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**'As if in opposition set / Against an enemy' –
Wordsworth's Anti-deterministic Strategies**

by

Scott David Procter, B.Eng., B.A., B.A., P.Eng.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
20 September, 2001
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And Research acceptance of the thesis**

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Thesis Supervisor

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**Carleton University
20 September, 2001**

Abstract

Different notions of free will and its alternative, determinism, have been debated since antiquity. Wordsworth was familiar with the philosophical struggle between free will and the deterministic systems contemporary with him through his readings of numerous philosophers, through his personal associations, and indirectly through his inheritance of the intellectual legacy of English and continental materialism.

Wordsworth was affected by these ideas, espoused necessarianism enthusiastically for a time, and sought to reconcile these notions with free will by converting deterministic features of his own history into a triumphant narrative. Then, even while writing the 1805 version of The Prelude, Wordsworth came to recognize the harsh implications of necessity and determinism in the frustrations of his personal will and in the unexpected deterioration of the French Revolution into regrettable violence. He was therefore compelled to repudiate his belief in determinism and necessity and their compatibility with free will, and to adopt an understanding of the imagination as a transcendent expression of will.

Through the specific period 1795 to 1805, Wordsworth wrote in evolving negotiation with experiences that seemed to confirm a determinism of mind and a necessity of circumstance theoretically predicted by philosophies with which he was familiar and that were initially very attractive to him. This authorial negotiation, within the medium of poetry, is expressed in various strategic reconciliations, in imaginative transformations, and then in the transcendence of unpleasant and unwilled historical realities into conspicuous recollections that optimistically assert free will.

Accompanying the various anti-deterministic strategies of 1795 to 1805 is an implied ethical insistence on freedom of will as the most fundamental human value. By socially deploying the anti-deterministic strategies that he had developed to deal with evidence of material inevitability in his own life, Wordsworth conspicuously discovered and promoted freedom in human circumstances that do not, on their surface, suggest anything like freedom. By beautifully, but speciously, transforming harshly determined historical realities into intricate manifestations of free will, Wordsworth effectively emptied these realities of their harshness, without actually combatting them, and thereby reduced the motivation to confront materiality and to make practical improvements in the world.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Introduction	1
Materialism in the Eighteenth Century	6
Anti-deterministic Reconciliation	21
The Transformative Imagination and Crisis	51
The Transcendent Imagination	78
Conclusion	88
Works Cited	96

Introduction

“ ‘But isn’t everything here green ?’ asked Dorothy.
‘No more than in any other city,’ replied Oz, ‘but when you wear green spectacles, why
of course everything you see looks green to you.’ ” Frank L. Baum, The Wizard of Oz

There is a special transformational power in much of Wordsworth’s poetry. Whether ostensibly writing about waves of daffodils or about crushing poverty, Wordsworth extracted from his experience both a palpable beauty and a compelling human purpose. In poems such as “We Are Seven” and “Simon Lee”, Wordsworth was able to build a praiseworthy edifice of optimism and loving human community upon the harsh facts of child mortality and the destitution of the elderly. This performance has been traditionally commented upon with almost unreserved admiration. In The Prelude, the primary work studied in this thesis, Wordsworth retrospectively applied his particular transformational powers to a series of autobiographical events that, for the most part, suggested his subjection to stultifying material forces. In consistently finding some form of free will in these experiences, he converted his own life’s story into a tale of protagonistic imaginative triumph.

Wordsworth’s ability to generate a narrative triumph is so compelling that, when we look through Wordsworth’s eyes upon the grounds of Tintern Abbey, we do not realize that it was occupied by starving beggars (Mary Moorman, as cited in Levinson 14). When we gaze upon the form of the Leech-gatherer barely distinguishable from the rock on which he crouches like a beast while dabbling in the murky ponds for slithering creatures, we somehow attribute to him a proud nobility. When we consider the mossy remains of the Ruined Cottage and the heaps of stones left by Michael, we do not grow

angry at human misery and loss, but become resigned and calm. It must then be fair to say that, not infrequently, when we have been moved by Wordsworth's poetry to an intellectual and emotional faith in human ascendancy, we have been very skillfully led through a veritable minefield of contradiction. While this narrative power does, and should, swell us with admiration of Wordsworth's craft, I believe that it should also worry us subtly that we have been so effectively and so movingly manipulated. There should consequently be a justified hesitation to leap into Wordsworth's magical landscape, a mild distrust of what may be a performance beautiful and astounding, but a performance that depends upon an artifice whose wires and trap-doors are carefully hidden from our sight by the use of diversion, smoke, mirrors, and by the magician's insightful capitalization of our own desire to be convinced that there is a magical reality superior to the material reality.

Others writing against the generally laudatory critical tradition have argued that Wordsworth practices a "strategy of displacement" causing the "transformation of fact into idea, and of experience into ideology" (McGann 90). Steven Cole summarizes a number of major critics of Romanticism as holding that Wordsworth's is a poetry that denies history. Joseph Beech and James Chandler observe curious processes of avoidance in the autobiographical history in The Prelude. Critics such as Nicholas Roe, Alan Liu and Jerome McGann feel that Wordsworth engaged in a process of historical denial. Indeed, for McGann, the whole tradition of Romantic criticism is a participation in the transcendence of material facts in favour of an imagined world. Michael Cooke has studied the importance of the notion of free will in Wordsworth's literary activity. I believe however that none of these authors have committed themselves to a statement of

a specific philosophical reaction underlying Wordsworth's historical denial. The existence of a pattern of historical transformation has been asserted, but the identification of this pattern as a creative dialectic between philosophical determinism and free will, and the distinguishing of Wordsworth's particular philosophical strategies of historical transformation may still bear further study.

I believe that it is possible to substantiate the specific claim that there is an authorial need to oppose evidence of determinism and necessity, to react 'anti-deterministically' to history and experience. Initially, Wordsworth's anti-deterministic strategy is as simple as the editorial superimposition of free will upon evidence of determinism and necessity, but it then becomes a more interesting, if unsubstantiated, assertion of compatibility between these notions. The strategies of reconciliation further evolve into proposals of an alien self and of the state of visionary exultation as evidence of a free will reconciled to material history. Wordsworth then develops the reconciliation of free will and determinism, with again more sophistication, by noting cases where necessary experience is effectively authorized and where experience may be seen as participatory rather than objective and imposed. Voluntary participation in necessity leads to the transformative imagination as a strategic reconciliation of will, that strategy with which Wordsworth confronts the French Revolution. Following a crisis of belief, in which Wordsworth concludes that the reconciliation of determinism and free will is impossible, he repudiates his past non-dualistic strategies and asserts the transcendent power of the imagination over experience. All these strategies grant the individual a unique involvement in, but not a subordination to, a supra-human destiny.

If I must then summarize my statement of claim, risking a criticism of so wonderful a wizard as William Wordsworth, it is this: that Wordsworth's poetry of 1795-1805, while reflecting his superficial recognition of determinist and necessarian thought, variously reinterprets harsh deterministic and necessary experience, abstracting from it most of its harshness, its determinism and its necessity, by either reconciling it with free will, by imaginatively transforming it into a manifestation of free will, or, later, by transcending it completely. The various anti-deterministic strategies of reconciliation, transformation and transcendence will be identified as they are deployed in the books of The Prelude.

Most frequently, the Wordsworthian reconciliation, transformation and transcendence of deterministic experience by free will do not take the shape of a positive statement or argument, nor even are they allegorically present in any trope of straightforward physical heroism. Rather, the assertion of free will is most frequently a conspicuous conclusion derived in reaction to retrospective depictions of necessary, material, and deterministic experience. Against instances of physical involuntarism, personal obligation, poverty, ignorance, fear, suffering, and death, Wordsworth opposes his evolving schemes of free will. This process of artistically transcending his own past to serve his urgently personal philosophical ends unfortunately generates a parallel Wordsworthian ethical strategy that transcends, and so denies, many of the native properties of human experience, depriving human authorities the opportunity and the motive to react practically to material and historical misfortune.

I will constrain my investigation of Wordsworth's anti-deterministic strategies to his own historically reconciled, transformed and transcended autobiography, The Prelude

of 1805, occasionally drawing reinforcing material from shorter poems and prose sources written during the same period. Structurally, this paper is broken into three stages of what is in fact a continuous philosophical development. As I claim that there is a roughly linear development of Wordsworth's anti-deterministic thought in the course of his autobiography, passages referred to in the text are reproduced in a sequence very closely matching that of their occurrence in The Prelude. I begin with an introduction on materialism in the eighteenth century, and conclude by pointing out the ethical costs of Wordsworth's struggle to reconcile free will with determinism.

Materialism in the Eighteenth Century

Though we today live in a world that has generally assumed the claims of materialism, we are perhaps even more anxious about its personal and social implications than the Romantics who observed how the “urban working poor were crowded in unsanitary and poorly ventilated lodgings, where they often slept in shifts, and in damp, cold factories where they laboured for too little to nourish themselves, and where they caught one another’s diseases” (Gaul 219). Curiously, while we in our relatively comfortable and libertarian surroundings are seriously concerned about the ethical implications of stem cell research and the excessive use of pharmaceuticals in psychological treatments, the youthful Romantics, surrounded by “periodic waves of suicide” and high rates of death partially related to the failure of doctors “to wash their hands between dissecting corpses and deliveries babies”, were positively excited about materialism, associationism, necessarianism, determinism, and any other doctrine that either maintained the dominance of material over spiritual reality (Gaul 218-9).

Surprising as this may seem to the modern reader whose sense of materialism, both in ordinary life and in literature, has been formed by Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Orwell’s and Kafka’s political nightmares, and by popular films wherein protagonists flee their relentless and logically unstoppable android nemeses, materialist ideas were considered sources of hearty optimism by all but the most religiously dogmatic of eighteenth-century intellectuals. It was generally felt that, in a world strictly ordered by material or natural law, the well-educated and hard-working intellectual might identify, understand, and very soon integrate these natural laws into the social infrastructure,

making the ordinary human laws consistent with the higher organizing principles of the universe. While submitting humanity to finalistic necessity, the integration of deterministic laws into the management of daily affairs would eliminate unnecessary incoherence and the accordant suffering, and would lead eventually to an ideal society. Furthermore, ideas subordinating or eliminating the spiritual person, elevating instead a deterministic being bound to fulfill a futurity predicated by the conditions of its existence, were pleasingly contrary to Christian dualist dogma of free will that was becoming unconvincing or ineffective to many in both the educated and the down-trodden classes. By adopting determinist views, people could envision themselves as intellectually progressive, justifying and embellishing their agnosticism, and could imagine for themselves a utopian social future to replace the Church's increasingly unsatisfactory and unbelievable promise of an afterlife.

The materialist ideas in vogue about the time of the Romantic poets should however be recognized as merely the most recent manifestation of ideas that had been discussed philosophically, theologically and scientifically since antiquity. In apparently periodic cycles, thinkers have argued for the material, necessary and behaviourally deterministic basis of reality, and, alternately, for the idealistic, spiritual and transcendent. With industrialization creating more and more credibly mechanical metaphors for human experience and behaviour, and with huge scientific advances suggesting a more restricted role for an immaterial soul and for the will, Romantic intellectuals were hard-pressed to swim against the wave of overall materialism and personal determinism whose turn it was to wash the shores of philosophical popularity.

Thus, even as we set entirely aside the question of whether the doctrines of materialism and determinism are in fact true, we must consider Wordsworth's exposure to these ideas, at least indirectly as a youth, and more directly as he obtained a formal education and emerged as an important intellectual involved in all the disputes, aesthetic, political and social, of his day.

It is difficult to determine which philosophical ideas had indirect influence on Wordsworth through his father, a lawyer, or through his instructors at the Hawkshead Grammar School, though T.W. Thompson relates the comments of the son of a governor of Hawkshead to the effect that "it was books he wanted, all sorts of books; Tours and Travels, which my father was partial to, and Histories and Biographies, which were also favourites with him; and Poetry – that goes without saying" (T.W. Thompson, 344). Most importantly, this individual reported to Thompson that, for Wordsworth, the governor "used to get the latest books from Kendal every month" (T.W. Thompson, 344), indicating that, even as a youth, Wordsworth was interested in current and popular themes. We also know that Wordsworth's childhood was marred by the penury of his father, that both his father and mother died when he was a boy, and that his most memorable childhood experiences were those moments of solitary insight that he achieved in the presence of overwhelming Nature (Chandler 7). We know with certitude that in October 1787, Wordsworth entered St. John's College, Cambridge, and that he completed "the required course of study, a curriculum based on the philosophy of John Locke and the cosmology of Isaac Newton" (Sheats xxxv).

During the period in which Wordsworth was educated, and throughout his maturity, publications on materialism, necessarianism, associationism, determinism, and

many related topics were widely available. Titles such as A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity, by Priestley and Price, published in 1778, were almost commonplace and were readily available to a man as inquiring into popular themes as was Wordsworth. We also know, without conjecture, that Wordsworth's library held a number of philosophical texts, including Rousseau's deterministic Emile and his Confessions, Shaftesbury's Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times, Cudworth's True Intellectual System, as well as works of divinity and Newtonian metaphysics, including those of Priestley, who wrote The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated and who edited Hartley's highly necessarian Theory of the Human Mind (Beech 569-77). We have Wordsworth's own comment in March, 1796, in a letter to a friend, that he had received "Godwyn's second edition [of the necessarian Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, published in that year], in terms suggesting that he was well acquainted with the work in its first edition [of 1793]" (Beech 573). Finally, indicative of philosophical motive, it was Wordsworth's lifelong intention to write "the great philosophical poem" The Recluse, "containing views on Man, Nature, and Society" (Sheats 410) which, if completed, would have fulfilled his commitment to poetry, not just as art, but as "the most philosophic of all writing" (Sheats xli).

Wordsworth's philosophical interests were not uncommon. During the eighteenth century, determinist thought and its social implications were all the rage, were commonly available to the public readership, generated great volumes of speculation and discussion, and were in fact "official [French] government thinking in the 1790s" (Larkin 4-5). We have written statements from Coleridge indicating that Wordsworth, during the years

prior to the French Revolution, was a necessitarian “even to Extravagance” (Thorslev 3). Though his faith in determinism and necessitarianism would deteriorate, it is clear that Wordsworth was a thinker influenced by the philosophers of his own and earlier times, and a motivated and well-informed participant in the materialist intellectual fervour of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

We should perhaps firstly draw attention to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) as an influence on Wordsworth. Though a Christian, Hobbes was one of the authors most frequently identified as a pernicious materialist by the contemporaries of Wordsworth who inclined in a more traditionally spiritual or idealistic direction. For Hobbes, the world was ruled by “laws that were never enacted by the Authority of a [human] Legislator” and which had rather originated in physical Nature (Hobbes, as cited in Beech 163). When Hobbes speaks of the freedom of the will, he usually speaks of the condition of persons who are unimpeded from personal action by social or political force, though they are inwardly determined by the laws of Nature causing sensations, that in turn occasion “movements in the brain” (Michael Oakeshott, in Hobbes xxxi). Hobbes eliminates even the socially or politically free will in his most famous argument that, in a state of nature, it is universally necessary to assume that other persons pose a threat to one’s own well-being and survival, and so *must* be pre-emptively attacked to ensure personal security, effectively neutralizing any individual choice in overall comportment. What Wordsworth would optimistically call the “dark / Invisible workmanship that reconciles / Discordant elements, and makes them move / In one society” (I 352-5), Hobbes would pessimistically identify as the force *necessarily* making society a

battleground and making individual life “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Hobbes 82).

Though Hobbes’ materialism may seem unpalatable to many, philosophers like Spinoza (1632-1677) were even more reviled than Christian materialists because, in addition to undermining the freedom of will that is popularly assumed, he was an avowed dissenter, if not an atheist. If such statements as “those who believe they do anything from the free decision of the mind dream with their eyes open” were not sufficient to call down disapproval upon him, Spinoza’s derivation of universal law from an atheistic ontology was certainly effective in motivating popular condemnation of his thought (Drew 16).

Like Hobbes and Spinoza, Newton (1642-1727), best known today for his mathematics and physics, was a thinker in an era when scientists concerned with “natural philosophy” wrote not only regarding the material structures of the universe, but also on the philosophical and theological implications of their empirical discoveries. Newton’s mechanistic model of the world describes events as causally initiated particulate interactions, where all causes, when themselves considered as events, also have their own origins in initiating causes, ad infinitum, back to the prime mover. Thus, even the more refined activities of the human mind, events generally assumed to be the products of a free will, may in fact be treated as the ricochet of tiny billiard balls subsequent to a crackingly powerful divine break. Newton, who is mentioned repeatedly and admiringly in The Prelude, like his continental counterpart Descartes, found no contradiction, however, in locating an immaterial soul inside, but independent of, the mechanistic body that he had described, making his simple unsubstantiated compatibility of body and soul a

possible model for Wordsworth's earlier efforts at the reconciliation of determinism and the will.

Descartes (1596-1650), in his Discours de la méthode (1637), explains that, if man, a mortal and limited being, can create such wondrous machines as clockworks using a small number of simple materials, then it is quite reasonable to assume that God, being immortal and infinite, could create a machine such as man, using the unlimited materials at his disposal (Griffin 38). We are thus God's machines and, ultimately, even our social behaviour and our most subtly introspective mental experiences are the result of interactions between particles of matter. Though mechanism is the overall impression left by Descartes, his theory does not however reduce God's machines to utter involuntarism. To Descartes, who invented very detailed and largely incorrect accounts of how the involuntary heart, eyes and other organs function, there is no doubt about the existence of a voluntary immaterial reality parallel to the material world. Anticipating creative minds like Wordsworth's, Descartes notes that artistic inventiveness, for instance, "cannot be in any way derived from the potentiality of matter, but must be specially created" (Allen 206). While the interaction of an immaterial mind co-located with a material body remains problematic, most thinkers since Descartes, either vaguely adhere to some form of Cartesian mind-body dualism, "primarily because they want to support belief in life after death, [or] perhaps fearing that a loss of this belief will lead to a general nihilism and loss of morality", or have proposed an alternative compatibilism more apparently satisfying than the Cartesian dualism of which they are cognizant but with which they disagree (Griffin 12). Wordsworth struggles throughout The Prelude with mind-body dualism via the correlated antagonists will (associated with the Cartesian

mind) and determinism (associated with the Cartesian body), and in Book 5, he reproduces a dream of Descartes to express the insufficiency of dualist notions of the interaction of a willed mind and a mechanistically determined corporeality.

It is John Locke (1632-1704) who most famously seeks to collapse mind-body dualism by suggesting that it is not illogical that God “should superadd to matter the capacity to think”, that the willed mind and the deterministic matter composing the body need not be separate entities at all (Locke 269). However, the suggestion that the spiritual and the material worlds are not logically distinct from each other generated great anxiety among Locke’s readership, who feared that if the willed mind or soul is part of the body, which is known to behave deterministically and to die necessarily, then Locke’s philosophy effectively proposes a mortal soul and personal annihilation at the time of bodily death. For present purposes, Locke’s “thinking matter” is important as a reconciling strategy that permits the authorization of a potential action, thus exercising a kind of free will, while also simultaneously submitting the mind to an omnipresent “uneasiness” that deterministically prompts actions (Locke 272).

Prefiguring Hartley, Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding argues that “the simple ideas, whereof we make up our complex ones of substances, are all of them powers”, where a power is the quality of a material thing to produce an effect in the mind (Locke 213). This definition of power suggests that minds do not really think, but are passively impressed by external forces, forming experiences that we call simple ideas, which then aggregate to form more complex ideas, ultimately creating the effect that we call consciousness in persons. Wordsworth uses the term “power” over five hundred times, usually treating it as an external force that impresses upon the mind the idea of a

thing and/or the qualities of a thing, notwithstanding the equally popular usage of the term “power” as a force emanating from within the mind and allowing the deliberate creation of ideas and the subduing of the material world. Wordsworth also describes the infantile development of consciousness in the early books of The Prelude in a manner consistent with Locke and the associationist school that developed around his disciple Hartley.

David Hartley (1705-1757) was a mechanistic determinist who organized his major work, the Theory of the Human Mind, as a “natural philosophy – of which Newton’s Principia Mathematica was the paradigm” (Allen xii). Hartley, like Newton and Descartes, consistently sought to ensure the compatibility of his materialist and psychologically determinist theory with the tenets of Christianity. However, Hartley’s penultimate explanation for human behaviour, secondary only to the will of God, is the effect of attractive forces, Newton’s “gravity”. His associationist psychology holds, with Locke, that all ideas are composed of sensations impressed upon the body by the mutual attraction of elements of matter, such that there are in fact no innate or spontaneously willed ideas within the mind. Rather, our wondrous biologies, designed to avoid pain and to maximize pleasure, construct our lives by self-promoting physical interaction with other particles and thus lead us through increasingly successful aggregations of bodily sensation until ideas result that appear to be independent of lesser sensory experiences and that permit us to form such mental abstractions as morality and the reality of God.

Hartley was unabashed in his defence of mechanism, demanding that “to prove that Man has Free-will in the Sense opposite to Mechanism, he ought to feel, that he can do different Things, while the Motives remain precisely the same” (Hartley 19).

In other words, for Hartley, free will is the ability to perform acts that are contrary to one's strongest motive. Since such acts are logically impossible, there is *no* free will. However, in a world where behaviour is created by a benevolent God, the invariable determinism of behaviour is exactly consistent with the notion of a divine finalism and with the ultimate attainment of the Christian Good. Notwithstanding the critical self-inquiry that Hartley recommends, his theory leaves human beings largely unable to modify their own behaviour.

Though not well-known today, Hartley was a "towering intellectual influence" and "Priestley's popularization of Hartley, whom he ranked with Newton, would make Hartley's ideas available after 1775 to dominate British social and psychological thought" (Isaak Kramnick, as cited in Allen 2). John Stuart Mill notes that his father made him read both Locke's works and Hartley's Observations, which he deemed a "master-production in the philosophy of mind", and which was of such importance to him and to his peers that they "raised Priestley's edition to an extravagant price by searching through London to furnish each of us with a copy" (Thom Verhave, in Hartley 9). Mill himself would later write on the human mind, in his Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind, using terminology and concepts also drawn from the associationist school of thought.

David Hume (1711-1776), in his Treatise of Human Nature, also surveys the human emotions in associationist terms, which links him to Locke and Hartley. Another fairly severe determinist, Hume predicated human thought upon the same causal forces that act in nature, making human beings no more free than water during evaporation or electricity during conduction. Notwithstanding this behavioural determinism, Hume

strongly associated his ideology with moral responsibility, asserting that, *because* there is a fatalistically fixed outcome to any human behaviour, this behaviour can be unequivocally attributed to the individual rather than generally attributed to the potentially exculpatory conditions surrounding an event. Indeed, without deterministic causality in human affairs, behaviour would be without cause and all moral interaction would be based on mere chance rather than intellectual values and morality. Necessity “is so essential to religion and morality, that without it there must ensue an absolute subversion of both, and that every other supposition is entirely destructive to all laws, both divine and human” (Drew 13). Like many of his predecessors, Hume depended upon the argument from design to prove, not so much that God exists, but that there is a benevolent finalism in all things, even though we mortal beings may be unable to recognize the finality toward which we are travelling.

William Godwin (1756-1836), who would personally influence Wordsworth and who referred to Locke as his “mentor” (Thorslev 148), made the doctrine of philosophical necessity a central article in the creed of Romantic philosophical radicals, including, for a time, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Godwin popularized the term “necessarian”, or “necessitarian”, in which state all events have inflexible causes, such that those events that occur *must* have occurred in precisely that manner. In his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793), also published by Priestley, Godwin affirmed that “in the life of every human being there is a chain of events, generated in the lapse of ages before his birth, and going on in a regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence of which it was impossible to act in any instance otherwise than as he has acted” (Godwin 168). Godwin also argued, with typical eighteenth-century optimism,

that, since there is no will independent of necessity, and since all things must necessarily seek out their own advantage, then, contrary to Hobbes's necessarily brutish eventuality, we must expect that there is a necessarily *happy* futurity to which the self-perfecting human nature is destined. If human activity were *non-deterministic*, or free, then it would be, in that case, impossible to legislate, train, curb or otherwise guide behaviour according to utilitarian or moral principles. Indeed, "he who regards all things past, present and to come as links of an indissoluble chain, will, as often as he recollects this comprehensive view, be superior to the tumult of passion; and will reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the same clearness of perception, the same unalterable firmness of judgement, and the same tranquility as we are accustomed to do upon the truths of geometry" (Godwin 174). Thus, though all behaviour in Godwin's society is as strictly deterministic as is Newtonian mathematics, he felt that moral life could and should be deliberately managed with our perfectibility in mind, stating that good conduct "consists in approaching as nearly as possible to the perfectly voluntary state. We ought to be upon all occasions prepared to render a reason for our actions. We should remove ourselves to the furthest distance from the state of mere inanimate machines, acted upon by causes of which they have no understanding" (Godwin 46). By participating consciously in necessary personal and social progress, we enjoy a beneficial and admirable, if perhaps delusional, form of will.

Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), who published necessarian works of his own in addition to such works as Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind, would have disagreed with Godwin and with Hartley himself that man might in any way approve of or participate in external forces as they are imposed upon the mind. While not supporting

the Calvinist notion that God intercedes continuously to cause each specific event, eternally prompting all activity, Priestley reproached Hartley for allowing a willing element in human nature to interact between the soul and the body. Notwithstanding this steadfast denial of all forms of agency, he became so popular that “after 1785, an inquirer into mental philosophy was faced with a choice: Priestley or Reid”.¹

Priestley was adamant that “the whole man is of some uniform composition, and that the property of perception, as well as the other powers that are termed mental, is the result of an organical structure [...] the brain” (Allen 377). This was unpalatable to some, and Priestley was accused by the press of being an advocate of a doctrine “which degrades man to mere machine, and which [...] must terminate in absolute spinozism” (Allen 382). Though reductively treated as a transgressive and offensive atheist, Priestley did however maintain that the forces of attraction and repulsion associated with mass (or matter) by Newton, and with such sensory phenomena as the impressions of Locke and Hartley, amply dignify materiality and suggested that the aggregation of these simple physical properties of body does indeed explain the observed activity of human minds.

Of the many French philosophes who were familiar to Wordsworth, the most politically important was no doubt Rousseau, a determinist whose thought contributed to the popular optimism that preceded the French Revolution. Rousseau’s account of simple and complex sensations is similar to Locke’s and is generally associationist: “Nos sensations sont purement passives, au lieu que toutes nos perceptions ou idées naissent d’un principe actif qui juge” (Beech 138). At a social level, he felt that “all of our wisdom consists in servile prejudices. All our practices are only subjection, impediment,

¹ Reid was an idealist philosopher who felt that a “mere mechanism” could never possess the qualities of consciousness (Allen 14).

and constraint. Civil man is born, lives, and dies in slavery. At his birth he is sewed in swaddling clothes...So long as he keeps his human shape, he is enchained by our institutions" (Emile, as cited in Chandler 93). Indicating Rousseau's influence as early as 1793, Wordsworth quotes from The Social Contract in his "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" (Chandler 15). Furthermore, "throughout the Letter Wordsworth deploys the rationalist diction of "'proofs' and 'maxims', 'causes' and 'effects'", and so must have been familiar with both Rousseau's ideas and the distinctive style of the continental philosophes (Chandler 23). And still further, "Rousseau's educational theory, camouflaging an elaborate set of controls beneath a surface appearance of freedom and spontaneity, would have appeared to Wordsworth the most subtle and insidious of plans. There is an illusion of liberty, but it merely hides the most rigid of limitations" (Morkan 251). This surface expression of freedom, under which lies a motivating sense of determinism, is precisely the motive structure that runs through The Prelude.

If Rousseau's determinism leads to revolution, Burke's determinism causes the formation of habit, and leads to careful and conservative social change. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), who would, according to Chandler, become an intellectual model for Wordsworth following the debacle of the French Revolution, was a metaphysical, if not a social determinist, believing that abstract social principles operate in a Newtonian fashion:

"These metaphysic rights entering into common life, like rays of light which pierce into a dense medium, are, by the laws of Nature, refracted from their straight line." (Burke, as cited in Chandler 34).

Burke is also quite Cartesian, permitting a form of will in at least one of our components by asserting that "men are made of two parts, the physical and the moral. The former he

has in common with brute creation...[but] Man, in his moral nature, becomes, in his progress through life, a creature of prejudice – a creature of opinions – a creature of habits, and of sentiments growing out of them. These form our second nature, as inhabitants of the country and members of the society in which Providence has placed us” (Burke, as cited in Chapman 275). By re-asserting Cartesian dualism, Burke provides for brutish determinism in our physical nature, but also allows the “creature of habits” an organ of free will in our moral nature.

Though Wordsworth may not have been fully conversant with the subtleties of these philosophers’ arguments, their influence was well-established in the world of ideas in which he studied and wrote and could not but have affected him in many ways. Anyone receiving an education at the universities, even as reluctant an education as Wordsworth’s, would have been at least indirectly familiar with these thinkers. More direct influence is also apparent in the integration of these authors’ idiosyncratic and therefore identifiable thoughts and systems into The Prelude. The very form of The Prelude may also indicate debt to the philosophers. We know that “in the 18th century, after Spinoza, Newton and Descartes, authors of ‘natural theologies’ often attempted to treat their subject as a coherent system of rational propositions” (Thom Verhave, in Hartley 15). Thus, even the sequential and numbered presentation of the books of The Prelude, in addition to reflecting the structure of great epic works, may very well have been an imitation of the then fashionable format of materialist works of philosophy, mathematics and physics by a philosophically motivated Wordsworth.

Anti-deterministic Reconciliation

In the first book of The Prelude, Wordsworth takes us back to the experiences of his naïve boyhood. There, his childhood self is repeatedly described as passively receptive to the experience of Natural forces around him, allowing Wordsworth's Nature to exert a strong formative power. When Wordsworth seems to describe acts of free agency in the world, forays of the mind into history, he consistently pre-conditions the superficial freedom of his antics by attributing their origins to deterministic forces such as the "strong desire / [that] O'erpowered my better reason" (I 325)². What residual agency is present in his desirous and instinctive childhood behaviour is threatened by "low breathings coming after me", and by "sounds / Of undistinguishable motion" (I 330), the imagined sounds of involuntary conscience chastising him for the guilty presumption of false freedom implicit in his adventures into a world that he senses is in fact ruled by harsh materiality. Having implied, in his descriptions, a deterministic human mind subjected to a determining Nature, the parallel protagonistic narration is then not coincidentally a deployment of strategies that assert free will. While Wordsworth acknowledges the formative and thus the determining power of Nature, the earliest experiences of interaction with the natural world generate simultaneous assertions of independence from materiality and of free will.

This struggle between material and deterministic reality and Wordsworth's free will is perpetuated dialectically throughout The Prelude. Thus, Wordsworth's population of Book I with consistently solitary and self-assertive rambles through the countryside,

² The Prelude of 1805.

notwithstanding that his childhood involved close interdependencies with other people and that each instance of self-assertion originates in interaction with an overwhelming physical Nature, is conspicuous. Wordsworth's coming to feel, through a solitary interaction with an instructive Nature, that "great hopes were mine" is similarly suspect since these "great hopes", like the intensified recollections of childhood solitude, show an early independence of their putative Natural source (I 63-66). The "great hopes" bubbled up in him not when observing Nature's beauties, but when hearing his own voice which "cheared me, and, far more, the mind's / Internal echo of the imperfect sound" (I 64-65). Thus, even in the recollected mode of experience of a nine-year old child, there are hints that Wordsworth sought to create his own reality in reaction to unavoidable external and formative material events.

In recounting how he had climbed a crag to steal raven's eggs, apparently exerting his youthful will, Wordsworth described a situation wherein he was suspended on the rocky face not by his *own* strength, but "by the blast which blew amain" (I 345). Even when the child tried most forcefully to project the will of a free soul by going "alone into a shepherd's boat" (I 373), that act was strictly dictated by Nature, since "surely I was led by her" (I 372). He details this automatic causation by reporting that "no sooner had I sight of this small skiff, / Discovered thus by unexpected chance, / Than I unloosed her tether and embarked" (I 380-2), suggesting an almost completely involuntary act of body. Though he stole the shepherd boat without overt expression of guilt, as might be expected in an act devoid of self-determining cause, his course through the water, like his path through the hills when he had earlier stolen birds from hunters' traps, was putatively free. His superficial willfulness was however exposed to danger by the wake of the boat, his

anxiety suggesting both an awareness of his behaviour and an awareness of the forces that limited and defined it. When the boy Wordsworth struck out across the water in the boat, seeming to assert his identity and his freedom, the determining forces of Nature rose up against him. “The voluntary power which the cliff appears to have – such is the genius of Wordsworth’s contrivance – is a reflection of the boy’s own misguided will. The more desperately this will is asserted, the greater the force of the adversary. This way lies madness” (Chandler 211).

Rather than arbitrarily portraying the irrationalities of a child’s developing psychology, Wordsworth structures and studies certain of these advances according to the philosophy of Hartley, rooted in material sensations and their aggregation, through association, into thoughts. This dependence on Hartley for a model of human psychological growth is also apparent in the 1800 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, where Wordsworth writes that his poems capture “the incidents of a common life [...] tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we *associate* ideas in a state of excitement” (Wordsworth, as cited in Beech 133-4, emphasis added).

In the associationist psychology of the young Wordsworth, or at least in the psychology of the older Wordsworth reflecting on his childhood, the apparent exercise of apparent youthful will is opposed, even crushed, by “a huge cliff / As if with voluntary power instinct” (I 406-7). The youth, in the nominal act of asserting free will is, in material fact, blocked by a necessary and deterministic reality “growing still in stature” as it looms more and more oppressively over him (I 409). The cliff, more alive and willful than the boy himself, confronts the presumption and attempted exercise of free will,

rising up between the boy and his own aspiration, “between me and the stars” (I 410). Nor does the indomitable cliff offer a simple warning to then allow the terrified and disillusioned boy his passage. It insists unrelentingly upon its nature “and still / With measured motion, like a living thing, / Strode after me” (I 410-2). The young Wordsworth, refuted in his timorous presumption of free will, flees compulsively in fear and consternation, “With trembling hands I turned, / And through the silent water stole my way / Back to the cavern of the willow tree”, scurrying back to the shore a terrified and chastened semi-automaton, a creature constituted in accordance with Hartley’s deterministic associationism (I 412-4).

If nothing else, we must conclude that the will of the boy Wordsworth, as recollected by the adult poet, was not a straightforward force of self-determination, as might have been popularly expected. Reflecting on this period of childhood, the adult Wordsworth suggests that

The mind of Man is framed even like the breath
And harmony of music. There is a *dark*
Invisible workmanship that *reconciles*
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society (I 351-5, emphasis added).

To Wordsworth, writing prior to 1799, the recognition of subjection to a larger necessary scheme, the “dark / invisible workmanship” is sublime, but it is also frightening, complex, and cause for much anxious introspection. It is then emotionally consistent that, in explaining the “Ode on Intimations of Immortality” (1802-4), Wordsworth notes that “nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being” (Stillinger 536). Since necessity, in death, the extreme opposite of his free will, is inconceivable in application to himself, its

occurrence in the deaths of his parents, friends, school-mates, and in strangers who drown themselves or who are envisioned hanging on the gibbet-mast, must be alienated from his own condition in some way. Likewise, the spots of time in Book 1, that actually describe the determinism of the boy Wordsworth's behaviour, must be set at a certain reflective distance. The resulting descriptions "are charged because even in their seeming substantiality they intimate immateriality" (Liu 48). This leaves the overall narrative suggestion of the burgeoning of an exceptionally willful character, whose subjection to nature's dictates must be bluntly denied, initially, by anti-deterministically superimposing free will upon any evidence of necessity in experience.

Further reflecting on this period Wordsworth noted that "many times while going to school have I grasped at a *wall or tree* to recall myself from *this abyss of idealism* to the reality" (Stillinger 537, emphasis added). Wordsworth knew, as an adult, as he may have sensed as a child, that material walls and trees were the "reality", but he found his mind fleeing so simple and harsh a realization, strategically seeking refuge and security in idealism. This tendency to mentally turn away from rationally held beliefs and from actual experience, and to superimpose the will thereupon, is the anti-deterministic motive in its most primitive reconciliatory form.

In trying to formulate a more satisfactory strategy with which to reconcile the material reality of walls and trees to the more desirable ideality of free will, it is understandable that Wordsworth described how the boy, recovering from the

confrontation with the cliff, struggled with “a dim and *undetermined* sense / Of unknown modes of being” (l 419-20, emphasis added). His thoughts were troubled as

huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men moved slowly through my mind
By day, and were the trouble of my dreams. (l 424-6)

As this is still just the beginning of the philosophical autobiography that Wordsworth was to narrate, it was suitable that he should remain philosophically torn, allowing the reader to consider the dialectical conflict with which the poet, as a boy, had suffered the experiment of anti-deterministic will in a material world. By bluntly superimposing free will on deterministic experience, Wordsworth leaves the conflict between the will and the “huge and mighty forms that do not live” essentially unresolved. In so doing, he also establishes a tension that persistently motivates passages throughout The Prelude. Also, if we acknowledge this specifically philosophical tension in The Prelude, then the appearance of terms such as “association” and “undetermined”³, and the introduction of particular metaphors and character types, such as the recurring solitaires, should be read as philosophical terms and constructs and not just as “a selection of language really used by men” (Sheats 791).

As the first book advances, the abrupt superimposition of will is relaxed into imperfect attempts to formulate a reconciliation between will and determinism.

³ The philosophical term, ‘determinism’, was formalized by Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) to distinguish the doctrine of Hobbes from that of religious fatalism, which is immaterialist, but that agrees with Hobbes that the end of all behaviour is fixed, by God, and so is not really free. Determinism is a feature of many, though not all, formulations of materialism, including necessarianism, associationism and mechanism, and holds that, under the same conditions, all phenomena must develop in the same way, with no possibility of deviation, originality or genuine spontaneity, such that all human behaviour is initiated and developed by fixed causes of nature and nurture, and that no genuinely new or uncaused thoughts or feelings may arise.

Thus, Wordsworth writes that, though “Nature *by extrinsic* passion first / *Peopled my mind* with beauteous forms or grand / *And made me* love them”, confirming a passive receptiveness to a dominant determinism, he can also write that he has been “*sedulous [diligent]...to trace / How*” this came about, thus claiming more than a passive receptiveness to Nature’s “extrinsic passion” (I 571-4, emphasis added). In his Theory, Hartley had insisted that “it is of the utmost consequence to morality and religion, that the affections should be analyzed into their simple compounding parts, by reversing the steps of the *associations* which concur to form them” (Hartley 25). This retrospective analysis of the “affections” and “associations”, the roots of mental experience, is exactly what Wordsworth did when he was “sedulous [diligent]...to trace” the determining influence of Nature (I 571). By applying the doctrine of associationism to himself, observing his own necessary acts, the young Wordsworth might extrapolate the finality towards which his behaviour tended. By attributing to himself an active “sedulous” capacity to seek out theoretical sources of insight into “extrinsic” experience and behaviour, he stated that both determinism *and* will were at work in his mind simultaneously.

In such passages as,

the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, t’is true,
By *chance collisions* and quaint *accidents* -
Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies - yet not in vain
Nor profitless, if haply they *impressed*
Collateral objects and appearances (I 614-21, emphasis added)

and,

The scenes which were a witness of that joy
 Remained, in their *substantial lineaments*
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight. And thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness -
So frequently repeated - and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of joys that were forgotten, these same scenes,
 So beauteous and majestic in themselves,
 Though yet the day was distant, did at length
 Become habitually dear (I 627-38, emphasis added)

Wordsworth described a whirl of associationist, necessary and deterministic forces that had acted on his young mind. Being older when he wrote The Prelude, he was also able to write that these deterministic experiences, “albeit *lifeless* then, and *doomed* to sleep” had had the longer-term ability “to *impregnate and to elevate the mind*”, reconciling these experiences to free will via an unexplained compatibility (I 622-4, emphasis added). Precisely how an elevation of mind in the future shows that personal subjection to natural causation is compatible with free will is left open to further development.

In Book I, Wordsworth posited a materialist reality based on the popular Hartleian ideas and, responding to an inner dissatisfaction with this reality, weakly superimposed free will upon determinism. He then considered further childhood events and insisted, somewhat more promisingly, upon an unsubstantiated compatibility between the opposite notions of free will and determinism. He closed Book I with the paradoxical claim that “the story of my life... is a theme / Single and of *determined* bounds, and hence / I *chuse* it” (I 667, emphasis added). With only blunt superimposition and an unsubstantiated claim of compatibility to assist us, we might ask how Wordsworth could claim to “chuse” a life that is confined within “determined bounds”.

* * *

Like the pre-revolutionary mind of the author recalled from his post-revolutionary seat at Tintern Abbey, the childhood mind that the author of Book II recalls is a strangely alien self. Wordsworth describes how, in recalling this earlier self,

A tranquilizing spirit presses now
On my *corporeal frame*, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days,
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
That sometimes when I think of them I seem
Two consciousnesses – conscious of myself,
And of *some other being*. (II 27-33, emphasis added)

The perception of an alien historical self highlights the fact that a mind is capable of both an immediate awareness of self and also of recognizing an abstract self, via an act of willed recollection. Though the present mind is contained within a “corporeal frame”, it is also capable of asserting independence from its experience of selfhood, of being “some other being” by considering alternate historical selves. Poets in particular, “more than any other men”, are disposed to be affected “by absent things as if they were present” and so are most able to employ this strategy in practice (Sheats 794). Still, this strategy, while reconciling will and corporeal reality in a way, must have seemed inadequate, as Wordsworth continued to ask perplexing questions about the capacity of the will to act upon experience and knowledge:

But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square ?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown even as a seed,
Who that shall point as with a wand, and say
'This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain'? (II 208-15)

Like Hartley's demand that a genuinely free will permit the performance of logically impossible acts, Wordsworth effectively undermines his will by denying its ability to assist in truly knowing the origins of thoughts and impressions with rational clarity.

In epistemological self-doubt, Wordsworth sought out external philosophical assistance. Becoming more didactic and more theoretically derivative both of Locke and Hartley, Wordsworth delved even deeper into a hypothetical past and imagined the earliest formative experiences of the infant babe entering into consciousness:

Subjected to the discipline of love,
His *organs and recipient faculties*
Are quicken'd, are more vigorous, *his mind spreads*,
Tenacious as the forms which it receives. (II 251-4, emphasis added)

and

Along his *infant veins are interfused*
The *gravitation* and the filial bond
Of Nature that connect him with the world.
Emphatically such a being lives,
An inmate of this *active* universe.
From Nature largely he receives, nor so
Is satisfied, but largely gives again;
For feeling has to him imparted strength,
And – powerful in all sentiments of grief,
Of exultation, fear and joy – *his mind*,
Even as an agent of the one great mind,
Creates, *creator and receiver both*,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds. (II 262-75, emphasis added)

These descriptions of consciousness as features of body, and not of a disembodied spirit or mind, are reflective of non-dualistic associationism and of Godwin's Necessarianism.

William Godwin, whom Wordsworth had personally sought out and with whom visits were exchanged (Roe 194), believed that "the Characters of Men originate in External Circumstances", that "Man, considered in himself, is merely a being capable of

impression, a recipient of perceptions", and that "an individual's anger and violence [...] are as irresistible an outcome of causative social forces as earthquakes and floods are of causes in nature" (Godwin, as cited in Allen 23-4). Godwin, a non-dualist, would have been uncomfortable with Wordsworth's treatment of consciousness as "an *agent* of the one great mind", a consciousness capable of being "creator and receiver both". But Godwin would have approved of the notion of a mind capable of moral progress since he believed that, through an examination of our own deterministic behaviour, purposiveness could be attributed to our human perfectibility as it leads necessarily to a better society. Though not precisely an argument for free will, the Godwinian doctrine of human perfectibility would have appealed to the youthful Wordsworth who could have called to mind many undeniable material frustrations but that he might have wished to transform or transcend.

The death of Wordsworth's mother, for instance, was apparently a material anxiety demanding some form of resolution. Imagining the withdrawal of his mother from his hypothetical infancy, Wordsworth envisions that "a trouble came into my mind / From unknown causes: I was left alone / Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why" (II 291-3). The introduction of a painful loneliness by "unknown causes" was an attack on the initially undifferentiated infantile experience, "a period of privileged freedom from the domination of the reality principle", to borrow a Freudian insight (Brown 113). The disruption of holistic infantile experience by material necessity differentiates the poet's will from experiential existence and compelled it to seek an alternative, the "visible world", wherein something similar to the infantile paradise could be discovered. Specifically, the infant Wordsworth, having to deal with the involuntary withdrawal of

his blissful maternally furnished security and the imposition of harsh material reality, reacted anti-deterministically by entering “fleeting moods / Of shadowy *exultation*” (II 331-2, emphasis added). These moods “that are kindred to a purer mind / And intellectual life” (II 333-4) are associated with a soul that -

Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not – 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. (II 335-41, emphasis added)

These early moments of compensatory exultation, of seeking “possible sublimity”, indicate an intensely renewed but irrational pursuit of an alternative to deterministic compulsion in the adult, if not in the infant, Wordsworth. This exultation was experienced as “a holy calm / [that] Did overspread my soul that I forgot / That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw / Appeared like something in myself, a dream, / A prospect in my mind” (II 367-71). The anti-deterministic reaction to the harshnesses of conscious existence within a body and to the awareness of the mortality of the body in the infantile realization of his mother’s death thus resulted in a flight away from materiality, from “bodily eyes”, into immateriality via

A *plastic power* [that]
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
A local spirit of its own, at war
With general tendency, but for the most
Subservient strictly to the *external things*
With which it communed. (II 381-7, emphasis added)

Yet even in the exercise of the “plastic power” to counteract the primitive awareness of materiality, determinism and mortality, we note the capriciousness of exultation as a

reconciling strategy, a capriciousness stabilized only by subordination of the mind to the very Nature, the “external things”, that had imposed the death of his mother upon him.

Wordsworth then returned from anti-deterministic speculations about his infancy to his adolescence. In the guise of his boyhood self, he wrote that there is a “great social principle of life / Coercing all things into sympathy” (II 408-9) and that its song, was “Most audible then when the *fleshly* ear, / O’ercome by grosser prelude of that strain, / Forgot its functions and slept undisturbed” (II 432-4, emphasis added). Though Wordsworth asserted the superiority of purely mental activity over the “fleshly”, he concluded Book II with a wish that “health and the quiet of a healthful mind / Attend” (II 479-80) his good friend Coleridge, who was suffering from chronic nervous depression and related *fleshly* maladies that so undermined his mental will that he was largely unable to pursue the intellectual goals that he and Wordsworth had set themselves.

I agree then with Philip Drew, who writes that

“the point that emerges clearly from Book II is that, for Wordsworth, genuine happiness is impossible unless he can convince himself that he is neither a passive recipient of the mechanical operations of nature nor a deluded agent unable to achieve certain knowledge of any external reality whatsoever. But if a middle position can be found...” (Drew 162).

This middle position, wherein free will and determinism co-exist in some way other than the weakly reconciliatory modes offered by contemplating an alienated self and by the irrational mood of exultation, would be the objective of passionate intellectual inquiry on Wordsworth’s part as he went up to Cambridge.

* * *

In Books I and II of The Prelude, Wordsworth had eagerly presented Nature as the active and formative source of the largely passive and deterministic human character, and had, in parallel, proposed only ineffective anti-deterministic strategies for the reconciliation of free will to the necessary human condition. The reconciliatory process is carried on in Book III and beyond, though in the books written for The Prelude of 1805, this synthesizing project is undertaken with a sophistication indicative of a maturing character whose self-definition depended increasingly upon a sense of personal agency.

On arriving at Cambridge, the more mature and more expressly willful Wordsworth was first confronted by materialism in the form of the “statue [...] of Newton with his prism and silent face” (III 58-9). Control of his behaviour, like that of the boy Wordsworth, was still easily commanded by such external powers as the impressive sway of a distinguished academic passing in his gowns. So strongly did this encounter affect the naïve Wordsworth that he came to a complete halt, “nor was I master of my eyes / Till he was left a hundred yards behind” (III 8-9). More importantly, Wordsworth explained that, for all his desire to assert his will by directing his mind to his studies,

Not seldom I had melancholy thoughts
From personal and family regards,
Wishing to hope without a hope – some fears
About my *worldly maintenance*,
And, more than all, a strangeness in my mind,
A feeling that I was not for that hour
Nor for that place. (III 75-81, emphasis added)

Such feelings of constraint by his personal circumstances and the more looming sense of the unsuitability of his mind for the life in which he was bound at Cambridge seemed to

confirm again in a social context what had already been suggested in a natural context: his subjection to an externally imposed necessity. As the reader of The Prelude sensitive to protagonistic narrative may have begun to anticipate, the experience of constraint and necessity caused a will-asserting reaction:

But wherefore be cast down,
 Why should I grieve ? – I was a chosen son.
 For hither had I come with *holy powers*
 And faculties, whether to work or feel:
 To apprehend all passions and all moods
 Which time, and place, and season do impress
 Upon the visible universe, and work
 Like changes there by force of my own mind.
I was a freeman, in the purest sense (III 81-90, emphasis added)

But of course, the possession of “holy”, or immaterial, powers and the assertion that he “was a freeman, in the purest sense”, were not conditions evident in Wordsworth’s antecedent concern for his “worldly maintenance”. The assertion of pure freedom is but an anti-deterministic superimposition of will upon the initial subjecting and necessitating facts.

For all his insistence on his immaterial freedom, Wordsworth’s economic and academic circumstances remained frustrating. No funds were yet forthcoming from a debt owed to his family and his studies were advancing with mediocrity. To insist upon the freedom of the will in this context, Wordsworth reduced his notion of will from the deliberate action of the mind to a concept more easily reconciled to harsh externally imposed reality. Thus, he attributes “a moral life”, indicative of will, not just to himself, but to “every natural form, rock, fruit or flower, / Even [to] the loose stones that cover the highway” (III 125-9). Wordsworth’s desire to assert some form of will was such that, though he resided next door to “catacombs in which / Perennial minds lie visibly

entombed" (III 345-6), in a scholarly cell from which he could not escape until graduation, and, though he suffered continuous financial strain, he emphatically claimed that "I was most rich, / I had a world about me – 'twas my own, / I made it; for it only lived to me" (III 141-4).

Having thus stated, against reason and the material facts of his own narrative, that he was an inherently free agent in the world, Wordsworth immediately relapsed into the opposite assertion, that "all external forms...spake perpetual [Newtonian] logic to my soul, / And by an unrelenting agency / Did bind my feelings even as in a chain" (III 161-8). Reversing himself once again and having, throughout the early books, described his overwhelming subjection to physical reality, Wordsworth summarizes his narrative so far as "Not of outward things [...], but of my own heart [...], and my youthful mind" (III 174-8). This surprising summary of frustrating subjection to natural and social materiality as an investigation of inner mental life is compounded by Wordsworth's exaggerated claim that the narrative, thus far an unreconciled juxtaposition of a timid and unsubstantiated will against an omnipresent determinism, is a "heroic argument, / And genuine prowess" (III 182-3).

As the student Wordsworth's education progressed, and while his own "nature's outward coat / Changed [...] slowly and *insensibly*", he learned more and more to appreciate and to uncover freedom where it might have been thought very scarce (III 208-10, emphasis added). Unable to find inspiration in the structures of the academic setting (a motive that should be superfluous to a truly free will), Wordsworth, who had been "accustomed [...] to walk / With Nature magisterially [as Nature's master]" (III 379-85), reacts to his relative lack of freedom at Cambridge by claiming, not that he could build a

better school, one wherein his will would have a freer rein, but that he “could shape the image of a place / Which with its aspect should have bent me down / To instantaneous service” (III 381-3). By proposing to bend himself down to the “instantaneous service” of knowledge, Wordsworth does not mean to describe a simple submission to necessity, but instead to describe the submerging of the will, paradoxically, within necessity. In this way, Wordsworth likened his superficial incapacity and frustration to the condition of the hypothetical mariner who,

When at reluctant distance he hath passed
Some fair enticing island, did but know
What fate might have been his, could he have brought
His bark upon the wished-for spot,
Good cause full often would he have to bless
The belt of churlish surf that scared him thence,
Or haste of the inexorable wind. (III-497-503)

In this illustration, even while failing to demonstrate the superficially free will to land on an attractive beach, the Argonaut, the student Wordsworth, attains a more profoundly willed objective, that of escaping “what fate might have been his”, death in the arms of the sirens. This is the first strategic reconciliation of necessity and determinism to free will that seems logically viable.

Such refinements of the reconciliatory strategies abound in the early books of The Prelude, each differing slightly in order to better accommodate a particular form of necessity or determinism recollected from Wordsworth’s time at Cambridge. Subtly, he writes of his struggle with “the surfaces of artificial life [...] This wily interchange of snaky hues, / *Willingly* and *unwillingly* revealed” (III 590-5) as analogous to the gaze of “a shepherd on a promontory, / Who, lacking occupation, looks far forth / Into the endless sea, and *rather makes / Than finds what he beholds*” (III 546-53, emphasis added).

That the shepherd “makes” his experience, rather than passively experiencing it, is an early suggestion of the role that the imagination will play in the later derivations of freedom from necessity.

Though he spoke most lyrically of freedom and made theoretically based points about the presence and intermingling of will in the involuntary experience of Nature, as Book III nears its conclusion, Wordsworth admitted, perhaps in a more somber mood, that, overshadowing his experience at Cambridge was “blind Authority beating with his staff” (III 640). He further scuttled any hastily developed interpretations of the narrative by noting that

Of these and other kindred notices
I cannot say what portion is in truth
The naked recollection of that time,
And what may rather have been called to life
By after-meditation. (III 644-8)

The poet makes it deliberately clear that his reporting of his own Cambridge years is complicated, or enriched, by his structured re-interpretation of material fact, and further hints at some form of inventiveness as a mode of reconciling free will to experience.

* * *

During the first summer vacation between terms at Cambridge, Wordsworth returned to his home and was reunited with his sister Dorothy and brother John. The physical world, for which Wordsworth had longed in his academic cloister, was then more readily accessible to him, as it had been during his childhood. But even in the familiar woods, he related to the condition of the “froward brook”, “stripped of his voice, and left to dimple down / Without an effort and *without a will*” (IV 42-4, emphasis

added). The tentative reconciliation of own will and necessary experience, resulting from the strategic efforts of the earlier books, is however evident in Wordsworth's report that when "my aged dame / Was with me, at my side; she guided me, / I willing, nay – nay, *wishing to be led*" (IV 55-7, emphasis added). By "wishing to be led" he assigned himself the power to authorize necessitating directions as they were received by him, and emphasized the tension between the will and determinism for the reader.

Testing this reconciliation of will and determinism, Wordsworth hailed "Our *inmate*, a rough terrier of the hills, / By birth and call of nature *preordained* / To hunt the badger and unearth the fox / Among the impervious crags" (IV 84-9, emphasis added). In the dog who scrambles through the hills pursuing his instinctive interests, we may recollect the boy Wordsworth furtively stealing from hunter's traps in the darkness. Here Wordsworth considers the degree of freedom available to a creature driven by instinct and the extent to which this creature is not unlike himself. Indeed, the antics and barking of the "rough terrier" may have seemed comparable to his own verbalized poetic composition while walking the laneways and fields of the Lake District. Wordsworth wrote how, with warning from the terrier, he would compose himself from these socially awkward moods to properly greet an oncoming person, so that he "might save / [his] name from piteous rumours, such as wait / On men suspected to be crazed in brain" (IV 118-20).

Wordsworth's ability to hush his voice, so that he is not mistaken for a released bedlamite, is the only feature of behaviour distinguishing his from that instinctive and non-self-determining behaviour of the dog. Even the constitutional benefits of his perambulations came to him unsought, as "strength came where weakness was not known

to be, / At least not felt; and restoration came / Like an *intruder* knocking at the door of unacknowledged weariness" (IV 145-8, emphasis added). This "intruder" was however no resented representative of the deterministic "shadings of mortality" (IV 240), but was welcomed, such that the relationship with Nature, initially "fostered alike by beauty and by *fear*" (I 305, emphasis added), gave way "to beauty and to love / *Enthusiastic*, to delight and joy" (IV 245-6, emphasis added). This enthusiasm is an attitude more indicative of a will freely authorizing the involuntary bodily experience of health, a reconciliation of the human will to necessity and determinism in Wordsworth's thought.

The relatively convincing strategies of submerging the will in deterministic behaviour and of willful authorization of necessary experience seem to have allowed Wordsworth to relax his anti-deterministic struggle in partial philosophical satisfaction. Unlike the boy who stole a boat and who, by rowing it furiously, tried to assert his will against the indomitable, the more mature Wordsworth allowed himself such luxuries as hanging "down-bending from the side / Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast / Of a still water, solacing himself / With such discoveries as his eye can make" (IV 247-50)⁴. Still, while luxuriating in the tentative reconciliation of material experience to free will, Wordsworth cannot evade the creeping feeling that

Something there was about me that perplexed
Th' authentic sight of reason, pressed too closely
On that religious *dignity of mind*
That is the very faculty of truth,
Which *wanting* – *either, from the very first*
A function lighted up, or else
Extinguished – man, a creature great and good,
Seems but a pageant plaything with vile claws,

⁴ This mood of luxurious relaxation from struggle is consistent with records of excursions undertaken at a slightly later time and noted in Dorothy's journal e.g. on Thursday, July 31st, 1798, 'the men [William and John Wordsworth and Coleridge], went to bathe, and afterwards sailed down to Loughrigg. Read poems on the water, and let the boat take its own course' (Clark 55)

And this great frame of breathing elements
A *senseless* idol. (IV 295-304, emphasis added)

Even when engaged in his warmest and most friendly natural enjoyments, the poet suffered persistent concern for the “dignity of mind”, that it may have been “wanting – either from the very first” or that it may have been more recently “extinguished”. In his summer holiday from creative and intellectual struggle, in “this vague heartless chace / Of trivial pleasures” (IV 304-5), Wordsworth found himself anxious that we may all be but “pageant plaything[s]”, no better than Shakespeare’s players strutting upon the stage. Thus, though “magnificent the morning was” (IV 330), it was in a pervasive mood of worry about a probably “senseless” necessity in events and in himself, and not in some entirely happy reconciliation of will and determinism, that Wordsworth reached a profound conviction in his life.

I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me: bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be – else sinning greatly –
A dedicated spirit. (IV 341-5)

This vow made *for* him, Wordsworth’s vocational dedication to poetry, made in a moment of unreconciled and anxious desire for purposefulness, is a clear submission of the will to Natural forces, but is also a confirmation of the will, in that he could have rejected the vocation by “sinning greatly”. There is in this passage a great desire to choose deliberately a personal course in life, but also to choose a course that is assured of honourable success by its pre-ordination *for* him. Wordsworth wishes for both the constraint of destiny and, anti-deterministically, the submerged and authorizing freedom to reject this destiny. In this confusing state of willed submission, pictures arose

*As from some distant region of my soul
 And came along like dreams – yet such as left
 Obscurely mingled with their passing forms
 A consciousness of animal delight,
 A self-possession felt in every pause
 And every gentle movement of my frame. (IV 394-9, emphasis added)*

The term “self-possession” may seem inappropriate in one whose visions rise actively “from some distant region”, but such contradictions in terminology are events in the further development of a satisfactory reconciliation of ideas, a struggle toward a unified treatment of will and deterministic forces.

Turning from his introspections to the application of his tentative submerging and authorizing reconciliatory strategies, Wordsworth then tells us of “The Discharged Solider”. In all that this broken man said

*there was a strange half-absence, and a tone
 Of weakness and indifference, as of one
 Remembering the importance of his theme
 But feeling it no longer. (IV 475-8)*

The mode of consciousness of this character, so like the Leech-gatherer, Simon Lee, the Wanderer, and others, reflects a continuing uncertainty in Wordsworth regarding human interaction with experience, for all his preliminary reconciliations of will to a necessary materiality. Does this old man *will* his experience, *willfully* interact with or *willfully* authorize it in any way, or has he been merely subjected to it? The Discharged Soldier’s material circumstances, rejection, isolation, exposure, poverty, and his “weakness and indifference”, suggest that he has been the victim of fate, and is not in any way its master. “His form / kept the same steadiness; and at / his feet His shadow lay, and moved not” (IV 423-5). This almost inanimate person is so devoid of free will, but also so devoid of

expressed frustration and disquiet, that he seems to have reverted to the infantile state of existence, wherein will and determinism are undifferentiated. This character is not treated as an object of scorn or pity, but as a strangely transcendent being, whose subjection to harsh materiality does not logically exclude a dignifying will.

The Discharged Soldier, like the Leech-gatherer of “Resolution and Independence” (1802), is an example of a type of man “whose age reduces (or elevates) them to what is almost the status of objects in the environment, natural phenomena” (Ellis 59). Such characters personify Wordsworth’s awareness of the inner determinism of Man, submitted to Nature, and his simultaneous anti-deterministic insistence that Man must nonetheless embody the submerged and authorizing will. The Discharged Soldier’s paradoxical state of mind seems important and familiar, but is difficult to identify or apply such an abstraction in ordinary human circumstances. This may explain Wordsworth’s repeated revisitation of this character type, poised between life and inanimate existence.

* * *

Having found reasonably satisfactory reconciliations of will and deterministic materiality, submerging one in the other or authorizing the latter by the former, Wordsworth then challenges dualistic institutionalized thought with his unifying strategies. Wordsworth did not of course strictly believe that books cause damage to the mind of the youth, though the introductory lines,

it grieves me for thy state, O man,
 Thou paramount creature, and thy race, while ye
 Shall sojourn on this planet, not for woes
 Which thou endur'st – that weight, albeit huge,
 I charm away – but *for those palms atchieved*
 Through length of time, *by study and hard thought*,
 The honours of thy high endowments; there
 My sadness finds its fuel. (V 3-10, emphasis added)

indicate a fairly strong disapproval of the traditional instructional techniques, indeed a disapproval that exceeds his disapproval of human suffering. While this passage also admits my eventual ethical claim, that Wordsworth's poetry "charms away" the unavoidable "woes" which man "endur'st", its main effect is to introduce a disapproval of books as the sole or dominant source of education and formative influence in the youth.

To Wordsworth, symbolically at least, books are associated with rigid reason, a reason which, in the Cartesian tradition, is completely distinct from body, and so challenges his struggling integration of will and necessity, mind and materiality. Reinforcing his ideological disaffection with book-based dualistic knowledge were also, no doubt, some negative feelings originating in his own weak academic performance, and the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (the Confessions and the educational text Emile) with which Wordsworth was familiar.

Rousseau, like Godwin, felt that the mind is governed by laws, and that when these laws are carefully reflected in the design of an educational curriculum, a more contented individual and a more socially conscious adult is produced. When young adults, so educated, leave the schools and enter society, a more fraternal, egalitarian and libertarian society would necessarily follow. Like Rousseau, Wordsworth recommends a curriculum more respectful of the natural and sensuously receptive state in which the

mind is born, rather than an education circumscribed by stone walls wherein the student memorizes the un compelling scribblings of dead men. Wordsworth proposes instead a formative experience very much like his own upbringing in the country, where the child is exposed to “the speaking face of earth and heaven [Nature]” (V 12), and to the philosophically compatibilist “soul divine which we participate, / A deathless spirit” (V 16-7). The benefit of this natural education, of interaction with a fully living world, will allow the Hartleian impressions to more beneficially exert their necessary power over the child, creating a “commerce of thy nature with itself” and leading to a sense of “things worthy of unconquerable life” (V 18-9).

Though Wordsworth thus expanded the notion of a submerged but distinct will into a participative unity with materiality, it is important to note that underlying his non-dualist pedagogical ideas of participation in Nature is still the fear of mortal necessity and determinism, wherein “we feel – we *cannot chuse* but feel” that the greatest works of Nature and of people “must perish” (V 20-21, emphasis added). Wordsworth’s pedagogy is not positive, but is a reaction against a fear of fatalistic bodily experience. It is therefore anti-deterministically that Wordsworth proposes that children should be given the opportunity to participatively discover within their experience a non-bodily futurity, in essence their immortality. The discovery of an immortal feature within the human being is repeated in the pantheism of “Tintern Abbey”, written in 1798, wherein God diffuses a life force into both Nature and Man, and where this participative human will permits a form of perpetuity.

With such far-reaching spiritual expectations of the effect of a natural education of the youthful mind, it is no wonder that Wordsworth mourns that the institutions have

developed no more suitable repository for the free “meditations of mankind / Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth / By reason built, or passion” (V 37-9) than the transient and corporeal constraints of the book:

Oh, why hath not the mind
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own ?
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail ? (V 44-8)

To illustrate the lamentable ineffectiveness of books in reconciling the willed mind to the determined corporeality, Wordsworth then retells a dream of Descartes, as recorded in Baillet’s Vie de Descartes (Stillinger 550), a story presumably related to him by Coleridge (Wordsworth, Abrams & Gill 158). In this dream, a Don Quixote-like character carries two objects that are perceived to be books, in flight from the rapid and unstoppable rising of an annihilating wave. The rising water conveys a frightening sense of the ultimate necessity, of doomed corporeality, against which Wordsworth dreams the uselessness of the traditional sources of recorded wisdom. The persona in the dream, finding no assistance in books, but not denying that a solution may exist, can only try to escape the forces of necessity, with “the fleet waters of the drowning world / in chace of him” (V 136-7).

Despairing that books, certainly books of scientific thought, but also those of Milton and Shakespeare, are but the “poor earthly casket[s] of immortal verse” (V 164), Wordsworth sought a more vital medium for the fulfillment of the will to project human complexity and dignity into eternity. He needed a medium “to tell again / In slender accents of sweet verse some tale / That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now” (V 177-9), a medium, in other words, that would accommodate the restatement of actual

experience having the ability to “bewitch”, like Descartes’ dream, as experience that “soothes”. Wordsworth, having tried to overcome determinism by various means, then wished to deploy a mind capable of participative material experience, a mode of experience sadly lacking in the recitative function of book study that leaves people

noosed [...]
Stringed like a poor man’s heifer at his feed,
Led through lanes in forlorn servitude;
Or rather like a stalled ox shut out
From touch of growing grass (V 238-43).

When Wordsworth satirizes the “prodigy” of book-based education, who is based on Rousseau’s *Emile*, in The Prelude, he identifies many of the flaws of too structured and book-dependent an education. Naïve fearlessness, for instance, is a critical fault in the prodigy because it is a restraining armour with which “he is fenced round”, shielding the youth’s mind against external influence and depriving him of the opportunity for participation in experience (V 314). The anti-deterministically proposed alternative to a book-based education is thus a curriculum of participation in experience.

Wordsworth contrasts the prodigy, into whom no experience may penetrate, with another Wordsworthian boy into whom “a gentle shock of mild surprize / Has carried [...] the voice / Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene [...] into his mind, / With all its solemn imagery” (V 407-11). Instead of the narrowing and deterministic effect of book-study, this boy engages in an interaction with Nature, “wandering...at will”, a non-necessary and non-deterministic education leading the youth to the realization of a participative mode of life (V 235-7).

Yet it is not a participative interaction with materiality that Wordsworth reinforces as he draws to the end of Book V. While concerned with meaningfulness in a

world where “the waters of the deep / are gathering upon us” (V 130-1), where death is the final deterministic eventuality regardless of our mode of living, Wordsworth recalls that, when he was a child, he had observed how some men “sounded with grappling-irons and long poles” (V 469) and how “at length, the dead man [who had drowned himself,]...bolt upright / Rose with ghastly face” (V 470-2). Though this horrible scene would surely affect any witness, whether young or old, Wordsworth reports that

no vulgar fear,
Young as I was, nine years old,
Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
Such sights before among the shining streams
Of fairyland, the forests of romance (V 473-77).

We might speculate that the inability of a soaked corpse to affect the mind of a child is a misrepresentation of actual memory by the poet. But there is no speculation in pointing out Wordsworth’s claim that, in the face of the final necessity, the imagination, even in a child, is sufficiently strong to transform the effects of this harsh reality.

Whether or not the boy Wordsworth really was unaffected by the grisly sight of a drowned suicide, embodying despair as well as death, Wordsworth the poet seems to believe that the horror of death may be eliminated by the preparations of an active and naturally impressed mind, and that, by the fantastical rehearsing of material events and situations in the imagination, the actual occurrence of even the most tragic of events may be emptied of negative significance. This recourse to the transformative imagination to deal with deterministic harshness is a complex idea, and a strong reconciliation of will in the face of determinism. Still, in drawing a curtain across this scene, Wordsworth immediately resumes his earlier and simpler unsubstantiated compatibilism of free will

with the determining “spirit [that] o’er this earth presides, / And o’er the heart of man:
invisibly / It comes, directing those to works of love / Who care not, know not, think not,
what they do” (V 516-9), leaving the development of a reconciling imagination to the
next book.

While nominally a criticism of books, Book V of The Prelude speaks
emphatically about the determinism and necessity of our interactions with the world,
especially in our youth, that

Time of trial ere we learn to live
In reconciliation with *our stinted powers*,
To endure this *state of meagre vassalage*,
Unwilling to forego, confess, *submit*,
Uneasy and unsettled, *yoke-fellows*
To custom, *mettlesome and not yet tamed*
And *humbled* down. (V 540-6, emphasis added)

To integrate this “state of meagre vassalage” into a willed mode of learning and living,
Wordsworth recommends participative interaction of mind and body with the natural
world, instead of book-study, and also hints, as he did in Book III, at the transformative
imagination as the next stage of his effort to reconcile free will and determinism.

* * *

In Books I through V, Wordsworth describes scenes and events from his
childhood and early adulthood, in all cases investigating the philosophical problem of
determinism and necessity in “conscious or unconscious reaction against the myth of the
mechanized universe of eighteenth-century physics” (Thorslev 81), asserting a
reconciliation of determinism with a free will that appears to be a fundamental
Wordsworthian condition for a dignified existence. Since materialist thought, including

severe determinism, was widely accepted and offered numerous attractions to the young Wordsworth, he could not deny these ideologies outright. Nonetheless, in parallel with descriptions of natural and social determinism, an anti-deterministic motive desire was manifest, resulting in logically strained efforts to reconcile free will to underlying material experience. Superimposition, unsubstantiated compatibility, authorization, exultation, submerging of the will in necessity, and participation of the will in necessity, are all attempted as possible reconciliations of free will and determinism. But none offer a fully satisfactory solution, neither to the demanding reader nor apparently to the philosophical Wordsworth, who situated all of these reconciliatory attempts in his youth, leaving many autobiographical years for the development of a more satisfactory solution to the problem of determinism. This solution, already hinted at, would form during a very stressful period of personal growth, concluding in the repudiation of many earlier philosophical beliefs.

The Transformative Imagination and Crisis

Having narrated the most memorable events of his youth and having not discovered therein a fully satisfactory reconciliation of the determinism that he confronted in experience and the free will that he longed to exercise, Wordsworth entered a period of intensified anti-deterministic reconciliation, focussing strategically on the power of the imagination.

Notwithstanding the claim that he could not “take long leave of pleasant thoughts” (VI 18), Wordsworth’s return to Cambridge following another summer vacation brought about the resurgence of

some personal concerns
That hung about me in my own despite
Perpetually, no heavy weight, but still
A baffling hindrance, a controul
Which made the thought of planning for myself
A course of independent study seem
An act of disobedience towards them
Who loved me, proud rebellion and unkind. (VI 34-41)

Not wishing to disobey his family, Wordsworth dutifully pursued his studies, suppressing his reaction against such external obligations and the unnatural book-based environment that squashed participative and imaginative involvement in learning. He referred to his desire for the fuller exercise of his will as “proud rebellion and unkind” and as a “cowardise” (VI 43) giving

treacherous sanction to that over-love
Of freedom planted in me from the very first,
And indolence, by force of which I turned
From regulations even of my own
As from restraints and bonds. (VI 44-8)

The conditions of life at Cambridge, “restraints and bonds”, were clearly a continuing frustration to Wordsworth’s intentionality. The poet could take only intermittent comfort from his “choice” among “our groves and tributary walks” until

the porter’s bell,
A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
Inexorable summons” (VI 81-7, emphasis added).

With the “inexorable summons” calling him in from his preferred activities, he nonetheless found that

Mighty is the charm
Of those abstractions [natural philosophy] to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by itself,
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
So gracefully, even then when it appeared
No more than as a plaything, or a toy
Embodied in the sense – not that it is
In verity, an independent world
Created out of pure intelligence. (VI 178-87)

These abstractions, of Newtonian materialism and Cartesian dualism, while also a source of philosophical anxiety to the author, were nonetheless an occasional haven, perhaps because, by learning more about the forces of necessity a form of agency over them was established, but also because their example of a “synthesis” would have suggested philosophical hope for the poet in his reconciliatory project.

At least one other student, also a latent philosopher and poet, was similarly trapped at Cambridge. Though Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge did not meet until August or September of 1795, after Wordsworth’s graduation and Coleridge’s withdrawal without a degree, Wordsworth links his oppressive experience of study to that

of Coleridge, in that they both “were framed / To bend at last to the same discipline” (VI 265-7). He also links their anti-deterministic reaction “To seek the same delights, and have one health, One happiness” (VI 266-7), to their common condition of being “Predestined, if ever two beings ever were” (VI 269-70).

Coleridge, who would immediately and permanently influence Wordsworth with his philosophical ideas and with his direct participation in Wordsworth’s poetic life, became one of the most outspoken and public thinkers regarding the freedom of the will, starting out as a devout materialist and necessarian, and then, after only a short time, radically crossing the floor to a passionate philosophical idealism. Thorslev argues that Coleridge engaged in a “youthful flirtation with Hartleyanism” around the time of meeting Wordsworth. He himself avowed that “I am a compleat Necessitarian and understand the subject almost as well as Hartley himself” (Thorslev 5). For a time, Coleridge so identified himself with necessarianism, associationism and determinism, that he sat for a portrait while displaying a copy of Godwin’s Enquiry in his hands and would irreversibly name his own son ‘Hartley’. Wordsworth’s devotion to theoretical Necessarianism was similarly insistent at that time and he is reported to have advised a student to “throw aside your books of chemistry and read Godwin on Necessity” (E.P. Thompson 87).

This period, around the close of Wordsworth’s formal education, was one of great social, political and philosophical upheaval, and Cambridge men like Wordsworth and Coleridge, by virtue of their excitability and intellectual creativity, were particularly susceptible to involvement in the volatile ideas and actions of the times. Indeed,

Wordsworth and Coleridge were caught in a vortex of contradictions which were both real and ideal...a fiery alternating current passing back and forth between Hartley [determinist] and Berkeley [idealist], Godwin [republican determinism] and Burke [conservative determinism], Newton [mechanical determinism] and the Book of Revelation [spiritual transcendence], leaving that medley of insights and nonsense which Coleridge was to try all his life to gather into a system. (E.P. Thompson 37)

While Coleridge did not succeed in his synthesis of philosophical opposites, his very failure to reach a conclusion may well have indicated the tremendous importance, as well as the daunting complexity, of the dialectical relationship between will/mind and necessity/body that Wordsworth was also addressing in his way.

In his Theory of Life Coleridge elaborates his view that “the whole *actual* life of Nature originates in the existence, and consists in the perpetual reconciliation, and as perpetual resurgency of the primary contradiction, of which universal polarity is the result and the exponent” (Coleridge 70). By positing a brief initial faith in determinism and necessarianism, Coleridge, like Wordsworth, provided himself with a force against which he could oppose its contrary, generating a passionate, if irreconcilable, faith in the “Supreme Will !” and a system of ideas that sought to dialectically unify the dualistic forces that he himself had dissociated from each-other (Coleridge 86).

In just a few years, and perhaps with the recognition of his own subjection to ill-health, mental and physical, Coleridge began to deplore the “general contagion of mechanistic philosophy” that permeated his age, and so began to influence Wordsworth toward a more idealistic pantheism and the cult of the imagination (Cooke x). As early as January of 1796, Coleridge had written and published articles attacking the notions that form Necessarianism (Chandler 258). He argued that, if Hartley’s theory is correct,

“our whole life would be divided between the despotism of outward impressions, and that of senseless and passive memory”, rendering experience incoherent (Allen 137).

Coleridge did not of course limit his criticism to Hartley, but also took aim at the “impious and pernicious tenets defended by Hume, Priestley, and the French fatalists and necessitarians; some of whom have perverted metaphysical reasonings to the denial of the mysteries and indeed of all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; and others even to the subversion of all distinction between right and wrong” (Coleridge, as cited in Chandler 263). Though “Wordsworth may often and early have heard from Coleridge the sort of arguments against the Hartleian theory which he [Coleridge] sets forth in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Biographia Literaria, and the closely related arguments of the eighth chapter against Descartes and Priestley” (Beech 142), Wordsworth continued to support necessarianism sufficiently that it formed the subject of a “philosophical dispute” with his partner (Chandler 258). Though a more loyal necessarian than Coleridge, Wordsworth’s thought was at least equally progressive. When he reflected upon the stability of his ideas, Wordsworth compared himself to a “man, who, when his house is built, / A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still / In impotence of mind by his fireside / Rebuild it to his liking” (VI 302-5), indicating that the continuous reconstruction, or imaginative transformation, of rational ideas and material facts was a central feature of his approach to philosophy, as well as to actual experience.

By the period described in Book VI, the reconciling strategies available to Wordsworth were increasingly important to him because the “mighty forms seizing a youthful fancy / Had given a charter to irregular hopes”, hopes and opinions about

political events outside the sphere of Wordsworth's own immediate life. "T'was a time when Europe was rejoiced, / France standing on the top of golden hours, / And human nature seeming born again" (VI 352-4). In taking an interest in politics, Wordsworth's necessarian belief that all behaviour tends in a beneficial direction moved him to believe that a more just France, and ultimately a more just England, must necessarily come about in time. His parallel anti-deterministic reaction against the necessity he believed in, paradoxically, moved him to wish that any such eventual society be based in the freedom of individual and collective will. The incomplete logical and philosophical reconciliation of necessity to the anti-deterministic will would however remain intellectually tolerable while continental and personal events could still be reasonably viewed as societal growth and as progress towards a utopian futurity.

But before the disappointment of the French Revolution and the undermining of Wordsworth's ideological faith, he and a friend made an excursion to climb Mont Blanc in the Alps. This holiday provided Wordsworth with new experience with which to bolster and develop his philosophical thinking about the mind. Wordsworth noted that he and his guide exercised a "pure simplicity of *wish and will*, [in] Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man" (VI 444-5, emphasis added). Yet the summit of Mont Blanc was not attained in the exercise or even the exultant mood of deliberate will. Rather,

That day we first
Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and *grieved*
To have a soulless image on the eye
Which had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be (VI 452-6, emphasis added).

Surprisingly, to the reader of today, the actual ascent of the actual mountain is discovered to have had little value relative to the imagined experience of ascending the imagined

mountain. The actual mountain is merely a material thing and the actual ascent is a mere experience of the limited body, whereas the idea of the mountain and its imaginary ascent, in abstraction, had been wonderfully free. Paradoxically, in descending from Mont Blanc, this lesson in the importance of the voluntary imaginary experience is so commanding that it is compared to “a book / Before our eyes [that] *we could not chuse but read*” (VI 473-5, emphasis added). Though there is clearly still some logical difficulty in deploying the transformative imagination as a means of reconciling material experience to free will, this imaginative mental vehicle, unlike dusty old books, seemed suited to the recording of immortal human experience.

Becoming lost and accidentally crossing the Alps, Wordsworth had then opportunity to deploy the transformative imagination to reconcile his free will and the determinism evident in his inability to navigate deliberately through the mountains. Confronting his subjection to materiality, Wordsworth unveils

*Imagination ! – lifting up itself
 Before the eye and progress of my song
 Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,
 In all the might of its endowments, came
 Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,
 Halted without a struggle to break through,
 And now, recovering, to my soul I say
 ‘I recognize thy glory’. In such strength
 Of usurpation, in such visitings
 Of awful promise, when the light of sense
 Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
 The invisible world, doth *greatness make abode*,
 There harbours whether we be young or old.
 Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
 Is with infinitude – and only there;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die (VI 525-40, emphasis added)*

Here, as in all the spots of time, Wordsworth imaginatively transforms a failure, the literal fact of an ineffective freedom of will, into a vast form of immortalizing intentionality, elevating error to a kind of divine confusion where “greatness make[s] abode”. Freud, who also believed there was significance and pattern in common errors and who wrote on the subject of literary creativity, would refer to cases like Wordsworth’s vision and would describe “the various ways an original content has undergone distortion – through [...] the replacement of necessity by choice” (Freud, xix). To Liu also, “the goal of the [autobiographical] denial – not fully effective until the purge of Books 9 and 10 – is to carve the ‘self’ out of history. The theory of denial is Imagination” (Liu 4-5). Though not desperately needed until the crisis of the Revolution, the transformative imagination was taking shape as a powerful strategy for reconciling free will to historical and material determinism.

* * *

On going down from Cambridge, equipped with the latest in intellectual theories and finally free from a constricting educational environment, the bachelor Wordsworth was nevertheless unable to choose a course of action for himself. This paralysis, similar to the paralysis with which he began The Prelude of 1799, is motivated “partly from voluntary holiday / And part through outward hindrance” (VII 18-9). Again, we find a struggle between the assertion of agency, his “voluntary holiday”, and acknowledgement that agency is ineffective. Though willfully resisting a career in the Anglican Church, one suited to his financial if not his intellectual needs, Wordsworth also lacked sufficient will to unhesitatingly pursue his earlier calling to poetry. In this state of immobility,

caused by both outward circumstances and by his inner indecisiveness, Wordsworth yet considered himself, contrary to the evidence he had presented, to be “determined”, “loose and at full command”, and “self-willed, / Yet temperate and reserved, and wholly free from dangerous passions” (VII 63-72). Still profoundly conflicted as to the degree and type of liberty inherent in his own nature, Wordsworth relocated himself to London.

Like the actual Mont Blanc relative to the mentally envisioned precipice, the actual London did not attain to the metropolis of the imagination. The London of Wordsworth’s boyhood projection had exceeded “whatso’er is feigned / Of airy palaces and gardens built / By genii of romance” and so the actual city in which he took up residence “fell short, far short, / Of that which I in simpleness believed / And thought” (VII 81-91). Wordsworth recollected how, while growing up in the countryside, he had expected the city to cure to a certain boy, “a cripple from the birth, whom chance / summoned from school to London” (VII 95-6). “When he returned [...] I was not wholly free / from disappointment to behold the same / Appearance, the same body” (VII 97-102). Though early disappointed in the powers of the city, the boy Wordsworth was apparently not fully disillusioned, as the grandeur of an imaginary London continued to have certain transformational powers into the poet’s adulthood.

Thus, while Wordsworth perceived that the actual London was decorated by statues of “Boyle, Shakespear, Newton, or the attractive head / Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day”, representatives of acknowledged authority and materialism (VII 182-3), the city was also sometimes seen in an illuminated vision. In this imaginatively transformative state, “all the ballast of familiar life – / The present, and the past, hope,

fear, all stays, / All *laws of acting*, thinking, speaking man – / Went from me” (VII 605-8, emphasis added). Transformatively relieved of the deterministic “laws of acting”,

Wordsworth encountered

a blind beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood propped against a wall, upon his chest
 Wearing a written paper, to explain
 The story of the man, and who he was.
 My mind did at this spectacle turn round
 As with the might of waters, and it seemed
 To me that in this label was a type
 Or emblem of the utmost that we know
 Both of ourselves and of the universe,
 And on the shape of this unmoving man,
 His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked,
 As if admonished from another world. (VII 612-23)

In this character we recognize another variation of the Solitary. Wordsworth acknowledges, in the physical blindness of the man, the character’s deterministic inability to be other than he is and as he must be. The fullest extent of the blind beggar’s agency is his capacity to scrawl a few words on a sign admitting his infirmity. But immediately, still in the rapture of the anti-deterministic transformative imagination, Wordsworth pronounces his faith that, notwithstanding blindness and incapacity, there is a sufficiency in “such structures as the mind / Builds for itself [...] the peace / Of night [...] The calmness, beauty, of the spectacle, / Sky” (VII 625-35). Though Wordsworth had earlier introduced Burke’s notion that it is only through “use” that “we have learnt to slight the crimes / And sorrows of the world” (VII 363-4), neither the elucidation of our habits in regard to deterministic harshness nor the sufficient “peace” of imaginative life are however of immediate help to the blind beggar. Though Wordsworth specifically chose the blind beggar to emphasize that the transformative imagination *is* applicable to the most deterministically infirm and discomfitted, the persona of Wordsworth has no

recorded exchange with the beggar and, even more so than in the case of the Leech-gatherer, we must speculate that the blind beggar standing on a bustling street corner did not realize that he had access to the anti-deterministic reconciliation of mortality in “calmness, beauty, of the spectacle, Sky”. Rather, at this stage, Wordsworth’s solution to the problem of will is suitable only for his own use, and not yet for general application by humanity. To generalize his anti-deterministic solution, Wordsworth had to explore the imaginative as well as the material lives of other persons in a more involving way.

* * *

Though he had evolved from various strategic reconciliations of will and determinism to a reasonably satisfactory anti-deterministic solution, whereby the imagination demonstrates the will in transforming material experience in the mind, Wordsworth had gradually realized that his approach was only available to imaginative persons such as himself and that, to be universally meaningful, it must reflect his political liberalism and his “love of human kind” (VIII 588). Wordsworth accordingly described how in late 1791 he traveled to France, nominally to improve his French so that he might become a tutor or travelling companion to a gentleman of less limited means than himself, but also to correct the perceived shortcoming that “my Fellow beings still were unto me / Far less than she [Nature]” (VIII 867-68).

While Wordsworth no doubt had many emotional reasons to support the French Revolution, it is not incidental that this popular movement against an oppressive authority, acted out in theoretical agreement with necessarianism and determinism, but also with tremendous anti-deterministic self-exertion, was a magnet for Wordsworth’s

struggling intellect. The necessarian theoretical basis of experience and the consequent popular anti-deterministic energy of the Revolution perfectly matched the personal beliefs and narrative dialectic that Wordsworth expressed in The Prelude. In order to verify the potential of the transformative imagination in reconciling not only *other* person's material lives, but its capacity to reconcile popular free will to the necessary advancement of a whole society, an immersion in the Revolutionary life was a perfect philosophical and urgently personal experiment.

In this new social investigation of mind, so much more demanding still than the early emphasis on the solitary pursuit of reconciliation between mind and body, will and determinism, Wordsworth conceived a new extension of Nature in Man. Michel Beaupuy, a "nobleman and captain in the Revolutionary Army", tutored Wordsworth "in the revolutionary faith that the natural [deterministic] goodness of the human reason and heart, once freed of feudal inequities, would [necessarily] flower into a truly humane society" (Sheats xxxv). In the physical and ideological company of the revolutionaries, Wordsworth felt the same "deep devotion" that he had previously felt for Nature, but it was then a devotion associated with "high thoughts of God and man, and love of man, / Triumphant over all those loathsome sights / Of wretchedness and vice" (VIII 62-8). Mankind was thus sufficiently elevated in Wordsworth's estimation that he might credit the popular imagination with the capacity to transform experience. With newly justified regard for the common man, Wordsworth tested the social applicability of the transformative imagination by returning to the example of a shepherd directing a responsive dog,

thus teaching him
 To chace along the mazes of steep crags
 The flock he could not see. And so the brute –
 Dear creature – with a man's intelligence,
 Advancing or retreating on his steps,
 Through every pervious strait. (VIII 108-113)

The shepherd, who was himself incapable of climbing as did the dog, transformed the dog with the projection of his human intelligence. This common man imaginatively achieved a measure of agency, in social interaction with another limited being, agency that neither he nor the dog could have achieved in isolation. Such men as the shepherd, who, though lacking sophistication, are free, each

working for himself, with *choice*
 Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
 His comforts, native *occupations*, cares,
 Conducted on to individual ends
 Or social, and still followed by a train,
Unwooed, unthought-of even: simplicity,
 And beauty, and *inevitable grace*. (VIII 152-8, emphasis added)

This passage conveys the Hartleian and Godwinian social optimism, as well as the power of the Wordsworthian imagination in dealing with the very same material conditions that he describes in poems like “The Ruined Cottage” and “Michael”, while concluding that common men have “choice” in their “occupations” and that this choice at the level of the imagination, satisfactorily transforms an “unwooed” and “unthought-of” destiny into “inevitable grace”.

Wordsworth further tested the transformative imagination in his study of a shepherd boy attempting to save his lost sheep. The boy, spying the missing sheep on an island in a torrent, “leapt upon the island with proud heart / And with a prophet's joy” (VIII 279). This prophetic joy is however shortlived, as it was when the boy Wordsworth

had rowed out into the lake in the stolen boat, since “immediately / The sheep sprang forward to the further shore / And was borne headlong by the roaring flood” (VIII 280), leaving the boy stranded on the island, unable to “summon up / The courage that was needful to leap back” (VIII 285). While the transformative imaginary life may offer “prophetic joy”, it all too often masks the fundamental dangers of a situation. Still, for all the material threats to well-being that were required for this case to constitute a valid test of the transformative imagination, the shepherd boy was soon “safe within his father’s arms” (VIII 311). Disregarding the fact that the lost sheep was drowned, the shepherd could therefore be said to enjoy feeling

his presence in his own domain
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding – and severest solitude
Seemed more commanding oft when he was there (VIII 393)

This passage packed with contradiction (the shepherd, “lord and master”, “presiding” and “commanding”, who is also subordinate “under Nature, under God”), does however succeed in projecting the emotional ascendancy of the shepherd and so conveys the sufficiency of the transformative imagination to reconcile free will even to the shepherd’s harsh material existence.

When Wordsworth then envisioned the shepherd, whose daily life was full of physical dangers, “in distant sky, / A solitary object and sublime...like an aerial cross...for worship” (VIII 406-10), he did so in the anti-deterministic deployment of his highly figurative and visual transformative imagination. Man was thus “ennobled outwardly before mine eyes, / And thus my heart at first was introduced / To an unconscious love and reverence / Of human nature” (VIII 411). It was not the

material achievements of the shepherd's life, but the transformed image of the man "glorified / By the deep radiance of the setting sun" and the metaphoric resonance of this image of "an aerial cross" that was ennobling (VIII 404-5).

Wordsworth was, however, aware that his imaginative depiction of the shepherd might have seem contrived, offering the reader a reconciliation of will to experience something like the earlier strategic mode of exultation. He asked us whether we call

these appearances
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man,
A shadow, a delusion ? (VIII 428).

But he asked this question regarding the validity of the transformative imagination only rhetorically, to immediately answer in the self-affirmative and to accuse anyone who harbours such doubts of being

fed
By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
And ye adore (VIII 431).

This re-assignment of the accusation labels the accuser, and not the visionary poet, as mechanistic and delusional for not appreciating the richness of sympathies between the loftiest of spiritual ideas, the inter-penetration of man and Nature, and the lives of simple shepherds.

The transformative imagination as social strategy of philosophical reconciliation, though viciously defended, nonetheless required further social localization. Wordsworth could not yet hold man "as having taken in my mind / A place [...] preeminent", for to Nature "was man in my affections and regards / [still] Subordinate" (VIII 473-85).

Wordsworth's transformative imagination, now confronted not just by personal determinism but by a larger social and political necessity, was "no longer a mute influence of the soul, / An element of the nature's inner self", but "began to have some promptings to put on / A visible shape" (VIII 515-6). Among visible, or social, products of the transformative imagination, such as political ideology and action, "works of art", and "the images of books", there was then "a wilfulness of fancy and conceit / Which gave them new importance to the mind – / And Nature and her objects beautified / These fictions (VIII 521-4). Influenced thematically by the then popular gothic tales, even subjects of "common death was none, common mishap, / But matter for this *humour*" (VIII-525-41, emphasis added), the "humour" of the transformative imagination. Indeed, "From touch of this new power / Nothing was safe". The availability of a strong anti-deterministic strategy seems to have invited the discussion of mortality and social tragedy, but only to then simultaneously undermine their realism and seriousness. Thus, for example, death was admitted, but only by transforming the simplicity of the fading sunlight into "a burnished shield [...] suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay / Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood" (VIII 573-5).

The transformational imagination became a sufficiently effective reconciliatory strategy that Wordsworth was comfortable writing out such oxymorons as how he "at all times had a *real solid world* / Of *images* about me" (VIII 605-6, emphasis added), how "more than anything we know, *instinct* / With *godhead*", and how he lived "by reason and *by will* / Acknowledging *dependency* sublime" (VIII 638-40). Via the transformative imagination, notwithstanding a "*dependency* sublime", the human being could be seen to be dignified by the freedoms of "reason and [...] *will*".

Returning to the “real solid world” outside of the imagination, London, “begirt with temporal shapes” (VIII 642-64, Wordsworth reported another perception of worrisome social and political materiality requiring reconciliation to the will.

I trembled, thought of human life at times
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity. (VIII 659-64)

Reinforced by the anti-deterministic strategies thus far developed, Wordsworth responded assertively to this vague political premonition by deeming himself “a moral agent, judging between good / And evil” (VIII 668-9). Though he claimed to be a moral agent by positive “human sympathy impelled”, it was in fact clearly first “through dislike and most offensive pain / [that he] Was to the truth conducted” (VIII 672), and whether positively or negatively motivated to act, his motives were in any case deterministic – he was either “impelled” or “conducted”. “That aught *external* to the living mind / Should have such mighty sway” may have bothered him immensely, but he admitted that “so it was: / The weight of ages did at once descend / Upon my heart” (VIII 701, emphasis added). Wordsworth, the young political radical, like the boy hearing whispers and footsteps behind him, was driven to pursue an active political good primarily because the alternative, the evil of passive philosophical necessity, was biting at his heels.

* * *

Using persistently necessarian terminology, Wordsworth described his desire to proceed with his narration: “I feel / An *impulse to precipitate* my verse” (IX 9-10), and

he offered “fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness, / Whene’er it comes” (IX 11-12, emphasis added) rather than simply commanding himself to work. It seems that external inspiration was “needful in work so long, / Thrice needful to the argument which now awaits us” (IX 15-17). The “thrice needful” argument, the theme of revolutionary France, was the tale of the “fellow beings” for whom, at this stage in the narrative, Wordsworth felt a strong attachment and who, like himself, had set themselves the reconciliatory task of *willfully* creating a *deterministic* paradise on Earth.

Wordsworth’s confidence in the socially transformative imagination as a strategy for attaining “rational liberty and hope in man” in France and more generally, was appropriately very much influenced by the French philosophes most affected by the pre-Revolutionary conditions (IX 402). Much of the ideology of Books IX and X was derived from or reinforced by continental necessarian and political writings, works such as the landmark essay, L’Homme Machine, published in 1748. The author of this heavily illustrated text, Julien Offray de La Mettrie, relied upon the popular momentum of scientific rationalism when he claimed, with great boldness, that “man is a machine, and that in the whole universe there is but a single substance differently modified” (Larkin 31). This, the height of mechanistic necessarianism, though simplistic, was quite consistent with the opinions of more immediately political writers like d’Holbach (1723-1789), a French atheistic mechanist, who had argued, before Rousseau, that man misunderstands nature primarily due to the poor education instituted by poor governments. Unlike Godwin, for whom all necessity tended toward the Good, d’Holbach’s unnaturally educated and governmentally misled individuals tended to behave perversely, fully contrary to their own interests.

The French Revolution, that impending “battle in the cause of liberty”, was precisely the sort of conflict that was bound to arise during a period when intellectuals like Wordsworth and the public believed that the natural laws identified by thinkers like Newton, Descartes, Hartley, Godwin and Priestley, and the French philosophes, should rule in the place of Kings and laws legislated by men (IX 692). Since, in these philosophical systems, all behaviour is caused by a combination of necessary nature and deterministic nurture which seek the public good, any material discomfort must be attributed to a perverse or corrupt government disrupting the otherwise inevitable natural progress towards utopia. The people revolted, not simply to obtain immediate gratification of material wants, but because of a firm theoretical belief in the certainty of a morally positive outcome. Similarly, not only Wordsworth’s youthful vitality and his needless impoverishment by “the parsimony of their father’s employer, the Earl [of Lonsdale], who for twenty years refused to pay them [the Wordsworth family] the nearly five thousand pounds he owed their father”, but his theoretical attachment to Necessarianism and the resulting volatility of the psychologically reactionary need for the exercise of anti-deterministic freedom, made the cause of the Revolution an attractive one (Sheats xxxiiv). Thus, Chandler is able to claim that “the foundational epistemology of the French Ideologues provided a crucial negative example for the formation of Wordsworth’s characteristic lyric practice” (Chandler xxii). While Wordsworth initially approved of the deterministic assertions of the philosophes (de la Mettrie, Condorcet, Condillac, Volney, d’Holbach, Rousseau etc.), as the Revolution grew, and certainly as its methods deteriorated, people everywhere became disillusioned with the actual effects of politically applied materialism, and Wordsworth flew, negatively and anti-

deterministically, in the opposite direction, asserting free will even to the same extravagance with which he had espoused necessarian views.

Suspecting, early in the narrated period of the Revolution, that his transformative imagination might prove inadequate to such a vast social reconciliation of will and materiality as the design of, and transition to, a new utopian nation, the radical activist Wordsworth predicted that the theme of the Revolution, “though bright with promise, will be found / Ere far we shall advance, ungenial, hard / To treat of, and forbidding in itself” (IX 15-7). Even to an ostensibly self-determining individual of “his noble nature” (IX 363), the course of the Revolution would prove profoundly difficult. Indeed, the failure of the Revolution would cause Wordsworth to revise all of his philosophical beliefs.

In Book IX, Wordsworth’s continuing resistance to determinism, but also his growing intellectual fatigue, were apparent in the logic of his claim that his friend Beaupuis “*perished fighting, in supreme command*” (IX 431-7, emphasis added). How, we might wonder, could Beaupuis’s “command” have been “supreme” if it permitted him to perish ? Furthermore, and more importantly, having elevated Beaupuis to a figure of flawless political idealism who died “for liberty, against deluded men”, Wordsworth then admitted that he was “blessed [...] that he the fate of later times / Lived not to see” (IX 333-6). We might ask, if Beaupuis was not himself politically and ideologically “deluded” by a false system of necessary utopian social renewal, why then would the *actual* outcome of the Revolution, have been to him such a horrifying spectacle ?

It is in the tale of Vaudracour and Julia, occupying much of Book IX, that we find a poignant parallel between the events frustrating Wordsworth’s personal will and the

conditions of life in pre-revolutionary France, a depiction of the perverse and determining social forces that the transformative imagination and the Revolution were to have overcome. Vaudracour is prevented by a series of family and social forces from following the course of his love affair, much as Wordsworth was prevented from continuing his relationship with Annette Vallon, by whom he had fathered a child. Indeed, “letters suggest that he [Wordsworth] and Annette intended to marry” but “Wordsworth’s uncles apparently opposed this idea forcefully” (Sheats xxxvi) and successfully. With conspicuously similar success, Vaudracour “was traversed from without” (IX 745) and he and Julia do not live happily ever after.

* * *

The Revolutionary philosophy, the “voice of freedom” constituting a widespread implementation of the transformative imagination, should have led necessarily to an ideal state (IX 931). But, contrary to the predictions of Necessarianism, the earthly political paradise was not forthcoming. Wordsworth, in describing the French Revolution, compared the development of its violence to “a toy, a windmill”, and not to anti-deterministic human decisiveness and volition (X 340). What agency there was in those harsh political and social events was that of a petulant child who, to spite the fatalistic wind, must set “his front against the blast” (X 344) and run “amain / To make it whirl the faster” (X 344-5). The failed optimism of eighteenth-century materialism, that would have theoretically ensured social and individual progress, was repudiated in Wordsworth’s images of senseless children, of blindly driving wind, and of bladed toys whose spinning play decapitated and ravaged a nation. He wrote, in great despair and in

great anger, that “when the calamity spread far and wide [...] as Lear reproached the winds, I could almost / Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle / For being yet an image in my mind / To mock me under such a strange reverse (X 458-465).

Wordsworth had begun, in the events of Book X, to recognize the negative implications of necessarianism and determinism as the basis of social and personal reality, especially when imaginatively transformed into optimism, as he had been doing, without actual address to the material forces of ordinary life. Realizing the upset and the misuse of theory within the Revolutionary practice, Wordsworth rephrased Madame Roland’s reported last words before she was guillotined⁵ in his own lament that “Liberty [...] all beneath / Her innocent authority was wrought, / Nor could have been, without her blessed name” (X 349-51).

Having believed that necessarianism would bring about the growth of knowledge and social freedom, and having begun to realize the horrifying error of this faith, Wordsworth reported nightmares that convey not just the bloodletting of the Terror but a new pessimistic interpretation of the doctrine of necessarianism as an “implement of death”:

Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
And tyranny, and *implements of death*,
And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
Labouring, *a brain confounded*, and a sense
Of *treachery and desertion in the place*
The holiest that I knew of – my own soul. (X 374-80, emphasis added)

With the disappointment of his philosophy, Wordsworth imagined himself as one of the dead and complained how much more difficult it is to love man, his “second love”, than it

⁵ ‘Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name !’, (from Notes in J. Wordsworth 378)

was to love Nature (X 381-94). He did not recognize that by conceiving Nature as a form of “oppression”, a “holy passion [that] overcame me” (X 383-5), he had early in life set up a difficult reconciliation to freedom and happiness almost certainly bound to result in failure. By conceiving of Nature deterministically, the anti-deterministic reconciliations and the transformational imagination that he developed against his own theoretically determined Nature and upon which he became philosophically dependent made him terribly vulnerable to logical crisis and meaninglessness should either necessity prove unpleasant or anti-deterministic strategies prove inadequate in logical reconciliation. When the Revolutionary confusion and violence became apparent, Nature’s deterministic and necessary “oppression” could indeed no longer be perceived as pleasant and the transformative imagination could no longer reconcile such harsh events to a dignifying and socially ideal free will. Wordsworth had to reconsider all his purposes in life, including his poetic vocation, wherein the transformative imagination had been most productively, if impractically, deployed. By 1794, in the period described in Book X, Wordsworth “questioned the fundamental moral assumptions of his age, the assumption, for example, that the human reason is necessarily true” (Sheats xxxviii). So grave were the pressures on Wordsworth’s mind that, during the “Spring of 1794 through 1795, Wordsworth suffers a psychological breakdown” (Sheats xxxvii).

During this period of crisis and retrenchment, near his childhood home, Wordsworth visited the grave of William Taylor of Hawkshead Grammar School, and there sought approval and reconfirmation of his mission in life from the dead headmaster. Placing words in Taylor’s mouth, Wordsworth re-affirmed his own mission and his own personal worth:

He loved the poets, and if now alive
 Would have loved me, as one not destitute
 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 Which he had formed when I at his command
 Began to spin, at first, my toilsome songs. (X 510-14)

Thinking then of the hoped-for victory of rational necessarianism and the formation of a perfect state, he noted that “such victory I confounded in my thoughts / With one far higher and more difficult”, political transformation in Britain, but also perhaps the universal transformation of people everywhere into more just beings (X 589-90). As this hoped-for transformation had proven so disappointing in France, “all things tending fast / To depravation” (X 805-10), Wordsworth angrily repudiated his radical philosophy, criticising Godwinism,

the philosophy
 That promised to abstract the hopes of man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element (X 806-8)

Wordsworth mocks Godwinism, exposing the subjectivity of his own philosophical understanding, by claiming incorrectly that Godwin sought

in self-knowledge and self-rule
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 The accidents of nature, time, and place,
 That make up the weak being of the past,
 Build social freedom on its only basis:
 The freedom of the individual mind,
 Which, to the blind restraint of general laws
 Superior, magisterially adopts
 One guide – the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect. (X 819-29)

Godwin’s thought did not in fact seek to shake off “the accidents of nature, time, and place” at all, nor had he claimed that there was an “independent intellect”, but in fact confronted the facts of necessity and determinism and, acknowledging them, hoped to

facilitate a self-reflective but fundamentally deterministic society wherein experience would be more just and more enjoyable because more accordant with the natural law.

Wordsworth's misconstrual of Godwin is most indicative of his own failed anti-deterministic reconciliations to stave off harsh inevitabilities. When Wordsworth wrote that he

wished that man should start
Out of the worm-like state in which he is,
And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight" (X 835-8),

he was writing in ideological desperation, himself tending, for lack of a secure belief system, to express the very

microscopic views
That furnished out materials for a work
Of false imagination, placed beyond
The limits of experience and truth" (X 846-8).

In this crisis, Wordsworth sought recovery in "communion more direct and intimate / With Nature" (X 606-9) and engaged in further "manuevers against the incomprehensible" (Bishop, as cited in Chandler 185). But in returning to Nature to review his philosophy, "he was obliged to describe the operations of this power with great circumspection in order to avoid aligning himself once again with Godwin's sensationism and necessitarianism" (Drew 158). Wordsworth would not read the second edition of Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice because he found the preface to be "a piece of barbarous writing" (Wordsworth, as cited in E.P. Thompson 76).

Wordsworth's repudiation of Godwinism and his entire belief system, required a painful inquiry into each feature of his mind,

dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
 Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
 Calling the mind to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours, now believing,
 Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of moral obligation (X 889-95)

Since deterministic necessity did not lead to social advancement and since the violent events that actually did result could not be reconciled to his will, regardless of the transformative imagination as a reconciling strategy, Wordsworth simply “yielded up moral questions in despair” (X 900). In utter intellectual and spiritual crisis, Wordsworth repudiated not just Godwinism but also the transformative imagination and the earlier reconciliatory strategies.

* * *

In Books VI-X, the transformative imagination had offered Wordsworth a convincing ability to reconcile material experience and the determinism of behaviour to a notion of free will, even on a large social scale. But the failure of the French Revolution to bring about enthusiastically expected social change, and structurally comparable personal frustrations of will, resulted in a personal crisis and Wordsworth’s repudiation of Necessarianism. If experience and individual life were deterministic, and yet led to such tragedies as the deterioration of the French Revolution into regrettable violence and pan-European war, then determinism was unacceptable. If experience and individual life were non-deterministic, and yet led to regrettable violence and pan-European war, then free will was unacceptable. To counter completely irrational ontological propositions,

Wordsworth needed another irrational proposition, an experience of mind that would transcend material experience entirely.

The Transcendent Imagination

By the period described in Book XI, the failure of the French Revolution to lead to the betterment of society, and other more immediately personal frustrations of will, had brought Wordsworth to philosophical crisis. But Wordsworth did not wish to wallow in depictions of his “loss of hope”, since “not with these began / Our song, and not with these our song must end” (XI 6-8). Nonetheless, all of his beliefs, including his theoretical confidence in a positive finalistic necessarianism, against which he had anti-deterministically developed the transformative imagination, were repudiated, leaving Wordsworth feeling that

Thus strangely did I war against myself;
A bigot to a new idolatry,
Did like a monk who hath forsworn the world
Zealously labour to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength (XI 74-8).

Of the vocation of poets, he despaired that “Their sentence was, I thought, pronounced - their rights / Seemed mortal, and their empire passed away” (XI 94-5). So complete was the failure of Wordsworth’s radical philosophy and so dark the resulting ideological vacuum, that he asked “what then remained in such eclipse, what light / To guide or cheer ?” (XI 96-7).

Wordsworth was not alone in repudiating, or in at least beginning to worry about, determinism and necessity. Newton, Hartley and the other philosophers discussed, were able to remain optimistic only because “the full implications of billiard-ball determinism became only gradually apparent” (Thorslev 27). These “full implications” had become apparent to Wordsworth when he wrote that “a multitude of forces, unknown to former

times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor” (Sheats 792). Having rejected necessity and determinism as notions that could be acceptable in practice, and therefore no longer troubled by a philosophical need to reconcile his free will to determinism, Wordsworth had recourse to

the laws of things which lie
Beyond the reach of human will or power,
 The life of Nature, by the God of love
 Inspired (XI 97-100, emphasis added).

Wordsworth could, at this stage, disregard the indignities of bodily existence, seeking freedom at a traditionally Cartesian source

More subtle and less easily explained,
 That almost seems inherent in the creature,
 Sensuous and intellectual as he is,
A twofold frame of body and of mind:
 The state to which I now allude was one
 In which the eye was master of the heart,
 When that which is in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses gained
 Such strength in me as often held my mind
 In absolute dominion. (XI 166-76)

In order to explain the range of contradictory experiences that he had thus far encountered, but to avoid the then rejected principles of deterministic materialism, “Wordsworth, following the lead of many philosophers, theologians and poets, conceive[d] of nature as a spirit, a soul of things, an active principle” (Beech 203). By returning to a Cartesian duality of “body and of mind”, involuntarily experienced materiality may be associated with the realm of the mere body, while “the most despotic of the senses”, the transcendent imagination, may remain completely unfettered. We may

therefore note “in our existence spots of time” (XI 257), moments where the power of the imagination is revealed. Wordsworth writes that

This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life in which
We have had deepest feeling that *the mind*
Is lord and master, and that outward sense
Is but the obedient servant of her will. (XI 257-72, emphasis added)

Though this mode of imagination also asserts free will, it does so not by non-dualistically transforming, but by completely transcending material experience. “Outward sense” is not merely reconciled to free will nor yet transformed into a manifestation of free will, but is made its “obedient servant”. Chandler writes that this expressed mode of imagination “constantly admonishes us to put our faith in the divine word of which the human word can never be more than an imperfect echo” (Chandler 230).

Testing the transcendent imagination for anti-deterministic effectiveness,

Wordsworth returned to his childhood once more, to an occasion when

some mischance [and not a deliberate decision]
Disjoined me from my comrade, and, through fear [not courage]
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and stumbling on [not following a confident path], at length
Came to a bottom where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains [physically bound until death].
(XI 284-9)

This episode of the gibbet-mast illustrates the “spot of time” experience, wherein a past event is recollected in a moment of tranquillity via the poet’s transcendent imagination. Though Wordsworth described himself as “faltering, and ignorant where I was” (XI 299-300), and though he only “at length...*chanced* to espy” the nature of the site whereupon he stood, and even then saw a girl who could only barely make progress “against the

blowing wind” (XI 307), these evidences of determinism and necessity became associated with “the spirit of pleasure and youth’s golden gleam” (XI 322) and so were lit by a “radiance more *divine* / From these remembrances, and from the power / They left behind” (XI 323-25, emphasis added).

Similarly, while recording “all the business of the elements / The single sheep, and the one blasted tree, / And the bleak music of that old stone wall” (XI 376-8), Wordsworth imaginatively described with “deepest passion” (XI 373) the vivid memory of the location where he had huddled waiting for the coach to take him home from school one Christmastime, during which season of merriment his father would die. With retrospectively applied imagination, Wordsworth succeeded in shaking off the harshness and determinism of that event, transcending human mortality. While still necessarily affected by material things, at the time described in Book XI, Wordsworth’s “youthful trust in [deterministic] natural influence gave way to an affirmation of the immortal and supernatural powers of the human mind” (Sheats xl).

* * *

If the transcendent imagination allowed Wordsworth to live contentedly with his material circumstances, it remained to be proved whether others could also benefit from this anti-deterministic strategy. Showing renewed social concern, Wordsworth wrote that “I found / Once more in man an object of delight / of *pure* imagination” (XII 53-5, emphasis added). Recognizing that the imagination tended to be impaired by dislocation from Nature, as was the case in urban and industrial centers, Wordsworth wondered whether even the “pure” imagination might in fact be developed in urban populations,

engendering a more healthy and contented society. He asked “what bars are thrown / By Nature in the way of such a hope ?” (XII 92-101). Coming very close to acknowledging a problem in his efforts to reconcile will and materiality, or to overstep materiality entirely via the transcendent imagination, Wordsworth considered whether “our animal wants and the necessities / Which they impose, are these the obstacles ?” (XII 94-5). Rightly, Wordsworth asked whether the physical impossibility of voluntarily overriding corporeal features by acts of mind is what limits the imaginative faculty from generating social idealism.

Wordsworth then wrote that “such meditations bred an anxious wish / To ascertain how much of real worth, / And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind, / Did at this day exist in those who lived by bodily labour” (XII 97-101). Thus, and with increasing “gratitude to God” (XII 275), Wordsworth proceeded to examine the common man to ascertain whether life in immediate contact with urban materiality could yield the same transcending imaginative power that he himself exercised. To his sadness, Wordsworth observed that the exposure of the common man to material necessity did not in fact yield up a fertile social imagination nor had it enhanced society. On the contrary, “awed have I been by strolling bedlamites” (XII 158), victims of their own chained minds, and he concludes that

where oppression worse than death
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And labour in excess and poverty
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affections, and to Nature’s self
Oppose a deeper nature – there indeed
Love cannot be; nor does it easily thrive
In cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed (XII 194-203)

But, having discovered that subjection to materiality was indeed crushing in others, Wordsworth's own transcendent imaginative power intervened. "About this time did I receive / convictions still more strong than heretofore" (XII 278-9). Some of these received, or uncaused and therefore transcendent convictions, included the faith that

men may be found of other mold than,
Who are their own upholders, to themselves
Encouragement, and energy, and *will*,
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
As native passion dictates (XII 260-4, emphasis added)

Though Wordsworth had vowed to make "verse / deal boldly with substantial things" (XII 233-4), we do not really know who these people are, as they were produced by Wordsworth's imagination and do not actually populate the text of Book XII. Yet, based on the transcendently assumed existence of these people, perhaps living simply in community with Nature in such poems as "Michael", Wordsworth was able to reaffirm his role as a poet unto whom

had also been vouchsafed
An influx, that in some sort I possessed
A privilege, and that a work of mine,
Proceeding from the depth of untaught things,
Enduring and creative, might become
A power like one of Nature's. (XII 307-12)

If there were indeed people having active and socially constructive imaginations, then Wordsworth could be their prophet and, with his guidance, necessity and determinism, that "array / Of outward circumstance and visible form", might be imaginatively transcended, becoming "to the pleasure of the human mind / What passion makes it" (XII 286-93).

* * *

In concluding his narrative, Wordsworth appropriately returned to an autobiographically factual struggle with materiality and the imaginative reaction that it provoked in him. Recalling his walking tour of Wales of 1791, Wordsworth described how, “with forehead bent / Earthward, as if in opposition set / *Against an enemy*, I panted up / With eager pace” towards another spot of time, the peak of Mount Snowdon (XIII 29-32, emphasis added). In the context of the continuous physical resistance that the inclination of the mountain offered to each exertion of his body and to his striving will, a phenomenal experience began to gather in Wordsworth’s mind,

When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash” (XIII 36-40, emphasis added).

Though the material scene before him was “grand in itself alone” (XIII 62), it is rendered all the more impressive by its attainment in a state of anti-deterministic effort, opening up the mind of the author to “that dark deep thoroughfare [...] the soul, the imagination of the whole” (XIII 64-5). This sublime experience, in that it “fell like a flash”, was not the product of rational consideration, nor of any deliberate creative act, but descended upon him as “the perfect image of a mighty mind, / Of one that feeds upon infinity, / That is exalted by an under-presence, / The sense of God” (XIII 69-72).

In this state of spiritual insight, Wordsworth discerns that the purely imaginative mind has such transcendent power over material experiences that it

moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
 Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
 Doth make one object so impress itself
 Upon all others, and pervades them so,
 That even the grossest minds must see and hear,
 And *cannot chuse* but feel. (XIII 79-84, emphasis added)

The mind that here “cannot chuse” was not a mind that interacted with corporeality in any way. This mode of imagination, though it “cannot chuse”, is not submission to an external necessity nor even to any internal determinism, but is a demonstration reversing the conclusion of Book XII, asserting that “even the grossest minds”, those people crushed the unnaturalness of the inner cities, may enjoy a miraculous access to spiritual agency. All people may interact with this force, “the glorious faculty / Which higher minds bear with them as their own” (XIII 89-90, emphasis added).

Though Thorslev’s assessment that Wordsworth was a rationalistic Necessarian for many of his most productive years seems amply justified, by the time of writing Book XIII, the anti-deterministic motive to exert the will against materialism in all its forms had gradually but entirely transferred Wordsworth’s allegiance from determinism to “communion with the invisible world” (XIII 105). The philosophical conception of mind that Wordsworth took into adulthood was that “minds are truly from the Deity” (XIII 106), exempt from material pre-ordination and limitation, holding that “this alone is genuine liberty” (XIII 122). The evidence of the later books seems to confirm that Wordsworth had almost entirely abandoned Hartleianism and Godwinism well before completing The Prelude of 1805. In these last books, and especially in this final book,

the mind of man becomes
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
 On which he dwells, *above the frame of things*
 (Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
 And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine. (XIII 446-52, emphasis added)

Having now a divine notion of the imagination to deploy against any historical experience, even flimsiest of philosophical efforts of the earliest books of The Prelude are retroactively reinforced. Though unsatisfactory as reconciliations of will to deterministic and necessary experience, the struggles and failures of the younger Wordsworth might then be seen as the gradual burrowing and interim realizations of the divinely transcendent imagination in Wordsworth's mind. Even in the most philosophically discordant works of art, every image transcribed from experience into abstraction hints at transcendence and immortality.

In a final example of the application of the transcendent imagination, Wordsworth reports the death of Raisley Calvert, a friend who left the poet nine hundred badly needed pounds. This friend's death is described not as a regrettable incident, but as an opportunity for the poet to free himself of material concerns. Wordsworth was not, in this, being cold nor was he being avaricious, but rather, by deploying the transcendent imagination, he simply escaped being "damped too soon by mortal cares" (XIII 359-60) and was so empowered that he could record the death of a friend for its good rather than its evil.

Though Wordsworth claimed that

I never in the 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;
 But rather did with jealousy shrink back
 From every combination that might aid
 The tendency, too potent in itself,
 Of habit to enslave the mind (XIII 131-9)

he was in fact almost continuously, most conspicuously, and most consciously guilty of interpreting his personal experience in a way that discovered freedom and willfulness where there was initially little or none.

* * *

In Books XI through XIII, Wordsworth discovered and explored a mode of imaginative life very similar to the transformative imagination developed prior to the Revolution and his personal crisis. The transcendent imagination, as conceived and illustrated by the poet, while co-located with the body and with deterministic forces, was however completely independent of these material circumstances, whether pleasurable or harsh, and so could not conflict with philosophical principles or material history in any way. The transcendent imagination is glorious, underlying Wordsworth's greatest works, and prepared the way for a fully dualistic Christian spirituality into which the maturing Wordsworth would evolve.

Conclusion

The theoretical and rhetorical reconciliation of deterministic experience to free will, or the transformation of deterministic experience by the imagination, and finally the transcendence of material experience by the imagination, are all anti-deterministic strategies deployed by Wordsworth to explain his more undesirable personal and social experiences.

In the deployment of strategies for asserting free will in the face of necessity and determinism, there is invariably some form of transformation of harsh reality without actually disputing or combatting it. Chandler concludes that “the process of resolution managed to leave its mark on the poetry [of Wordsworth] in the form of disguise, distortion, and dislocation” (Chandler xviii). McGann feels similarly that “the poetry of Romanticism is everywhere marked by extreme forms of displacement and poetic conceptualization whereby the actual human issues with which the poetry is concerned are resituated in a variety of idealized localities” (McGann 1). Though these terms are accusatory, the transformational processes at work in Wordsworth are not obviously escapist or irresponsible in *all* cases. Certainly, as a means of asserting the will against the genuinely inalterable and unpalatable facts of aging, inability, effort and death, the final reconciliatory strategy, the transcendent imagination, is a beneficial coping mechanism. However, in dealing with some situations in The Prelude, and more particularly in the other contemporary poems having precise ethical subjects, where the harsh realities that are addressed by the imaginative will are not fully inalterable by practical human effort, Wordsworth’s resort to anti-deterministic strategies may be socially counter-productive. Had Wordsworth himself been subjected to starvation,

infirmity or ignorance, the various anti-deterministic strategies developed and deployed in The Prelude (superimposition, compatibilism, alien selves, submerging, authorization, participation, and transformative and transcendent imaginations) would likely have been of little comfort to him. It would almost certainly have proven unsatisfactory to Wordsworth, had he been starving, to have known that unavoidable suffering is consistent with free will so long as the sufferer recognizes or fancifully elaborates their starvation as an involvement in a larger Natural narrative using their transcendent imagination. The effect of much of Wordsworth's poetry, unfortunately, is the proposal of flights to philosophical reconciliations and to modes of the imagination when more practical actions would have been of far greater value to persons suffering under the more mundane forms of necessity in which human beings unaccountably find themselves.

For instance, "The Old Cumberland Beggar", Wordsworth's 1797 appeal to the legislative powers not to enact laws that would render beggary illegal, is a curious and questionable assertion of the right to uninterrupted isolation. While the political situation to which he addressed himself was no doubt intricate, Wordsworth's position was essentially that the Poor Laws allowing society to confine beggars for lack of visible means would deprive man of the fundamental dignity of free will and would simply "make him a captive !" (Sheats 93). Wordsworth also argued that captivity should be socially unacceptable because, though beggary is perhaps a sad life, the beggar actually serves an important social function, to wit, "where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds, / The mild *necessity* of use compels / To acts of love" (Sheats 93, emphasis added). In accordance with the associationist model of necessary or conditioned interaction between people, the beggar engenders a sympathetic pleasure in those who contemplate their own

did he feel his faith;
 There did he see the writing – all things there
 Looked immortality, revolving life,
 And greatness still revolving, infinite (Wordsworth, as cited in
 Butler 400),

should become so ill that he is left no option but to sell the withered remnant of his life as cannon fodder, desperately contributing thereby a few pence to his wife and children.

It is very unsatisfactorily explained how, following her husband's departure, Margaret should lose her first child, then her dignity and optimism, then her second child, and then, presumably, her own life. "Margaret is eventually overcome, like the ruined cottage itself, by the calm oblivious tendencies of nature. The interpolated tale leaves us with no sense whatever of human complicity in the causes of her suffering and death" (Chandler 135). Rather than realistically depicting the causes, and not just the superficial effects of and anti-deterministic reaction to materialist necessarianism, which would have motivated an improvement in rural medical services, Wordsworth created a poem wherein "grief itself becomes the occasion of a feeling happier" (Chandler 136).

When the story of Margaret and "The Ruined Cottage" is later retold in The Excursion, Wordsworth further distanced himself from the harsh reality of his own story by placing the Wanderer between his own persona and the events narrated. Why did Wordsworth not tell the tale directly, as his own experience? The answer, I think, is that his immediate self, a theoretical and optimistic necessarian, was unable to confront the deterministic implications of such a completely materialist history. To survive psychologically, Wordsworth created a false distance between himself and his alien selves, allowing him to envision experiences within a larger imaginary panorama, imposing creative and optimistic purpose upon what is so palpably a tragic, inalterable

kindness when offering aid to the destitute. Wordsworth demands that, instead of taking the beggar captive, the authorities “let him be *free* of mountain solitudes; / And have around him, whether heard or not, / The pleasant melody of woodland birds”, where he may, in seeing the sun and moon rise, “find a *free* entrance to their languid orbs” (Sheats 95-96, emphasis added), which, in wintertime, would condemn the Old Cumberland Beggar to a lonely and certain death by exposure.

Nowhere in “The Old Cumberland Beggar” did Wordsworth deplore the material suffering of beggary, its necessarian origins in a poorly managed transition from agrarian to industrial economics, and its deterministic entrapment of a mind within its own depressing circumstances. Were the material facts of beggary realistically depicted, the anti-deterministic reaction that beggars should be allowed to freely practice their beggary, would never have been motivated. Were an anti-deterministic motive not at work in Wordsworth’s thought, a practical anti-poverty solution might instead have been proposed.

In “The Pedlar”, the original version of “The Ruined Cottage”, begun in 1795 and finished in 1798, a similar transformation of material experience is proposed. In this poem, the central character loses what little financial stability her family could maintain when her husband becomes seriously ill. It is not explained why this man, who is idealized for having “early learned / To reverence the volume which displays / The mystery, the life which cannot die” (Wordsworth, as cited in Butler 400), the Bible, and who is further distinguished from vulgarity by a love of Nature wherein he

and still repeating deterministic fact of life – that harsh things happen to the body regardless of what the mind wishes or chooses. By placing the story in the words and actions of other characters and alien personae, Wordsworth granted himself the function of anti-deterministic editor of unacceptable history. Arguably, a mature necessarian thinker would have confronted the facts of determinism in the story of Margaret and the ruined cottage, and would not, like the boy he had been, have turned his boat away from the looming deterministic cliff to return to the safety of his transcendently imaginative will.

Similarly, in “Michael”, written in 1800, the deeply personal and moving human story depicted is but a transcendence of a material reality. Wordsworth spent the bulk of the poem’s lines convincing us of a profound emotional attachment of the shepherd to his land and to his son. Yet we were not presented with much realistic detail of the work or the psychologies of these characters. Surely Michael’s Job-like submission to a tragic fate could not be so utterly uncomplicated by anger, embarrassment, self-accusation and bitterness ? Surely, the work of the shepherd for which Michael had raised up his son, was not really such golden pastoral occupation that it was uncomplicated by injury, numbing cold, self-doubt, stultifying boredom and the social ignorance that comes from near-total isolation ? We read nothing of broken fingers, furious kicking of fence posts, the bleating of sheep awaiting their turn to have their throats cut, etc., all of which would have been very much part of a shepherd’s life, but which Wordsworth ignored in contriving a story that was really his own deployment of philosophically reconciliatory transcendent imagination, and not an effort to lighten the burden of the common man.

In “Resolution and Independence”, written in 1802, there was again the raising up of a man to the height of heroism, who was in fact destitute and pathetic, who waded about in muddy ponds allowing leeches to adhere themselves to his flesh. This man stands “*unawares*” and merely “seems a *thing* endued with sense: / Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf / Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself; / Such seemed this Man, *not all alive nor dead*” (Sheats 281, emphasis added). However impressive, the character of the Leech-gatherer is not only unrealistic, but is actually a watering-down of the historical truth of this unhappy fellow. Notes taken by Dorothy indicate the full harshness of the material circumstances to which this paragon of human ascendancy was in fact submitted. While walking together, Dorothy and Wordsworth had

met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders...Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a night-cap...He had dark eyes and a long nose...He had had a wife, and “a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with two children”. All of these were dead but one...His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce...He lived by begging...He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broke, his body driven over, his skull fractured (Clark 75-6)

Though the poem may be considered a glorification of the human capacity to endure with dignity the hardships of mind and body, “Resolution and Independence” is composed anti-deterministically, in reaction to “the fear that kills; And hope that is unwilling to be fed” and disregards the harsh, even shocking, facts of a miserable material existence too difficult for Wordsworth to honestly address (Sheats 282). On June 14, 1802, Wordsworth wrote to Sara Hutchinson regarding the character of the Leech-gatherer that, like the argument for the allowance of beggary based on the self-reflecting pleasures of charity, “it is of the utmost importance that you should have had pleasure from contemplating the fortitude, independence, persevering spirit, and the

general moral dignity of this old man's character" (Clark 255). Though the Leech-gatherer's existence was extraordinarily harsh and "the poem is not precisely a celebration of this state of affairs, we are nonetheless not asked to consider how it might be changed" (Chandler 92).

The deployment of imaginative creativity to transform or transcend one's harsh experience is not uncommon. It is well known in psychological circles that "autobiographical memory is socially and culturally constructed" (Paul. J. Eakin, in Schacter and Scarry 295) and Freud spent considerable time "pointing out the various ways an original content has undergone distortion – through ... the replacement of necessity by choice" (Freud xix). Such poems as "The Old Cumberland Beggar", "The Ruined Cottage", "Michael", "Resolution and Independence", and others, all written during the period of composition of The Prelude of 1805, are however particularly powerful and well-loved examples of recourse to strategies of reconciliation with free will that are not of benefit to those with whom Wordsworth genuinely sympathized. Yes, death should be confronted anti-deterministically, with whatever abstraction makes it palatable, because it ultimately *must* be accepted, but against starvation, loneliness, disease, disgrace, ignorance, destitution, unwanted pregnancy, political injustice, and other necessary and deterministic and necessary impositions of the world with which Wordsworth dealt, flight to imperfect compatibilisms and imaginative transcendence only ignores the suffering at large and disregards opportunity for practical human agency and intervention.

In The Prelude, "Wordsworth narrated with great fidelity and patience the processes by which he was able to convince himself that man is a free agent. He was

thus able to make the poem a testimony to human sovereignty, to the power of “man’s unconquerable mind” (Drew 173). Wordsworth’s poems, while indeed being wonderful works of mind, are wonderful in large part because they develop an emotionally triumphant narrative outcome against deterministic and necessary experience before readers who need such arguments to use against their own harsh experiences. The essence of this poetry is then not the legitimate triumph of the will, but an interpretive complicity between author and reader to engage in self-delusion as regards deterministic experience.

With time and advancing maturity, Wordsworth came to believe that determinism and necessity were completely irreconcilable with free will and happiness, and that only a form of spiritual transcendence could dignify humanity. In editing The Prelude for eventual re-publication in 1850, after his inevitable death, Wordsworth carefully modified and retained a preliminary acknowledgement of determinism in Book I, writing that, as a young poet, he had passed his days “in contradiction; with no skill to part / Vague longing, haply bred by want of power, / From paramount impulse not to be withstood” (1850, I 237-40). By anti-deterministically asserting free will against this condition of subjection to material circumstances at all times during his philosophical growth, and by finally finding the reconciliation of these harsh and inalterable experiences to free will only in a *transcendent* imagination, Wordsworth set a new standard for introspective poetry, “revived religious faith” (Reed 197), “set the tone for a characteristic Victorian outlook” (Reed 197), but also neutralized his otherwise active concern for the common man.

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