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Placing the Places in Wordsworth's 1802 Sonnets

STEPHEN C. BEHRENDT

I

Wordsworth's political sonnets of summer and fall 1802 recount the sights and sounds the poet encountered during the brief respite provided by the Peace of Amiens, which enabled him to return to France and to the woman and child who were the physical reminders of the time he had spent there ten years earlier in the spirited days following the French Revolution. Published together in 1807 in *Poems, in Two Volumes*, they juxtapose the dispirited and pathetic state of France in 1802 with the ebullience Wordsworth recalled from that earlier time. More important, the sequence documents his "return" to England, tracing his anticipation of touching English soil again, his landing at Dover, his progress toward London, and his reactions to the capital's decay.¹ Interwoven with this geographical record is a series of carefully structured comparisons of France's intellectual, cultural, and spiritual desolation with the state of affairs in England, a "conservative mythmaking narrative" that turns toward reaffirmation in a vision of a newly—and differently—idealized Britain.²

The sequence traces a "crisis of patriotism" arising from the poet's recognition that, whatever his disappointment with his country's responses to the French Revolution, he could not

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bring himself to desire England's defeat.³ It recounts his paradoxical conclusion that the values embodied in the initial ideals of the French Revolution which he had so much admired and which had been perverted and then lost by 1802 still resided in his native country, albeit increasingly imperiled by the growth of materialist capitalism. Characterized throughout by an ambivalence that reflects contemporary public uneasiness about the Peace of Amiens and its implications,⁴ the sequence foreshadows the militarism of poems (like the sonnet to the men of Kent) composed during the national alarm over the prospect of a French invasion. Yet Wordsworth resists the easy jingoism that pervades the writings of many of his contemporaries and instead reverts back to the model provided by Milton some two centuries earlier in grounding his uneasy optimism about the future in a faith in an informed and appropriately self-aware British citizenry. Wordsworth's increasing militancy reflects the poet's sense both of public duty and private conviction in the years following his visit to France, and the subsequent embrace of patriotic domesticity—of heartfelt Englishness—signaled both in his manner of documenting his return to his homeland and in his immediate marriage to Mary Hutchinson.

The physical locales marking the stages of Wordsworth's journey also mark psychological ones in a no less significant intellectual, psychological, socio-political, and spiritual journey. Having returned to France with a troubling mixture of anticipation and anxiety (influenced alike by his changing political values and his impending marriage), Wordsworth was psychologically predisposed for a traumatic experience. Repudiating France and things French is that portion of the poet's response to this trauma which he renders irreversible by articulating it in the public texts of his poems in terms of renunciation and embrace as England replaces France in the poet's political soul. The other portion of his response, having to do with the personal, domestic sphere, involves Wordsworth's virtual suppression of the history of his relationship with Annette Vallon. Kept nearly invisible in *The Prelude*, this record is also deliberately marginalized and compartmentalized in Wordsworth's various editions of his poems.

The psychological journey included several important displacements. Primary among these is the displacement of Annette Vallon and their daughter Caroline by the implied (if invisible) Mary Hutchinson. This personal, physical (or matrimonial) displacement—so profound that it is manifested “in reverse” by Wordsworth's *not* writing about it—is itself displaced psychologically by the parallel reinstatement of his native country,

England, in place of the temporary intellectual, emotional, and political anchor, France. Judith Page has suggested that Wordsworth's trip to France constituted both a practical and a figurative "divorce" from Annette Vallon.⁵ If so, it is a double divorce that reduces both his romantic relationship and his revolutionary political dalliance to the status of mere unfortunate effects of a regrettably naive and youthful intoxication. Wordsworth grounds these displacements metaphorically in certain crucial passages in the figure of the lover, subsuming the trope of the choice between Virtue and Vice within a larger metaphoric pattern centered upon the prodigal return of the temporarily faithless lover to a native country that is at once mother and lover—even bride.

Wordsworth the private lover deliberately fashions himself as public patriot—as lover of his country who rejects his previous yielding to the seduction of the new and titillatingly hazardous (revolutionary France as well as Annette Vallon) for a renewed fidelity to the former, "proper," and natural/originary (England and Mary Hutchinson). If Wordsworth's child by Annette is the visible reminder of that earlier liaison, his *sonnets* tangibly represent the restored relationship: textual surrogates for the physical children Wordsworth would subsequently father in his new marriage. That new marriage is officially sanctioned (in a way that his physical relationship with Annette was not) both by the sacrament of matrimony *and by its location on English ground*. Moreover, the prodigal return to sanctioned social and political order is cemented by the poet's grouping of these poems under the significant subtitle "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty" in subsequent editions of his poems. Indeed, in preparing his poems for the 1845 edition, Wordsworth tentatively renamed the group "Political Poems," subdividing them into "Political Sonnets with other pieces, dedicated to national Independence and to Liberty" and "Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order."⁶ Wordsworth ultimately rejected this plan, but his coupling of Liberty and Order indicates his renewed appreciation of the long tradition in England which explicitly linked these properties in a reassuring vision of an "established authority" designed to preserve order.⁷

These sonnets comprise a meditation on the person and role of the poet who is drawn in seemingly contradictory directions by compelling imperatives of external, socio-political events and internal, private impulses, and by the tension between "the temptation to despair and the duty to hope,"⁸ which accompany the conflicted role of the alienated and dispirited poet forced to function as example, mentor, and role model. They record

the struggle by not just “the poet” (in an abstract sense) but also Wordsworth himself (in his particular person) to reconcile these disparate impulses. The nineteenth century exhibited, Roger Sale observes, “a particularization, often a localization” in the conception and description of physical place, together with “a conviction that place plays an important part in people’s lives.”⁹ The “places” in these poems become increasingly localized in the external environment first of England and then of Wordsworth’s rural north and in the internal environment of the poet whose view of public political activism is becoming increasingly internalized and rusticated.

Lee M. Johnson succinctly identified the intellectual and emotional poles governing Wordsworth’s 1802–3 sonnets when he observed in 1973 that the focal point of their private substance is in Grasmere while their public form is based in Milton.¹⁰ Dorothy Wordsworth read Milton’s sonnets to her brother at Dove Cottage on 21 May 1802, a date that Wordsworth, curiously, seems to have misremembered—whether innocently or intentionally—as 1801.¹¹ Wordsworth sees Milton less as the committed public activist admired by other Romantics than as the exemplary *person*, a suppressing or transforming of Milton’s overtly political self that reflects Wordsworth’s response to his own personal and public trauma in 1802. Carl Woodring says that these poems progress “from love of soil to love of nation and on to love of state.”¹² But the case can be put differently and with greater attention to the poetry’s internal dimension. For the “places” in the sonnets from this period which Wordsworth included in the “Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty” illuminate the transition from the political Milton to the personal Milton in the poet’s estimation, as Stuart Curran hints in his assessment of the Romantic sonnet.¹³ This shift in the poems’ external geography parallels Wordsworth’s movement from external, public place to internal, private space.

Part of Wordsworth’s trauma in 1802 involved confronting and accepting the reversal of roles that had transformed Britain into the bulwark of liberty compelled to war against an imperialist aggressor that had betrayed the French Revolution’s ideals. In this quandary, Wordsworth shared with many of his contemporaries among *all* political factions an alienation that prompted wholesale reassessments of political realities and political ideals alike.¹⁴ The poems take an increasingly tough stand, striving to unify England in worthy purpose for God and Country (“Nation”) under the banners of righteousness sanctioned and

empowered not just by military might but, more important, by the moral center epitomized by Milton. That center is located in the “week-day man” of common domesticity (including the married Wordsworth selflessly tended by wife and sister), and embodied in the poet Wordsworth who is perused both *in* his texts and *as* a text—just as “London, 1802” entreats his contemporaries to peruse Milton the moral man. Wordsworth’s contemporaries knew about his life (and lifestyle) in the years following 1802, and that knowledge, combined with the deliberate programming in the poems, augmented the image of the poet as the withdrawn (and withdrawing) sage who had inscribed a pattern of prodigality and passionate steadfastness upon a circle that was at once intensely intimate and paradigmatically public.

The broader public context of these poems as literary documents involves still other places. Some of the poems were published (and even republished) in the *Morning Post* before their appearance in 1807 in *Poems, in Two Volumes*. Of the *Morning Post* sonnets, none was published really near either its date of composition (or completion) or the external event it commemorates; only “I Grieved for Buonaparté”¹⁵ even comes close, appearing on 6 September 1802, fifteen weeks after the poet drafted it. Others, like “Calais, August, 1802,” “Calais, August 15, 1802,” “To Toussaint L’Overture,” and “September 1, 1802” were published some five months after their probable dates of composition. More interestingly, poems more explicitly critical of English political policies and domestic practices (like “Written in London, September, 1802,” “London, 1802,” and “Great men have been among us”) did not appear in the press, although more adamantly nationalistic sonnets like “It is not to be thought of” and “When I have borne in memory” did.

The poems published in the *Morning Post* appeared in the physical context of the newspaper, where they were literally surrounded by (news of) the world. Public documents published (i.e., publicized) in a public place, their purely aesthetic qualities were undoubtedly overshadowed by their rhetorical and political impact. Moreover, as we shall see in the representative example of “Composed in the Valley near Dover, on the Day of Landing,” they participate in a public discourse whose central terms enjoyed wide currency. In this respect the sonnets are inherently intertextual, their references extending far beyond the limits simply of Wordsworth’s *oeuvre*. They “play” to popular opinion in denigrating both francophilia and English backsliding (after the sobering fact of the resumption of hostilities) and in contributing to the anxious militancy toward which the entire

nation was moving in 1803.¹⁶ Within this very public forum the poems trace the fears and subsequent reassurance of a representative *articulate* member of the community—Wordsworth speaking (writing) not just as individual (and hence private) citizen but also as public figure. Their publication reveals the poems as calculated gestures of community designed to draw the reader into their author's physical and psychological vicinity through the act of reading, which imaginative activity transcends the limitations of time and space.

But in *Poems, in Two Volumes*, and subsequently, Wordsworth assumes total control over the physical and psychological geography by arranging the poems in a particular (not entirely chronological) sequence within a larger, ostensibly thematic arrangement that governs the volumes. In the process, he also isolates physically—as he has already isolated it psychologically—"It is a beauteous evening," the sonnet about his walk with his natural daughter Caroline. He had composed the sonnet in France in August 1802 when he and his sister had traveled there to "lay to rest at least one ghost from the time's unique blend of personal and public history,"¹⁷ and he placed it within the separate cluster of "Miscellaneous Sonnets" that precede the "Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty."¹⁸ Of course, for the reader, the only delimiters of "time" and "place" are those which the poet provides. Nothing alerts the reader, for instance, to the interpolation in the sequence of later-composed sonnets like "The King of Sweden" or "Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland." That is, the external and internal journey traced in the poems as they appear in *Poems, in Two Volumes* and later assumes a logic of time and place which is at least in part artificial: it is created by the poet's artifice working in concert with the reader's own sense of history and of human behavior, as well as her or his expectation of how sequential texts "work." As Neil Fraistat observes, this mediated process is particularly complicated when it comes to assessing individual poems within the context of the *collections* in which they appeared, because "special demands are placed by the poetry book as a unit on the reader's memory, interest, attention, and mental capacity."¹⁹ Wordsworth's extraordinary attention to the ordering of his collections implies his awareness of how any editorial arrangement can manipulate the reader's consciousness. It seems safe to suggest that in the political sonnets Wordsworth sets out for his readers to retrace, via the reading activity and within their own mental space, his paradigmatic physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual steps. The journey toward law and order represented by the increasing nationalism of the poems

that followed through 1816, and which Wordsworth included in the "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty" in succeeding editions of his works, continues this constructed progression for the reader, even as it traced it for the originating poet.

Because Wordsworth's sonnets are intended for publication, however, they are necessarily liberated from physical, historical place and time. Even that sense of historical moment that pervaded those poems published soon after their composition was lost during subsequent revision and republication. Indeed, the historical moment becomes further detached from any poem within each reader's act of reading, an act that is by definition both historical and ahistorical, temporal and atemporal, a detachment or separation that becomes increasingly attenuated with every passing day and year. This separation of poem from historical moment, text from context, produces for the reader—increasingly so as that reader is located at further chronological remove from the poem's composition and first publication—a significant shift in response. For the reader reads the poem within an increasingly metaphoric intellectual and aesthetic context that militates against the poem's original particularized historicity, locationality, and rhetoricity. The more time passes, the more the act of reading becomes a "hothouse" activity ever more divorced both from its original cultural context and from the intertextual discourse in which in its own time it visibly participated. The poems are dislodged from their original moorings and relocated in places that belong ever more to the reader and ever less to the poet. As the reading acts ripple outward ever further, the texts themselves are increasingly everywhere—having migrated to their diverse readers' mental spaces—and nowhere.

In this light one can understand why Alan Liu regards Wordsworth's texts, individually and in the aggregate, in terms of Lewis Hyde's theories about gifts. Like Hyde, Liu finds in the literary text an artifact whose ultimate "value" lies not in its stature as aesthetic object but rather, like a tool, in the nature of "its function of changing other forms to suit the purpose at hand." Within this essentially rhetorical formulation of "value" any poem's "use" lies precisely within "the open market of multivalent, transformable, and perennially negotiable 'meanings' it passes from hand to hand."²⁰ While this commerce among Wordsworth and his readers ranges from "brutally contestatory" (one thinks of Francis Jeffrey's outburst: "This will never do.")²¹ to "consensual,"²² it is predicated on the implicitly dominant rhetorical strategy the poet adopts in transmitting his poems to

his reader. The part assigned the reader in realizing or performing the text is constrained, invisibly but no less actually, by the poet's rhetorical and textual manipulations.²³ For it is Wordsworth, not the reader, who arranges (physically and intertextually) the texts of the poems, in the process suppressing certain historical, chronological, or (psycho-)biographical facts, altering or enhancing others, and reconfiguring the whole by erecting a scaffolding of referentiality which inevitably dictates much of how a reader organizes and processes her or his responses within the reading process.

Reading is a historical act that holds the potential for ahistoricity in that whenever a text is reread, that activity gathers within an increasingly complex and self-reflexive activity both the present reading and all previous reading acts. Hence every rereading generates both a new, composite, and accumulative poetic text *and a similarly incrementally expanding reader* who is a composite of all previous reading selves. The reading-activity transaction between any reader and any text is at once temporal and locational as well as atemporal and place-less, but it becomes especially interesting with poems like Wordsworth's 1802 sonnets, which are ostensibly tied to determinate time and place. If reading poems within textual environments supervised by their author is "a means of rehistoricizing texts" that locates them at the confluence of various cultural, literary, social, and ideological currents, that activity also reminds us that we are never able entirely to regenerate those contexts.²⁴ Recent New Historicist discourse warns us that as any reading activity draws us nearer the context provided by the historical circumstances surrounding an author (like Wordsworth), it also drives an unavoidable wedge between ourselves and that context, for our reading selves, however attuned to those circumstances they may be, can never become simply metaphysical mediums for reformulating "a past that is continuous with the present."²⁵ We do not simply replicate the past, in other words. Rather, the textual transformations that arise from our readings and rereadings insist upon the irreversible "pastness" of the past and thereby serve as powerful rejoinders to any too-literal insistence upon "original context." They suggest to us that the affinities we discover with texts and their authors, and with the circumstances surrounding their production, ultimately reflect ourselves. Through complicated activities like reading and interpretation (and would-be historical contextualization) we *manufacture* the past, creating in it intimations of a "future" that is exactly embodied in the "present" in which we ourselves live, read, and write. The challenge is to recognize this fact, rather

than assuming that we have discovered genuine affinities which we attribute to our authors when we have in fact merely manufactured them ourselves.

For the (especially) English reader of his own day—and for the more distanced reader of a later day—reading Wordsworth's sonnets becomes a vicarious participation in temporal and psychological activities inscribed within the poetic texts and replayed in the reading activity. In this shared environment, reading the sonnets becomes for the reader an act of love and fidelity whose "patriotic" (i.e., overtly nationalistic) import transcends time and space because love of one's country (and fidelity to that country) presumably also transcend the vagaries of time and space. The sonnets—like much of Wordsworth's writing—invite us to blur the distinction that New Historicism insists that we perceive between the originary author and the reading self. They appeal to the impulse toward community of experience and spirit that was such a powerful unifying force in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and they mount this appeal by positing for the reader a variety of ostensibly shared internal and external attitudes and environments. Reading becomes, under these conditions, an act both of self-love and of renewed commitment to values outside and "above" the spaces inscribed by the individual self and the individual text.

II

"Composed by the Sea-Side, near Calais, August, 1802," the first poem in both the final arrangement and the "Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty" of 1807, introduces several of the sonnets' central images. The "[f]air Star of evening, Splendour of the west" (line 1) is of course the "Star of my Country" (line 2): at once evening star and symbolic emblem of England, the two drawn together as the star appears "stooping, as might seem, to sink / On England's bosom" (lines 3–4). The star, which serves as crest, as jewel in a diadem, approaches the "bosom" of the English land mass. "Bosom" suggests the femaleness of England as Britannia (and prevents reading the star as military decoration pinned on masculine "breast," the word which Wordsworth did *not* select), and initiates the trope of the poet as lover which is borne out explicitly by the final two lines.²⁶ The Miltonic sonnet form bore for Wordsworth a particularly masculine connotation (he praises Milton's sonnets in particular for their qualities of "dignified simplicity and majestic harmony" [*PW*, 3:417], calling them "manly" compositions "distinguished by

simplicity and unity of object and aim, and undisfigured by false or vicious ornaments").²⁷ This makes notable the poet's decision to begin this set of sonnets with what is in effect a political love poem addressed to the absent (female) lover who has "stayed at home," physically as well as figuratively, and whose presence the star epitomizes. At the same time, the image of the star is the one that Wordsworth will subsequently apply to Milton ("Thy soul was like a Star" ["London, 1802"]) in what is itself a "love poem" in literary, political, nationalistic, and *personal/poetic* terms.

The first sonnets immediately indicate the importance of particular place. The sea (the English Channel) physically links the dissociated Wordsworth, standing on French soil, and the shores of his homeland. That Calais was the popular disembarking-point for English visitors lends special topical force to "Calais, August, 1802," which laments the (ast this point) political infidelity of those English nationals who throng to see "the new-born Majesty" (line 7), Napoleon, following the Peace of Amiens. Wordsworth's chastisement of his incautious countrymen prefigures his manner of chiding these same "selfish men" ("London, 1802," line 6) in the poems composed upon his return to London soon afterward.

"Composed near Calais, on the Road Leading to Ardres, August 7, 1802" commemorates Wordsworth's retracing of the route he and Robert Jones had taken on the day in 1790 when Louis XVI swore allegiance to the new constitution, they having arrived in Calais the preceding day (*PW*, 3:453). Wordsworth's misgivings are natural enough, for imperfectly concealed behind the poet's description of the radically altered external scene is the fact of the poet's own internal alteration. No longer the ardent Republican sympathizer eager to take up "[a] service at this time for cause so great, / However dangerous," he is cautious, judgmental, and distanced (*Prelude*, 1805, 10.135–6).²⁸ The hollow greetings of "'Good morrow, Citizen!'" that seem to come from the dead roll off him:

Yet despair
Touches me not, though pensive as a bird
Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare.

("Composed near Calais," lines 12–4)

The concluding image is curiously ambivalent, for though Wordsworth protests that he has escaped despair (which he seems to attribute more to the miserable French of 1802 than

to himself), the image of the exposed bird bespeaks vulnerability, both to the blasts of winter and to the threat of predators.

The political sonnets of 1802–3 make especially compelling reading when we consider them as a response to personal and national trauma which is ritualized (and hence distanced) through the medium of poetry. Richard Swartz remarks that Wordsworth's poetry in general is filled with moments that recall Burke's concept of the sublime, moments that "stabilize change and in the place of changefulness discover the loftiest, most abstract end of aspiration, while locating the source of aspiration in the interior reaches of the psyche."²⁹ External variability is subordinated to internal consistency, in other words. Swartz contends that the experience of the sublime is one of trauma and recovery that leads to greater self-assurance grounded in fuller self-knowledge. Alan Liu concurs, seeing in the political sonnets and elsewhere an antithetical pattern that turns on an ongoing process of "crisis and recovery, inner fall and self-correction."³⁰ To the *citoyens* they had encountered some dozen years before, Wordsworth and Jones "bore a name / Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen" whom the French regarded as "their forerunners in a glorious course" (*Prelude*, 1805, 6.409–12). Ironically, by 1802 Wordsworth had concluded that the name of Englishmen scarcely deserved honor *in England*. The poet's trauma of private (personal) and public (national) self-doubt is a principal impulse behind the sonnets, and the growing militancy of Wordsworth's rhetorical postures there reflect the depth of that trauma and the ardor with which he sought to correct it in print.

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth sees in Robespierre a negative type of his own potential as public figure.³¹ Here he explores analogous relationships with Napoleon (negative) and Milton (positive), both of whom represent particular "types" against whom Wordsworth appears to measure himself. In both "I grieved for Buonaparté" and "Calais, August 15, 1802" ("Festivals have I seen") the poet rejects worldliness and temporal political power in favor of abstract, eternal values to be found in the homelier trappings of "the simple life":

Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,
 Consul, or King, can sound himself to know
 The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

("Calais, August 15, 1802," lines 12–4)

The sources of this liberating self knowledge are significant:

Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
 Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
 Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
 Of the mind's business.

(“I grieved for Buonaparté,” lines 9–12)

The distinctly Godwinian formulations, “perfect freedom” and “talk,” indicate the continuing influence upon Wordsworth of Godwin’s views about philosophical anarchism and the ways to achieve it through public discussion. More important is the populist thrust of Wordsworth’s argument: the fertile ground for cultivating wisdom (which elsewhere bears a more explicitly moral connotation) is the ordinary life of the “week-day man.” The value of such life (and those who live it) increases exponentially as one moves away from the political and population centers; this is why, for instance, the explicit address to the politically powerful appears in the midst of “The Old Cumberland Beggar.” As Alfred Cobban observed, “local patriotism”—the grassroots bonding of the people with their land and the traditional ways of life and thought rooted there—lay at the center of Wordsworth’s political theory.³² Nowhere were the values and virtues of this local patriotism more apparent than among the scattered rural communities that had produced and now housed the poet.

The next three sonnets address the fate of liberty in different locales: Venice, Sweden, and Haiti. The common thread is the pernicious influence of Napoleon, who terminated the Republic of Venice in 1797. Toussaint L’Ouverture was imprisoned in 1802 when he resisted Napoleon’s reinstatement of slavery, and Gustavus IV’s passionate hatred of Napoleon was well-known by 1802.³³ The sonnet on Venice’s fate presages Wordsworth’s fears for his country’s demise, fears that are played out in the poems that follow and finally repudiated in “It is not to be thought of” and “When I have borne in memory.” Writing later in a note, Wordsworth explicitly stressed Gustavus IV’s *moral* qualities for the benefit of those misguided readers “whose besotted admiration of the intoxicated despot hereafter placed in contrast with him, is the most melancholy evidence of degradation in British feeling and intellect which the times have furnished” (*PW*, 3:453). Significant here is the juxtaposition of sobriety and intoxication, the latter of which Wordsworth associates with Napoleon and his British partisans whose political and moral intemperance he has already deplored in “Calais, August, 1802.” Sobriety, on the other hand, characterizes that morally simple life of the “week-day man,” both in the person

of the suffering gallant Haitian and in the figure of moral discrimination and political propriety delineated in these poems.

Having briefly shifted the physical locus away from France (Venice, Sweden) and then returned it via Haiti to Toussaint's dungeon in Paris, Wordsworth presents in "September 1, 1802" another instance of France's inexplicable cruelty toward blacks, blending anti-Napoleonic sentiment with a nod to growing English abolitionist sentiment. The racist implication of the sonnet's final lines ("O ye Heavens, be kind! / And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race!" [lines 13–4]) introduces an ominous tone of moral superiority. In the reassuring appeal of familiar things and familiar values, however, and in the conviction of one's own moral rectitude, lie the security—even if it is largely self-manufactured—that enables one to recover from trauma.

"*Here*, on our native soil, we breathe once more." The first word insists on the sonnet's locationality, which combines with a comparable sense of time in the title: "Composed *in* the Valley *near* Dover, *on the day* of landing" (my emphases, both passages). The full-stopped initial line underscores the sense of suffocation (a standard phenomenon of the nightmare) which William and Dorothy (and by extension all right-thinking, sober English citizens) have endured in France and from which they have happily escaped. The characteristic sights and sounds reestablish the sense of place as distinctively *English*—indeed, that sense comes in an overwhelming rush: "All, all are English" (line 6). If "Fair Star of evening" suggests that absence (from the beloved country) makes the heart grow fonder, that sense is reiterated here and textured with a newfound appreciation for the dearness of the familiar: the prodigal lover has returned, enlightened and newly impassioned. Interestingly, until the 1827 edition the sonnet opened thus: "Dear Fellow Traveller! here we are once more" (*PW*, 3:114 n.). Wordsworth finally substituted for the original announcement of interpersonal community the more compelling sense of physical place lent by "here," which revision reinforces the universal, almost iconic, intellectual and emotional significance of place.

The import of specifically *British* places became central to public discourse in 1803 during the alarm over the threat of a French invasion. Colin Pedley has documented the intertextual significations of the phrase, "on British ground," which appears in Wordsworth's "Anticipation. October 1803."³⁴ The phrase, which was widely current in the press and in other forms of public discourse (including sermons and speeches in Parliament) which might find their way into print, bore polemical

value in aggravating francophobia and rallying nationalist fervor. The pattern was already in place in 1802, however, and Wordsworth participates in its richness with his double under-scoring of "Here, on our native soil," which rhetorical doubling he repeats with "all, all are English." Pedley remarks that "Anticipation. October 1803" reveals "intersecting [public] linguistic practice being forged into a boldly evocative rhetoric."³⁵ But Wordsworth's evocative intertextual rhetoric is already visible in the synthesis of diverse metaphoric, linguistic, political, and geographical materials that inform the sonnets right from the start.

"September, 1802. Near Dover" employs the specific locator "inland" to locate the poem subsequent in both place and time to that first footfall on native soil. The ominous physical presence of France, visible across the Channel (recall the *favorable* presence of England in "Composed by the Sea-Side, Near Calais, August 1802"; in each case Wordsworth is looking "backward"), is translated into a complex intellectual and moral abstraction: "yet what power is there! / What mightiness for evil and for good!" (lines 7–8). That Wordsworth selected as conjunction here not "or" but "and" underscores the dynamic potential that still exists in France. This is perhaps why, as Dorothy Wordsworth noted in her journal, from their vantage point they "looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought" (*PW*, 3:454). Neither sister nor brother is at this point willing or able entirely to repudiate the nation that has held so much for both. Such moral discrimination counters the tide of rampant, unreflecting nationalism by distinguishing among individual citizens (like Annette and Caroline), their intoxicated leaders (Robespierre and Napoleon), and the nation taken as an abstract whole. Moreover, lines seven and eight are significantly ambiguous in reference. With the "span of waters" spread between the two nations (as in "Composed by the Sea-Side, Near Calais"), it is not entirely clear which is the actual referent of "there" in line seven. This sonnet and the preceding one serve as fulcrum in a vexed political and moral see-saw, the physically and geographically transitional mid-point of a meditation on the potential "for evil and for good" that resides in both nations and which thus transcends simplistic categories founded upon mere national citizenship. As before, Wordsworth locates the source of greatness in "the soul / Only," by whose agency "the Nations shall be great and free" (lines 13–4). The conspicuous plural ("Nations") underscores the non-exclusivity of Wordsworth's concept.

Wordsworth's nationalism is more pronounced in his 1809 essay on the Convention of Cintra.³⁶ In "Composed in the Valley

near Dover,” though, one is already struck by the seemingly flip-pant dismissal of the miseries of a terrible, protracted war: “Europe is yet in bonds; but let that pass, / Thought for another moment” (lines 9–10). Nor can one escape the self-congratulation in “September, 1802”: “Even so doth God protect us if we be / Virtuous and wise” (lines 9–10). The implication is that “us” is first and foremost England and its citizens, and in particular those sober individuals (like Wordsworth—and Milton before him) who eschew materialism and the intoxication betokened by blind adulation of despotism, individuals who combine virtue and wisdom under the banner of moral superiority.

The point is driven home by the following sonnet, “Written in London, September, 1802,”³⁷ addressed to Coleridge as stand-in for thoughtful English citizens in general. The foolish pursuit of material gain and outward show exposes England’s abandonment of nature and wisdom alike: “No grandeur now in nature or in book / Delights us” (lines 8–9). Why? Because the “week-day man” (“1801,” line 11) who “can sound himself to know / The destiny of man” (“Calais, August 15, 1802,” lines 13–4) has given way to the idolater of “rapine, avarice, expense” (“Written in London,” line 9). Lost, or at least submerged, are the values of the moral universe to which the earlier sonnets direct the reader:

Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

(lines 11–4)

In short, the public world of surface glitter has forsaken private virtue and the innate good sense and humility of “household laws.” Presumably the new religion that has supplanted the old “pure” one is impure because it is both idolatrous and blasphemous, revolving around the worldly twin godhead of political power (imperial and otherwise) and wealth. Wordsworth’s allusion to “the good old cause” bears Miltonic significance, for in *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660) Milton had chastised contemporary backsliders for placing personal considerations before the nation’s good in a time of crisis. Milton’s closing comments bear quoting at length:

I trust I shall have spoken persuasion to abundance of sensible and ingenuous men; to some, perhaps, whom God may raise of these stones to become children of reviving liberty, and

may reclaim . . . to bethink themselves a little and consider whither they are rushing; to exhort this torrent also of the people not to be so impetuous, but to keep their due channel; and at length recovering and uniting their better resolutions, now that they see already how open and unbounded the insolence and rage is of our common enemies, to stay these ruinous proceedings, justly and timely fearing to what a precipice of destruction the deluge of this epidemic madness would hurry us, through the general defection of a misguided and abused multitude.³⁸

So reminiscent of Milton's admonishments are Wordsworth's in these sonnets that it is tempting to believe that he had reviewed Milton's treatise.

Wordsworth was unequivocal about his repugnance at the materialism that so contrasted with the straitened circumstances he had observed in France in 1802, where he observed in Calais not gay "poms and games" marking Napoleon's birthday, but instead a plain routine in which "each man frames / His business as he likes" ("Calais, August 15, 1802," lines 5, 8-9). As he put it to Isabella Fenwick later, "I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in the great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the revolution had produced in France" (*PW*, 3:455). Because Wordsworth locates the epicenter of cultural pollution in the cities, his oppositional "critical patriotism" is especially pronounced when it comes to the creeping horror of capitalism he associates with them.³⁹

Precisely at this juncture Wordsworth introduces the corrective in the person of Milton. In abandoning the traditional moral center, the English have "forfeited their ancient English dower / Of inward happiness" ("London, 1802," lines 5-6). England has become a Magdalene, a defiled bride in need of a chastening bridegroom: Wordsworth invokes Milton for the purpose, but his invocation implies also a Jesus who will redeem and resurrect those who are powerless to help themselves (recall Donne's "Batter my Heart, Three-Personed God"). In writing not "come" but "*return*" (line 7) he implies also a second coming, an apocalyptic visitation in which he plays both Milton's and Jesus' roles to initiate a new golden age. About to marry the faithful Mary Hutchinson, he chastises his beloved *country* upon her infidelity. And yet, as we shall see shortly, blame cannot be leveled in such simple, one-sided terms, for the sin of infidelity applies also to himself.

This sonnet and the next (“Great men have been among us”) reveal most conspicuously the predominating “maleness” of all these sonnets. Having declared his fondness for the “masculine” qualities of Milton’s sonnets, Wordsworth adopts in his own a quintessential masculinist patriarchalism. Wordsworth could scarcely have been blind either to the marital relationships of his predecessor, or to the ways in which he had been quite literally served by his women.⁴⁰ Throughout the sonnets, Wordsworth clothes himself and his positive *and negative* exemplars in the rhetorical garb of masculine role-playing: traveler, pilgrim, public leader, lover, and moral and spiritual preceptor obliged to chasten and subdue that which is female (England, referred to already in the first sonnet in feminine terms) and that which is, in the contemporary parlance, “womanish” (irrational, sentimental, impulsive behavior by English citizens and nation alike), even when those traits are manifested, to his chagrin, in the poet’s own behavior (“When I have borne in memory”). And in portraying England as freedom’s “bulwark,” he invests his country with dominant, masculinist attributes that are the converse of the recessive female traits ascribed to England in “Composed by the Sea-Side, Near Calais.”

The imagery in “London, 1802” enlarges the opening poem’s trope of the poet/patriot as lover. Wordsworth replaces the legislative leader (Robespierre) and the military-imperialist (Napoleon) with the literary figure (Milton—and by extension himself) who writes for the nation’s welfare (sacrificing his own comfort and health) and who serves as both public figure and model of the just and moral (private) individual. The former is by definition more than usually influential in shaping both national character and national destiny. What is wanted, as Wordsworth makes clear in *The Prelude*, is “the virtue of one paramount mind” capable of abashing “impious crests” (note the recurrence, now negatively charged, of the crest image from “Composed by the Sea-Side, Near Calais”), quelling “outrage and bloody power,” and clearing “a passage for just government” (*Prelude*, 1805, 10.179–85). Against the public (political) power of Robespierre and Napoleon, whose minds the poet clearly deems *not* paramount, Wordsworth counterposes the private (moral) power of Milton, reanimated in the public performances of Wordsworth’s Miltonic sonnets and made manifest in the present by Wordsworth himself.

Wordsworth emphasizes not the political Milton whom the Romantics were rediscovering, but rather that private moral individual:

Thy soul was like a Star, *and dwelt apart*

.....
 So didst thou travel on *life's common way*,
 In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

(lines 9–14; my emphases)

He invests Milton with the humble, domestic virtue—the “magnanimous meekness” (“Great men have been among us,” line 9)—that encapsulates “the essential strength of a nation”⁴¹ which Wordsworth attaches to the “week-day man in the hourly walk.” Milton’s “cheerful godliness” is a commonplace from eighteenth-century biographies, which Wordsworth had already appropriated to himself in *Tintern Abbey*, lines 126–35.⁴² Wordsworth’s Milton is a repository for those virtues which the English have “forfeited” (they are not just “lost” or “gone,” which would imply less culpability, a less shameful error of judgment and volition on their part): “manners, virtue, freedom, power” (line 8). “Manners” would seem a curious inclusion here among the other more expansive abstract qualities. And yet it is precisely “manners,” the rules of decorum and the behavior they govern, that bind the human community in that mutually beneficial relationship in which due consideration for the rights, privileges, happiness, and comfort of others governs all interaction. In a rampaging materialist environment of the sort Wordsworth perceives in England, it is the manners which are the first to go as concern for Other is replaced by devotion to Self. Hence “we are selfish men” (line 6).

As “Star,” Milton is guiding light by which moral and political navigators may take their bearings, but also emblem of the lover drooping over the beloved’s breast, where he might enter her moral and cultural heart. At the same time, his “voice whose sound was like the sea” (line 10) links him with the English voice singing to Liberty in the later “Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland.” Milton’s voice of the sea brilliantly juxtaposes the “fen / Of stagnant waters” (lines 2–3) that is contemporary England, one of only two occasions among these sonnets when Wordsworth applies to England an image of water neither in motion nor capable of it (the other, “bog,” figures analogously in “It is not to be thought of”).

In declaring that “England hath need of” her secular patron saint Milton at this crucial hour, Wordsworth voices his own need. But in saying that England needs “thee,” as opposed to Milton’s poetry, he indicates that what is needed is not the celebrity but the citizen who models the ideal of local or national

community citizenship. Celebrating the great predecessor who “dwelt apart,” Wordsworth announces and justifies his determination to devote himself both to the poetry he will address to his nation and to the rusticated lifestyle he now regards as the necessary condition for meaningful composition. If “the soul of a nation is often exemplified by a representative man,” then Wordsworth will reanimate and transform the spirit of the staunch, sober republican Milton.⁴³ In effect, Wordsworth sets out “to seize for the conservative cause his radical, middle-class, Puritan precursor and the revolution of which he was a spokesman,” and in the process to idealize the man who rebelled against his king but embedded in *Paradise Lost* the argument that true liberty is virtually identical with order and authority.⁴⁴ Wordsworth will become the domestic bard, following in Milton’s footsteps by retiring to a non-urban environment, by withdrawing (at least in part) from public political activism, by marrying, by having his poems transcribed by a domestic female circle. In fashioning himself both as an exemplar and as one of the ordinary citizens, Wordsworth extends into a social, political, and moral sphere the leveling of distinctions implicit in his remarks in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* about the (common) language used by (ordinary) individuals. What is at once representative and exemplary in Milton—and himself—Wordsworth seems to imply, is inherent in the national moral character shared by all English citizens as part of their natural birthright, their common history. As he writes in noticeably Burkean terms in 1809, “[t]here is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise, of all ages. We would not be rejected from this community; and therefore do we hope. We look forward with erect mind, thinking and feeling: it is an obligation of duty: take away the sense of it, and the moral being would die within us.”⁴⁵ This is precisely the point of “It is not to be thought of.”

The value of the rusticated environment is also evident in other poems of the period. Especially important are three poems on the daisy whose composition John O. Hayden places between 16 April and 8 July 1802 and thus prior to the sonnet on Milton. The daisy is for Wordsworth the physical emblem of

The homely sympathy that heeds
 The common life our nature breeds;
 A wisdom fitted to the needs
 Of hearts at leisure.

(“To the Daisy,” lines 53-6)

It is a source of the “lowlier pleasure” that tempers the devouring fires of the “stately passions” (elevated, but perhaps related to “state,” or politics) that burn within the poet (lines 52, 49). These poems make clear that the natural world inhabited by the retiring poet affords abundant inspiration while providing a salutary, sobering antidote to the intoxicating passions of political and material power that reside in the urban centers. That natural world is also the domain of the leech gatherer, whose steadfastness in the face of doubt, debility, and dwindling resources is a source of strength and purpose to Wordsworth in the poem upon which he labored during the early summer of 1802. It is Wordsworth’s home turf, his native element, a *place* unique in its steadfast preservation of the traditional values he most reveres. That rural Cumberland environment, he writes,

yet
 Retaineth more of *ancient homeliness*,
Manners erect, and *frank simplicity*,
 Than *any other* nook of English land
 (*Prelude*, 1805, 9.218-21; my emphases)

despite—or perhaps in consequence of—its being “a poor district.”

Logically enough, then, in the next sonnet, “Great men have been among us,” Wordsworth observes that “France, ’tis strange, / Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then” (lines 9–10), and that the nation has proven destitute of principles as well as literary production: “equally a want of books and men” (line 14), a remark that in one sweep dismisses Voltaire, Rousseau, and the eighteenth-century *philosophes*. This “dearth of knowledge” figures also in “October, 1803.” “Great men have been among us” invokes public figures in whom “greatness” is equated with public service to God and country (which for the Wordsworth of 1802 are rapidly becoming functional equivalents). Wordsworth makes explicit what he has increasingly implied, that their significance lay in the fact that they were all “moralists” (line 5) schooled in internal rectitude and external righteousness—not to mention devotion to appropriate social and political principles. The richness of the English cultural heritage of which they are a part contrasts dramatically with the ostensible paucity of the French. Indeed, Wordsworth joins Burke in repudiating the over-fast (r)evolution in France whose “unceasing change!” appears to be equated with “perpetual emptiness” (line 11). Michael Friedman writes that “change . . . destroys pleasure” for Wordsworth; “it

makes the world forbidding.”⁴⁶ Moreover, it permits an unhealthy materialism to spring up as “the good old cause” of moral steadfastness is eroded by the tide of change. Wordsworth reprises a subject that had been popular when Burke’s pamphlet appeared: the self-congratulatory celebration of the “glorious” English Revolution of a century earlier as opposed to the increasingly inglorious recent French one. Like Burke, Wordsworth locates stability in gradual, “natural” change, which position marks dramatically the distance he has traveled politically and philosophically from a dozen years earlier.⁴⁷ Indeed, while James Chandler claims that only in his 1818 address to the freeholders of Westmoreland had Wordsworth “managed to give Burke credit” for predicting the events that would lead radical thinkers to recant their initial enthusiasm for the French Revolution, Wordsworth’s affinity for Burke’s views seems very clear already here in 1802.⁴⁸

Two sonnets complete this sequence; apparently dating from late 1802 or early 1803, both appeared in the *Morning Post* in 1803: “It is not to be thought of” on 16 April and “When I have borne in memory” on 17 September. In both Wordsworth attempts to rally his nation behind the traditional values delineated in preceding sonnets. The first collapses time by melding the “armoury of the invincible Knights of old” (line 10) with the English cultural heritage whose hallmarks include Shakespeare’s *language* (“tongue,” line 11) and Milton’s “faith *and morals*” (line 12; my emphases). Wordsworth clearly implies that the English hold a prior moral and linguistic claim to liberty that stretches back to “Earth’s first blood” (line 14) and hence to the unfallen Eden. While Wordsworth’s comments verge on self-satisfied pridefulness, they are surely more moderate and cautious, and more attuned to notions of order extending back at least to Locke, than the flatly jingoistic sentiments that filled the British popular press (including the caricature print) after the resumption of hostilities in the autumn of 1802.

Indeed, the first sonnet’s initial phrase becomes far more tentative and anxiety-laden when we read it not simply as “it is unthinkable [because it is so unlikely]” but also as “one must not think about it [because the thought is so terrible].” Wordsworth reiterates England’s mixed relation “to evil and to good” (line 8) in a passage heavy with ambiguity: the potential may be lost to England, but it may equally be lost to the world in general, and to the powers for good and for evil that inhere in persons and in states. The universality of the values advocated here becomes apparent when Wordsworth writes “we must be free or die” (line 11), a line that echoes Patrick Henry’s famous words

about liberty or death as well as the more familiar slogan of revolutionary France. Not an ironic echo, I believe, but a completely earnest one, Wordsworth's formulation appropriates to England the function that the next sonnet will name: that of serving as "a bulwark for the cause of men" ("When I have borne in memory," line 10).

These two poems are linked by the thematic connection between what is to be thought of—or not—and what is "borne in memory" by the poet speaking both in his personal voice and in his public persona. Where the first sonnet assumes the collective first-person *plural* ("we"), the second divides the voice between private individual ("I") and public consciousness ("we"). Moreover, the second explicitly and emphatically addresses "my Country!" (line 5) in a way analogous to—but more directly than—the first poem in the series, "Composed by the Sea-Side, near Calais." Bringing the sequence full-circle, Wordsworth returns to the persona of the lover, subjoining to it also the role of child (line 14).

Wordsworth decries materialism in gender-specific terms when he writes

England! the time is come when thou should'st wean
Thy heart from its emasculating food

(lines 1–2)

in a sonnet probably written in mid-1802 but located, in the 1807 edition and after, "later" in the sequence—and by implication also later in the mental time-frame in which the reader explores the sequence. Coupled with materialism's rise is the abandonment of learning—and hence of both knowledge and moral discrimination—already lamented in previous sonnets. And here is perhaps the ultimate locus of the trauma with which Wordsworth wrestles in these poems: the erosion of moral and intellectual wisdom in a volatile culture torn by doubts, discontent, and revolutionary political activity.

And here, too, is the source of the potential self-redemption and "moral resurgence" Wordsworth foresees for England and which he attempts both to model and to prescribe.⁴⁹ The "fears unnamed" ("When I have borne in memory," line 4) which had troubled him he now projects outward, into society, where he exorcises them by repudiating his anxieties as "unfilial fears [of which] I am ashamed" (line 8).⁵⁰ Why shame? Not because the fears are groundless, but because they stem from "my affection [by which I] was beguiled" (line 11). That is, he was swayed and

misled (“beguiled” implying trickery and seduction from within as well as from the outside) by emotion from the proper, stable orientation provided by Reason. This is why Wordsworth adopts the ultimately ambivalent posture of the lover, and why he problematizes it further by relating it also to that of a child (line 14). Both are prone to sentimentality and to the false promptings of irrational fears, as we learn from the extreme suggestibility attributed in particular to the “lover” in “Strange fits of passion I have known,” and from Wordsworth’s remark in *The Convention of Cintra* about “the long calenture of fancy to which the Lover is subject.”⁵¹ The apparent self-deprecation elicited by the forthright admission that it is specifically in his role as “a Poet” that he “now and then” *feels* for his country as a lover or a child (lines 12–4) is countered by implication in his *knowledge* as poet that at other moments he reasserts his moral and political moorings under the guidance of Reason, which enables him to perceive in his country that “bulwark for the cause of men” which not only he but also “*we*” must prize (lines 9–10).

After the experience of personal and socio-political traumas, Wordsworth turns to poetry—and particularly to what he explicitly acknowledges as the at once challenging and “safe” confines of the sonnet’s fixed, tightly regulated formal form—to anchor the moral and intellectual security he required for his own poetic self-fashioning. Judith Page observes that Wordsworth wrote his Calais sonnets “as a way of legitimizing his personal experiences while seeming to comment primarily on historical circumstances or general human relationships.”⁵² But there is more to it than that, for Wordsworth’s efforts have in large part to do also with control, itself a prototypical masculinist preoccupation. Wordsworth at once exonerates himself from blame on both the moral and the political counts and offers his own experiences for his readers to share, which sharing reduces his isolation by replacing it with community. It is part of the poet’s agenda, as the expanded Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* reminds us, to articulate the nature and significance of experiences shared by all. In tracing his own journey through the external and internal places of these sonnets, Wordsworth reaches out to his readers for the reassurance of their recognition of the common ground that the poems explore. And in that transaction between poet and reader lies both valorization and forgiveness, for in the compact that constitutes the reading activity lies the implicit realization that the poet is “just like” the reader—neither more guilty, more naive, and more susceptible to temptation and the trauma of “fall,” *nor less*. In that ultimately shared responsibility

which the poems engineer, that mutual potential “for evil and for good,” lies the bond of humanity that transcends time, space, and the particularizing circumstances of nationhood. If he can generate a sense of this bond, Wordsworth can control both the reader and the reader’s judgments about the poetry’s several subjects—including Wordsworth himself.

NOTES

¹I use “sequence” loosely and for convenience. Not a formal sequence like that on the River Duddon, the poems nevertheless constitute a constructed “arrangement” intended for sequential reading. These poems are, of course, part of another, inevitably linear “sequence” that includes all of Wordsworth’s poems and that differs from the chronological order of the poems’ composition, a historical order the poet deliberately disrupted when he chose already in 1807 to group his poems within thematic categories. Stuart Curran has employed this term in his brief discussion of these sonnets in “Multum in Parvo: Wordsworth’s *Poems, in Two Volumes* of 1807,” in *Poems in Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections*, ed. Neil Fraistat (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 234–53.

²Peter J. Manning, “‘Will No One Tell Me What She Sings?’: *The Solitary Reaper* and the Contexts of Criticism,” in Manning, ed., *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 241–72, 260.

³See J. G. A. Pocock, “Political Thought in the English-speaking Atlantic, 1760–1790: (ii) Empire, Revolution and an End of Early Modernity,” *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500–1800*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 309.

⁴See Curran, “Multum in Parvo,” pp. 246–7; Ian R. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions: Britain, 1760–1815* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), chap. 11; and J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III: 1760–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), chap. 16.

⁵Judith W. Page, “‘The Weight of too much liberty’: Genre and Gender in Wordsworth’s Calais Sonnets,” *Criticism* 30, 2 (Spring 1988): 189–203, 190.

⁶See *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 2d edn., 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949–58), 3:452–3, where the history of these regroupings is detailed. Further references to *PW* will appear parenthetically in the text by line numbers or volume and page numbers. See also *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800–1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983).

⁷Pocock, p. 309. See also H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), esp. “Part Three: Radical and Conservative.”

⁸Curran, “Multum in Parvo,” p. 249.

⁹Roger Sale, *Closer to Home: Writers and Places in England, 1780–1830* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 2–3.

¹⁰Lee M. Johnson, *Wordsworth and the Sonnet*. *Anglistica* 29 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1973), pp. 39–40.

¹¹See *PW*, 3:417, which quotes Wordsworth to Isabella Fenwick and Dorothy

Wordsworth's corroborating correction of the date to 1802. From Wordsworth's misdating apparently stems the frequent attribution of "I Grieved for Buonaparté" to 1801.

¹²Carl Woodring, *Politics in English Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 115.

¹³Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), esp. pp. 27–30.

¹⁴E. P. Thompson, "Disenchantment or Default? A Lay Sermon," in *Power and Consciousness*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien and William Dean Vanech (London: Univ. of London Press, 1969), pp. 149–81.

¹⁵Because the title given this sonnet in *PW*, "1801," embodies Wordsworth's misdating of the poem he actually wrote in 1802 (see note 11), I shall refer to the sonnet hereafter instead as "I Grieved for Buonaparté," to reduce confusion.

¹⁶On "public opinion" during this period, see especially "Public Spirit to Public Opinion," the concluding chapter of J. A. W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property: The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 260–315.

¹⁷Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 474.

¹⁸Something similar occurs with both "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" (composed in August and/or September 1802 and misdated—perhaps intentionally?—as 1803 until Wordsworth altered the date in 1838) and "The world is too much with us" (whose composition is dated variously from 21 May 1802 through 6 March 1804, but which makes perhaps greatest contextual sense in relation to the two London poems of September 1802 which decry pernicious English materialism. On this point, see also Liu, esp. pp. 485–91).

¹⁹Neil Fraistat, "Introduction: The Place of the Book and the Book as Place," in *Poems in Their Place*, pp. 3–17, 7. See Fraistat's discussion of what he terms the "contexture" involving the readers' dynamic transaction with individual poems and collections in which they appear, in "Ideas of Poetic Order and Ordering," the first chapter of his book *The Poem and the Book: Interpreting Collections of Romantic Poetry* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985).

²⁰Liu, p. 349; see especially chap. 7, "The Economy of Lyric." Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1979; rpt. New York: Random House, 1985).

²¹Francis Jeffrey, in *Edinburgh Review* 24 (Nov. 1814): 1–30, 1.

²²Liu, p. 349.

²³Kurt Heinzelman writes that Wordsworth appears in this respect to have conceived the literary work "as a form of labor to be exchanged for the reader's," so that "the successive labor of the reader is a recompense for the original work bestowed upon the text" (*The Economics of the Imagination* [Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1980], p. 201). Jean-Paul Sartre stated the case more directly when he observed that "reading is an exercise in generosity, and what the writer requires is not the application of an abstract freedom but the *gift* of his whole person, with his passions, his prepossessions, his sympathies, his sexual temperament, and his scale of values" (*What Is Literature?* trans. Bernard Frechtman [1949; rpt. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966], p. 32; my emphasis).

²⁴Fraistat, "Introduction," p. 4.

²⁵Marjorie Levinson, "The New Historicism: Back to the Future," in *Rethinking Historicism: Critical Readings in Romantic History*, ed. Marjorie Levinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 18–63, 50.

²⁶Johnson, who sees in the image of the crest an allusion to stanza 16 of Spenser's *Epithalamion*, goes further still and says that Wordsworth's description of star and England is presented "in nuptial terms" (p. 49).

²⁷*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787–1805*, 2d edn., ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 379; the latter description is from a letter of November 1802.

²⁸*The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), p. 364. Further references will appear parenthetically in the text by book and line number.

²⁹Richard G. Swartz, "Wordsworth and the Political Sublime, 1793–1804" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, San Diego, 1986), pp. 19–20.

³⁰Liu, p. 436.

³¹See Brooke Hopkins, "Representing Robespierre," in *History and Myth: Essays on English Romantic Literature*, ed. Stephen C. Behrendt (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1990), pp. 116–29.

³²Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century*, 2d edn. (1929; rpt. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 146–7.

³³De Selincourt speculated that "The King of Sweden" was composed in August 1802 (*PW*, 3:112), but subsequent editors, including Haydon and Jones, date the poem no earlier than late 1804. I include it here both because it figures in Wordsworth's later design for this set of sonnets and because it introduces yet another figure placed in counterpoint to the Napoleonic paradigm. See *William Wordsworth: The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), 1:1009; *Wordsworth's Poems of 1807*, ed. Alun R. Jones (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987), p. 164.

³⁴Colin Pedley, "Anticipating Invasion: Some Wordsworthian Contexts," *The Wordsworth Circle* 21, 2 (Spring 1990): 64–70.

³⁵Pedley, p. 64.

³⁶William Wordsworth, *Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to Each Other, and to the Common Enemy, at this Crisis; and Specifically as Affected by the Convention of Cintra*, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1:191–415; hereafter *Convention of Cintra*.

Wordsworth does absolve England of blame. Like Coleridge, who had in his "Ode to the Departing Year" (1796) and "Fears in Solitude" (1798) reminded his countrymen of their nation's culpability, Wordsworth warns them not to miss the opportunity the moment provides. So strong was Wordsworth's feeling on the point that he repeated it in the *Convention of Cintra* in a specifically military context: "Now is the time for a great and decisive effort; and, if Britain does not avail herself of it, her disgrace will be indelible, and the loss infinite . . . imbecility in his opponents (above all, the imbecility of the British) has hitherto preserved [Napoleon] from the natural consequences of his ignorance, his meanness of mind, his transports of infirm fancy, and his guilt" (p. 341). The pejoratives heaped upon Napoleon resemble those directed at him and at France in the 1802 and 1803 sonnets.

³⁷"Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland," probably written late in 1806, was interpolated here in 1807 and after. Addressed to Liberty, it identifies two voices whose songs are especially beloved by Liberty: the mountain, which is particularly appropriate to Switzerland, and the sea, which

the British navy still ruled. Driven out of Switzerland, it is all the more significant that Liberty "cleave to that which still is left" (line 10): the sea, or England, as is further indicated in the imagery of sea, water, and tides in the other sonnets. Despite its later composition, the poem is still relevant to the series, for it was in 1802 that Napoleon conquered Switzerland.

³⁸John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), pp. 880–99, 898–9.

³⁹Stephen Bluestone, "On Wordsworth's Political Sonnets of 1802–1803," *Rackham Literary Studies* 2 (1972): 79–86, 84.

⁴⁰Page's comments on this point (pp. 194–7) are particularly interesting.

⁴¹Johnson, p. 51. Wordsworth here echoes his remarks in the "Essays Upon Epitaphs" about the potentially salutary relationship between meekness and magnanimity ("Essays Upon Epitaphs," *Prose Works*, 2:49–99).

⁴²Robert Brinkley, "'Our chearful faith': On Wordsworth, Politics, and Milton," *The Wordsworth Circle* 18, 2 (Spring 1987): 57–60.

⁴³Johnson, p. 47.

⁴⁴Manning, p. 261.

⁴⁵*Convention of Cintra*, p. 339.

⁴⁶Michael H. Friedman, *The Making of a Tory Humanist: William Wordsworth and the Idea of Community* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979), p. 240. Friedman links Wordsworth's opposition to Napoleonic France with his opposition to the capitalism that was rapidly replacing a community of mutual benevolence with one of depersonalized economic competition and social predation.

⁴⁷Wordsworth reiterated the point in 1803 in "England! the time is come," where "old things have been unsettled" (line 4). England's errors and failures, too, have retarded progress and renovation; it even seems that England would prevent progress utterly if possible (lines 6–8). Nevertheless, more despicable "is thine Enemy" (line 11). How awful (in both the older and the more modern senses), Wordsworth implies in the final lines, that such awesome responsibility for "Earth's best hopes" lies "all with Thee [England]" (line 14; my emphasis).

⁴⁸James K. Chandler, "Wordsworth's Reflections on the Revolution in France," in *The Golden and the Brazen World: Papers in Literature and History, 1650–1800*, ed. John M. Wallace (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), pp. 145–70, 147. Chandler does observe, however, that despite Wordsworth's "tendency to camouflage Burke's ideas when he uses them," the poet's "Burkism" is in fact apparent already in the earliest drafts of *The Prelude* (p. 148).

⁴⁹Pedley, p. 66.

⁵⁰Notice that Wordsworth adopts the very language of Coleridge's "Fears in Solitude":

May my fears,
My filial fears, be vain! and may the vaunts
And menace of the vengeful enemy
Pass like the gust, that roared and died away
In the distant tree.

(*The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge [1912; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960], p. 263, lines 197–201.)

⁵¹*Convention of Cintra*, p. 338. Calenture is a tropical fever that prompts delirious sailors to hurl themselves to destruction in the sea.

⁵²Page, p. 201.