not signal, as had been previously thought, a retreat by Wordsworth from his former allegiance or a debacle but something far different and unquestionably sound.[7] Common beliefs aside, le sommeil des dieux is distinct from la mort des dieux. The interests that animated writers' and thinkers' labors in the heyday of polytheism are the same in essence as distinguish his. Gods may change shape, remove from one clime to another, and retain withal their pristine identity. Besides, there is no presumption here of possible somnolescence by Wordsworth. He remained virtually to the day of his death active at his calling, and, as students who have perused the sum of his

5. See, respectively, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," in M.H. Abrams, ed. English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 37-67; "Le Cimetière Marin" (line 139); and "Lycidas" (line 193).

6. P.W. (line 191), IV, 285.

7. See "The Immortality Ode," in M.H. Abrams, ed. op. cit., pp. 123-43. Although Trilling says that there was "a great falling off in his genius which we are drawn to connect with the crucial changes the Ode records," his thesis, first published in 1942, is that "it was not so sharp as is commonly held" (p. 141), that the poem "is about growing up" (p. 125), and that "Wordsworth is not saying, and it is sentimental and unimaginative of us to say, that he has become less a feeling man and less a poet. He is only saying that he has become less a youth. Indeed, the Ode is so little a farewell to art, so little a dirge sung over departing powers, that it is

work with care know, his later testament is as vital and inspired as his former. Only, it must be stressed that it is of a different, but by no means inferior, genre.

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, written for the most part in 1821 and published the year after (and, as part of a one-volume edition of collected poetry, again in 1845, with additions from 1827 and 1842), traces the development of the Church of England, an institution prized by Wordsworth in his advancing years as a prime substratum of Britain's culture and affected in general by a similar history. Its sectarian character is of relatively minor consequence. What matters instead is that Ecclesiastical Sonnets reveals a fidelity to sympathies akin to those upon which his earlier work is founded and that certain of its reverberations have recognizable affinity with the thought underlying the idea of family.

Britain is a nation or, in a larger sense, also a family. As a family depends for cohesion upon the devotion and harmony of its members (the sine qua non, so to speak, as Wordsworth insists in his letter to Charles Fox, of its prosperity and culture), so Britain has had need of a culture, and continues to have need of one still. The relation of the smallest and largest unit of society is a permanent proposition. What

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actually the very opposite--it is a welcome of new powers and a dedication to a new poetic subject. For if sensitivity and responsiveness be among the poetic powers, what else is Wordsworth saying at the end of the poem except that he has a greater sensitivity and responsiveness than ever before?" (p. 140).

touches or is true of the one, touches likewise and is true of the other. Only the numbers and the species of immediacy conveyed by them to the viewer differ. The Church of England, which has grown and prospered despite time, mortality, the disasters of war, and internal dissension, is an instrument of stability, longevity, and faith, sacred as well as secular. It is, of course, a religious establishment; but that does not hinder it from qualifying as an object of literary and historical interest. For it is also equally a particle of Britain's prevailing social culture and an agent as such of social and not exclusively religious or spiritual good.

The Church of England merits, therefore, poetic treatment much as Margaret's plight in "The Ruined Cottage" does, for instance, but of another sort--a series of dignified sonnets rather than a dramatic narrative. If the Church defaulted on its responsibilities, abandoned its flock, and failed in its mission, as Robert deserts his wife Margaret and their children, a similar disaster as seals their fate would descend on Britain. The Church decaying, the British people would forfeit a key factor of their identity. We need not pause to examine illustrations of the contents of Ecclesiastical Sonnets; suffice it if we consider that the Church of England and Britain have intimate connection, that the history of the one is bound up with that of the other, neither susceptible to change without modification sooner or later in the other, and that Wordsworth in three series of 132 sonnets in all carefully constructs a mosaic of the Church's evolution, through its

vagaries, distresses, confusion, and progress, during the many centuries from its founding to its emergence as a dominant force in British life. The nucleus conception behind Ecclesiastical Sonnets is one of accretion, expansion, and growth with the history of the Church conceived in characteristic Wordsworthian fashion as a developing metaphor, independent of time, place, or circumstance, but obedient in essence to the same laws as govern individual family members' growth and prompt or retard their progress.

The principles regulating relations among nations are pragmatic; they satisfied the meaning of that word before it was coined and before the advent of Il Principe or the establishment of foreign affairs as an autonomous political discipline. Helen's was not remotely the face that launched a thousand ships, unless in a sinister, psychological sense. The desire for lucre financed, equipped, and put those ships to sea, and the sack of Troy and dispersal of the Trojans as slaves was adequate and ample return on the investment. Ideally, however, these principles presuppose reciprocity and trust among nations and the enjoyment by their citizens of certain prerogatives and guarantees of freedom analogous to those deemed desirable for a family or household. Interaction, correspondence, cohesion are props of a family's well-being and foundations for the realization by its members of identity. "Without Contraries," as Blake discerned, "is no progression,"[8] to be sure. "Attraction, Repulsion, Reason

and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to human existence."[9] It does not follow, however, immediately that a glut of contraries necessarily means that more is better, and, for the short (as well as the not so short) term, it can have the opposite effect and stifle progression.

At the family level, freedom grants an individual--wife, husband, child--the scope required to practice his being without fear or duress, censure, or intimidation, and to achieve an awareness of self and the means thereby to draw sophisticated moral distinctions affecting invariably, in addition to himself alone, other individuals near him; likewise, freedom is indispensable for a nation to define its traditions, to raise and nurture institutions for the benefit of its people, and to secure, paradoxically along with the perpetuation of its freedom, a framework for rearing a culture and evolving an awareness of its self.

As his tract The Convention of Cintra, written in the fall and winter of 1808-09 and published the following spring, proves, a nation is a link for Wordsworth in the larger, terrestrial aggregate of the family of man. Napoleon seems to have grasped the axiom, Divide and rule, and put it to use in Portugal and Spain. Cast a wedge between a people and its rulers, desecrate and ransack its houses of worship, suppress its right of assembly and its institutions, and insure that no man can feel confident to address

8. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "The Argument."
9. Loc. cit.

neighbor or brother without fear of denunciation, torture, the firing squad, or the gallows. Events will take their course and the enemy soon sue for peace. As fate had it, however, that summer of 1808, events on the Iberian Peninsula took a different course. Having united against Napoleon with Portugal and Spain, Britain sent an expeditionary force, and the French were defeated. But instead of a bill of surrender, General Wellesley, commander of the British force, and General Kellerman, commander of the French, negotiated an armistice. A "Convention" was drawn up, under whose terms the French with all their spoils of war were to board British transports and, at British cost, be given safe-conduct back to their country. Victims of appalling atrocities under Napoleon's occupation and with the greatest stake in a cessation of hostilities and victory, the latter won on their soil, the Portuguese were excluded from the proceedings.[10]

When tidings of the Convention reached Britain, consternation was widespread. The public reacted with contempt for the perpetrators of an outrage against elementary justice and the rules of war, to say nothing of British honor. A Board of Inquiry was convened in effect soon after, in November, 1808, but it cleared the accused of wrongdoing. Wordsworth and his

10. For a detailed narrative of these events, see the first chapter of Gordon Kent Thomas, Wordsworth's Dirge and Promise: Napoleon, Wellington, and the Convention of Cintra (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971); a very brief, but historically less useful, summary is also included in the Introduction to the text of the Convention in The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, edd. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (3 vols., Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 193-96; hereafter cited as Prose.

countrymen were incensed. Whereas the injuries not only of the Portuguese but of all people smarting under Napoleon's abuse could have been avenged, the representatives of the Crown entrusted with the execution of that task had proved remiss in judgement. Instead of right they had elected wrong, had allied themselves with the despot, perplexed the issue of freedom, and diminished an occasion for glory and bliss to one of sad infamy and shame. The episode was of a kind aptest to score a sensible and thinking man's faith in being and to make him suspicious ever after of his fellow mortals' motives. It was a darksome hour in Britain's history and the annals of international relations with similarities, for the modern historian and Wordsworth reader, to statesmen's tepid response in the 1930's to Haile Selassie's eleventh-hour appeal to the League of Nations and to Hitler's Anschluss of Austria. In each instance, lethargy, disbelief, and misjudgement abetted chaos and a carnage of human lives.

For Wordsworth, Napoleon was nothing less than the incarnation of Satan, and the settlement of Cintra, coupled with the Board of Inquiry's dismissal of charges against the accused, more than ordinarily vexing and mindless. It was treason. It exposed and betrayed the integrity of the British. "We are," had Wordsworth lamented to Richard Sharp, in a letter of 27 September 1808, "all here cut to the heart by the conduct of Sir Hew and his Brother Knight in Portugal."[11]

11. M.Y., I, 267.

Having joined cause with a nation at arms to combat a common oppressor and to safeguard freedom for all, the British now seemed meanwhile to have been seeking another goal and engaged in duplicity.

I have selected The Convention of Cintra and cited the facts behind it without excerpts from the text to suggest only that at a time when it is often supposed not so much Wordsworth's technical capacities as libertarian views were flagging, evidence may be had of them strong and potent as ever. The Convention required six months to complete, longer than he had devoted in a single period to any work, The Prelude, The Excursion, and his youthful tragedy, The Borderers excepted. If for no other reason than as a relative expression of the significance of that fact as a measure of its importance to him, it deserves generous critical notice, and some, as attested by G.K. Thomas' recent Wordsworth's Dirge and Promise and its contention that the Convention was "a great monument to the continuity of Wordsworth's principles,"[12] seems forthcoming finally.

The Convention is vigorous and poetic (albeit in prose[13]) and fulsome indication of Wordsworth's unabated consciousness of the magnitude and tenacity of human evil and of his enduring, authentic commitment to the possibility of good. It

12. Page 165.

13. See "Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads": " . . . a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any

bristles with the righteous indignation and contempt of one sorely touched to the quick by the wretched bungling of an affair whose resolution, adroitly and charitably handled, might have meant at a critical juncture a strike for sanity and good; it might have challenged instead of tending to confirm a tyrant's trust in the feasibility of his odious designs. As significant, the Convention is the lofty pronouncement of a sentient, genuinely pained man, an aloof one, it is true, but one nonetheless involved in the world and profoundly believing that the convergence of the City of God and City of Man must ever be sought here below or not at all, and that good, paramount and immortal, is anthropomorphic, fixed on acute determinants such as the union in man of thought and affection, the bond between one set of men and another, and freedom for all to execute, without hindrance save as solicitude for the need of others may imply, the abundance of life's choices. Both the tone of the Convention and the record it contains in particular of the vile iniquities suffered by a helpless people in subjugation bring to mind Milton's sonnet on the massacre of the Vaudois, and in frequent instances it is as inspired and impassioned a work as the

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essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition" (P.W., II, 391-92); cf. Biographia Literaria, Chapter XVIII, "Unless . . . the difference denied be that of the mere words, as materials common to all styles of writing, and not of the style itself in the universally admitted sense of the term, it might be naturally presumed that there must exist a /difference/ between the ordonnance of poetic composition and that of prose" (Shawcross, II, 46).

finest of Wordsworth's poems on liberty and independence composed in 1797-1805, his alleged most characteristic creative period, and equally so as some of the more memorable passages of The Prelude concerned with the same themes.

On the basis of the following examples quoted from the concluding sections of the Convention, in extenso, let the reader judge:

> Let us attend to the springs of action, and we shall not be deceived. The works of peace cannot flourish in a country governed by an intoxicated Despot. . . . commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and all the peaceful arts, are of the nature of virtues or intellectual powers: they cannot be given; they cannot be stuck in here and there; they must spring up; they must grow of themselves . . . .
>
> It is to the worldlings of our own country . . . that I address myself. Let them know, there is no true wisdom without imagination; no genuine sense;--that the man, who in this age feels no true regret for the ruined honour of other Nations, must be poor in sympathy for the honour of his own Country; and that, if he be wanting here towards that which circumscribes the whole, he neither has--nor can have--a social regard for the lesser communities which Country includes. Contract the circle, and bring him to his family; such a man cannot protect that with dignified love. Reduce his thoughts to his own person; he may defend himself,--what he deems his honour; but this is the action of a brave man from the impulse of the brute, or the motive of a coward.
>
> The outermost and all-embracing circle of benevolence has inward concentric circles which, like those of the spider's web, are bound together by links, and rest upon each other; making one frame, and capable of one tremor; circles narrower and narrower, closer and closer, as they lie more near to the centre of self from which they proceeded, and which sustains the whole.
>
> There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise, of all ages. We would not be rejected from this community; and therefore do we hope. We look forward with erect mind, thinking and feeling: it is an obligation of duty: take away the sense of it, and the moral being would die within us.

> . . . the present juncture is most auspicious. Upon liberty, and upon liberty alone, can there be permanent dependence . . . Now is the time for a great and decisive effort; and, if Britain does not avail herself of it, her disgrace will be indelible, and the loss infinite. . . . Let us hasten to redeem ourselves. 14

Obvious in this assemblage of statements is a nexus of ideas answering in the main to that encountered in a handful of poems written in 1802 or 1803 and known and admired since by every generation of Wordsworth enthusiasts. I am referring to the several sonnets that may be described as pure Wordsworth gold and that convey such inestimable sentiments as:

> It is not to be thought of that the Flood
> Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
> Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
> Hath flowed . . .
> . . . . . .
> Should perish; and to evil and to good
> Be lost for ever. . . .
> . . . . . .
> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held. . . .
>
> Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
> England hath need of thee: she is a fen
> Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
> Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
> Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
>
> Plain living and high thinking are no more:
> The homely beauty of the good old cause
> Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
> And pure religion breathing household laws.

14. Prose, I, 330, 329, 340, 339, 341.

> Winds blow, and waters roll,
> Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;
> Yet in themselves are nothing! . . .
> . . . by the soul
> Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

The poems from which these four utterances are drawn being no doubt immediately recognizable, I omit the normal line references as superfluous.

2.

The Convention, we saw, dates from 1809, while Ecclesiastical Sonnets was written for the most part in 1821. We could extend our analysis and discover that the same qualities and underlying stresses as distinguish them do likewise numerous, shorter compositions much farther along in Wordsworth's years, like "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways" (1833) and "Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of James Hogg" (1835).

A misconception about Wordsworth, perpetrated by critics in the last century and carried over into this, needs at this juncture to be dispelled, or qualified. Despite his "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" in 1793, signed "by a Republican" and never published, or The Borderers, composed in 1796-97 under the influence of Godwin, or the statements in Book X of The Prelude, it is improbable that Wordsworth in the 1790's

was significantly a radical.[15] The question of apostasy and of the conceivable connection of it with the attenuation of his creative powers persists in the absence of evidence of his having either never held meaningful radical views of his own, or held them but lightly and but for the shortest time, in 1792 in consequence of his discussions with Beaupuy whom he much admired, and perhaps for a while longer upon his return to Britain. Could it be proven otherwise, the problem should swiftly vanish. But there is, of course, no firm or conclusive evidence either way. As do most other great person-

15. The critical literature that has accumulated on this topic since the publication in 1896 of Legouis' La Jeunesse de Wordsworth--1770-1798, followed in 1916 by Harper's biography, which takes the poet's life through to 1815 and, like Legouis, stresses his early republicanism and unorthodoxy, is vast and interesting. A full and balanced assessment of Wordsworth's political thought throughout his long years remains, however, still to be written.

In addition to Legouis and Harper, which gave renewed impetus to the division of Wordsworth into the young radical and the mature conservative, for which there were ample antecedents in the nineteenth century, and which still continues on the whole to be accepted, the reader may wish to consult for contrast Edith Batho, The Later Wordsworth (1933), which, besides re-evaluating Wordsworth's later years and challenging the alleged radicalism of his youth, maintains that from 1789 to 1797 he wrote bad poetry, and that he retained his esteem of liberty and humanity and belief in progress thereafter. Although differing from Batho about his later years, Willard L. Sperry, in Wordsworth's Anti-Climax (1935), concurs in doubting the influence upon his political principles of the French Revolution, and Mary E. Burton, in The One Wordsworth (1942), a study of Wordsworth's revisions of The Prelude and an extension of a sort of the first chapter of Batho's book, espouses a kindred view, denies a fundamental shift in his thought, but discerns rather a consistent strengthening and development of it. Published in the year after Harper's biography, in 1917, and opposite in reasoning, is A.V. Dicey, The Statesmanship of Wordsworth, which concentrates on the years 1802 to 1815, the period of the political sonnets and The Convention of Cintra, and defines Wordsworth persuasively as a nationalist like Mazzini

ages, Wordsworth has his share of complexity.

To gauge his youthful radical temper, it were useful to compare him with Blake or Hazlitt, for instance, about whose radical predilections there is not the faintest glimmer of doubt. A material, private, intransigent side of his nature, like that implied in the dictum in The Prelude on the virtue of being worthy of oneself,[16] and beneficial on the whole to his independence as an artist, but consonant with a conserv-

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and a precursor of the nationalism of the Victorian era.

The best studies of more recent years are F.M. Todd, Politics and the Poet (1957) and Carl Woodring's chapter on Wordsworth in Politics in English Romantic Poetry (1970). Todd glosses over some of Wordsworth's later political pronouncements, but advances the view that his thought was superficially radical and at odds with what radicalism later in the nineteenth century came to mean, but, as Burton had argued, that he never abandoned it. Most closely-reasoned to date is Woodring, who proceeds from the observation of the cleavage in the estimate of romanticism by literary critics as radical and by social historians as the opposite. His most valuable point is that Wordsworth's thought transcends political appraisal and evades the labels of liberal or conservative; but, given the need for a liberal to dwell in the world of action and to forego personal choices, it would seem to vindicate, at least from a radical point of view, the thesis that Wordsworth could not have been a radical and to suggest that his crisis in the mid-1790's was evidence of more than solely anxiety or disillusionment over the failure of the Revolution.

Bearing on the same theme is M.H. Abrams' Natural Supernaturalism (1971) and its premise that the Revolution, if not producing an essential change in Wordsworth, was instrumental in revising his faith in political upheaval as a basis of progress to dependence on the powers of consciousness. Also worthy of mention, lastly, is Leslie F. Chard, II, Dissenting Republican (1972), which traces the development of Wordsworth's political thought to 1797 and concludes that, after a period of moderate liberalism in 1793 and extreme radicalism in 1795, Wordsworth assumes a conservative posture akin to that of his forebears and consonant with the character of his own early upbringing. (For places of publication and publishers of the latter, see "Selected Bibliography," below.)

16. See The Prelude, I, 361.

ative more than a radical turn of mind, surfaces early in his work.

This may be evidenced by scrutinizing some of his dramatic characters like the Discharged Soldier or that steadfast figure the Leechgatherer who, though at the last of their earthly fortunes, comport themselves like men of substance. Their strength and dauntlessness lie in their apparent recognition of the ineluctable logic of things and in their possession withal of faith in their soundness. Observes the Leechgatherer, recalling the time when leeches were plentiful,

> Once I could meet with them on every side;
> But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
> Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may, [17]

and the Discharged Soldier no less, rebuking his young benefactor for entreating him to ask for needed help, " . . . my trust is in the God of Heaven / And in the eye of him that passes me."[18] Unlike worldlings, to borrow a word used by Wordsworth several times for kindred service, they do not expect as their due favored treatment or dispensations from men or (the Discharged Soldier's allusion aside) from heaven. They acquiesce in their mortality. This adaptability to untoward circumstance and uncertainty and in turn autonomy

17. P.W. ("Resolution and Independence," 124-26), II, 235.

18. The Prelude, IV, 494-95.

from them is one aspect for good or ill in the end of a conservative, or more remotely a stoical, disposition and part of what I hope to define further, if tentatively, as an index from youth to maturity of Wordsworth's intricate and evolving conservative temper.

I am not suggesting that the broad categories of conservative and radical are by any means stable. A man's actions may be stamped as radical by the world one day and as conservative the next, and so they may be. What is material is how the record of that man's actions considered over the course of his life sums up in the balance; besides, if he be of sound health and his faculties reliable, only he, by consulting the dial of his conscience, may proffer a reading. Here, too, Fustel de Coulanges' noted maxim is illuminating, "Une vie d'analyse pour une heure de synthèse." The conservative mind indeed, as Blake so justly realized, thrives on repression and receives in the end, as reward for more than common labor, its own carrion to feed on. Happily, complete conservatives are figments of literate imaginations and as rare a breed in life as complete radicals. Even so, with the celebrated lines of 1798 in mind,

> Therefore let the moon
> Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
> And let the misty mountain-winds be free
> To blow against thee: and, in after years,
> When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
> Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
> Thy memory be as a dwelling-place

> For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
> If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
> Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
> Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
> And these my exhortations! 19

it is difficult to read without a pang of sorrow the poet of after years confiding to Isabella Fenwick in a letter of 28 July 1842,

> And now my dear Friend I should like to let loose my heart upon this scrap of Paper--but it is folly to think of it. Mary has already told you how deeply we love you and how ardently we long for your return, though for my own part I must say that encreasing years are I feel making me less and less of an interesting companion. Nothing however said or done to me for some time has in relation to myself given me so much pleasure as a casual word of Anna's that the expression of my face was ever varying. I had begun to fear that it had lately been much otherwise . . . 20

It is distressing to observe Wordsworth resort to periphrasis to communicate, except for the last, measured and devastating remark, an expression of sentiment. Moreover, one cannot but notice how much this excerpt and that from "Tintern Abbey," different as they are, have, after a lapse of more than forty years, in common of similar pathos.

In their self-sufficiency, isolation, and tacit sufferance of their appointed lot, perhaps more than any other of Wordsworth's dramatic characters the Discharged Soldier and

19. P.W. ("Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," 134-46), II, 263.
20. L.Y., III, 1132-33.

Leechgatherer epitomize a stark existential ethic which, founded on an economy of want and exacting discipline, and of unquestioned merit inasmuch as it secures them their recompense of grace, is arduous and repelling and a classic article of a conservative and impatient attitude to life. Although Wordsworth would not much have subscribed to the reading which follows, they also illustrate ironically in the Convention, which but for an occasional blemish as here is generally unexceptionable in its propriety and sense, his curious and feeble suggestion,

> Nor is it to be forgotten that the incapacity and ignorance of the regular agents of long-established governments do not prevent some progress in the dearest concerns of men; and that society may owe to these very deficiencies, and to the tame and unenterprising course which they necessitate, much security and tranquil enjoyment. 21

This is magisterial, queer reasoning, distinct from the gold alluded to earlier. Wordsworth recognized well, in this and other writings, the chaos and tumult engendered in his day by the incompetence of custodians of government, and he was aware of the results so far as men like the Discharged Soldier and the Leechgatherer haplessly affected by them were concerned. Clearly he was being transported with theory over plain fact.

21. Prose, I, 307.

Critics, who must ever distinguish in an author a problem, have pointed to this tautness and ambiguity in Wordsworth, confusing in the context of his decidedly generous assertions elsewhere about the viability of the imagination and the Prometheanism of art, and have identified here the central paradox of his work. The Discharged Soldier, the Leechgatherer, and even vaguely the Wanderer, who more nearly achieves the semblance of a substantial citizen, are disquieting, haunting figures. Their vital geometry both exceeds and falls short of that commonly called for by life. It is almost as though they were the us within us, the sepulchred, archetypal us, struggling to emerge, and whom we had rather avoid forever.[22] They are strange, fearsome, half human and half not, and more like agents designed to abet the poet's atonement of some mysterious, recondite guilt, than like rational, everyday, flesh-and-blood beings. As do most of Wordsworth's lone dramatic figures, they come upon one in unusual circumstances, at night, after a storm, in desolate places, by stealth, and

22. Cf. Rimbaud, in a letter to his lycée professor, Georges Izambard, of 13 May 1871, "Je est un autre" and, as will become more relevant below, "Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dereglement de tous les sens. Les souffrances sont énormes, mais il faut être fort, être né poète, et je me suis reconnu poète. Ce n'est pas du tout ma faute. C'est faut de dire: Je pense. On devrait dire: On me pense. Pardon du jeu de mots" (Arthur Rimbaud: Oeuvres Complètes, edd. Rolland de Réneville and Jules Mouquet /Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1954/, p. 268). (I is another . . . The point is to arrive at the unknown by the upheaval of all the senses. The sufferings are enormous, but one has to be strong, to be born a poet, and I have recognized myself a poet. It's not at all my fault. It's false to say: I think. One ought to say: I am thought. My apologies for the play on words.)

when we have the least cause to expect them. Thus, in addition to an expression of an economy of want, we have in them one of fear, with the same underlying assumptions. Rather than signifying famine and death, the spectre at the door now, to come nearer to our own time, is apparelled in a black leather coat and boots, with skull and crossbones on his cap and a swastika on his arm. Perhaps, too, these characters and their sparseness satisfy a further purpose and symbolize the poet's unconscious vision of his own self in after years when, art no longer sufficing to maintain equipoise between life's imponderables and life itself, the "spots of time"[23] rarer and less keen and their lustrous magic gone, he merges, as does the Leechgatherer with his "eminence,"[24] his identity with his art and becomes, save for his own, a monument for men's good in all seasons and stations. The paradox remains, that is. A surfeit of opposites is likely not an ideal prescription for sound health. Nevertheless, less is not more, only more is more. "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom;"[25] or it leads to the slough of defeat. But the wager must be entered and its implications pursued with steady nerve.

The knowledge that fear kills[26] does not portend auto-

23. See The Prelude, XI, 258 ff.
24. See "Resolution and Independence," 58 (P.W., II, 237).
25. William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "Proverbs of Hell."
26. See "Resolution and Independence," 113 (P.W., II, 239).

matically confidence and joy. Wordsworth's performance on that score is mixed as in the saintliest of men and need not stay our progress or hinder our conscience. The brave and the fearing equally are candidates for admission to heaven. Our present aim is to weigh the temper of Wordsworth's mind and art and, beyond the absence of a rift in his essential beliefs between his earlier and his later work, to ascertain his peculiar notion of the poet and the value of his related doctrine on the kinship of man and its foundations in the family. Whether because of the influence upon him as a child of the hardy Cumberland peasantry and their children who were his daily companions, or more as a reflection of the early loss of his parents and of the several years when, not figuratively only but literally, a "naked Boy," he "stood alone / Beneath the sky,"[27] he had shrewdness and a partiality to common sense (and banality even on occasion, which Coleridge, more the idealist, saw and reproved[28]), and distrust for

27. The Prelude, I, 292, 300-01.

28. See Biographia Literaria, Chapter XXII: "There is, I should say, not seldom a certain matter-of-factness in certain poems . . . a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their positions, as they appeared to the poet himself; . . . an apparent minute adherence to matter-of-fact in characters and incidents; a biographical attention to probability, and an anxiety of explanation and retrospect" (Shawcross, II, 101, 103); cf. "My First Acquaintance with Poets": "Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening . . . He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was something corporeal, a matter-of-fact-ness, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the

pomp and solemnity and the aery schemes concocted by some of his contemporaries, as an Athena from the head of a Jove, for the improvement of man. Of his dialectical speculations in the period alluded to at the conclusion of Book X of The Prelude, the consequence was, he notes wrily and with a hint of humor,

> I lost
> All feelings of conviction, and, in fine,
> Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
> Yielded up moral questions in despair,
> And for my future studies, as the sole
> Employment of the enquiring faculty,
> Turn'd towards mathematics, and their clear
> And solid evidence . . . 29

He believed firmly that truths to conform with reason and be a valid source of human solace must first be proved on the pulses. Addressing Coleridge on a kindred theme, in Book II of The Prelude, for instance, he asks rhetorically,

> who shall parcel out
> His intellect, by geometric rules,
> Split, like a province, into round and square? 30

"Hard task to analyse a soul," he goes on,

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gold-finch sang. He said, however (if I remember right) that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction" (The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe /1930-1934; rpt. New York: AMS, Inc., 1967/, XVII, 117).

29. Lines 897-904.

30. Lines 208-10.

> in which,
> Not only general habits and desires,
> But each most obvious and particular thought,
> Not in a mystical and idle sense,
> But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd,
> Hath no beginning. 31

These lines, parenthetically, should give pause to readers still inclined to view him a mystic. He discerned early the intricacies of the mind and the necessity to uphold its inviolability, and both resented and was especially alert to intrusions upon his freedom. "Points have we all of us within our souls," he cautioned, in what may be safely assumed a manifesto of his faith, "Where all stand single . . . there's not a man / That lives who hath not had his godlike hours." 32

Such august sentiments, as much about the relationship of the individual and the state as the autonomy of the mind, even if they date from a time when most of the fracas of the French Revolution had passed, underscore poorly an alleged radical's disposition (even a former one) and could ill sort with an authoritarian, centrally conceived and directed, radical notion of social change. We might glance for an instant again at Van den Berg's analysis and also allude to Robert Mayo's study,"The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads." 33 Except for the brief onslaught upon him by the Imagists and the

31. Lines 232-37.
32. The Prelude, III, 186-87, 191-92.
33. PMLA, lxix (June 1954), 486-522; reprinted, but very abridged, in Wordsworth: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. M.H. Abrams (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 67-74.

New Critics, Wordsworth has been hailed as an innovator and the grand poet of nature and the outdoors. There is little to dispute on either score. But, as Mayo demonstrated, the novelty of the Lyrical Ballads has in one respect been exaggerated. A reading of verse in periodicals of the 1780's and 1790's proves conclusively that, insofar as meter, forms, themes, subject-matter, and attitudes are concerned, the Lyrical Ballads conform with prevailing, popular tastes of the times and with the expectations of the audience by whom they were meant to be read and criticized. Likewise, unassailable on moral and aesthetic grounds as Van den Berg's subtle and sober reasoning suggests it is, Wordsworth's founding of much of his poetry on nature and material phenomena of which he had intimate, first-hand knowledge reveals a propensity to rely on empirical data and to conform, and an establishmentarian, traditionalist's view of things.

We could broaden this perspective and consider, with the same ultimate consequences collectively, several features of Wordsworth's biography: 1) his circle of friends in and about the year 1800, when England by no means lacked radicals from all sectors of society and of every imaginable description, and except for Hazlitt, Thelwall at Alfoxden in 1798 once or twice, and "no less than nine meetings" with Godwin "between February and August 1795,"[34] his most conspicuous corres-

34. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years, 1770-1803 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 262.

pondents or recipients of his attentions are men--Wrangham, Southey, Scott, De Quincey, Sharp, Beaumont, even Coleridge--either solid citizens or noted for other than their radical sympathies; 2) his brothers,--John, shipwrecked and drowned in 1805, captain of his vessel and had he lived, like most of his profession and rank, sooner or later a man of means; Christopher, clergyman and later university don; Richard, like his father an attorney and man of business, or all three as one might now say, upper middle-class men; 3) his forebears,--likewise of the bourgeoisie, tradesmen and property owners and, if formerly Dissenters, hardly a fount of republican sentiment; 4) his reticence about displays of affection and dubious relations with women, with Dorothy, Mary, Dora, and Annette Vallon. The latter, in his argument that the poet must ever be defeated in his desire to surmount nature, Harold Bloom has characterized tellingly as his "direct Promethean failure."[35] The liaison with Annette took place significantly in 1792, at the same time as his friendship with Michel Beaupuy.

His support of the French Revolution is engrossing, particularly since in providing him with a rich basis on which to hone his reasoning and deepen his poetic gift the Revolution contributed in no small measure to transforming him into the poet we know. It calls, however, for more careful and deliber-

35. "The Internalization of Quest Romance," in Romanticism and Consciousness, p. 20.

ate treatment than it is feasible or necessary to render it here. If Wordsworth wished for social progress, as doubtless he did, the sordid excesses of the Revolution and its aftermath were not what he had hoped for at the start. Far more than with social progress, he was concerned with man--individual man--and still more with the dignity and the heart of man. The revolution he sought, if such it may be called, makes the grandest and most hallowed notions of perfection conceived anywhere along the political spectrum then or since seem morbid and minuscule.

He advanced the Revolution his support conditionally upon its clear-sighted retention of its avowed democratic objectives. The passages in Books IX and X of The Prelude which substantiate his support do so not because they would seem to validate his espousal of a radical creed (and then warrant Browning's denunciation,

> Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a riband to stick in his coat, 36

and the unqualified censure of critics for his alliance in the Westmoreland elections of 1818, 1820, and 1826 with the Lowther interest and the conservative cause [37]). Readers who so in-

36. "The Lost Leader," 1-2.

37. On Wordsworth's role in the Westmorland Elections, see Wallace W. Douglas, "Wordsworth in Politics: The Westmorland Election of 1818," Modern Language Notes, lxiii (November 1948), 437-49, and the chapter, "A Poet's Politics," in Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Later Years, 1803-1850 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 330-63 and especially pp. 344-56.

terpret his meaning confuse the forest for the trees. For perspective, they might consider Hazlitt who, the Revolution failed, remains steadfast in his loyalty to it, his reaction diametrically opposed to Wordsworth's.[38] Tyranny of any kind, by a despot or the mob, is abject and opprobrious to Wordsworth; his contempt for it provides a fitting gloss for his statement during his political campaigning for the Lowthers,

> 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 Westmoreland or Cumberland who had fallen into this mistake if he could point out any arrangement by which Jacobinism can be frustrated, except by the existence of large Estates continued from generation to generation in particular families, with parliamentary power in proportion. 39

With the growth and collapse of Robespierre's dreaded Comité du Salut and the accession of Bonaparte to power, his enthusiasm for the Revolution and praise for the French wane and are succeeded by as ardent an odium. Instead of the enraptured "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very Heaven!"[40] or "I . . . believed / Devoutly that a spirit was abroad / Which could not be withstood,"[41]

38. Consider, for instance, his veneration of Napoleon and dedication to him of the elephantine The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, which he deemed the magnum opus of his life, and see Herschel Baker, William Hazlitt (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 328-31, 472.

39. M.Y., II, 413.

40. The Prelude, X, 693-94.

41. Ibid., IX, 519-21.

he cites the change by the French of "a war of self-defence / For one of conquest" and their loss of "sight of all / Which they had struggled for."[42] His disillusionment passed, a mood then more suited to his purpose and native temper appears, characterized in part by his patriotic "Great men have been among us" and

> France, 'tis strange,
> Hath brought forth . . .
> . . . . . .
> No master spirit, no determined road;
> But equally a want of books and men! 43

which, unless the meaning not be what seems clear, is little more than xenophobic passion.

3.

I have proposed that the continuity of Wordsworth's thought is firmer than generally allowed and that a significant breach in his identity or fundamental political sympathies during or immediately after the French Revolution and subsequently is doubtful. Wordsworth neither renounced nor retreated from his steady preoccupation with the bequeathal to man of a master-plan for a society of the future, predicated on the uni-

42. Ibid., X, 793-94, 794-95.
43. Lines 9-10, 13-14 (P.W., III, 116-17).

fication of brook and road. His vision and faith were uncommonly free of clutter or obscurity in that sense. He knew, however, that he belonged to the future, could not be heard or understood in his time,[44] and is perhaps only beginning to be so in ours.

To speak of a resolution of mind and sense is to speak of the domestication of nature. More than anything this is what Wordsworth is about. Man is distinguished from creation by possessing, in addition to sense, which is synonymous with nature, a mind and a conscience. So long as man's mind and sense are discrete or embattled with each other, nature is hostile. Given their resolution, the situation is reversed. Nature becomes genial. Nature in Wordsworth--mountains, winds, sky, and so on--functions as an objective metaphor (or objective correlative) for man's senses and counter for his mind. To preserve its identity and value for man, nature must be free, like man's archetypal self, to communicate with him below the threshhold of his consciousness or reason.

Small wonder, in the amusing episode in Book VI of The

44. See, for instance, his letter of 21 May 1807 to Lady Beaumont, soon after the publication of Poems in Two Volumes and their modest reception by the public: " . . . of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny . . . which . . . they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. . . .
I am not . . . afraid of . . . censure, insignificant as probably the majority of those poems would appear to very respectable . . . grave, kindly-natured, worthy persons, who would be pleased if they could. I hope that these Volumes are not without some recommendations, even for Readers of this class, but their imagination has slept; and the voice which is the voice of my Poetry without Imagination cannot be heard" (M.Y., I, 146).

Prelude when Wordsworth and Jones stop for the night in an Alpine inn ("those Italian clocks that speak the time / In fashion different from ours"[45] aside), if they misread the time and pass the remainder of the "widely-parted hours" of the night, "lost, bewilder'd among woods immense," with

> . . . sometimes rustling motions near at hand
> Which did not leave us free from personal fear. 46

Only two days before, having crossed the bar, as it were, entered the "gloomy Pass" and seen the "Characters of the great Apocalypse,"[47] and returned, their experience and its profoundly unfamiliar phenomena must needs have been unnerving, and they might perhaps have willingly dispensed with it. They were on ambivalent ground in the Alps, successively hostile or genial, without so much as the stroke of a clock, that venerable instrument of civilization, to furnish them a modicum of predictability or security beyond what the Alpine setting itself might accord. But as Wordsworth observes in retrospect, although the effect of the journey upon him may not then have been immediately apparent,

> whate'er
> I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream

45. The Prelude, VI, 623-24.
46. Ibid., VI, 650-51.
47. Ibid., VI, 554, 570.

That flow'd into a kindred stream, a gale
That help'd me forwards . . . 48

The paradox so distressing to some Wordsworth critics, which we glanced at briefly earlier and dismissed, means nothing more in the last than that the success of his endeavor to diminish the potent tensions between mind and sense and to prove artistically that the best of man's hopes may be the simple produce of the common day is partial and interim, but remote from a capitulation. We could with much propriety and wisdom advance the thesis in fact that, so far as man is concerned, these qualities are final, and discern in Wordsworth's testament the sober moral that normalcy and perfection require that both noblest and meanest human designs proceed indifferently from dust to dust, falter on the high seas and fail to reach port, but leave a redemptive vestige behind. Hopkins' conclusion, in "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection," is also applicable here,

Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond. 49

48. Ibid., VI, 672-75.
49. Poems and Prose, ed. W.H. Gardner (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953), p. 66.

Or we could say with the same drift that the optimism of Wordsworth is less than we might prefer because his art is predicated upon a partial and interim, primitive man in whom the boon of a family and community, as Wordsworth envisages, is distant, and proof of the efficacy of its pursuit in the present or realization hereafter, lacking.

Still, Wordsworth considers the wager worthwhile. Below, by the margin of the pond, with the Leechgatherer scratching out his meager sustenance, is man's business; above, with Wordsworth on Mount Snowdon and "The perfect image of a mighty Mind, / Of one that feeds upon infinity,"[50] is where it might be, if men circumcised their heart, were faithful to their nature, and practiced their imagination. Hence should "the highest bliss / That can be known" be theirs,

> Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,
> Emotion which best foresight need not fear,
> Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
> Hence chearfulness in every act of life,
> Hence truth in moral judgements and delight
> That fails not in the external universe. 51

In 621 b.c., a large part of the Book of Deuteronomy being discovered, after it had long been lost, King Josiah

> went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him,

50. The Prelude, XIII, 69-70.
51. Ibid., XIII, 107-08, 114-19. (I have added commas after "will" in verse 114 and "fear" in verse 115, as the sense seems to require.)

> and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words . . . 52

The wealth of learning accumulated during the many centuries between that event and Wordsworth's years is vast. Yet, it is striking and a tribute to his greatness how disarmingly ingenuous at once his thought is and reaches back to that distant age. " . . . what we have loved, / Others will love; and we may teach them how . . . " [53] To reduction he would oppose accretion, to the material eye conjoin the sentient ear, and as antidote to suspicion, fear, and indifference that divide men and nations, he would prescribe magnanimity, trust and dialogue, abetted by the timely influence of a poet's compassionate, illuminating words.

> If future years mature me for the task
> . . . . . .
> haply shall I teach,
> Inspire, through unadulterated ears,
> Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope, my theme
> No other than the very heart of man
> As found among the best of those who live
> . . . . . .
> it shall be my pride
> That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
> Speaking no dreams but things oracular,
> Matter not lightly to be heard by those
> Who to the letter of the outward promise
> Do read the invisible soul . . . 54

Granted then that, "as Shakspeare hath said of man," the poet "'looks before and after'," his frame of vision spanning

52. II Kings 23:1-2.
53. The Prelude, XIII, 444-45.
54. Ibid., XII, 232, 237-41, 250-55.

the ruins of time that have preceded and that will succeed him. Mortality everywhere confronts him, saps away at him, and inexorably perplexes and slows his course. Wordsworth's poet, though highly and unusually gifted, is a man. In his professional capacity as poet he writes verse. But in his vatic capacity as teacher, even if possessed of "more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness . . . greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul,"[55] he resembles all men. He need not write verse in fact; in Wordsworth's conception he is a poet still.[56]

> Men may be found . . .
> Who are their own upholders, to themselves
> Encouragement, and energy and will,
> Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
> As native passion dictates. Others, too,
> . . . . . .
> Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
> Shy, and unpractis'd in the strife of phrase,
> Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
> Beneath them, summon'd to such intercourse:
> Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
> The thought, the image, and the silent joy;
> Words are but under-agents in their souls;
> When they are grasping with their greatest strength
> They do not breathe among them . . . 57

55. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 393.

56. The conception that the poet need not be a versifier, but a good man with more than commonly lively sensibility, and a speaker, is ancient and Biblical. The latter element, that he may be a speaker, is the theme of such modern studies, for instance, as Francis P. Magoun, Jr., "The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry" (1953), in An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), pp. 189-222.

57. The Prelude, XII, 260, 261-64, 266-74.

Except for the Solitary in The Excursion and the Statist in "A Poet's Epitaph" who fit another mold, virtually all of Wordsworth's solitaries are poets in that generous and democratic sense. The Discharged Soldier and Leechgatherer, once again, and the Wanderer are sentient, contemplative beings. (Among his solitaries should also be included Wordsworth himself, or his persona, in The Prelude.) They may be isolated, with darksome thoughts or the burden of years telling upon them and seem to have reached an estate the reverse of what most men would wish for themselves. Could one laugh oneself to scorn, as Wordsworth maintains he could (but, so far as his poem tells, interestingly did not), at the prospect of "that decrepit Man" with "so firm a mind," who, with a mate once, a house with cries of young children, friends nearby and neighbors, now bides so entirely alone with nothing to stir him but his self and the setting and rising of the sun? As we observed, Wordsworth's solitaries (even Beaupuy who soon after Wordsworth knew him perished in battle for a cause destined shortly to be swept from the historical stage[58]) seem more to argue the futility and inherent weakness of human prerogative over fate than to champion a notion of the rationality and justness of life. Yet, though they cannot ever be

58. See ibid., IX, 430-35. Wordsworth, however, is mistaken. Beaupuy did not die "Upon the Borders of the unhappy Loire" (431), but fell at the battle of the Elz on November 19, 1796 (v. Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, 1770-1798, trans. J.W. Matthews /London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1897/, p. 214).

immediately attractive or answer to the demands of priggish, conventional elegance, they remind the reader uncannily of the prose dictum in Ecclesiasticus and verse that follows it, both worth quoting despite their length,

> Let us now praise famous men . . . The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning. Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, and declaring prophecies: Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise and eloquent in their instructions: Such as found out musical tunes, and recited verses in writing: Rich men furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations: All these were honored in their generations, and were the glory of their times.
>
> . . . these were merciful men,
> whose righteousness hath not been forgotten.
> With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance,
> and their children are within the covenant.
> Their seed standeth fast,
> and their children for their sakes.
> Their seed shall remain for ever,
> and their glory shall not be blotted out.
> Their bodies are buried in peace;
> but their name liveth for evermore.
> The people will tell of their wisdom,
> and the congregation will show forth their praise. 59

Succeeding and documenting this text is a long panegyric on an assortment of Old Testament personages, patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets, traditionally regarded in Christian exegetical doctrine as comprising an evolution anticipating and terminating in Christ. The text obviously does not apply to any of Wordsworth's meek, solitary figures in particular, or

59. 44:1-7, 10-15.

to him. It has bearing to them collectively. Christian exegesis, Ben-Sira (the purported author of Ecclesiasticus), and they merge ways and share or illustrate the same, organicist and apocalyptic, perspective as dominant in either secular, poetic myth or religious typology.[60]

The earlier discussion then notwithstanding,[61] though several of Wordsworth's key characters seem grim and disappointing, their perceptual acuity is enviably sound. They know, without restlessness, sorrow, or fanfare, that life is fleeting and bliss elusive. They do not despond over nor are obsessed with this stark truth. "Why should we," demands the Wanderer pensively, for instance,

> with an untoward mind,
> And in the weakness of humanity,
> From natural wisdom turn our hearts away;
> To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears;
> And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
> The calm of nature with our restless thoughts? [62]

They are cognizant of it, acquire in consequence a halo of immortality this side of heaven, and qualify as visionaries and poets. Instead of fearsome, as I suggested, like the Ghost

60. For pioneering studies in the application of religious typology to literature, see Michael Fixler, Milton and the Kingdoms of God (London: Faber & Faber, 1964) and William G. Madsen, From Shadowy Types to Truth: Studies in Milton's Symbolism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), and for an interesting statement by Wordsworth on poetry and religion and the "language of accommodation," "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface /1815/" (P.W., II, 412).

61. V. supra, pp. 71-74.

62. P.W. (The Excursion, Book I: "The Wanderer" /"The Ruined Cottage"/, 599-604), V, 28.

in Hamlet ("Taint not thy mind . . ." [63]) and all else that is connotative of the divine, they are unfathomable, dispassionate, and awesome, and do set their life at more than "a pin's fee."[64]

Most of all, they are free and, explicitly evident or not, the progenies of a certain early household and education whose essential and most distinct feature, to recall Jacqueline Pascal's injunction to her boarders at Port-Royal, has been solicitude by their elders for their needs, even when the latter have clashed with their own.

To touch on a related point, this much is clear, that concerned with artistic objectives as Wordsworth certainly was, he is a poet with a moral, social, and democratic conscience. Despite his allusion to Milton in the "Prospectus" of The Recluse, "'fit audience let me find though few!'," [65] his work is addressed to the broadest possible number of readers. That some of his contemporaries, most notably Hazlitt and Keats, pronounced him a selfish man, his thought as a poet at variance with his practice as a man, is unfortunate.[66] Keats, however, was but twenty-two, was attending Hazlitt's Lectures on the English Poets which impressed him much, and had met

63. I, v, 85.
64. See ibid., I, iv, 65.
65. P.W. (line 23), V, 3.
66. The subject of Wordsworth's alleged egotism, or "egotistical sublime" as Keats termed it (see his letter of 27 October 1818 to Richard Woodhouse), is akin to the larger one of the so-called "pathetic fallacy;" rather than to dwell on this subject here, beyond only a general comment, I will treat of the implications to Wordsworth of the pathetic fallacy below.

Wordsworth recently (undoubtedly at Haydon's Christmas party the preceding 28th of December [67]), when he wrote to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds, on 3 February 1818:

> It may be said that we ought to read our Contemporaries. that Wordsworth &c should have their due from us. but for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist--Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself . . . [68]

His letter is more an indication of the quality and drift then of his mind and of his need for self-assertion than it is a valuable aperçu of the integrity of Wordsworth as artist or thinker. Keats benefited besides from Wordsworth, as is generally recognized,[69] more than either this text or his other references to him convey that he was aware. As to Hazlitt, and the succession of later critics who have continued to espouse into our day the idle contention that Wordsworth was an

67. See The Autobiography and Journals of B.R. Haydon, ed. Malcolm Elwin (London: MacDonald, 1950), pp. 316-19, and Moorman, The Later Years, pp. 254, 316 f.

68. The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821, ed. Hyder E. Rollins (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), I, 223.

69. Consider, for instance, Douglas Bush's statement in the Introduction to his edition, John Keats: Selected Poems and Letters (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), which, although about Keats, could as well be about Wordsworth, "He inveighed against what he saw as the barren rationalism and formalism of the eighteenth century, and affirmed his profound faith in the senses and imagination and 'the holiness of the Heart's affections'" (p. xii), and "When Keats exclaims 'O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts,' he means 'O for the direct, concrete apprehensions of the artist rather than the logical abstractions of the thinker'" (loc. cit.).

egotist and to doubt therefore the sincerity and value of his work, suffice it to know that some mortals are myopic and cannot do with a gift of grace unless written in large, heavenly characters, miraculously.[70] Like many another great man, he may have been somewhat eccentric and not have had an affable personality. Still, he was Wordsworth. In any case, he is surviving nicely.

"Behind my Father's House," he writes,

> Oh! many a time have I, a five years' Child,
> A naked Boy, in one delightful Rill,
> A little Mill-race sever'd from his stream,
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day,
> Bask'd in the sun, and plunged, and bask'd again
> Alternate all a summer's day, or cours'd
> Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves
> Of yellow grunsel, or when crag and hill,
> The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
> Were bronz'd with a deep radiance, stood alone
> Beneath the sky, as if I had been born

70. To be just to Hazlitt, however, he did admire Wordsworth and granted that through his mind "about as many fine things" had passed as, with few exceptions, "through any human mind whatever" and that, although its "greatest egotist," he was "the most original poet of the present day" (William Hazlitt, Works, XIX, 24, VIII, 44). But he was a radical, objected to Wordsworth's Toryism, and bristled with contempt for anyone he thought had held radical views and changed his mind; he was certain Wordsworth had. He conceived of such change as "a thing unsightly and indecent" (XVII, 297); if Wordsworth and others had abandoned the ideals of the French Revolution and their youth, the past retained for him a glory "not to be effaced by birth-day odes, or the chaunting of Te Deums in all the churches of Christendom" (XIX, 18; v. "Thanksgiving Ode" and note prefixed by Wordsworth /P.W., III, 155, 462 ff./). "To those hopes eternal regrets are due; those who maliciously and wilfully blasted them, in the fear that they might be accomplished, we feel no less what we owe -- hatred and scorn as lasting" (loc. cit.).

These convictions color his criticism of Wordsworth, which influenced Keats--

> On Indian Plains, and from my Mother's hut
> Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
> A naked Savage, in the thunder shower. 71

Archetypal symbolism and religious iconography are patent here. The verses are a fine rendering of the interplay of memory and the imagination and an example of the harvest of emotions "recollected in tranquility."[72] A profusion of

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> . . . with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.
>
> A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity . . .
> (Rollins, I, 194, 387)

--and has done likewise several succeeding generations of critics. Following are some examples: in "Observations on Mr. Wordsworth's The Excursion" (1814), he reasons, "He may be said to create his own materials; his thoughts are his real subject. His understanding broods over that which is 'without form and void,' and 'makes it pregnant.' He sees all things in himself. . . . An intense intellectual egotism swallows up every thing. . . . The power of his mind preys upon itself. . . . He lives in the busy solitude of his own heart . . . His imagination lends life and feeling only to 'the bare trees and mountains bare'; peoples the viewless tracts of air, and converses with the silent clouds!" (IV, 112, 113). Similarly, in "On the Living Poets," the last of his series of Lectures on the English Poets (1818), he notes, "His poetry is . . . internal . . . he furnishes it from his own mind, and is his own subject" (V, 156), and on the Lake Poets, with Wordsworth foremost in mind, "The paradox they set out with was, that all things are by nature equally fit subjects for poetry. . . . They founded the new school on a principle of sheer humanity, on pure nature void of art. . . . He who was more than man, with them was none. . . . A thorough adept in this school . . . is jealous of all excellence but his own. He does not even like to share his reputation with his subject; for he would have it all proceed from his own power and originality of mind. . . . He sees nothing but himself and the universe" (V, 162, 163).

71. The Prelude, I, 288, 291-304.

72. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 400.

concrete detail, shot through with color, light and geometry, has dissolved into an abstraction. The Child has been transformed into a Savage, the Mill-race into a thunder shower; an "Ancient of days" is nearby busily minding his labor, and a baptism is in progress. The miraculous has occurred. A series of disparate, innocent facts have been translated into a higher truth.

Wordsworth was deliciously free as a child: he was let grow. Hence, he affirms, in two justly memorable lines familiar to all his readers, "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up / Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear."[73] We may ignore these agents for the moment and the various illuminating episodes in The Prelude they call to mind. The point to be emphasized is that he could have derived comparable value from either solely if he were free. Book I of The Prelude, from which these lines are drawn, was composed, according to de Selincourt, mostly during the Goslar period in the autumn and winter of 1798-99.[74] In the "Reply to 'Mathetes'," in Nos. 17 and 20 of "The Friend," dated 14 December 1809 and 4 January 1810, and confirming therefore once more the unity of his thought, he declares, commenting on the premise "that the moral spirit and intellectual powers of this Country are declining," and as if with the memory of the glorious "five years' Child" still fresh and before him,

73. The Prelude, I, 305-06.
74. See ibid., pp. xxxv, xlvii.

> There is a life and spirit in knowledge which we extract from truths scattered for the benefit of all, and which the mind, by its own activity, has appropriated to itself--a life and a spirit, which is seldom found in knowledge communicated by formal and direct precepts . . .
>
> Every Age hath abounded in instances of Parents, Kindred, and Friends, who, by indirect influence of example, or by positive injunction and exhortation have diverted or discouraged the Youth . . .

Indeed, he continues, in an image as much of his coinage as ancient and venerable, "The progress of the Species neither is nor can be like that of a Roman road in a right line. It may be more justly compared to that of a River . . . "[75]

The language of Dorothy's allusions, in the correspondence of the Racedown days, to little Basil Montagu, who then lodged in the Wordsworth household, and inspired "Anecdote for Fathers," also is revealing, although in a different vein, and some samples may be inserted here. Thus,

> I have not spoken of Basil yet, he is my perpetual pleasure. He is quite metamorphosed from a shivering half starved plant, to a lusty, blooming fearless boy. He dreads neither cold nor rain. He has played frequently an hour or two without appearing sensible that the rain was pouring down upon him or the wind blowing about him. 76

Her description a year after of the effect of her cure of his fits of crying is equally apt and touching;[77] more telling, however, is the following:

75. Prose, II, 10, 8, 9, 11.
76. E.Y., 166.
77. Ibid., 180.

> You ask to be informed of our system respecting Basil; it is a very simple one, so simple that in this age of systems you will hardly be likely to follow it. We teach him nothing at present but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability. It is directed to everything he sees, the sky, the fields, trees, shrubs, corn, the making of tools, carts &c &c &c. He knows his letters, but we have not attempted any further step in the path of book learning. Our grand study has been to make him happy in which we have not been altogether disappointed; he is certainly the most contented child I ever saw . . . 78

But for the fact that "The Tables Turned" had not yet then been written, Dorothy might be said clearly to have captured its spirit; or, relying upon her in many ways as Wordsworth did, including for poetic inspiration, the debt may have been at least partially the other way about.[79] At any event, under the Wordsworths' tutelage, though his fate subsequently took a som-

78. Loc. cit.

79. The two letters from which the above excerpts are taken date respectively from 7 March 1796 and 19 March 1797; Wordsworth says in the "Advertisement" to Lyrical Ballads (1798), "The lines entitled Expostulation and Reply, and those which follow, arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy" (P.W., II, 384), and in the notes dictated to Isabella Fenwick in 1843, referring to "Expostulation and Reply," "It was composed in front of the house at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798" (ibid., IV, 411).

The "friend," it has been conjectured, was Hazlitt, who in "My First Acquaintance with Poets," published in 1823, recalls that one evening, "I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible" (Hazlitt, Works, XVII, 119; quoted by de Selincourt, loc. cit., and Moorman, The Early Years, p. 399); Hazlitt visited Coleridge and Wordsworth in May-June 1798 and was then at work on his "Essay on the Principles of Human Action," for which, according to Moorman, "he had overworked himself in studying all the modern philosophers from Hobbes to Hartley" (p. 381).

ber turn,[80] Basil stood then a fair chance of becoming a visionary and poet himself.

To be "laid asleep / In body, and become a living soul," as the speaker in "Tintern Abbey"[81] wishes, may be objectionable and even macabre to a man committed to discriminate and delicate reasonings and to the steady infliction of havoc upon his perceptions. The sleep of the body communicates, besides, to nearly everyone a notion of the perpetual sleep of death. To another man, secure in his freedom, able without compromise or guilt to loosen hold over himself, and aware therefore, if dimly or intuitively, of the truth in the phrase, "the fear that kills," the phenomenon is sound and eminently to be desired. Spirit and flesh, abstract and concrete, cohere in Wordsworth. As Alfred North Whitehead observes,

> His theme is nature in solido, that is to say, he dwells on that mysterious presence of surrounding things, which imposes itself on any separate element that we set up as an individual for its own sake. He always grasps the whole nature as involved in the tonality of the particular instance. That is why he laughs with the daffodils, and finds in the primrose "thoughts too deep for tears." [82]

80. See Moorman, The Later Years, pp. 237-38.

81. P.W. (lines 45-46), II, 260.

82. Science and the Modern World (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 121. Cf. Coleridge's conception of philosophical inquiry: "The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just distinction; while it is the priviledge /sic/ of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical process of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philosophy" (Biographia Literaria, II, 8).

For him as for Blake and the other Romantics, "Body is a portion of Soul."[83] True signifies whole; and particular and general are not, the latter destined to dominate the former, in conflict as in Neo-Classical doctrine.[84] However choice or grand, truth cannot be severed of connection with matter, nor law of reliance on fact, without sinister consequence for the integrity and health of man.

4.

The poet looks fore and aft, is an upholder and preserver, because he is a free man, has profound affection for truth, and provides in his person living evidence, tacit, oral or written, of human power comparable to divine.

It is thus that Wordsworth's two statements, "Poetry . . . is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science" and "I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject,"[85] must be conjoined and interpreted. For

83. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "The Voice of the Devil."

84. For a history of these terms in English thought, see Scott Elledge, "The Background and Development in English Criticism of the Theories of Generality and Particularity," PMLA, lxii (March 1947), 147-82.

85. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 396,390; for an interpretation of "Daffodils" ("I wandered lonely as a cloud") in the light of the latter of these, and indication that Wordsworth does not in fact see "all things in himself" and is not "his own subject" (v. n. 70, supra), see Frederick A. Pottle, "The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth" (1950), in Romanticism and Consciousness, pp. 273-87.

science to be susceptible in its pursuit of truth to join the household of man means that truth, more than alone conforming to fact, is human, and that its suppression or denial as in the corruption of nature and withdrawal by man into the abyss of self, as we considered it in the last chapter, more than abstractly diminishes truth but demeans, effeminates, and dehumanizes man.[86] It follows that the reverse proposition, the re-integration of man in nature and re-affirmation of fact, redeems and vindicates his stature and emancipates him; or, to put that celebrated pronouncement now into clearer view, "Love of Nature /leads/ to Love of Mankind."[87]

While we are on this theme of subject and object, we may pause and terminate this chapter by considering the relevance to Wordsworth of John Ruskin's milestone essay of 1856, "Of

86. Cf. "How Books . . . Effeminately level down the truth / To certain general notions . . . set forth / The differences, the outside marks by which / Society has parted man from man, / Neglectful of the universal heart" (The Prelude, XII, 207, 210-11, 216-19) and "Of all the men I ever knew, Wordsworth has the least femineity in his mind. He is all man" (The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. T. Ashe /London: George Bell and Sons, 1888/, p. 339).

87. This statement, adapted from the subtitle of Book VIII of The Prelude and similar to that in "Tintern Abbey," "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her" (ll. 122-23), accords, it should be noted, with Pascal's belief that faith in Nature presupposes faith in God and with the view of Kant, familiar no doubt to Wordsworth at least through Coleridge, that Nature is subordinate to man but sublimated by him as part of an evolutionary aesthetic process in his mind; cf. the closing lines of The Prelude, " . . . the mind of man becomes / A thousand times more beautiful than the earth / On which he dwells" (XIII, 446-48) and "Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be inclined to settle upon those of eternity . . . In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry; be-

the Pathetic Fallacy."[88] Wordsworth knew as well as Ruskin that stones are not sentient, winds not forlorn, and brook and road not travellers. Along with Blake's, his work marks the start of a new eschatology with man firmly at the center once more, rather than at the periphery, of things. To allude to the use made of those words by M.H. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp,[89] this design would presume a shift from a mimetic to expressive theory of art and would require of necessity an extension in the apprehension of truth, beyond the traditional, narrow confines of established reason. (Natura naturans is the whole of which natura naturata is a part.[90]) The poet would again assume his ancient calling as alchemist, metaphysician, and prophet, again distil or foretell new knowledge, and guide men to seek and multiply their godlike hours.

What Ruskin urges is a fallacy Wordsworth asseverates a

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tween religion--making up the deficiencies of reason by faith; and poetry--passionate for the instruction of reason; between religion--whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry--ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation" ("Essay, Supplementary to the Preface /1815/" /P.W., II, 412/).

88. Modern Painters, Vol. III, Part IV, Chapter XII (The Works of Ruskin, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn /39 vols., London: Allen, 1903-12/, V, 201-20).

89. (1953; rpt. New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), pp. 6-26.

90. "If the artist copies the mere nature, the natura naturata, what idle rivalry! If he proceeds only from a given form, which is supposed to answer to the notion of beauty, what an emptiness, what an unreality there always is in his productions . . . Believe me, you must master the essence, the natura naturans, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man" ("On Poesy or Art" /1818/, Shawcross, II, 257).

highest truth. Recalling his arrival at Cambridge and first protracted absence from his "beloved Vale," he writes,

> . . . now it was, that, from such change entire
> And this first absence from those shapes sublime
> Wherewith I had been conversant, my mind
> Seem'd busier in itself than heretofore;
> At least, I more directly recognised
> My powers and habits: let me dare to speak
> A higher language, say that now I felt
> The strength and consolation which were mine. 91

The latter, indicative of his faith in the geniality of being and confidence in himself, originated in his untrammelled contacts as a child with the external world. Uprooted and alone in a strange environment, he preserved his aplomb; he did not search for innate resources to compensate for his loss, and despair. Instead, "Unknown, unthought of," he observes, "yet I was most rich, / I had a world about me; 'twas my own," and

> As if awaken'd, summon'd, rous'd, constrain'd,
> I look'd for universal things; perused
> The common countenance of earth and heaven;
> And, turning the mind in upon itself,
> Pored, watch'd, expected, listen'd; spread my thoughts
> And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
> Incumbences more awful, visitings
> Of the Upholder of the Tranquil Soul,
> Which underneath all passion lives secure
> A steadfast life. 92

Notice the proliferation in these lines of passive participles, awakened, summoned, roused, constrained, and the counterpoint

91. The Prelude, III, 101-08.
92. Ibid., III, 141-42, 109-18.

between them and the active verbs pored, watched, expected, listened, spread, and felt.[93]

Because, as the result of the character of his education as a child, the world mattered to Wordsworth, he gave it stature as an agent of human growth. From his education and that witnessed of others, he knew that to restrain judgement and to comport oneself in one's transactions with the world with awe and wonder are akin to loving.[94] Wholesomely he feared and admired,[95] and opposed stoutly the tendency in himself common

93. Of the world he had about him and was his, Wordsworth tells us significantly, "I made it" (ibid., III, 143), just as "To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower," he says, "I gave a moral life, I saw them feel, / Or link'd them to some feeling" (III, 124, 126-27; my italics); cf. Keats's "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream /Paradise Lost VIII, 460-90/--he awoke and found it truth" (Rollins, I, 185). He may have been responding to Nature's impulses or presence and practicing his imagination but was also, regardless of whether or not "the great mass / Lay embedded in a quickening soul" or "respired with inward meaning" (III, 127-28, 129), exercising his will, in keeping with the credo in the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads that "the feeling . . . gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling" (P.W., II, 388-89).

94. Cf. "My heart leaps up" (ibid., I, 226); "Such virtues are the sacred attributes of Youth: its appropriate calling is not to distinguish in the fear of being deceived or degraded, not to analyze with scrupulous minuteness, but to accumulate in genial confidence; its instinct, its safety, its benefit, its glory, is to love, to admire, to feel, and to labour" (Prose, II, 23); and Biographia Literaria, Chapter IV: "'To find no contradiction in the union of old and new; to contemplate the ANCIENT of days and all his works with feelings as fresh, as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat; characterizes the mind that feels the riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it'" (Shawcross, I, 59; quoted by Coleridge from his own text in "The Friend").

95. The relation between awe and wonder, fear and admiration, key themes in Wordsworth, will be explored in the next chapter; see, however, Havens (I, 39-53, II, 480-92), and the portion of Manuscript Y and de Selincourt's Introduction in The Prelude (pp. 569 ff.).

to all men, first to erect antinomies and distinctions and then to capitulate before them as if insuperable and eternal. "Thou," said he to Coleridge, comparing the higher, unifying power of the imagination to the lower faculty of reasoning,

> art no slave
> Of that false secondary power, by which,
> In weakness, we create distinctions, then
> Deem that our puny boundaries are things
> Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
> To thee, unblinded by these outward shows,
> The unity of all has been reveal'd . . . 96

This belief in the accessibility of revealed knowledge crystallized in his verse. Winds could be forlorn, stones sentient, brook and road travellers. They had genuine, moral worth. Without violence to them, they could pathetically but validly nevertheless be suborned and altered, and caused to serve man, to heighten his consciousness and sharpen his moral conscience. The criterion hinged, regardless of the actual facts, on how one viewed oneself, in isolation, without basis for hope and without purpose, or engaged albeit in a modest labor in one consecrated to the good of oneself and the human race.

Aware that he had a share in the world as in turn it had in him, Wordsworth deemed himself no more a stranger at Cambridge than heretofore in his vale. He was at ease, receptive to more ready and soothing comforts than he could have been otherwise. Reflecting upon the lessons of his early youth, he

96. Ibid., II, 220-26.

could declare afterwards with reason and satisfaction,

> . . . there is a dark
> Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, makes them cling together
> In one society. How strange that all
> The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
> Regrets, vexations, and lassitudes interfused
> Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
> And that a needful part, in making up
> The calm existence that is mine when I
> Am worthy of myself! 97

Even then, if prone to solitude, he was fast becoming the poet of the kinship of man, sensible to the richness of life within him and without and to their correspondence.

> Who less insensible than sodden clay
> On a sea River's bed at ebb of tide,
> Could have beheld with undelighted heart,
> So many happy Youths, so wide and fair
> A congregation, in its budding-time
> Of health, and hope, and beauty; all at once
> So many divers samples of the growth
> Of life's sweet season . . . ? 98

A part of this microcosm of society gathered on occasion in his lodgings, which, on her visit to Cambridge with Wordsworth in 1839, Isabella Fenwick pronounced among the "meanest and most dismal . . . in the whole University." "But here,"

97. Ibid., I, 341-50 (1850 text); the 1805 version of these lines (352-61), with their "Ah me!" (355) instead of "How strange" and their "that all" (355), "all" (356), and "that all" (357), is much improved in the version of 1850.

98. Ibid., III, 218-25.

rejoined he, "I was as joyous as a lark."[99] "To me, at least," he continues, the spectacle

> . . . was a goodly prospect: for, through youth,
> Though I had been train'd up to stand unpropp'd,
> And independent musings pleased me so
> That spells seem'd on me when I was alone,
> Yet could I only cleave to solitude
> In lonesome places; if a throng was near
> That way I lean'd by nature; for my heart
> Was social, and lov'd idleness and joy. 100

This affinity for solitude and sociality are not as antithetical as may appear. The one provided the originality of his genius the distance, latitude, and privacy that it required in order to function and flourish; the other enriches the sense of his definition of genius as "the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe" of which the "only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility."[101] Wordsworth was not a great intellectual like Coleridge, but there is small reason to speculate if he understood the magnitude and solemnity of his purpose. In the Preface to the 1815 Edition, he writes:

> The grand store-houses of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination . . . are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton; to which I

99. G.M. Harper, William Wordsworth, His Life, Works, and Influence (2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), II, 409.

100. The Prelude, III, 229-36.

101. P.W. ("Essay, Supplementary to the Preface /1815/"), II, 428.

> cannot forebear to add those of Spenser. I select these writers in preference to those of ancient Greece and Rome, because the anthropomorphitism of the Pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets in those countries too much to the bondage of definite form; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry. 102

We shall grasp momently the meaning of this statement and that of the one on Milton which follows, "However imbued the surface might be with classical literature, he was a Hebrew in soul; and all things tended in him towards the sublime."[103]

In according life to the lifeless, or imagining every natural form to feel and have moral worth (a process sometime reversed as in the Leechgatherer who seems less a man than a thing, or the heroine of "A slumber did my spirit seal" who, "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and

102. Ibid. ("Preface to the Edition of 1815"), II, 439-40.

103. Ibid., II, 440; except for the classical literature, a similar appraisal has been advanced of Wordsworth. In "Wordsworth and the Iron Time" (Kenyon Review, xii /Summer 1950/, 477-97), Lionel Trilling distinguishes in him a "Judaic quality" (482) and pairs him with "the great Hillel" who "has a peculiarly Wordsworthian personality" and "said--was, indeed, in the habit of saying: he 'used to say'--'If I am not for myself, who, then, is for me? And if I am for myself, what then am I?'" (485). Trilling then notes that this pharisaic utterance, which appears to be difficult, presents no hardship "for the reader of Wordsworth, who finds the Wordsworthian moral essence here, the interplay between individualism and the sense of community, between an awareness of the self that must be saved and developed, and an awareness that the self is yet fulfilled only in community" (loc. cit.). Germane to this last theme, and to the ensemble of ideas upon which my own essay is founded, is the historical analysis "The Originality Paradox" by Thomas McFarland (New Literary History, v /Spring 1974/, 447-76), which treats of the contemporary implications for art and thought of the tension between the individual's desire for autonomy of self on one hand, and the dependence of self on community on the other; e.g., "We cannot think of man except by invoking simultaneously

stones, and trees,"[104] is neither and more), he was conforming to his belief that the earth and the mind of man are exquisitely fitted to each other. After several centuries of rational philosophy's onslaught on them, he was seeking for their mutual sake to revitalize man's perceptions and to restore the earth in focus. As a poet, he was avowing that he was sovereignly free to collect, assemble, and interpret the materials of his art as he wished, answerable to none but his conscience and the Creator above him, and that these materials, insofar as they were a bona fide part of man's environment, had of necessity inherent aesthetic and ethical importance. By his immense power to blur and refashion conventional perspectives within the realm of probability, he was attesting to the infinite competence of art to reveal truths to man of a compelling and redeeming nature, else hidden from him perhaps forever.

It would seem, besides, that Ruskin grants him his due. Nearly thirty years after his essay on the pathetic fallacy, in 1883, he avers:

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the opposed categories of individual and society. The 'pivotal point,' insists Simmel, of the 'concept of individuality' is that 'when man is freed from everything that is not wholly himself, what remains as the actual substance of his being is man in general, mankind, which lives in him and in everyone else.' It is only by this truth that there can exist the conception of a 'lonely crowd,' for the paradox of that title reflects the paradox of human consciousness. Neither individuality nor communality can be felt without the other, although each strains against its complement. The paradox reflects no adventitious alignment of possibilities, but rather an irreducible truth of what it is to be human. 'The fact is,' points out Kierkegaard, 'that at every moment the individual is himself and the race'" (447).

104. Lines 7-8.

> I . . . have used Wordsworth as a daily text-book from youth to age, and have lived, moreover, in all essential points according to the tenor of his teaching . . . Any man who lives by his precepts will thankfully find in them a beauty and rightness . . . which will preserve him alike from mean pleasure, vain hope, and guilty deed . . . 105

One could suppose, as M.H. Abrams has said in another connection, that this is "the praise Wordsworth deliberately sought, and would have valued most highly."[106] It is similar to Matthew Arnold's assessment in "Memorial Verses,"

> He too upon a wintry clime
> Had fallen--on this iron time
> Of doubts, disputes, distractions, and fears.
> He found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round;
> He spoke, and loosed our hearts in tears.
> . . . . . .
> But where will Europe's latter hour
> Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
> Others will teach us how to dare,
> And against fear our breast to steel;
> Others will strengthen us to bear--
> But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
> The cloud of mortal destiny,
> Others will front it fearlessly--
> But who, like him, will put it by? 107

105. Works, XXXIV, 349-50.

106. The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 333.

107. Lines 42-47, 62-70. Cf. Trilling: " . . . the Wordsworthian courage is different in kind from the Byronic. For one thing, it is never aware of itself, it is scarcely personal. It is the courage of mute, insensate things, and it is often associated with such things . . . Michael on his hill-top, whose character is defined by the light of his cottage, which was called The Evening Star, and by the stones of his sheepfold; or the Leechgatherer, who is like some old, great rock; or Margaret, who, like a tree, endured as long as she might after she was blasted--of the Lesser Celandine it is said that its fortitude in meeting the rage of the storm is neither its courage nor its choice but 'its necessity in being old,' and

But to Ruskin's or to Arnold's praise, it is likely Wordsworth would have preferred A.C. Bradley's, for whom there was not a simple and a problematic but one Wordsworth, who had not put by the cloud of mortal destiny, but fronted it.[108]

"I want to examine the nature," Ruskin writes sceptically in his essay of 1856, of the

> error . . . which the mind admits when affected strongly by emotion. Thus, for instance, in Alton Locke,--
>
> > "They rowed her in across the rolling foam--
> > The cruel, crawling foam."
>
> The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They

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the same thing is to be said of all Wordsworth's exemplars of courage: they endure because they are what they are, and we might also say that they survive out of a kind of biological faith, which is not the less human because it is nearly an animal or vegetable faith; and, indeed . . . sometimes nearly mineral. Even the Happy Warrior, the man in arms, derives his courage not from his militancy of spirit but from his calm submission to the law of things" (pp. 487-88).

108. E.g., " . . . the road into Wordsworth's mind must be through his strangeness and his paradoxes, and not round them. . . . He did not pretend . . . that what he saw sufficed to solve the riddle of the painful earth. . . . But still what he showed was what he saw, and he saw it in the cloud of human destiny. . . . No poet is more emphatically the poet of community. A great part of his verse . . . is dedicated to the affections of home and neighborhood and country, and to that soul of joy and love which links together all Nature's children, and 'steals from earth to man, from man to earth.' And this soul is for him as truly the presence of 'the Being that is in the clouds and air' and in the mind of man as are the power, the darkness, the silence, the strange and mysterious visitations which startle and confuse with intimations of immortality" (Oxford Lectures on Poetry, 2nd ed. /1909; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1934/, pp. 101, 125, 143-44).

> produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy." 109

With this criterion, Ruskin proceeds to weigh the validity of the language of several authors, ancient, medieval, and modern, by reference to small extracts of their work, and concludes, "so far as" the "pathetic fallacy" is

> a fallacy, it is always the sign of a morbid state of mind, and comparatively of a weak one. Even in the most inspired prophet it is a sign of the incapacity of his human sight or thought to bear what has been revealed to it. 110

To borrow from a definition of scepticism near at hand, the essay "raises doubts about the adequacy or reliability of the evidence . . . offered to justify"[111] the efficacy of art as a redeemer of man. Ruskin is anticipating Freud in Zur Einführung des Narzissmus some sixty years later. The fundamental bias in his reasoning, for which Jung provides the corrective in Modern Man in Search of a Soul,[112] is his implicit identification of subjectivism in art with narcissism and psychosis.[113] Haydon recollects in 1841 of his "immortal dinner,"

109. Works, V, 205; Ruskin's quotation is from the song "The Sands of Dee" (lines 19-20) in Chapter XXVI of Charles Kingsley's novel, Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet (1850).

110. Ibid., V, 218.

111. Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism: From Erasmus to Descartes (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. xiii-xiv.

112. V. supra, p. 17.

113. Cf. Ruskin's ironic gloss on "German dulness, and English affectation" and the distinctions springing from "the

> /Lamb/ in a strain of humour beyond description, abused me for putting Newton's head into my picture /"Christ's Entry into Jerusalem"/; "a fellow," said he, "who believed nothing unless it was as clear as the three sides of a triangle." And then he and Keats agreed he had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours. It was impossible to resist him, and we all drank "Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics." 114

Cautious in its turns and counter-turns as his argument is, Ruskin would seem to wish his reader to believe, as he himself surely did not, that the poet (or painter,--great art critic that Ruskin was) is reliably seeking truth only when an idolater.

"Of the Pathetic Fallacy" appears to have but a minor relation to Wordsworth,[115] until one is aware of the resemblance of its theme to Hazlitt's strictures of him several decades earlier and to some of Coleridge's uncertainties in Biographia Literaria and elsewhere.[116] In concentrating, however, on the

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use of two of the most objectionable words that were ever coined by the troublesomeness of metaphysicians,--namely, 'Objective,' and 'Subjective'": "From these ingenious views the step is very easy to a farther opinion, that it does not much matter what things are in themselves, but only what they are to us; and that the only real truth of them is their appearance to, or effect upon, us. From which position, with a hearty desire for mystification, and much egotism, selfishness, shallowness, and impertinence, a philosopher may easily go so far as to believe, and say, that everything in the world depends upon his seeing or thinking of it, and that nothing, therefore, exists, but what he sees or thinks of" (Works, V, 201, 202; my italics).

114. Op. cit., p. 316.

115. It cites him twice, contrasts him with William Shenstone and with Pope, and ranks his depiction of emotions and use of metaphor as superior to theirs.

116. Cf. Hazlitt on the Lake Poets and Wordsworth: "He sees nothing but himself and the universe. . . . His egotism is in some respects a madness; for he scorns even the admiration of himself, thinking it a presumption in any one to

self-evident notion that knowledge by the eye and knowledge by the ear are dissimilar and always bound to collide, and ignoring the immensely weightier fact that the task of art is to reconcile them by whatever means may be required, Ruskin is straying far afield into a position inimical to art, and inveighing not solely against the core of Wordsworth's poetic practice or in favor of metaphorical propriety, but against poetic language and language as a whole, and by extension (which would accord with his socialist principles) against the foundations of spiritual faith.

The questions of pathetic fallacy and egotism, indeed, are of a piece with the question of truth in art. Ruskin's essay is scarcely original in that sense; the controversy dates back as far at least as Plato in the Republic and, in the broad realm of ideas, farther back still to Genesis and its two accounts of Creation, one spatial, mathematical, and Babylonian,[117] the other psychological and Hebrew. All truths, severely scrutinized, weaken. This is the meaning of

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suppose that he has taste or sense enough to understand him" (Works, V, 163); and the ambivalence, in this context, of Coleridge's remark: "I think Wordsworth possessed more of the genius of a great philosophic poet than any man I ever knew, or, as I believe, has existed in England since Milton; but it seems to me that he ought never to have abandoned the contemplative position, which is peculiarly--perhaps I might say exclusively--fitted for him. His proper title is Spectator ab extra" (Ashe, pp. 171-72).

117. Cf. the similar conception in Genesis 1:1-10, 14-17, and Tablet V of the enuma elish, the Akkadian creation epic, which antedates Genesis (Religions of the Ancient Near East: Sumero-Akkadian Religious Texts and Ugarithic Epics, ed. Isaac Mendelsohn, "The Library of Religion," No. 4 /New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955/, pp. 35-36).

> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:--
> We murder to dissect; 118

or of the statement in "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface /1815/":

> As the pathetic participates of an animal sensation, it might seem--that, if the springs of this emotion were genuine, all men, possessed of competent knowledge of the facts and circumstances, would be instantaneously affected. And, doubtless, in the works of every true poet will be found passages of that species of excellence, which is proved by effects immediate and universal. But there are emotions of the pathetic that are simple and direct, and others--that are complex and revolutionary; some--to which the heart yields with gentleness; others--against which it struggles with pride; these varieties are infinite as the combinations of circumstance and the constitutions of character. Remember, also, that the medium through which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected, is language; a thing subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations. The genius of the poet melts these down for his purpose; but they retain their shape and quality to him who is not capable of exerting, within his own mind, a corresponding energy. 119

There are truths that serve and truths that dis-serve. All men, from early childhood, know without a shred of doubt that some day their life will end. Their book of days will shut, and make short shrift of their dreams, triumphs, or misfortunes. To adapt a pair of images from Yeats, it is the artifice of eternity that sustains them alive in adversity and prompts them to build, as testament of their undaunted spirit

118. P.W, ("The Tables Turned," 26-28), IV, 57.
119. Ibid., II, 428.

for all time, monuments of magnificence. But it is the certitude of death, forcefully and unremittingly proclaimed, that causes them to default on themselves and to despair, and speeds them to the grave.

We shall explore in the next and final chapter how Wordsworth is the poet of the community of man and how the relation between metaphor and truth functions in the construction of his myth of the family.

THE FAMILY

"One brotherhood of all the human race . . . "

--William Wordsworth, The Prelude

Like the Bildungsroman and the Künstlerroman which it resembles in several particulars, The Prelude is a crisis-autobiography[1] and treats, as its subtitle states, of the "Growth of a Poet's Mind" and, more fundamentally, of that of an ideal man. The mode of thinking evidenced in it and the handful of lyrics like "Tintern Abbey," "Resolution and Independence," "Elegiac Stanzas," and the Immortality Ode has become so much a part of our modern consciousness that it is difficult sometime to focus clearly on their novelty. "I must think," says Keats in one of his letters, "Wordsworth is deeper than Milton." The latter, he explains, had only "hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost;" he seems to have been content with the "Dogmas and superstitions" that survived the Protestant Reformation, and did not venture further. "He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done."[2] This is a surprising comment, if we recall that a while earlier Keats censured Wordsworth for self-deception and egotism. But except that Milton was him-

1. For M.H. Abrams' coinage and use of this term to describe The Prelude, see Natural Supernaturalism, pp. 71, 74 ff., and for an extended study of the forms of the Bildungsroman and the Künstlerroman, Jerome H. Buckley, Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

2. Rollins, I, 281, 282.

self a staunch Protestant and that Keats need not be thought as absolutely praising Wordsworth here, perhaps as John Jones implied in The Egotistical Sublime, although a circular one, it attests that there is "a grand march of intellect."[3] If love is eternal and conquers all in one sense, dread evens the scale in another and returns all things to their rest in the end. In an earlier time, before philosophy parted from theology and God ceased gradually to function as a ritualistic, extraterrestrial Being, or according to Keats even only as recently as Milton, a poet could not either have thought into the human heart or have elaborated on the individual mind and self. This attribute of Wordsworth above any other distinguishes the intellectual content of his verse from that of his predecessors and marks the difference in perspective between the pre-Renaissance or early Christian periods and the present.[4] Yet, toward the close of the Century of Reason, as he set out to transfer the haunt of poetic song from Heaven to earth and to modernize Milton, novel as was his vision, what he perceived cannot have varied radically from what Milton or older writers, save for their station in time,

3. Loc. cit., and see the chapter, "The Baptized Imagination," in Jones (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), pp. 154-92.

4. For a historical treatment of the emergence in the eighteenth century of consciousness of the interconnected ideas of time, memory, and self, see Georges Poulet, Studies in Human Time (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), and for an analysis of the relevance of these ideas to several of Wordsworth's key themes, Christopher Salvesen, The Landscape of Memory (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

might have seen, or been altered in capacity to provoke "fear and awe."[5]

I admire M.H. Abrams' book, Natural Supernaturalism, for its learning and for the soundness of its thesis respecting the Romantic era in general. But I cannot subscribe to the view that "Wordsworth's is a secular theodicy--a theodicy without an operative theos."[6] The pivotal word in Abrams' statement appears to be the adjective operative; but progress for Wordsworth comprehends accretion and also regression, or at least foresight and hindsight. The poet, whose mission on earth, as we noted earlier, is the perpetuation of the Word, looks fore and aft. Metaphor, that is, to be viable, to transcend the depredations of time and to serve man in the present, must be preserved live. It cannot be codified or localized, or it will desiccate and not merely cease to be a human asset but degenerate into an instrument of repression. The rule applies in the context of an individual's life and to society in a historical framework, as well as in religion. Consider the curious detail in Deuteronomy that when Moses, "whom the Lord knew face to face," died, "the children of Israel wept . . . in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended" (34:10, 8), and the lines,

> . . . I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
> Deep--and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
> To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.
> All strength--all terror, single or in bands,
> That ever was put forth in personal form--

> Jehovah--with his thunder, and the choir
> Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones--
> I pass them unalarmed. 7

Freud re-examined the hypothesis years ago that the Israelites may not have wept at all, that instead, to retaliate for their sufferings in the desert, they murdered Moses and, to assuage their guilt and pre-empt renewals of bloodshed from similar acts of vengeance on figures of authority, worshipped his memory.[8] This sacrificial killing, Freud maintained, despite the Israelites' attempt to sublimate it, failed; it laid basis for the sequel centuries later, the crucifixion of Christ, "the resurrected Moses and the returned primeval father of the primitive horde,"[9] and must recur at certain intervals in history.

Two ambivalent ingredients comprise Freud's speculation, the Israelites' umbrage at Moses for his dictatorial sternness and their contempt--which is to say, their fear--of his guiding them to freedom and constituting them into a nation. Regardless, however, of whether we read the conclusion of Deuteronomy literally, as a renunciation of excessive, un-

5. P.W. ("Preface to The Excursion /1814/," 38), V, 4.
6. P. 95.
7. P.W. ("Preface to The Excursion /1814/," 28-35), V, 3-4.
8. Moses and Monotheism, trans. Katherine Jones (1939; rpt. with additions, New York: Vintage Books, Random House, n.d.). The theory about Moses' death was originally propounded by Ernst Sellin in Mose und seine Bedeutung für die israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1922).
9. Moses and Monotheism, p. 114.

manly grief,[10] or are disposed like Freud to discern in the narrative of Moses a somber expression of the conflicting stresses of a people's growth, indicative of the kinship between neurosis and religion, the consequence for our immediate end is the same. We have a lesson that touches on the interconnection between the idea of reduction and that of the circumcised heart and substantiates that the poetry of Wordsworth with which Abrams is most concerned, if secular and free of orthodox Christian myth, rests on a Judaeo-Christian plan but with greater emphasis perhaps on its pre-Hellenistic than Pauline character. Yet it were an interesting study which undertook to explore with respect to the latter the parallels between the successive stages of Wordsworth's thought from his early poetry to his late and the evolution of early Christianity. I know only two studies at present that have seminal bearing on this potentially worthwhile theme.[11]

10. On grief or, in Patristic writing, tristitia, see R.E. Kaske, "Sapientia et Fortitudo as the Controlling Theme of Beowulf," in Beowulf Criticism, pp. 269-310, esp. 292-93.

11. Jane Worthington (Smyser), "Wordsworth and Roman Stoicism," in Wordsworth's Reading of Roman Prose (1946; rpt., n.p.p.: Archon Books, 1970), pp. 43-74, and Jones, pp. 154-92. Also germane, if more remotely, are the recent books by Frank D. McConnell, The Confessional Imagination (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974) and Richard E. Brantley, Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism" (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), both of which are concerned with the influence of religious ideas on Wordsworth but stress exclusively his Protestantism. Brantley's book, in particular, however, may be deemed a rejoinder to Natural Supernaturalism, and scores "the tendency to see Wordsworth in a secular and empiricist Germano-Coleridgean context, as a poet whose constant concern was either to fuse outer and

Jehovah is not Baal. Conceived "in personal form" or as one half of a twofold of which the other half is the observer, instead of as a manifold that embraces without further specification both, Jehovah pales in stature and worth, becomes like Urizen and the other Eternals in Blake's primal act of creation reductive and counterfeit,[12] the God of the Sabbath, who, as Walter Kaufmann says in the prologue to his translation of Martin Buber's I and Thou, "condemns men to lives that are at least six-sevenths drab."[13] The essential distinction here is between Judaism which discountenanced the visual or objective and Christianity which insisted on it;--another way of signalling this contrast might be to allude to the discussions of Dante by C.S. Singleton and Erich Auerbach, and say that it is between the "allegory of poets" and the "allegory of theologians."[14] The lines by Wordsworth that I juxtaposed to the passage of Deuteronomy appear to be heretical and to disparage Christian allegory and ultimately the Incarnation for precisely the same reason as readers have been critical of the war in Heaven and the meetings between God and

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inner worlds through the creative imagination and thus to carry on the dialectic of mind and nature, or to displace theological ideas into naturalistic and humanistic contexts" (p. xi).

12. Blake's myth of the fall of man and of the creation of the world is set forth in The Book of Urizen (q.v.).

13. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 30.

14. On the application of these terms, and the Divina Commedia as "allegory of theologians," see, respectively, Dante Studies 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 10-17, 84-98, and "Figurative Texts Illustrating Certain Passages of Dante's Commedia," Speculum, lxxxix (Oct., 1946), 474-89, upon which the latter is ultimately based.

Christ in Paradise Lost. The point, in a Judaic sense, is that, regenerate or sinning, rebellious or modest, man encounters God--Jehovah or Yahweh--in the expression of his being, as a continual, unremitting, everyday reality rather than as an abstracted principle, however objectively rendered. It follows in Judaism that the secular is the sacred, the sacred the secular without hierarchy or difference.

> Not in Utopia, subterraneous Fields,
> Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where,
> But in the very world which is the world
> Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
> We find our happiness, or not at all, 15

man dispenses with the need for either redeemer or language of accommodation. He addresses God without intercession by person or thing each instant of his life; and the warfare which Milton as well as Blake portrayed allegorically in a remote past before the advent of man, as a confrontation between titans or an assault on a whole by cleavage of one of its parts, is here and now, waged relentlessly by man in the recesses of his heart and mind.

Martin Buber, than whom there is no more distinguished interpreter of Judaism in recent times, comments upon the matter thus:

> Man's "religious" situation, existence in the presence, is marked by its essential and indissoluble antinomies.

15. The Prelude, X, 724-28.

> That these antinomies are indissoluble constitutes their essence. Whoever affirms the thesis and repudiates the antithesis violates the sense of the situation. Whoever tries to think a synthesis destroys the sense of the situation. Whoever strives to relativize the antinomies annuls the sense of the situation. Whoever would settle the conflict between antinomies by some means short of his own life transgresses against the sense of the situation. It is the sense of the situation that it is to be lived in all its antinomies--only lived--and lived ever again, ever anew, unpredictably, without any possibility of anticipation or prescription. 16

In expounding why the "heaven of heavens is but a veil" or whatever is associated with it fails to disturb him, and to circumvent it he "must tread on shadowy ground," except for the qualification in the word *often*, Wordsworth frames very nearly the same thought:

> Not Chaos, not
> The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
> Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
> By help of dreams--can breed such fear and awe
> As fall upon us often when we look
> Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man--
> My haunt, and the main region of my song. 17

The path to spiritual health is relational and, if progressive, without *a priori* end. The phrase "must tread on shadowy ground," belonging like the lines from which it is taken to a fragment of verse written in 1798 and appended in 1814 to the Preface to *The Excursion*, the latter tangibly more Christian in concept than *The Prelude* completed in 1805, would seem to

16. *I and Thou*, pp. 143-44.
17. *P.W.* ("Preface to *The Excursion* /1814/," 35-41), V, 4.

approximate loosely the meaning of Michael's summary in behalf of Adam of St. Paul's polemics against the Mosaic Law,

> So Law appears imperfet, and but giv'n
> With purpose to resign them in full time
> Up to a better Cov'nant, disciplin'd
> From shadowy Types to Truth, from Flesh to Spirit,
> From imposition of strict Laws, to free
> Acceptance of large Grace, from servile fear
> To filial, works of Law to works of Faith. 18

It conforms, however, more nearly to the concise formula, "to know / That which before us lies in daily life, / Is the prime Wisdom; what is more, is fume."[19]

1.

Consciousness of the passage of life in the present and of the interrelation of the bases of being has a decisive influence in Wordsworth, as in Judaism and later with certain important modifications in Christianity. It is fundamental

18. Paradise Lost, XII, 300-06. For St. Paul's belief that man is to be "justified by faith" in Christ rather than as heretofore by adherence to "the works of the law," see Galatians 2-4 (esp. 2:16, 3:16, 19, 23-25 and 29) and Romans 3-8 (esp. 3:28, 5:1, 6:3-8 and 22).

19. Ibid., VIII, 192-94. Cf. Montaigne's statement, equally apt here, "The desire to increase in wisdom and knowledge was the first ruin of the human race; it was the way by which it cast itself into eternal damnation" (Essays II, xii. Translation of G.B. Ives, Harvard University Press, 1925, II, 260); quoted by Merritt Y. Hughes, ed. John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 367.

to his conception of the soundness of a social order whose principal virtues are solidarity, tradition, and a constant devotion to the master principle that the fate of man and his universe coalesces with that of the family as part of a continuum of experience reaching through the darkling, unfathomable past back to the immediate present.

"Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets . . . "[20] Man's learning begins in infancy; the family in Wordsworth and through it society at large collaborate in tuning the infant's consciousness and fostering confidence in him that will allow in after years recall of the "spots of time" that have "a vivifying Virtue" whence "our minds / Are nourished and invisibly repair'd,"[21] and the unabated desire for more.

> Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
> Too weak to gather it, already love
> Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
> Hath beautified that flower; already shades
> Of pity cast from inward tenderness
> Do fall around him upon aught that bears
> Unsightly marks of violence or harm. [22]

Wordsworth's many poems celebrating childhood and the relation between the child and the nearest members of his family have acute importance in this respect. With love and trust first felt in infancy under the aegis particularly of mother

20. Numbers 11:29.
21. The Prelude, XI, 258, 260, 264-65.
22. Ibid., II, 245-51 (1850 text).

and father, and further abetted and refined on the way to manhood in intercourse with peers, man can commit his power and aspire to divinity, can prevail on time and space, alter liability to gain, oppose death, and if but partially, fashion his fate according to his designs.

Wordsworth's children all reside, as does the "SIMPLE Child" of "We Are Seven," in a world in which seven minus two still equals seven; are mighty prophets and seers blest, like the "six years' Darling" of the Immortality Ode, exquisitely nourished with inner knowledge transcending the limits of discursive learning; and know, as does little Basil Montagu in "Anecdote for Fathers," that a weathercock is more than a decorative article but meant to signal bad weather. Ambivalence or doubt is foreign to their mind and the line of demarcation between life and death, good and evil, joy and sorrow, affection and hostility, sharp and clear. Their ethical framework is supremely monistic: to feel tall and strong and be let out to play is good, not to is bad. There is nothing of mental bombast in these allegations; just as there is nothing trite or uninteresting, as A.C. Bradley observed, in the story of Alice Fell whose loss of her tattered cloak, hitherto her only earthly possession, signifies to her the utter demise of her universe.[23]

23. Cf., in Biographia Literaria, Chapter XXII, the critique of the epithet "Thou best philosopher" to describe the child in the Ode as an example of "mental bombast, as distinguished from verbal" (Shawcross, II, 109, 111-12), and see Bradley, pp. 105-06.

Children are children, that is, because they have not reached the age of reason, and may be inferred accordingly to inhabit an ideal world. The latter is not that which Wordsworth envisages for himself or his reader. As may be gathered without disturbing the drift of his comment on the notion of pre-existence of the soul, in the Fenwick Note on the Immortality Ode, the common view of childhood as privileged and free because of its close proximity to birth and distance from the cares of life, compared with that of the developing self in The Prelude, is a simple metaphor, with "sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet."[24]

> 'A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death!' [25]

Children are not men, who daily must bide with conflict and alarm, else absolve themselves of their pretension to manhood.

Neither are they invulnerable, immortal, or impervious to pain and anguish, as the tale "Vaudracour and Julia," originally part of Book IX of The Prelude, poignantly proves.[26]

24. P.W., IV, 463.
25. "We Are Seven," 1-4; quoted by Wordsworth, loc. cit.
26. For specimens of criticism of this narrative, which its obvious stylistic demerits aside, seems to have been, beginning with Matthew Arnold in the introductory essay to his edition of 1879 of Wordsworth's poetry, selected for especial abuse, that has tended to ignore what the narrative is essentially about--the fate of a man and his loved ones deprived

The same moral obtains from the death of Margaret's youngest child in "The Ruined Cottage," and the fact that Margaret pines away after Robert's desertion in solitude and grief "Nine tedious years" but magnifies the fatuousness of her fidelity and deepens its irony. "Needs must it have been / A sore heart-wasting,"[27] remarks the Wanderer laconically toward the end of his discourse, as if tendering a piece of information of indistinct value. Margaret's love, however, her life's wonted rhythm abruptly arrested, has been exhausted and transformed to obsession long before either the death of her child or her torment's final term. Not Man, Nature, or God, as these melancholy tales bear witness, can efface the toll of betrayal by one being of another. This truth is patent during man's helpless, infant years but continues to exert influence long after. More than upon the sanctity of a territorial patch of ground which he may love and upon which establish his home, as Karl Kroeber has persuasively argued recently, in reasoning recalling both J.H. Van den Berg and Martin Buber,[28] the cultivation by man of

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of the benefit of genial community--see The Prelude, pp. 591-93, and Havens, II, 508-13.

27. P.W. (lines 872, 874-75), V, 37.

28. The following brief excerpt will furnish a notion of Kroeber's argument ("'Home at Grasmere': Ecological Holiness," PMLA, 89/1 /Jan., 1974/, 132-41): "'Home at Grasmere' praises the divinity of the world and gives joyous thanksgiving for the goodness of actual life, internal and external. The valley indubitably is Wordsworth's temple, his holy place. Just as indubitably it is also his home, his 'Dwelling Place.' And if it is reasonable to suspect angels of speaking matter-of-factly of the Heaven they inhabit, one may forgive Wordsworth some prosaicness. Living in paradise, he lives by ordinary

higher virtues depends throughout his years upon a confluence of affections originated in youth. The desire for a home and place of labor, or for a permanent domicile, rather than shelter and a source of income, not precedes, but is catalyzed and qualified by this prior gift. As Wordsworth confidently puts it in his letter to Charles Fox, and much of his better poetry in a sense paraphrases that statement, man must have a durable basis for his love; by implication, to seek permanence and give his love fulsome and enduring expression, he must previously have been initiated, or himself have learned how to love.

Betrayal and love are the theme likewise of the family narratives, "The Brothers" and "Michael." In the letter to Fox, sent with a copy of the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth cites these two poems as having been inspired with the motive to "enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species," and confesses the hope that, "at a time when these feelings are sapped in so many ways," the poems "might co-operate, however feebly, with the illustrious efforts which you have made to stem this and other evils with which the country is labouring."[29] Three months later, in April 1801, writing to Thomas Poole, he comments upon his objective in "Michael" as an attempt

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standards 'idly.' Because the poet does not segregate home from holy place, the sacred from the profane, because to him commonplace living can be divine, his religiosity appears as a kind of indolence" (p. 137).

29. E.Y., 315.

> to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart; the parental affection, and the love of property, landed property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence. 30

"The Brothers" and "Michael" are not concerned overtly with childhood. But since they illustrate with precision the norm upon which the solidity of the family is structured and maintained, which, needless to say, is of profound consequence for the integrity and well-being of its members, including the child, they may be profitably considered here. Violence is more subdued and disguised in these poems than in "Vaudracour and Julia" or "The Ruined Cottage" but no less savage or fatal. Here too, it is soon evident, the dualities of the mind, of alternating obscurity and light, treachery and constancy, compulsion and hope, signified in Books VI and VII of The Prelude in the awesomeness of the spectacle of the Simplon Pass and subsequently Wordsworth's sleepless night at Gravedona, or in the blank confusion of the mighty city of London,

30. Ibid., 322; cf.: "The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst these men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing Poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn" (ibid., 314-15).

are present and Nature indomitably active.

"Why, there, Sir," says the Priest in "The Brothers," answering Leonard's easy suggestion in the preceding lines, " . . . your Church-yard / Seems . . . / To say that you are heedless of the past: / An orphan could not find his mother's grave,"

> is a thought that's new to me!
> The stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread
> If every English church-yard were like ours;
> Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth:
> We have no need of names and epitaphs;
> We talk about the dead by our fire-sides.
> And then, for our immortal part! we want
> No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale:
> The thought of death sits easy on the man
> Who hath been born and dies among the mountains.

To which Leonard rejoins, with truth but also unconscious irony that becomes more and more apparent as the poem's story unfolds,

> Your Dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts
> Possess a kind of second life: no doubt
> You, Sir, could help me to the history
> Of half these graves? 31

The Priest defers thereupon to Leonard's wish, and proceeds to shrive his soul. It might not be to stretch too far a point to propose that from then on the substance of his relation recalls that of the Ancient Mariner to the Wedding-Guest in "The

31. Lines 174, 166-69, 174-83, 184-87 (P.W., II, 5-6).

Rime of the Ancient Mariner":--to slay the bird that brings the fog and mist and makes the breeze to blow is a dire sin.

The crux about which hangs the action in "Michael" is the threat of diminished independence. An untoward turn of fortune constrains Michael, a patriarch of four-score years, to honor an obligation in behalf of a kinsman and to forfeit possession of half of his land. To avert the catastrophe, Michael opts to apprentice his son as a merchant in the city. To pre-empt the bane of a life of penury, Leonard, an orphan-lad of sixteen, similarly abandons his village and embarks on a career at sea. In each instance, the desire to obviate antinomies, as Martin Buber would have it, signifies a lapse of faith, and a more sinister misfortune strikes. The "set" broken, as Wordsworth was to write to Richard in 1805, referring to the death of John,[32] Leonard's younger brother, between whom and Leonard there had been formerly "much love to spare, / And it all went into each other's hearts," droops on for a short time alone and dies. Luke, who brought Michael hope in his declining years,

> and forward-looking thoughts,
> And stirrings of inquietude, when they
> By tendency of nature needs must fail.
> Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
> His heart and his heart's joy! [33]

32. See E.Y., 540; cf.: "I am sometimes half superstitious, and think that as the number of us is now broken some more of the set will be following . . . " (ibid., 571).

33. Lines 247-48, 148-52 (P.W., II, 8, 85).

cannot long sustain his isolation in the city, falls prey to evil, and is never heard from again.

The actions of Michael and Leonard originate in noble intentions, to secure a son's inheritance in one instance, and to procure one for a brother in the other. The distinguishing motive in both is love. Yet, Leonard hallucinates at sea--

> when the regular wind
> Between the tropics filled the steady sail,
> And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
> Lengthening invisibly its weary line
> Along the cloudless Main, he
> . . . . . .
> by feverish passion overcome,
> Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
> Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
> Saw mountains; saw the forms of sheep that grazed
> On verdant hills--with dwellings among trees,
> And shepherds clad in the same country grey
> Which he himself had worn-- 34

and Michael's disposition, after he has resolved on his choice, is likewise uncertain.

> . . . Isabel was glad when Sunday came
> To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
> By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
> Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
> And when they rose at morning she could see
> That all his hopes were gone. 35

Both Michael and Leonard in their wish to do good stray from their more immediate and vital purpose, to validate the inher-

34. Lines 49-53, 59-65 (ibid., II, 2).
35. Lines 288-93 (ibid., II, 89).

itance that they have, superior to that which might accrue from their choice since the lavishest wealth cannot purchase an equal, and to conserve the homogeneity of their situation; which, despite Michael's anxiety for his land or the orphaned status of Leonard and James, compasses abundant, domestic love and an arcadian perfection. And, even if that were not so, they overlook that to be beholden or indentured, in one sense or another, describes their mortal identity. Both are requited by the swift train of events of which their error is the cause. Nature, implacably, asserts its will. Says the Priest to Leonard, whom after the passage of twenty years he fails to recognize,

> If there were one among us who had heard
> That Leonard Ewbank was come home again,
> From the Great Gavel, down by Leeza's banks,
> And down the Enna, far as Egremont,
> The day would be a joyous festival . . . 36

A small d would translate into a large d, a common day become a holy day.

Having absolved himself, however, of his birthright and damned himself, or at least compromised himself, Leonard cannot return home just yet, cannot re-embrace faith, and justly declines the Priest's invitation that he break with him bread. Notwithstanding what has been said earlier in this chapter about the import of Wordsworth's stress on the present, this is particularly a Christian notion here rather than a Hebrew,

36. Lines 308-12 (ibid., II, 9).

although it is difficult to fathom how at this juncture, under the ordinance of Torah or Paul's doctrine, with "upright heart and pure" or by repentance and grace, Leonard might have reason to return to Ennerdale. Hence, his removal anew to sea, unlike the fate of Coleridge's Mariner, signifies only doubtfully the start of observance of a Christian process of repentance and salvation. Wordsworth's religiosity here again rests on concrete reality and is qualified upon his pulses. Similarly, Michael, who prized his son's material inheritance more than he did his spiritual, cannot carry out the covenant entered upon with him shortly prior to his departure and, the sheep vanished, erect his sheepfold.

Conceived perhaps, in an image reminiscent of Milton's "Genius of the shore" in "Lycidas," as that one of the pair of

> springs which bubbled side by side,
> As if they had been made that they might be
> Companions for each other . . .
> . . . one hath disappeared;
> The other, left behind, is flowing still, 37

the spirit of James endures and keeps vigil over the memory of Leonard; so, too, after "the ploughshare has been through the ground"[38] upon which the EVENING STAR stood, Michael's heap of stones, as memento of an unfulfilled love, remains. But, except

37. Lines 141-43, 144-45 (ibid., II, 5); v. "Lycidas," 182-85.
38. Line 477 (ibid., II, 94).

> For the delight of a few natural hearts;
> And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
> Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
> Will be my second self when I am gone, 39

the actuality is fled. Walter Ewbank's estate, which might conceivably in time and with industry have been acquired by Leonard and James without necessity for Leonard to course the seas, and James then been alive, is instead destined with all its sheep, "A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know, / Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years,"[40] forever to be the property of strangers; and Michael's, on which his forefathers had presumably also toiled a millennium, no less.

The ambivalence that causes man to harbor his uncanny fascination for destruction and death, and gives substance to interest in a human, anagogic design, is the essential theme of "The Brothers" and "Michael," as it is of the cycle of Lucy poems:

> What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
> Into a Lover's head!
> "O mercy!" to myself I cried,
> "If Lucy should be dead!" 41

In effect, suffice it to formulate that possibility, and from that instant, reality is compromised in fantasy and doubt,

39. Lines 36-39 (ibid., II, 81).
40. Lines 302-03 (ibid., II, 9).
41. P.W. ("Strange fits of passion have I known," 25-28), II, 29.

clarity made opaque, and Lucy indubitably dead. The events related in "The Brothers" and "Michael" illustrate the functioning of two discrete modes of time, or, as Alan Grob distinguishes in The Philosophic Mind, "time as a teleologically directed sequence in which human life follows nature's determinations" and "time as a random and purposeless flow, the human condition when man lives apart from nature."[42] What precipitates the debacle in either poem is the clash in the protagonists' consciousness between these modes of time. I ascribed the latter earlier to a lapse of faith; it may also be conceived as evidence of a paucity of imagination, or a failure to be "affected . . . by absent things as if they were present."[43]

2.

To diminish the disparity between transcendent, natural time and human time, or "arouse the sensual from their sleep / Of Death" and "win the vacant and the vain / To noble raptures,"[44] describes, of course, Wordsworth's avowed aim as a poet. The poem on John's death, "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle," and the passage, in Book XI of

42. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), p. 41.
43. P.W. ("Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/"), II, 393.
44. Ibid. ("Preface to The Excursion /1814/," 60-61, 61-62), V, 5.

The Prelude, on that of his father do not convey raptures. Were they anything less than solemn and sober, they were ludicrous. They accord, however, in their choice of detail, symmetry of design, and perfect blend of sublimity and art, arresting instances of his objective at work, and they may be profitably set off against "The Brothers" and "Michael" since their theme, unlike theirs, is not one of life's innumerable calamities that portend death and can speed it to come about, but that dread, final calamity itself.

Written in 1806, more than a year after John's death, hence like the conclusion of The Prelude and Mount Snowdon episode or "Character of the Happy Warrior," belonging to Wordsworth's middle period, but post-dating the completion of the Immortality Ode (Stanzas V-XI) by at least two years, "Elegiac Stanzas" deserves an especially careful reading.[45] No doubt, John's sudden death was a grievous blow to Wordsworth privately and professionally. Jack Stillinger, in his notes on "Elegiac Stanzas" in his edition of Wordsworth, echoes the common critical view when he states that after it "Wordsworth did not write more than a relative handful of first-rate poems in the forty-odd years of life remaining to him."[46] Crucial, of course, is the fact that John died at sea, a victim of Nature's fury. Of Wordsworth's private re-

45. On the dating of the last books of The Prelude and the Immortality Ode, see The Prelude, pp. xliii-liv, esp. liii-liv, and P.W., IV, 464-65.

46. William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 569.

action to the event, there is abundant indication in his correspondence. Within seven hours of being informed of it, on 11 February 1805, he writes to Sir George Beaumont and strikes the chord that in the succeeding weeks and months will reverberate through all his letters: "I can say nothing higher of my ever dear Brother than that he was . . . meek, affectionate, silently enthusiastic, loving all quiet things, and a Poet in every thing but words. Alas! What is human life!"[47] The next day, to Southey, he elaborates on this thought: "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 on such errands as we do, destroying and laying waste . . . Surely, this is not forever, even on this perishable planet!"[48] Later, as if climactically, he speculates,

> Would it 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. 49

John's "modesty was equal to that of the purest Women;" he was "all that could be wished-for in man . . . thinking of and living only for others; and we see what has been his end! So good

47. E.Y., 541.
48. Ibid., 543.
49. Ibid., 556.

must be better; so high must be destined to be higher."[50]

As one ponders these and similar, pained reflections and the reiterated sentiment, "I feel . . . something cut out of my life which cannot be restored" or "my loss is great, and irreparable,"[51] it is tempting to wrench from context and give a symbolic reading to Wordsworth's request on 19 March 1805 to Richard Sharp: "I broke my watch the other day by letting it fall; would you be so good as to send your servant . . . to have it mended . . . "[52] But significantly in "Elegiac Stanzas," as a poet, he transcends the objective fact of his brother's death and re-mobilizes time. Even if "the set is now broken," there is no trace here either of anxiety or despair, no ambivalence, but composure and a calm avowal of the reigning order of things,[53] and proof of the earnestness of his vow,

> Our Brother . . . encouraged me to persist in the plan of life which I had adopted; I will work for you was his language and you shall attempt to do something for the world. . . . I will not be cast down were it only for his sake I will not be dejected. I have yet much to do . . . his part of the agreement between us is brought to and end, mine continues . . . 54

50. Loc. cit.
51. Ibid., 565, 548.
52. Ibid., 572.
53. Cf. the verses of the Chorus and Manoa in Samson Agonistes: "His servants he with new acquist / . . . hath dismist, / And calm of mind" (lines 1755, 1757-58) and "Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail . . . but well and fair" (lines 1721-23).
54. E.Y., 563; cf. the letter of 23 February 1805 to Sir George Beaumont, which contains almost verbatim the same statement (ibid., 547).

The poem has several, closely related meanings. First, Wordsworth's experience of John's death parallels his experience in the Simplon Pass and threatens the integrity of his consciousness. "That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell, / This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!"[55] recalls the "types and symbols of Eternity," the woods, torrents, and crags that likewise inspire fear. The difference now is that the life of his brother and by extension his own are at stake. Yet his reaction on the whole, the discernment that Beaumont's picture is "a passionate Work," its spirit "wise and well" and "Well chosen," and the emphasis, "This which I know, I speak with mind serene,"[56] is heartening and equivalent. It is to assimilate the event, diminish its sting, and survive.

Second, disquieting in terms of his Romantic beliefs and faith in Nature as it is, "Elegiac Stanzas" is a poem of triumphant virility and sweep with the same resolved dualism as informs his earlier work. Nothing in it suggests, as we might expect had John's death sapped Wordsworth's strength, a departure from the resilient view of life of his youth. Nor is the main theme of "Elegiac Stanzas" new.

> I have submitted to a new control:
> A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
> A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.
>
> Not for a moment could I now behold
> A smiling sea, and be what I have been:

55. P.W. (lines 47-48), IV, 260.
56. Loc. cit. (lines 45, 46, 40).

> The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old [57]

captures the sorrow felt by Wordsworth because of John's death; however, it also confirms the conviction rendered in the Immortality Ode, completed before John died, that "The Clouds that gather round the setting sun / Do take a sober colouring from an eye / That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."[58] Aside from the fact that "Elegiac Stanzas" is an elegy, if it is bare and somber and in low key, that is because it is the statement of a poet whose creative sensibility--as it is sound that it have--has matured to tragic vision and hitherto naturalistic ecstasy given way to knowledge of human pathos. But despite his awareness of these limitations, his grasp on life and art abides unaltered. How else, issued from likely the severest confrontation with death of his entire life, could he conclude?--

> 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. [59]

It may still be opined ad infinitum that thereafter Wordsworth enters into a protracted creative twilight of forty years. We may leave that question rest, as true perhaps in an obvious

57. Ibid. (lines 34-39), IV, 259-60.
58. Ibid. (lines 197-99), IV, 285.
59. Ibid. (lines 57-60), IV, 260; cf. Paradise Lost, "So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear" (IV, 108).

and limited sense but mis-focused and false in another. "Elegiac Stanzas" occupies in the stage of development begun with the Immortality Ode and culminating in the classical "Laodamia," written in 1814, a middle ground. Here, with the artist in his prime, art reaches essentially its bourn and is shorn of its former utility. Prospero's familiar speech, beginning,

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air, 60

implies a similar process in Shakespeare; except that, for Wordsworth as for him, some dreams are genial, while others not.[61] The test is in the reading, or the seeing.

Third, it is idle to dwell at length on Wordsworth's childhood and early loss of both parents. To relate the poet biographically to his work is tempting and can serve a valid purpose. But the doctrine in his work must stand or fall dependent on its merit. Except in a carefully defined context, the poet's life, extrinsic to his work, cannot furnish criteria for its truth, nor the latter be a standard for judging the life, without risk of extending the flaw in Ruskin's reasoning, considered earlier, and doing injury to the integrity of both. The Prelude purports to be biographical. But it is a spiritual, figurative, and idealized biography. It is

60. The Tempest, IV, i, 148-50.
61. See ibid., IV, i, 156-58.

selective. It includes, omits, disguises elements of Wordsworth's life, its chronology is tactical, not sequential, and the crisis of which it treats, identifies and resolves the agents, is symbolic. It pertains, as I suggested, not to Wordsworth or to any particular man or poet, but to a being whose potentiality, as a reflection of the history and collective character of humankind, is there, waiting to be realized.

Similarly, the speaker in "Elegiac Stanzas" is the embodiment of an ideal being; who, blessed with a family's presence (or its surrogate) and unwavering affection in youth, sorts thereafter with nature's determinations, and counters the assault perpetrated on his consciousness by his brother's death with confidence, as if a sum minus a part equalled the whole, and if not quite with "feelings as fresh, as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat," and at mid-life with the unalloyed "child's sense of wonder and novelty," differently but as well, conscious, as Coleridge would wish, of "the riddle of the world" and helping "to unravel it."[62]

A like reading produces from Wordsworth's depiction of the death of his father in The Prelude and, as we will observe below, from his address to Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey." The family in Wordsworth is dynastic, its merit hinged on the conditions accorded the child to pave his way to manhood and on his subsequent relations with death. If the child is father

62. Biographia Literaria, Chapter IV (Shawcross, I, 59).

of the man, incumbent on him on reaching manhood is the capacity to contain death, which means also importantly to succeed or even to supersede his elders, but at any event to continue the line.

Conspicuous in Wordsworth's treatment of his father's death are also the tragic vision, the altering of objective proportions and fusing of live and inert, and the inferring of a realm of experience transcending and superior to the conventional:

> One Christmas-time,
> The day before the Holidays began,
> Feverish, tired, and restless, I went forth
> Into the fields, impatient for the sight
> Of those two Horses which should bear us home;
> My Brothers and myself. There was a crag,
> An Eminence, which from the meeting-point
> Of two highways ascending, overlook'd
> At least a long half-mile of those two roads,
> By each of which the expected Steeds might come,
> The choice uncertain. Thither I repair'd
> Up to the highest summit; 'twas a day
> Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
> I sate, half-shelter'd by a naked wall;
> Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
> A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
> With those Companions at my side, I watch'd,
> Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
> Gave intermittent prospect of the wood
> And plain beneath. Ere I to School return'd
> That dreary time, ere I had been ten days
> A dweller in my Father's House, he died,
> And I and my two Brothers, Orphans then,
> Followed his Body to the Grave.
>
> (Lines 345-68)

Here is the familiar assemblage of symbols--of anxiety, guilt, remorse--that in one guise or another permeates much of Words-

worth's important poetry and accounts for its distinctive, apocalyptic reach. The ascent "Up to the highest summit" to have "sight" of the plain below and the watching with strained expectancy, it is barely worth noting, are again indicative, as in Wordsworth's meeting with the Peasant in the Alps and his distressful tidings, of a misuse of human faculty and of a doomed attempt at reversing the roles of the human and the divine. Consequently, if in a slightly different sense from that in "Elegiac Stanzas,"[63] the spirit of the present picture, with its desolate landscape, bleak weather, impotent "single sheep" and portentous "whistling hawthorn" and "naked wall," is also "wise and well" and "Well chosen." So violent, fluid, and evocative is the imagery, it astonishes the mind. Yet the speaker, whose subject is the death of his father, is calm, impassive, intent on his craftsman's labor, selecting and arranging particles of language into phrases, phrases into sentences,[64] impervious to joy or pain, life or death.

Between these verses and "Elegiac Stanzas," however, there is a distinction, which parallels that between "Nutting" and

63. But consider lines 53, 54: "Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone, / . . . at distance from the Kind!" (P.W., IV, 260), which also refers to a negation ultimately with kindred ramifications.

64. Cf. "Preface to . . . Lyrical Ballads /1800/": "I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till . . . the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and . . . qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever . . . the mind will . . . be in a state of enjoyment" (ibid., II, 400-01; my italics).

"Home at Grasmere." "A difference," says Karl Kroeber, between the latter two, "is the poet's mature consciousness in the latter poem. Full awareness enables him to accommodate himself to the 'spirit' of a place (instead of 'ravaging' it) by an act of deliberate regressiveness;"[65] regressiveness being synonymous in this instance with wise passivity or indolence. The implication in "A Poet's Epitaph," parenthetically, is the same. In foregoing the initiative and orienting his faculties without (or in exhibiting Keatsian negative capability and selflessness), man compasses his fear, eschews the haughtiness of the Moralist,

> Himself his world, and his own God;
> One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
> Nor form, nor feeling . . . , [66]

loves the best of himself and all else of Man or Nature, past or present, residing and active in that self, and attests to poetic sensibility. Likewise, the condition of repose, acquiescence, and hope evident in "Elegiac Stanzas" as established fact, except so far as the speakers are concerned, is in the lines of The Prelude, with their emphasis on feverishness, restlessness, and impatience--hence aggressiveness--a desideratum. From the initial phrase, "One Christmas-time," to the final, "to the Grave," the lines form a self-contained whole. "The event," however, continues Wordsworth, to point

65. Op. cit., p. 136.
66. P.W. (lines 28-30), IV, 66.

the moral further, "appear'd / A chastisement" (lines 368, 369, 370), and afterwards, when he recalled the day

> when from the crag
> I look'd in such anxiety of hope,
> With trite reflections of morality,
> Yet in the deepest passion, I bow'd low
> To God, who thus corrected my desires . . .
>
> (Lines 371-75)

It should be underscored that Wordsworth is not ascribing to his want of discipline that day his father's death, or intimating that he wished him dead. The notion of guilt is present, but what Wordsworth says is that, occurring so soon after, without stated causal connection with his desires, the death dramatized and gave substance to the "spectacles and sounds" (line 383), whose recall later taught him the value of the discipline he had lacked. God--Yahweh--interceded and, metaphorically, "corrected my desires." God cured, fertilized, irrigated his heart. Thence "I often would repair and . . . drink, / As at a fountain," he concludes, and, shifting tense from past to present, "I do not doubt" that

> . . . when storm and rain
> Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
> When I am in the woods, unknown to me
> The workings of my spirit thence are brought.
>
> (Lines 384-85, 385, 386-89)

God may not be physically present in the world. For men happily circumstanced with a family or community in youth and

after as Wordsworth tells us he was--men whose sides of the psyche beneath and past the threshold of consciousness communicate, who reason with feeling, their primal sympathies preeminent and creative energies live--there is no loss, disruption, or dissolution. God is real, Nature genial. Theirs is a continual joining and Bildung, continual holiday and baptism. They know how to draw water from stone.

3.

Poetic sensibility is an acquired, not innate, attribute. "The thought of our past years . . . / . . . fountain light of all our day, / . . . master light of all our seeing," Wordsworth affirms, "in me doth breed / Perpetual benediction," and of his childhood,

> Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
> Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear, 67

or, prosaically, by the beautiful and the sublime. Both statements are theodetic. As interest in Wordsworth's time in the ancient, theological rather than purely aesthetic, subject of the beautiful and the sublime was widespread, 68 and as his

67. Ibid. ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," 134, 152-53, 134-35), IV, 283; The Prelude, I, 305-06.

68. Thomas Burnet's The Sacred Theory of the Earth, which Coleridge conceived "a grand Miltonic Romance" (Coleridge on

announced purpose was to celebrate in "spousal verse"[69] a millennial wedding of Man and Nature, inspired by Milton and the Book of Revelation, the many illustrations in The Prelude of the polarity of Nature's "gentlest visitations" and "impressive discipline of fear"[70] are further evidence of the orthodoxy of his thought and a predictable ingredient of his theme. The sacred history of man and sacred history of nature paradigm each other, the Fall having affected both.

" . . . he was a chosen son," says Wordsworth, however, of the Wanderer, in an early version of "The Ruined Cottage" from which he transferred several elements into The Prelude:

> To him was given an ear which deeply felt
> The voice of Nature in the obscure wind
> The sounding mountain and the running stream

and "he had an eye" that

> Could find no surface where its power might sleep,
> Which spake perpetual logic to his soul,
> And by an unrelenting agency
> Did bind his feelings even as in a chain. 71

---

the Seventeenth Century, ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley /Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1955/, p. 492), appeared in 1681-89, and Edmund Burke's Enquiry in 1757. Both were enormously popular and influential. See Samuel Holt Monk's classic treatise, The Sublime (New York: Modern Language Assn., 1935), and Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959).

69. P.W. ("Preface to The Excursion /1814/," 57), V, 4.

70. Book I, 367, 631.

71. P.W. ("The Ruined Cottage," MS B, 272, 273-75, 290, 297-300), V, 388.

Man retains an antediluvian resemblance to his Maker, and the Book of Nature is the Book of Scripture, and inspires man by eliciting from him "a just equipoise of love" latently present, to love his fellow. The Wanderer "could afford to suffer / With those whom he saw suffer."[72] Like the Book of Scripture, Nature is an ethical force. " . . . ere yet of age / To be a shepherd," the Wanderer "had learned to read / His bible . . . ;" but when he began to tend sheep for his father,

> Oh! then what soul was his when on the tops
> Of the high mountains he beheld the sun
> Rise up and bathe the world in light. He looked,
> The ocean and the earth beneath him lay
> In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touched
> And in their silent faces did he read
> Unutterable love.

"Ah! then how beautiful . . . / The written promise . . . "
" . . . in the mountains . . . / There did he see the writing . . . / . . . nor did he believe--he saw."[73]

Behind these sentiments, and episodes in The Prelude like that of the stolen boat or the gibbet scene, lay a host of speculations on a question only marginally different from that treated earlier in the first chapter.[74] Given the presumption of a good God and an imperfect Creation as regards both

72. Ibid. ("The Ruined Cottage," MS B, verso, 355, 370-71), V, 386, 387.
73. Ibid. ("The Ruined Cottage," MS B, 54-56, 122-28, 145, 146, 149, 150, 155), V, 380, 382, 383.
74. See, above, pp. 26 ff.

Man and Nature, since "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,"[75] how might one construe this hieroglyphic language and adjust one's ways accordingly? Suffice it for our purpose this time, patent as Wordsworth's concern with this question is, to call attention to it briefly.

The sublime and the beautiful manifestly substantiate the existence and the dual, punitive and merciful, identity of the Godhead. To expand on Karl Kroeber's study of "Home at Grasmere" and "ecological holiness," the preservation of a natural ecology, or marriage of the mind of man and nature, is significant and the health of human fate dependent on it, because implicit in it is the assurance of man's ultimate knowledge of God and with it the advent of his salvation; or, according to the Book of Revelation, the union of the Lamb and the Church. To rouse himself from slumber, build up great things from small, and so avow as poet and teacher his love of self, "For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it . . . ," man cannot do less than to advance sounder merit to second place than to first and, without craving for prescription or modification, allow the "sister horns" of Nature, of tumult and tranquillity, pain and pleasure, "that constitute her strength,"[76] to minister to and govern him. Nature is indeed not God but it is that whose negation by man

75. Romans 1:20.
76. The Prelude, XII, 4.

causes God to be alien. It qualifies in the Old Testament the Lord's command to Ezekiel, even if remote from the interests in nature of later centuries, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, / . . . say . . . thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot" (16:1-2, 15), and in Revelation the fierce denunciation of Babylon (of course, imperial Rome), "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:5), and it furnishes ground in Wordsworth for the lament, "What man has made of man."[77]

"The thought of our past years," thus, "in me doth breed / Perpetual benediction" because it is at that time that man is most receptive to Nature's sublime and beautiful intimations and open and disposed to accumulate his store of recollections, of "spots of time," which in later years

> with distinct pre-eminence retain
> A vivifying Virtue, whence, depress'd
> By false opinion and contentious thought,
> Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
> . . . our minds
> Are nourished and invisibly repair'd,
> A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced
> That penetrates, enables us to mount
> When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen. 78

This "efficacious spirit," which "chiefly lurks / Among those passages of life" which, "worthy of all gratitude, / Are scat-

77. P.W. ("Lines written in early Spring," 24), IV, 58.
78. The Prelude, XI, 258, 259-62, 264-68; the 1850 text has commas after "enhanced" (266) and "mount" (267).

ter'd everywhere, taking their date / From our first child-hood," and although (but aptly still) associated with moments when

> We have had deepest feeling that the mind
> Is lord and master, and that outward sense
> Is but the obedient servant of her will, 79

is the same as that conjured in "Tintern Abbey" as a property of Nature, which

> 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. 80

" . . . each man is a memory to himself," and "Life with me, / As far as memory can look back, is full / Of this beneficent influence;" [81] or as Augustine in his apologia of his life himself had stated, conceiving of his self in the past and that in the present as conterminous:

> All this I do inside me, in the huge court of my memory. . . . And in my memory too I meet myself--I recall myself, what I have done, when and where and in what state

79. Ibid., XI, 269-70, 274-76, 271-73.
80. P.W., (lines 125-34), II, 262-63.
81. The Prelude, III, 189, XI, 277-79.

> of mind I was when I did it. . . . And upon them all I can meditate as if they were present. 82

As in Augustine and Dante, and nearer to our time in Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Proust, memory in Wordsworth is a force majeure. The soul by it

> retains an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity, to which
> With growing faculties she doth aspire,
> With faculties still growing, feeling still
> That whatsoever point they gain, they still
> Have something to pursue. 83

Hence, "feeling comes in aid / Of feeling, and diversity of strength / Attends us, if but once we have been strong." 84 Memory, in this basically Platonic concept, is an instrument of grace.

The three passages that succeed the section of verse we are considering, and illustrate the resolution of fear and

82. Confessions, X, viii, as quoted in Natural Supernaturalism, pp. 84-85. Cf. XI, xviii: "Thus for example my boyhood, which no longer exists; but the likeness of my boyhood, when I recall it and talk of it, I look upon in time present, because it is still present in my memory" (ibid., p. 493). In like vein is Abrams' citation of John Freccero's discussion "of the role of the two selves in the narratives of Dante, whose old life has been transformed into a 'new life' by the profound experience of conversion. In the Vita Nuova 'the Dante who is tells the story of the Dante who was'; and the Divine Comedy 'recapitulates the whole of the poet's life in retrospect'--a life in which Christianity and poetry are 'not separable vocations'" (loc. cit.).

83. The Prelude, II, 336-41.

84. Ibid., XI, 326-28; cf. IV, 140 ff., "Gently did my soul / Put off her veil . . . / Strength came where weakness was not known to be . . . "

"visionary dreariness," the chancing on the gibbet scene, the encounter with the Girl under the Beacon, forcing her way "with difficult steps . . . / Against the blowing wind,"[85] and the death of Wordsworth's father,[86] exemplify collectively the function of memory. Yet, vital as this aim is, it is tangential. They have a further, larger purpose, to convey how the mind is "lord and master" and "outward sense" the "obedient servant of her will," and recall a preceding set of lines, "A plastic power / Abode with me, a forming hand" and "An auxiliar light / Came from my mind which on the setting sun / Bestowed new splendor."[87] Memory, which harks back to "simple childhood" wherein may be observed "something of the base / On which" human greatness stands,[88] is a force in its own right but the crucible of the poet's imagination, under whose action the soul's "obscure sense / Of possible sublimity" is clarified and the sublimity realized.[89]

Continuing on the central theme of The Prelude, his re-

85. Ibid., XI, 311, 307-08.
86. Ibid., XI, 279-302, 302-16, 346-89.
87. Ibid., II, 381-82, 387-89.
88. Ibid., XI, 331, 332-33.
89. Cf. on this idea, the reverse of entropic or reductive, Wordsworth's comment on The White Doe of Rylstone, another family narrative, in his letter of 18 January 1816 to Francis Wrangham: "It starts from a high point of imagination, and comes round through various wanderings to a still higher . . . Throughout, objects (the Banner, for instance) derive their influence not from properties inherent in them, not from what they are actually in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects. Thus the poetry, if there be any in the work, proceeds whence it ought to do from the soul of Man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world" (M.Y., II, 276).

covery from the crisis of the impairment of his imagination, Wordsworth writes in Book XII:

> Long time in search of knowledge desperate,
> I was benighted heart and mind; but now
> On all sides day began to reappear,
> And it was proved indeed that not in vain
> I had been taught to reverence a Power
> That is the very quality and shape
> And image of right reason . . .
> To seek in Man, and in the frame of life,
> Social and individual, what there is
> Desireable, affecting, good or fair . . .
> Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
> Once more in Man an object of delight
> Of pure imagination, and of love . . .
>
> (Lines 20-26, 39-41, 53-55)

So confirmed in faith in the justness of things, he too could empathize with men, settle in his paradise at Grasmere and in "inviolate retirement" practice his vocation, and, in "the great system of the world," with "God and Man divided, as they ought . . . Where Man is sphered, and which God animates,"[90] collocate in an orderly view of the laws of existence family, village, city, and nation. The seed having been sown, the harvest was at hand. This awakening and recognition of right reason came about in his life in 1795-96, prior to the composition of the Lyrical Ballads, most of which are on family or community themes, and prior to the political sonnets of 1802-03, or The Convention of Cintra of 1808-09, which manifest kindred concerns.

90. The Prelude, XIII, 267, 266, 268.

To return to Book XI, "When in a blessed season . . . Long afterwards," with Mary Hutchinson, later Mary Wordsworth, and Dorothy, "With those two dear Ones, to my heart so dear . . . ," he

> roam'd about
> In daily presence of this very scene,
> Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
> And on the melancholy Beacon, fell
> The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam . . .
>
> (Lines 316, 319, 317, 319-23)

The thought is a variant on that immediately after the long sentence in the Immortality Ode expanding on the sanctity "of our past years,"

> Hence in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the Children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. 91

Here in Book XI, however, memory was sound and operative and the mind "lord and master" because of the presence of Mary and Dorothy. The juxtaposition of "With those two dear Ones" and "in a blessed season," along with the "spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam" that then prevailed, is too close to be fortuitous and its meaning ignored. More than a myth of

91. P.W. (lines 162-68), IV, 284.

Nature, memory, or childhood, dominant in Wordsworth is a myth of family. This is true in "The Brothers" and "Michael," in "Daffodils," which seemingly has nothing to do with the family,"[92] in the sonnet, "Composed upon Westminster Bridge,"

> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty . . .
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
> And all that mighty heart is lying still! [93]

in "It is a beauteaous evening, calm and free,"

> Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
> If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
> Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
> Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
> And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
> God being with thee when we know it not, [94]

or--the number of compositions attesting to Wordsworth's fidelity to this over-arching idea could be continued almost without end--in "To H.C., Six Years Old,"[95] The White Doe of Rylstone; or, the Fate of the Nortons, Ecclesiastical

92. F.A. Pottle's essay is apt here too. Cf., "Wordsworth . . . fixes on Dorothy's fine central perception of 'the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway,' and condenses it into the one word 'crowd' . . . " (op. cit., pp. 277 ff.).

93. P.W. (lines 2-3, 13-14), III, 38.

94. Ibid. (lines 9-14), III, 17.

95. Underscoring the frailty of youth and its dependence on elders, Wordsworth likens Hartley Coleridge, in a metaphor reminiscent of Vaughan, Marvell, and other Renaissance poets (lines 27, 32-33), to "a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth," but "at the touch of wrong, without a strife / Slips in a moment out of life" (ibid., I, 247).

Sonnets, The River Duddon.

To cite a final, arresting instance, reciprocity between family members, in which strength or affection in the one increases on evidence of similar power in the other, is conveyed most movingly in "Tintern Abbey." The poem begins as a paean to the relation between Man and Nature. But midway, with the statement, "Nor perchance, / If I were not thus taught, should I the more / Suffer my genial spirits to decay,"[96] it shifts course and focuses on Dorothy. More than from Nature, the speaker receives "tranquil restoration"[97] from the sound of her voice.[98] Implicit in it, beside evident religious symbolism and an evocation of Covenant, is a sizeable share of his consciousness of his being. His address to Dorothy is like a litany, and it is difficult, so intimate and annexed they are, to mark off where his integrity ceases or hers begins. "Oh! yet a little while / May I behold in thee what I was once, / My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make . . . "[99] This prayer is an exhortation to her to let Nature exercise on her its benignity so that her mind in after years "shall be a

96. Ibid. (lines 111-13), II, 262.
97. Ibid. (line 30), II, 260.
98. Cf. the magnificent thanksgiving to Dorothy in The Prelude, which starts, "Child of my Parents! Sister of my Soul! / Elsewhere have strains of gratitude been breath'd / To thee . . . " (XIII, 211-13), and ends, "thy breath / . . . was a kind of gentler spring / That went before my steps" (244-46), and says that, "destined to remain so long / Foremost in my affections," Nature had because of her "fallen back / Into a second place," but "well pleas'd to be / A Handmaid to a nobler than herself . . . " (237-38, 238-39, 239-40).
99. Ibid. (lines 119-21), II, 262.

mansion for all lovely forms" and her "memory . . . as a dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies."[100] But it expresses also what he desires as fully himself and which she is in a measure to grant by countenancing his need of her, as he is hers of him. The lines,

> If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
> Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
> Of tender joy wilt thou remember me, [101]

could be spoken as well by Dorothy as they are by William.

The family of man, according to Wordsworth, at its smallest, intimate level or in the sense of all men, is a compact whole, like a masterpiece of orchestration in which every particle of sound, every soul of being, accords with the next to produce out of the world's body a heavenly music. Milton dubbed Raphael, who was charged with the moral education of Adam, "the sociable Spirit." Blind, he rued the loss of sight of the "human face divine."[102] Wordsworth understood but went further, forward and back. God's regent for him in the divine creation on earth is man--as father, husband, brother, or since in the Spirit "there is neither male nor female," as mother, wife, or sister--and hence as poet. Martin Buber, to glance back at I and Thou, observes memorably in two separate passages, and might be paraphrasing Wordsworth:

100. Ibid. (lines 140, 141-42), II, 263.
101. Loc. cit. (lines 143-45).
102. Paradise Lost, V, 221, III, 44.

> The anchoring of time in a relation-oriented life of salvation and the anchoring of space in a community unified by a common center: only when both of these come to be and only as long as both continue to be, a human cosmos comes to be and continues to be around the invisible altar, grasped in the spirit out of the world stuff of the eon (p. 163).

> God embraces but is not the universe; just so, God embraces but is not my self. On account of this which cannot be spoken about, I can say in my language, as all can say in theirs: You. For the sake of this there are I and You, there is dialogue, there is language, and spirit whose primal deed language is, and there is, in eternity, the word (p. 143).

So indeed. With a conservative view in ethics, politics, and religion, Wordsworth speaks to us moderns liberally because of his emphasis on a human cosmos and on the Eternal Word, which livens the dead matter of the objective world, gives being to song, and easily redeems the daily act of living.

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