History and Autobiography: The French Revolution in Wordsworth's *Prelude*

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In 1856, Alexis de Tocqueville published what Francois Furet has recently designated "the most important book of the entire historiography" of the revolutionary period—namely, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*.[1] Having analyzed the origins of the Revolution in this remarkable book, Tocqueville then set out to write a history that would represent the minds of those who lived through it: "Not what is said about them or what they said about themselves later, but what they themselves said at the time, and, so far as possible, what they really thought."[2] But Tocqueville brought to this daunting task a constitution ravaged by sickness, and sickness spawned the metaphors with which he represented the Revolution to himself. It was, he wrote,

> a *virus* of a new and unknown kind. There have been violent revolutions in the world, but the character of these Revolutionaries is so immoderate, violent, radical, desperate, audacious, almost insane yet powerful and effective as to have no precedents, it seems to me, in the great social agitations of the past. . . . Beyond everything that can be explained in the French Revolution there remains something unexplained in its spirit and its acts. I sense where this unknown object is, but try as I may, I cannot lift the veil that covers it. I grope as if across a foreign body that prevents me from quite touching it or seeing it. (Palmer, 242)

In its metaphors of disease, its string of epithets ("immoderate, violent, radical"), and its characterization of the Revolution as a veiled exotic body, this passage shows signs of the "male hysteria" that Neil Hertz finds in the writings of nineteenth-century French reactionaries—including Tocqueville himself.[3] For Hertz, in fact, Tocqueville is a cocksure reactionary who knows exactly how to categorize the rebellious "other," how to diagnose a political disease on the spot. But Tocqueville's view of the French Revolution is not at all categorical. Unlike the "incurable malady" of the old regime, which he lucidly classifies in his book, the virus of the French Revo-

lution is for Tocqueville *inexplicable*—"something peculiar that I sense without being able to describe it well or analyze its causes" (Palmer, 242).

Tocqueville's second metaphor for the Revolution reinforces this point. A veiled foreign body is exotic, covertly female, and decidedly "other," but it cannot be easily attached to the menacingly serpentine head of the Medusa, the sign with which—according to Hertz—reactionaries categorized the revolutionary threat to patriarchy and familial order. The veiled foreign body eludes classification. It signifies a Revolution wrapped in language—a language hardly translucent, let alone transparent, a language that keeps Tocqueville from "quite touching . . . or seeing" his subject. In his struggle to grasp the foreign body of the Revolution through the veil of language left by its participants—by their private correspondence even more than the official record of their debates (Palmer, 242)—Tocqueville reminds us that all historians, whether of a public past or a private one, must reckon with the problem of mediation: with everything that falls between the historian and the period he tries to represent.

As the historian of his own revolutionary self in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth struggles to see it through a veil of intervening inhibitions. Scholarship alone has unveiled what his seemingly exhaustive autobiography conceals about his year in France: his affair with Annette Vallon, the foreign body who gave birth to their daughter in December 1792, shortly after his return to England. But no historian can directly touch the foreign body of his subject, and if there is an appreciable gap—as Tocqueville implies—between what the contemporaries of the Revolution said at the time and "what they said about themselves later," we must wonder whether anyone who lived through the Revolution can fully recover even his own experience of it. Like Tocqueville, Wordsworth saw the Revolution as a "fever," and one of the things he remembers thinking at the time of the Revolution was that it would make "a mockery" of historical representation: "O laughter for the page that would reflect / To future times the face of what now is!"[4]

Yet this is precisely what Wordsworth tries to do in his own history of the Revolution—a history that he locates within his autobiography, which he calls "the history of a poet's mind" (*Prelude*, 13.408). At one and the same time, he seeks to tell his own story and to retrace the course of the Revolution, or more precisely to convert the bewildering mass of events that we now collectively call the French Revolution into an intelligible and meaningful shape: a shape that could take its place in what he conceived as the providential design of a life destined to make him a poet. To fully understand Wordsworth's way of representing the Revolution, therefore, we must reckon with four different elements. There is first the viewpoint

of the generative "I" who remembers and writes. Second, the viewpoint ascribed to the "I" of his remembered self. Third, the external record of what the remembered self thought and experienced during the Revolution—the extant record of what was written by, about, and to him at that time. Finally, there is the public record of the Revolution, the independent evidence for such events as the storming of the Bastille and the execution of Louis XVI.

These four elements variously cooperate and conflict in Wordsworth's poem. While the viewpoints of the generative "I" and the remembered "I" sometimes converge, they diverge radically at times, as when Wordsworth records the "painful" truth that he once rejoiced at British losses to revolutionary France (10.259). And some painful truths go unrecorded. When the letters that Annette Vallon wrote to Wordsworth and his sister in March 1793 were discovered 150 years later, they raised a question that must be faced by anyone seriously studying Wordsworth's version of the Revolution: why does he suppress the story of an affair that lasted through nearly all of his year in France? Comparable questions arise when we set the poem beside the public record of the events it re-creates. Why, for instance, does Wordsworth place the invasion of Chartres in the summer of 1790, two years before the public record says it occurred? Why does he tell us that Michel Beaupuy—the would-be hero of the Revolution according to Wordsworth—died in the Vendée rising of 1793 rather than in the battle of Elz three years later, where the public record says he died? To raise and pursue these questions is to enter the mind of an autobiographer struggling to make coherent sense out of memories profoundly disordered by guilt, loss, bewilderment, and pain.

I

The struggle begins with the task of defining his own relation to the revolutionary events he is representing. At times he presents himself as a mere bystander to these events, which seem to thrust him from the center of his own autobiographical stage. Describing the political climate of France in early 1792, he apologizes for turning to himself: "I fear / Now in connection with so great a theme / To speak, as I must be compelled to do, / Of one so unimportant" (9.111–114). With such a statement Wordsworth momentarily abandons the basic assumption underlying his whole autobiographical enterprise, which is that he himself is precisely its most important theme. Revolutionary events—and especially revolutionary figures—made him alternately self-assertive and self-deprecating. Of the events surrounding Louvet's denunciation of Robespierre, he writes:

"These are things / Of which I speak only as they were storm / Or sunshine to my individual mind, / No further" (10.103–06). Yet just a few lines later, he regrets that he himself could do nothing to check Robespierre's lust for power because he was "an insignificant stranger and obscure, / . . . and little graced with powers / Of eloquence even in my native speech, / And all unfit for tumult and intrigue" (10.130–33). Unlike Winston Churchill, Wordsworth could not make himself the hero of a public history because he had done nothing publically heroic. On the contrary, while fervently believing that "the virtue of one paramount mind" (10.179) would "have quelled outrage and bloody power" (10.179–81), Wordsworth himself withdrew from political combat by returning to England. There–as Kenneth Johnston has argued—he could do psychic battle with Robespierre for control of the Revolution and could rejoice at the bloodthirsty Jacobin's fall as if he himself had wrought it.[5] More important, he could "return / To my own history" (10.657–58): to the story of his own development as a poet, to the "heroic argument" (3.182) of a history in which he was unequivocally the hero.

The return to his own history is in many ways the return to a prerevolutionary self. In the final book of the poem, Wordsworth tells us that he experienced a revelation one night upon reaching the moonlit summit of Mount Snowdon in Wales.[6] But the revelation occurred in June 1791, several months *before* he left for his yearlong sojourn in France. And this return to a prerevolutionary moment at the end of his poem prompts us to ask whether Wordsworth simply aimed to cut the Revolution out of his memory, or parenthesize it within the main line of his autobiographical argument. Viewed from the vantage point of what he saw as its ghastly conclusion, Wordsworth's account of the Revolution in *The Prelude* seems in fact a valley of shadow and fear stretching from one elevation to another: from his unconscious crossing of the Alps in book 6 to his sublimely self-conscious conquest of Snowdon in the final book, where he symbolically emerges from darkness into light. By returning at the end of his poem to a moment of revelation that occurred just *before* his major experience of the Revolution, he situates the revelation on the far side of the revolutionary nightmare—as a beacon guiding him out of it. In this light, the bewildering process by which ascent becomes descent in the crossing of the Alps prefigures the ecstatic rise and vertiginous fall of Wordsworth's enthusiasm for the Revolution, and his apocalyptic vision of a height that transcends any measurable summit—the soul's sublime consciousness of "something evermore about to be" in book 6 (6.542)—looks beyond the finite destiny of the Revolution to the mountaintop revelation of the final book, where the moving spectacle of moonlit mist symbolizes the infi-

nite capacity of "a mind sustained by recognitions of transcendent power" (1850 14.74–75). Indeed, Geoffrey Hartman contends that long before the crowning of Napoleon, Britain's declaration of war against France (in February 1793) left Wordsworth "with a hope deprived of the possibility of earthly realization," so that it was bound to become apocalyptic.[7]

Apocalyptic hope surely energized Wordsworth's imagination in the early 1790s. Yet to see such a hope as Wordsworth's solution to the catastrophe of the French Revolution is to overlook a crucial point: throughout the books devoted to his experience of the Revolution, Wordsworth repeatedly invokes the myth of apocalyptic renewal in contexts that undermine its authority. The most striking example is the passage expressing his reaction to the "tidings" of Robespierre's death, which he heard from a traveler as he was crossing the sands of an estuary on the coast of Westmoreland at low tide, with "the great sea . . . / at safe distance, far retired" (10.537,528–29). Like a historian of the Revolution, Wordsworth quotes his own speech—or rather, like Thucydides, he retrospectively constructs a speech that expresses what he felt at the time:

> Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy
> In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus
> Made manifest. 'Come now, ye golden times,'
> Said I, forth-breathing on those open sands
> A hymn of triumph, 'as the morning comes
> Out of the bosom of the night, come ye.
> Thus far our trust is verified: behold,
> They who with clumsy desperation brought
> Rivers of blood, and preached that nothing else
> Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
> Of their own helper have been swept away.
> Their madness is declared and visible;
> Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
> March firmly towards righteousness and peace.' (10.539–552)

The irony of this ecstatic hymn to apocalyptic renewal becomes partly clear some two hundred lines later, when Wordsworth recalls that Robespierre's death did nothing to stop French armies from marching firmly toward aggression and war all over Europe, "chang[ing] a war of self-defence / For one of conquest" (10.791–92). But the real irony of this passage, which concludes book 10 in the final version of the poem, emerges only when we compare it to an earlier passage. When Wordsworth quotes his triumphant proclamation that bloodshed and terror have "now"—in 1794—given way to righteousness and peace, he tacitly reminds us that book 10 begins by describing an equally millenarian reaction to the massacres of early September 1792, when the Prussian capture of Verdun

provoked the slaughter of more than one thousand prisoners in Paris. Recalling his return to Paris in late October, little more than one month after the massacres, Wordsworth writes:

> Lamentable crimes,
> 'Tis true, had gone before this hour—the work
> Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
> Was prayed to as a judge—but these were past,
> Earth free from them for ever (as was thought),
> Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once,
> Things that could only shew themselves and die. (10.31–37)

Here Wordsworth distances himself from the millenarianism he describes by using the passive voice about the recent crimes: "Earth free from them for ever (as was thought)." He did not share this thought. Though he had eagerly read "the master pamphlets of the day" (9.97), he drew little hope from such undecipherable sights as the "black and empty" place de Carousel, where the bodies of those killed in the August 10 storming of the Tuileries had been heaped up and burned by the hundreds. He studied these sights, he says, like a man with an impenetrable book—a volume "written in a tongue he cannot read" (9.52). "Reading at intervals" in his high-perched room at night, he "kept watch" over a city that defied both comprehension and confidence:

> The fear gone by
> Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
> I thought of those September massacres,
> Divided from me by a little month.
> . . . . . .
> 'The horse is taught his manage, and the wind
> Of heaven wheels round and treads in his own steps;
> Year follows year, the tide returns again,
> Day follows day, all things have second birth;
> The earthquake is not satisfied at once'—
> And in such way I wrought upon myself,
> Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
> To the whole city, 'Sleep no more!' . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . at the best it seemed a place of fear
> Unfit for the repose of night,
> Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam. (10.62–82)

The editors of the Norton edition of *The Prelude* call these lines "apocalyptic" (p. 362n). But they actually express a radical critique of apocalyptic expectations—of the belief that murderous violence can suddenly beget an era of irreversible peace. Wordsworth's tropes cumulatively stress the

inevitability of repetition. When he writes that "the horse is taught his manage," he alludes to the fact that the National Assembly regularly met in the *salle de Manège* or Riding Hall of Paris, where horses were taught to move in circles, wheeling round like "the wind / Of heaven" and "tread[ing] in [their] own steps."[8] In Wordsworth's eyes, the Revolution was not so much like a tamed or managed horse as a perpetually driven one: driven to return on itself like wind, tide, and earthquake; driven to reenact Macbeth's regicide—the crime that would let him "sleep no more" (*Macbeth* 2.2.35)—by shortly executing Louis XVI. Apocalyptic expectations did nothing to end violence; they aggravated it. The Terror itself, Wordsworth goes on to say, exploited "the hopes of those / Who were content to barter short-lived pangs / For a paradise of ages" (10.319–21).

In thus demolishing the apocalyptic hope misbegotten by the September massacres, Wordsworth prepares us to recognize the profound irony of his ecstatically millenarian response to death of Robespierre. When he rejoices at the "tidings" of this death, which reached him as he crossed an estuary at low tide, with the "great sea . . . / . . . at safe distance, far retired" (10.528–29) he subtly reminds us of what he has said about the massacres: "the tide returns again."[9] The very image with which he represents the prospect of radical renewal after Robespierre's death actually drags a bloody past behind it. When Wordsworth proclaims the dawn of a new era of righteousness and peace, coming like "the morning . . . / Out of the bosom of the night," he is using a figure embedded in the history of the Revolution and its violence. As Jean Starobinski has shown, advocates of the Revolution typically represented it as "la lumière victorieuse des ténèbres"—light conquering darkness, the dawning of a new day—and in February 1974, Robespierre himself introduced the worst excesses of the Terror by saying, "Let us, in sealing our work with our blood, see at least the early dawn of universal bliss."[10] The fact that revolutionary rhetoric had thus perverted the image of the dawn is clearly implied by Wordsworth's final comment on what the revolution became. With the crowning of Napoleon in 1804, he says, "the sun / That rose in splendor" turned into a piece of theatrical machinery and "[set] like an opera phantom" (10.935–40).

II

In thus deconstructing the revolutionary language of apocalyptic expectation, Wordsworth's history of his own response to the Revolution points the way toward a critical history of the Revolution itself. Francois Furet

has written that "any conceptualization of the history of the Revolution must begin with a critique of the idea of revolution as experienced and perceived by its actors, and transmitted by their heirs, namely, the idea that it was a radical change and the origin of a new era" (Furet 14). In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth represents his younger self as the very embodiment of this idea—as a firm believer in the revolutionary myth of an absolute break with the past. "Dare I avow," he writes,

> that wish was mine to see
> And hope that future times *would* surely see
> The man to come, parted, as by a gulph
> From him who had been. . . . (1850, 12.57–60)

In this startling passage, Wordsworth remembers hoping *for* precisely what his autobiography as a whole aims to prevent—obliteration of the past. This initially seductive prospect eventually threatened to destroy him. To support the revolution, he had to oppose his own country's war against it; and to accept the revolutionary ideal of Reason as supreme arbiter of right and wrong, he had to stifle his customary feelings, "to cut off [his] heart / From all the sources of her former strength" (11.77–78). He could resolve this war within himself only by returning, psychically as well as physically, to his own country. In other words, he had to recapture the very past that his enthusiasm for an apocalyptic revolution had threatened to destroy. This is why *The Prelude* assumes such a radically recursive form: why Wordsworth's account of his experience with the French Revolution is followed by two "spots of time" summoned up from memories of his childhood (11.257–384) and then by the story of the Snowdon ascent, which antedates his year in France. Within the totality of *The Prelude*, then, Wordsworth's history of his response to the French Revolution can be read as a valley of shadow between two peaks, as I have already suggested, or a phase of division in which the bond of unity formed with nature in childhood is violated, so that the final phase is a return to nature and to the self that nature has helped to form.[11]

Ideologically, this return seems overdetermined. Wordsworth returned in order to survive, to become a poet, and to write the autobiographical poem that signs itself an epic by the very act of ending with the story of his return. But this Odyssean repossession of self, nature, and native land closes the poem so firmly that we may hardly know how to open books 9 through 11 without a formula. The usual formula is that these books tell the story of a simple change, of an ideological shift from the remembered revolutionary self to the self that Wordsworth has become—or has recovered—by the time he writes the poem. Within *The Prelude*,

the young radical who rejoiced at British losses in the war against France clearly troubles the middle-aged conservative who finds that fact "painful to record" (10.259). Outside *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's letters and writings of 1793–94 also show that while he at first condoned regicide and violence in unmistakeably Robespierrian terms, the Terror made him "a determined enemy to every species of violence" and in particular to the "execrable measures pursued in France."[12] Given such internal and external evidence of ideological change, we may readily conclude that Wordsworth's chief aim is to narrate this change: to offer us a two-stage story of enthusiastic support for the Revolution followed by disillusionment with it, or a three-stage story in which euphoric enchantment with revolutionary ideals gives way first to resolute acceptance of the violent measures taken to achieve them, and then to repudiation of those measures.[13]

But Wordsworth's narrative does not follow either of these chronologies. Using instead the recursive structure already established in the poem, he puts *after* his account of the Terror the well-known passage describing the Revolution "as it appeared to enthusiasts at its commencement,"[14] and in this passage he dares to use even the auroral figure that revolutionary rhetoric had debased:

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven! O times,
> In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
> Of custom, law, and statute took at once
> The attraction of a country in romance—
> When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
> When most intent on making of herself
> A prime enchanter to assist the work
> Which then was going forwards in her name.
> Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth,
> The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
> (To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
> Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
> The budding rose above the rose full-blown. (10.692–705)

What makes this passage remarkable is not just that it represents an ecstasy of expectation but that it *follows* Wordsworth's account of the Terror. "History," writes C. V. Wedgewood, "is lived forwards but it is written in retrospect. We know the end before we consider the beginning and we can never wholly recapture what it was to know the beginning only."[15] Hence the notes of premonition in this song of anticipatory rapture. In a remarkably close reading of these lines, James Chandler argues that they subtly merge two contradictory points of view: that Wordsworth sympathetically describes the feelings of young English Jacobins at

the outset of the revolution even while echoing Edmund Burke, who denounced the fatuity of believing that traditional "ways / Of custom, law, and statute" were "stale" and expendable, and who—more important—warned against the dangerous enchantments of a rationalism that claimed to be free of all passion.[16]

Burke's influence on Wordsworth's interpretation of the Revolution in *The Prelude* must certainly be recognized. Yet Burke's ideology cannot explain why Wordsworth invokes the myth of paradise to describe the way the world appeared to him and his fellow enthusiasts at the outbreak of the Revolution. To understand Wordsworth's language, we must recall that the whole purpose of *The Recluse*—the philosophic epic for which *The Prelude* would be merely a prelude—was to demonstrate that "Paradise, and groves / Elysian" could be discovered in our own universe by those who looked upon it "with love and holy passion" (*PW* 5:4). The very opening lines of *The Prelude* anticipate this discovery as the wandering Wordsworth, freshly liberated from city walls, wonders where he will alight: "What dwelling shall receive me [?]" he asks. "The earth is all before me" (1.11,15). Echoing thus the very last lines of *Paradise Lost*, where Adam and Eve are expelled from Paradise into a world that spreads out "all before them" (12.646), Wordsworth begins the quest for a paradise of his own. And the question about where he will settle has at least two answers. In the recursive unwinding of the poem, home is at first the "known vale" of Grasmere, a vale remembered from his childhood in the Lake District, a personal paradise which he reenters in order to write *The Prelude* itself. In the later books of the poem, however, home becomes a remembered vision of "the whole earth" re-created as paradise at the beginning of the Revolution. "Why should I not confess," he asks,

> that earth was then
> To me what an inheritance new fallen
> Seems, when the first time visited, to one
> Who thither comes to find in it his home? (10.728–32)

"Why should I not confess?" he asks—as if this enchanting memory were somehow shadowed with guilt. In fact, what is wrong with this memory is that it perpetuates a radically dehistoricized moment: a moment detached from the history that came before it, which assumes the remoteness of a "country in romance," and the history that followed it, which is momentarily erased just after being recorded in book 9 and the first part of book 10.[17] The paradisiacal "home" created by revolutionary promise was placeless and timeless; it existed only for the imagination and survives only in memory. Once it entered space and time, once it entered the his-

tory of France during the Revolution, the paradisiacal home had to be lost before it could in any way be regained. For this Wordsworth needed at once the diachronic structure of narrative and the synchronic structure of prophecy. He found both in the ultimately redemptive myth of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the paradigmatic synthesis of history and prophetic vision. But Wordsworth makes Milton reenter history. He radically rehistoricizes Milton's myth even as he uses it to write a providential history of the Revolution.

III

This ultimately prophetic purpose—this desire to reveal the meaning of what he has personally experienced even as he relives it—makes Wordsworth's history of the Revolution look forward and backward at the same time. Though he scarcely claims to have foreseen at its outset what the Revolution would become, he subtly intimates the course of the revolution even before he begins the narrative of his year's residence in France. In book 6, which tells of his European walking tour in the summer of 1790, he speaks of the joy and benevolence he met everywhere in France during its "golden hours."[18] But his description of the travelers he met on the Rhône—chiefly delegates returning from the Fête de la Fédération—defines a mood of giddiness hovering on the very edge of violence. "Like bees they swarmed," he writes,

> gaudy and gay as bees;
> Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,
> And flourished with their swords as if to fight
> The saucy air. (6.398–401)

Beyond alluding to Milton's description of Satan and his followers as bees swarming in Hell (*Paradise Lost* 1.768–776), Wordsworth represents the newly emancipated France as a precarious paradise: a garden of violence where swordsmen flourish in the saucy air. He thus anticipates the feverish mood of Blois in the early part of 1792, when the daily news from Paris would make one of the royalist officers there reach for his sword "continually" and "the soil of common life was . . . / Too hot to tread upon." (*Prelude* 9.163, 169–70). To show that this potentiality for violence was planted in the soil of the Revolution from the outset, Wordsworth sometimes manipulates chronology. In book 6, describing the convent of the Chartreuse as it appeared to him in the summer of 1790, he claims to have seen at that time something he could not actually have seen for another two years: "Arms flashing, and a military glare / Of riotous men

commissioned to expel / The blameless inmates" (1850, 6.424–426). By conflating the memory of his 1790 visit to the Chartreuse with what he knew about an invasion that took place later, Wordsworth deliberately darkens the remembered light of France's "golden hours."

This proleptic account of the invasion of a monastery in book 6 clearly looks forward to the passage in book 9 that describes what Wordsworth actually saw in the Loire valley during his sojourn at Blois in the summer of 1792: a freshly desecrated convent—"a roofless pile, / And not by reverential touch of time / Dismantled, but by violence abrupt" (9.470–72). Together with news of what French troops were even then doing to the monks of the Chartreuse, here was one more example of the havoc wrought by the suppression of religious orders that had begun more than two years before. But if Wordsworth can remember signs of revolutionary violence from the summer of 1792, he can also remember his friendship in that period with Michel Beaupuy, the army captain who inspired Wordsworth to love the Revolution. Wordsworth's Beaupuy is a walking anachronism. In 1790, the mob attack on the king and queen at Versailles had led Edmund Burke to proclaim, "the age of chivalry is gone" (p. 89). But in Beaupuy as Wordsworth represents him, the age of chivalry was come again—by means of the Revolution itself. Benevolently aristocratic, Beaupuy saw the Revolution as an "old romance" come true (9.307), as a new summons to knightly duty, as a call to serve the poor with the gallantry "Which he, a soldier, in his idler day / Had payed to woman" (9.318–20).

The explicitly chivalric nature of Beaupuy's revolutionary zeal helps to explain why Wordsworth remembers that during their "earnest dialogues" on the banks of the Loire his mind would sometimes slip to thoughts of literary ladies in distress—romance heroines such as Ariosto's Angelica (9.445–456). He also says he was enchanted by the legend that Francis I used torches to send signals from Chambord to the castle of his mistress (9.485–93). But if in fact this story made the young poet look upon those spots with "chivalrous delight" (9.503), he was implicitly accepting in the summer of 1792 the very maxim he would scornfully reject in the winter of 1793: Burke's claim that under chivalry "vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness."[19] Whatever Wordsworth actually thought about this point in 1792, he represents himself as so enraptured by romantic nostalgia in a Loire valley "innocent yet / Of civil slaughter" (439–440) that he failed to grasp the true nature of Beaupuy's chivalry, which lost half its virtue by losing all its effectiveness.

Most critics treat Beaupuy as a hero, the perfect embodiment of chivalric courtesy and revolutionary idealism. But Beaupuy's pretensions to chivalry produce nothing tangibly heroic. In the impressionable eyes of

Wordsworth's remembered self, Beaupuy's finest act is his response to the sight of a "a hunger-bitten girl" creeping along a lane with a heifer tied to her arm (9.512–515). Seeing this modern-day lady in distress, Beaupuy says passionately: " 'Tis against that / Which we are fighting" (9.519–20) These words instantly lead the young Wordsworth to believe that political salvation is at hand. But they have no practical effect on the starving girl, who gets absolutely nothing—not even a word of sympathy—from the benevolent Beaupuy. Flourishing the sword of his rhetoric against invisible enemies, he resembles only too well the *fédérés* of 1790 slashing away at the "saucy air." The hunger-bitten girl is not a human being but an impersonal *that* (actually italicized in 1850, 9.517)—a revolutionary signifier. Instead of asking for help, much less getting any, she simply *denotes* all of the abstract misery that has provoked and justified the Revolution, including the worst of its violence. To end her suffering would be counterrevolutionary. It would end the justification for the fighting to come, and specifically for the "civil slaughter" (9.439) that would soon ravage the Loire valley when the Vendée rising began in March 1793.

Equally ironic is Wordsworth's claim that Beaupuy died in the effort to suppress this reactionary outbreak, that "he perished fighting, in supreme command, / . . . / For liberty, against deluded men, his fellow countrymen" (9.431–34). Since Beaupuy actually died fighting Austrians on the Rhine in 1796, Wordsworth may have simply decided that *his* Beaupuy would die in defense of the Republic, not in what Wordsworth later calls a war of conquest (10.793).[20] But in any case, we know from other sources that Wordsworth's "deluded men" of the Vendée were fighting partly to protest the suppression of religious orders, the very thing that made Wordsworth grieve when it led to the desecration of a convent.[21] Since Beaupuy himself has sworn to serve the poor as if he were taking the vows of "a religious order" (9.312–13), the way he dies in Wordsworth's poem is scarcely more glorious or heroic than the way he died in fact. Either way, we do not learn what Beaupuy's death gained for the hunger-bitten girl.

Wordsworth idealizes Beaupuy because his history of the Revolution needs singular epic heroes—figures like Abdiel and Christ in *Paradise Lost*. Knowing "how much the destiny of man had still / Hung upon single persons" (10.137–38), he hides the fact that Beaupuy's whole regiment was prorevolutionary and represents him as the only "patriot" among a band of royalists (9.296), a single spirit fired by heaven (9.376), "one" called to action by the times (9.407–09).[22] But Beaupuy scarcely acts at all, and to fit him into his history, Wordsworth must temporarily convert it from epic to romance. Essentially, he represents Beaupuy as an ineffectual idealist: a chivalric hero who wanders through the revolution "as through . . . an

old romance" (9.307), who does nothing at all for the only lady in distress he meets, and who is doomed just as soon as his forest of romance—the valley of royal châteaux and love-torches—becomes a place of "civil slaughter."

In the latter half of book 9, the fate of the chivalric romance that Wordsworth tries to construct around the figure of Beaupuy is repeated in the story of Vaudracour and Julia, the passionate young nobleman and the low-born lady in distress who must bear his child out of wedlock because his father will not let him marry beneath his station. Told at length in the early version of *The Prelude* and much abridged in the later one, this story is usually read as a disguised version of Wordsworth's affair with Annette Vallon—something he is often chastised for suppressing. Yet ideologically, Wordsworth's history of his love affair with the Revolution could hardly accommodate the story of his love affair with an active royalist, which is what Annette had become by 1793 if not sooner.[23] So the untold story of Wordsworth's affair with Annette is displaced by the erotic "bliss" of his first enthusiasm for the Revolution (10.689–691) and—more important—by a political parable: a story about two young people doomed to misery by the social code that forbade them to marry. But the real point of the story is that Vaudracour—like Beaupuy—is a feckless reformer. Just as Beaupuy thought he could ride the Revolution with the reins of the chivalric code, Vaudracour thinks he can follow his heart and marry beneath him without renouncing his filial obligations, without violently rebelling against his rigidly aristocratic father. As Kenneth Johnston observes, "Vaudracour is a gradualist; he believes his father's heart will soften at the sight of a grandson. . . . [But he] is driven mad by his failure to resist parental power, even when 'the voice of Freedom' resounding through France could have roused him" (*Prelude* 9.931–934; Johnston 180).

To see Vaudracour's fecklessness as a parody of Beaupuy's ineffectual idealism is to understand why Wordsworth's remembered self undergoes—as we move from book 9 to book 10—a change that mirrors the shift of political power within the Revolution itself: the shift from Girondist idealism to Jacobin terror. This shift also takes Wordsworth's history out of chivalric romance and back to epic, for book 10 has a hero of Miltonic stature: Robespierre. But since Robespierre is also the villain of book 10, he radically intensifies the ambivalence that Wordsworth remembers feeling toward the Revolution. The Wordsworth of book 9 was enraptured by the idealistic aims of the Revolution and alarmed by its potentiality for violence; the Wordsworth of book 10 is at once drawn and repelled by the power of violence itself, by its seeming capacity to work sudden and dramatic change. Hence his barely suppressed admiration for Robespierre,

who confounds his enemies by sheer force of terror and daring. Recalling Louvet's denunciation of him on 29 October 1792, when Wordsworth himself was in Paris, he writes that Robespierre "dared" the man who had obliquely accused him

> To bring his charge in openness. Whereat,
> When a dead pause ensued and no one stirred,
> In silence of all present, from his seat
> Louvet walked singly through the avenue
> And took his station in the Tribune, saying
> 'I, Robespierre, accuse thee!' 'Tis well known
> What was the issue of that charge, and how
> Louvet was left alone without support
> Of his irresolute friends. (10.95–103)

The Louvet of this passage evokes no less than three Miltonic figures. Rising alone from the "silence of all present" at a meeting of the National Convention, he resembles at once Milton's Christ and Milton's Satan, each of whom rose to speak at a council in response to a challenge that left all others "mute" (*Paradise Lost* 2.420; 3.215). Furthermore, in solitarily charging Robespierre with a lust for *supreme pouvoir*—the accusation to which Wordsworth alludes—Louvet resembles Milton's Abdiel, who all alone denounced Satan for claiming a power equal to God's (6.833–40). Unlike Christ and Abdiel, however, Louvet is "left alone without support / Of his irresolute friends"; and unlike Satan, he fades before the power of his adversary, who not only "dared" him to make an open accusation but also—as was "well known"—answered the accusation shortly afterward and went on to attain supreme power nine months later, in July of 1793 (10.103n.).

Like Milton's Satan, Robespierre is also the supreme tempter, the man whose merciless enforcement of political "virtue" nearly seduces Wordsworth himself. On one hand, Wordsworth repeatedly casts him as the devil incarnate. On the other hand, Wordsworth represents himself as having wished for something very close to the kind of leadership Robespierre provided. On leaving France at the end of 1792, he did not doubt that "the virtue of one paramount mind / Would have . . . quelled / Outrage and bloody power" and thus would "have cleared a passage for just government" (10.179–85). Even as he denounces "bloody power," he is asking for radically effective "virtue," for someone like Robespierre, who spoke as the apostle of virtue and declared that terror was "nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice" (Robespierre, 38). Though Richard Onorato sees Wordsworth's Robespierre as "the extreme of what Wordsworth repressed and denied in himself,"[24] Wordsworth *ex*presses his wishes at a level re-

markably close to the surface. Two things, he says, upheld his spirits during the Terror. One was the recollection of ancient prophets who called down divine retribution on wicked places (10.401–408); the other was the fact that he "felt a kind of sympathy with power" (10.416)—a point made even more emphatically in the 1850 version of *The Prelude*:

> amid the awe
> Of unintelligible chastisement,
> Not only acquiescences of faith
> Survived, but daring sympathies with power,
> Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
> Within the folds of no ungentle breast
> Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged? (1850, 10. 454–460)

Even as he writes, Wordsworth feels again a vibrating sense of kinship with power, with radical action, with the spirit of vengeance that drove the Terror itself. In fact, not long after hearing of the "vengeance" cruelly taken by Robespierre upon his native town of Arras (10.460), Wordsworth rejoices "in vengeance" at the news of Robespierre's execution (10.540). Thus the joy of Wordsworth's triumphant hymn is undercut not only by the irony of its millenarianism, as we have seen, but also by its vicarious reenactment of Robespierrian vindictiveness.

Further darkening this would-be moment of renewal in the poem is the striking conjunction of memories that just precede it. First he tells us that the Terror seemed to him an overflowing reservoir of guilt that "burst and spread in deluge through the land" (10.436–39). Then he writes that in the very midst of the Terror, he felt impelled to recall the glad summer of 1790 when he walked through France, and above all to remember

> That day when through an arch that spanned the street,
> A rainbow made of garish ornaments
> (Triumphal pomp for Liberty confirmed)
> We walked, a pair of weary travellers,
> Along the town of Arras. (10.450–55)

Coming as it does just after the figure of the deluge, the image of the rainbow obviously evokes the archetypal moment of renewal in Genesis. But the biblical pattern here is yet again radically revised. Though it once signified Liberty, the remembered rainbow "made of garish ornaments" now prefigures what the crowning of Napoleon did to the sun of revolutionary France, which thereby turned into "a gewgaw, a machine" that set "like an opera phantom" (10.939–40). Just as painfully, the memory of the ornamental rainbow at Arras is inseparably linked to the cruelties perpetrated

by its native son. To walk through its arch in memory is to enter once more the world of the Terror.

Characteristically, however, Wordsworth will not allow the later memory to obliterate the meaning of the earlier one. Seen through the intervening veil of the Terror, the memory of passing through Arras in the "glad time" (10.449) of 1790 now mocks him with a "strange reverse" of associations. But it nonetheless remains a "blameless spectacle" in recollection, and he recognizes its innocence even as its aftermath "almost" leads him to quarrel with it (10.464–66). Thus the strange reverse works both ways. The memory of Terror refracts the earlier memory of joy, but the memory of joy resists annihilation by Terror.

In the later books of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth struggles to find a form that will allow him to repossess his entire experience of the Revolution: the erotic bliss and the shattering despair, the premonition of violence and the indestructible memory of joy, the entrancement with Beaupuy's idealism and the daring sympathies with Robespierre's power. The struggle to write a history of all these experiences led Wordsworth to see that traditional structures of representation—whether literary or historical—could not contain them. Chronological narrative could show how joyous expectation was shattered, but not how the memory of joy survived. Crucial moments in the history of the Revolution could be made to recall the plot of *Paradise Lost*, but the providential design of Milton's epic could not explain how the Revolution undermined the myth of apocalyptic renewal itself. Finally, an apologia for the Revolution—or for his own part in it—could not express the disintegration of Reason, could not speak for Wordsworth's memory of nightmares in which he

> 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. (10.376–80)

As the hopeless process of defending himself before a revolutionary tribunal becomes a nightmarish metaphor for the process of defending the Revolution itself, Wordsworth reveals the impossibility of rationally justifying his commitment to it. He could re-create his experience of the Revolution only by means of the structure he had adopted for *The Prelude* as a whole: the structure of recursive narration. Repeatedly recalling the origins of his enthusiasm for the Revolution, Wordsworth identifies with

his remembered self even as he enables us to see what that self did not foresee. He does not simply show how his past self gradually discovered what his present self knows; he reveals a present self profoundly shaped by the past, a self that keeps alive the "dread vibration" of sympathies with power that he felt at the most violent stage of the Revolution.

The Revolution fired Wordsworth with a love of power that survived the very worst abuses of it. For Wordsworth, revolutionary France briefly embodied the power to change the world radically, to make it universally just, free, and happy. In re-creating his experience of this power, Wordsworth foreshadows its violence and brutality from the beginning, but nowhere does he repudiate power itself. Instead, by embedding the history of the French Revolution within a history of his own life, he sought to show why the power released by the Revolution had to pass from the world of politics, where he "both was and must be of small worth" (10.192), to the world of poetry, where he could demonstrate his spiritually redemptive force.

What he could or might have done, however, is not the same as what he actually did. For all its length and scope, *The Prelude* is a prefatory poem, and Wordsworth never completed the philosophic epic that it was designed to introduce. Instead he struggled to recover something like the mood with which his own experience of the Revolution had begun. When Napoleon was crowned in 1804, Wordsworth believed that the Revolution had come full circle, returning to monarchy like a "dog / Returning to its vomit" (11.362–63). *The Prelude* enacts a quite different return. In its concluding lines, the poem that so poignantly evokes the blissful dawn of the French Revolution returns to a mood of expectation, with a promise that Wordsworth and Coleridge will together show the way to mankind's "redemption, surely yet to come" (13.441). But the revolutionary expectation of imminent apocalyptic change now gives way to the essentially conservative hope of eventual transcendence. Having entered history in search of a heroic redeemer and failed to find one, Wordsworth now looks beyond history—to a vision of the "mind of man" raised "above this frame of things / (Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes / And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)" (13.449–50). For the power to act within history—the power that filled him with admiration and dread—Wordsworth can only substitute the potentially redemptive power of imagination—the hope of something "evermore about to be."

NOTES

1. Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 16.

2. R. R. Palmer, ed. and trans., *The Two Tocquevilles: Father and Son* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 242.

3. Neil Hertz, "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure" in *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 173–74.

4. *Prelude* 9.158, 171–72, and 176–77, in William Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979)—henceforth cited as *Prelude*. Unless otherwise indicated, I quote the version of 1805.

5. Kenneth Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), 181.

6. Wordsworth seems to have created this revelation in retrospect. While we have independent evidence that he climbed Snowdon, we have good reason to doubt that he experienced a revelation there. See Jonathan Wordsworth, "The Climbing of Snowdon" in *Bicentennial Wordsworth Studies*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 8, and Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 8–9.

7. Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787–1814*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971), 245. Jerome McGann has observed to me that Hartman's "apocalyptic" means "psychologically displaced" rather than radically utopian. But Hartman makes it clear that Wordsworth's apocalyptic hope is founded on abandonment of "the past and its institutions" (p. 245), on faith in "abstract individual man" (p. 246), and on the wish such a man should "spread abroad the wings of Liberty" (1850 *Prelude* 11.253). In forswearing the authority of institutions and custom for the theoretically liberating power of the individual man's reason, Wordsworth—says Hartman—becomes "an apocalyptic revolutionary" (p. 246).

8. Ernest de Selincourt, ed., *The Prelude*, 2nd ed. rev. by Helen Darbishire. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 586.

9. Though Wordsworth repeatedly uses the figure of the river to symbolize the movement of his mind in *The Prelude* as a whole (as in 2.214), the sea—and sometimes water itself—signifies destruction and violence in the books on the Revolution. Book 9 begins by comparing the poet's mind to a river that turns back on itself rather than flowing straight to the "devouring sea" (9.4), and in book 10 Wordsworth develops the apocalyptic figure bequeathed to the Revolution by Louis XIV. The Terror, he writes, resulted from

> a reservoir of guilt
> And ignorance, filled up from age to age,
> That could no longer hold its loathsome charge
> But burst and spread in deluge through the land. (10.436–39)

Wordsworth echoes this passage in the lines on Robespierre's death, where he celebrates the overthrow of those "who with clumsy desperation brought / Rivers of blood."

10. Jean Starobinski, *1789: Les Emblemes de la Raison* (Paris: 1973), 7, 31; Maximilien Robespierre, "On the Principles of Moral Policy that ought to Guide the National Convention" (speech of 5 February 1794) in *The Ninth of Thermi-*

dor: The Fall of Robespierre, ed. Richard Bienvenu (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 34.

11. "In three movements of turn, counterturn, and turn again," says Carl Woodring, *The Prelude* "shows how one poet's imagination was formed in childhood; how this imagination was progressively impaired in Cambridge, France, and London; and how it was restored by Nature through the threefold mediation of Dorothy, Coleridge, and the visible universe." *Politics in English Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 102.

12. *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, vol. 1, *The Early Years 1787–1805*, 2nd ed. rev. Chester L. Shaver. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 124, 128. In the unpublished *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* that he probably wrote in February or March 1793, shortly after the execution of Louis XVI, Wordsworth declares: "A time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty. . . . She is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence. She deplores such stern necessity, but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation." *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1:20, 33–34. In his speech on "Moral Policy" delivered a year later, Robespierre justified the Terror in precisely these terms, arguing that "the government of revolution is the despotism of liberty against tyranny" (Robespierre, 39). What Wordsworth calls "the safety of the people" was in fact overseen by the Committee of Public Safety (*Comité de Salut Public*), which was established in March 1793 to enforce the policy of revolutionary violence and which Robespierre soon came to dominate; see J. M. Roberts, *The French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 64, 170. He also delivered "Moral Policy" on its behalf (Robespierre, 32n). For these and other parallels between Wordsworth and Robespierre, see Brooke Hopkins, "Representing Robespierre," in *Romantic History and Myth*, ed. Stephen Behrendt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

13. The full story actually includes a prerevolutionary stage of indifference to the Revolution. Writing to William Mathews on the eve of his departure for France in late November 1791 (*Letters* 1:61–63), Wordsworth makes no mention of the Revolution, and even after passing through Paris he could write to his brother Richard from Orleans on December 19, "We are all perfectly quiet here [ ] likely to continue so" (*Letters* 1:70).

14. The passage first appeared (without a title) in Coleridge's *The Friend* on 26 October 1809. I have lower-cased the title Wordsworth used when he published the passage as a poem in 1815. See *Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940–49), Vol 2 rev. by Helen Darbishire (1952), 264. Henceforth I cite Wordsworth's *Poetical Works* as *PW*.

15. C. V. Wedgewood, *William the Silent, William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, 1533–1584* (1944; New York: Norton, 1968), 35.

16. James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 47–48. This summary of Chandler's argument includes a slight revision of it. Chandler argues that young English radicals would have seen the ways of custom as "unjustifiable, unjust, favoritist . . . and so on" but never "meagre, stale, and forbidding." Yet a boundlessly optimistic faith in the politically redemptive *power* of Reason—which is what Wordsworth here recalls—would have led young enthusiasts to see the ways of custom precisely as "meagre," obsolete

("stale"), and hence feeble in their "forbidding": no more resistant to the inexorable progress of Reason than a "country in romance" would be. This seductive or "enchant[ing]" view of custom that a mature Wordsworth plausibly ascribes to the young English Jacobins is very close to the view that Burke ascribed to the early advocates of revolution, who—he said—saw all traditional usages as "ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated" and "all homage paid to the [female] sex in general . . . as romance and folly." Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1973), 90.

Whether or not the English Jacobins of Wordsworth's passage saw custom as enchanted, they themselves are said to have been enchanted by a bloodless rationalism: by what Wordsworth later calls "the philosophy / That promised to abstract the hopes of man / Out of his feelings" and place them in a "tempting region . . . Where passions had the privilege to work, / And never hear the sound of their own names" (10.806–813). As often noted, "the philosophy" here described is that of William Godwin's highly influential *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). But as Nicholas Roe has recently observed, the coolly ironic tone with which Wordsworth defines Godwinian rationalism obscures the power of its influence upon him in the 1790s. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 7.

17. Lionel Gossman finds the revolutionary moment similarly dehistoricized by Michelet. "The essence of the Revolution, as Michelet presents it to us," writes Gossman, "is something that cannot be sustained in history" (p. 91 in this volume).

18. *Prelude* 6.352–370. This is one of the few retrospective passages in *The Prelude* wholly confirmed by what Wordsworth wrote at the period being recalled. In a letter to Dorothy from Switzerland on 6 September 1790, he says that he has found the French uniformly courteous, benevolent, and cheerful—a whole country "mad with joy, in consequence of the revolution" (*Letters* 1.36).

19. Burke, 89. This claim moved Wordsworth to call Burke an "infatuated moralist" in the *Letter to Llandaff* (*Prose* 35–36).

20. He was, however, *wounded* in the Vendean uprising and his brother Pierre died in it, so Wordsworth may simply have misunderstood what he was told; see Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography: The Early Years, 1770–1803* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 197.

21. The Vendée rising, says J. M. Roberts, was partly provoked "by the increasing ferocity of religious (and, in the end, anti-religious) legislation" (p. 53). When Wordsworth says that a war waged to defend such legislation was a fight "for liberty," he unwittingly reminds us of the last words reportedly spoken by Madame Roland as she went to the guillotine—words to which Wordsworth himself alludes in book 10: "Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!" See 10.352–54 and the Norton editors' note.

The heroism Wordsworth imputes to French troops marshalling for war against Austria in April 1792 is likewise more rhetorical than real—though Wordsworth may have believed in their heroism when, as he says, "the bravest youth of France" were "posting on / To meet the war upon her frontier-bounds" (9.269–272). He represents France as threatened by her enemies and fighting for an unimpeachable cause (9.289–93), but France declared the war simply because the king of Austria—who did not want to fight—was unable or unwilling to disperse the French emigrants gathered in territories belonging to his vassals and adjacent to France (Roberts, 47). As for the heroism of French troops, Wordsworth's letter of 17 May

1792 describes what they had just done in Belgium: "An ignominious flight, the massacre of their general, a dance performed with savage joy round his burning body, the murder of six prisoners, are events which would have arrested the attention of the reader of the annals of Morocco, or of the most barbarous of savages" (*Letters* 1:77).

22. See Roe, 47n. Though Beaupuy's regiment was stationed at Blois (where Wordsworth met him), Wordsworth places him—in effect—among the group of royalist cavalry officers whom he knew at Orleans (men "bent upon undoing what was done" [9.137]). Orleans, where Wordsworth spent the first few weeks of 1791, and Blois, where he spent the spring and summer, become in *The Prelude* just one unnamed "city on the borders of the Loire" (9.39).

23. Moorman, 179. Wordsworth's suppression has been defended and interpreted on various grounds (see for instance De Selincourt, 592), but not—so far as I know—on grounds of specifically political ideology.

24. Richard Onorato, *The Character of the Poet: Wordsworth in The Prelude* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 351.