CRITICAL RESPONSES TO THE WORKS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1794-1850

A THESIS

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PREFACE

This thesis is a report on a study of critical responses to the works of William Wordsworth. Specifically, it reviews the responses made by critics writing for periodicals to the works of William Wordsworth from 1793, the year of his first publication, through 1850, the year of his death. The object of the study was to ascertain the response of Wordsworth's contemporaries to works which have since come to represent a revolution in literary thought and practice. The questions to be answered were these: (1) What were initial critical responses to Wordsworth's published works? (2) What changes in criticism occurred during his lifetime, at what periods did they occur, and what reasons for the changes can be assigned? (3) Did Wordsworth attain general critical acceptance and approval during his lifetime?

The plan of the study was quite simple. I chose five magazines contemporary with Wordsworth which often reviewed poetry in their columns, which had circulations large enough to indicate that they exerted some influence on the thought of the period, and which were in existence most

or all of Wordsworth's adult lifetime. Using the indexes and tables of contents provided from time to time by the magazines themselves and scanning all issues during the period 1972-1850, I copied each review of a Wordsworth publication and summarized it. I have also summarized all discussions which dealt with Wordsworth but which occurred within articles under titles not using his name, whenever these appeared to be in any way significant or revealing of contemporary opinion. A few short articles or passages are so compact or characteristic that I have simply transcribed them. These variations from my standard procedure have been noted within the body of the study.

The five periodicals included in the study are Gentleman's Magazine, the Critical Review, or Annals of Literature, the Monthly Review of Literature, the Edinburgh Review, and the Quarterly Review. These five were chosen in order to obtain the widest possible range of critical opinion. Of these five publications, Gentleman's Magazine was a publication of general interest, which did not include the word literature anywhere in its title or subheading.[1] It printed articles on many subjects, including current literature. It was chosen because it published throughout the necessary time period, because it had no financial

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[1]Frank A. Mumby, Publishing and Bookselling, pp. 393-401. Subsequently referred to as Mumby.

support from any political party, and because it represented a relatively non-literary, "middle-brow" point of view. The Critical Review and the Monthly Review were literary reviews of the type which began in the mid-eighteenth century, with political party and publishing-house connections; by 1790, both were widely circulated and considered influential.[2] The Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review began publication in 1802 and 1809, respectively, and are representative of the newest style of literary quarterly of the time, having ties with political parties but not with booksellers, and concentrating on imaginative literature more than any of their predecessors were. Confining my study to these five periodicals has meant excluding some very famous (even notorious) reviews, but it has also allowed me to discover some less well known, but equally cogent and revealing, articles.

A brief history of each publication is given at the beginning of the chapter devoted to its reviews, but a more general introduction to British periodicals of the era may prove useful, as so many elements may have influenced the content or tone of the reviews.

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[2]Walter Graham, English Literary Periodicals, pp. 158-246. These pages furnish a very useful publishing history for the Reviews. This work is subsequently referred to as Graham.

Three of the periodicals were edited by proprietors of publishing houses, a circumstance which often influenced the choice of new works to be reviewed. Four received financial support from a political party, and somewhere between these extremes of influence entered in the editors' personal biasses and the fees paid to contributing authors.

The first British magazines were modelled on those La Roche and were a form of digest, containing a series of abstracts from books, daily newspapers, or any other publication the editor thought might interest his readers. The Grub Street Journal was the immediate model for most magazines of the early eighteenth century. They contained little or no original material of any kind. Gentleman's Magazine, begun in 1731 (Mumby, p. 393), had just enough new elements to secure its popularity. It did include original material, much of it in the form of letters from subscribers, and it was illustrated with woodcuts and engravings of quite good quality. The literary criticism was not outstanding, or very perceptive. The standard critique was simply a summary of the work under review, including long excerpts from that work. The intention of this form of critique was that the reader of the review, given an abstract of the work, could decide for himself whether he wished to read the entire production. These reviews were not a major part of Gentleman's, but

the magazine was widely read, and its choice of works to review well represented a conservative point of view.

The Monthly Review, founded in 1749 with the support of the more liberal of the two competing political parties, was the first specifically literary review, in that all of its articles were at least tangentially concerned with a work under review. By 1790, the format of the Monthly, and of its chief rival, the Critical Review, was set into one of a dozen long articles and a "Monthly Catalogue" of short reviews of new publications. It was not unusual for the long articles to deal with two or more publications or to use the subject of the works reviewed as the basis for a wide-ranging discussion of political and social topices. Most of the works reviewed were not fictional. The Critical Review was founded in 1756, with the support of the Tory party and the Established Church, in opposition to the Monthly and under the editorship of Tobias Smollet (Graham, p. 210). It followed the organization and format of the Monthly in every detail, and quickly became equally successful. The book reviews, and more especially the poetry reviews, of these two periodicals follow the summary-and-excerpt formula favored by Gentleman's, although the reviewers were more apt to venture an opinion (especially unfavorable) of the work. Since critical essays of the modern cast were being written

by 1800, the retention of these (often quite dull) reviews is rather puzzling. At least two factors help explain this retention, I think. One is that the "abstract" formula was a time-honored one, which the editors would not have wanted to change as long as circulation figures were good. Another factor, and one which I believe must have weighed heavily, was that the contributors of the reviews were of the variety still known in Britain as "penny-a-liners." They were paid for their articles at the rate, usually, of two guineas per octavo sheet: sixteen printed pages of small type. Many of these ill-paid authors wrote for several magazines to support themselves, and they probably "padded" their contributions as much as they could. (Graham, pp. 210-214. Mr. Graham gives the information about rates of pay; the assumption that this low rate influenced the style of review is mine.) The style of reviews and the quality of writing improved drastically in the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly, which paid from thirty to one hundred guineas per article (Graham, p. 235), and were able to obtain contributions from popular and respected writers of criticism and imaginative literature.

All three of the older magazines were edited by men who also printed and published books and pamphlets. These gentlemen displayed a pardonable tendency to "notice" their own publications more often and more

favorably than those of their competitors. The rival Reviews sometimes attacked publications for no apparent reason except that they were issued by a competing publisher; the conservative Gentleman's, however, pursued a stated policy of eschewing political and literary quarrels in its columns, including the columns of letters from subscribers.

The Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review represent a third type of periodical, the literary quarterly as one understands it, today. In 1802, the year in which the Edinburgh Review began publication, its articles, to quote Walter Graham, had already

> . . . Those characteristics which are now usually associated with the Edinburgh Review of 1802 and the Quarterly of 1809--the partisan bias, the vituperation, the dogmatism, the judicial tone, the air of omniscience and finality . . . (Graham, p. 226)

The Edinburgh Review was founded with the financial support of the Whig party, was free of any publisher's influence, and was dedicated by its young staff to "wit and fun" (Graham, p. 233); it paid its contributors well, and it succeeded immediately. Though the politics of the magazine were liberal, its literary standards were those of the late eighteenth century, and it upheld them dogmatically in the early years.

The chief imitator and competitor of the Edinburgh Review was the Quarterly, founded in 1809 with Tory party

support and help of Walter Scott and Robert Southey (Graham, p. 236). Conservative in political matters, the Quarterly was generally more liberal than the Edinburgh Review with respect to literary developments. Part of the qualified welcome accorded the innovators in poetry was no doubt traceable to a desire to appear as unlike the Edinburgh Review as possible in all its opinions, though its critical tone was strikingly similar. Nevertheless, and again in Graham's words, ". . . many of the commonplaces of modern criticism first appeared in the Edinburgh Review or Quarterly Review appreciations of Wordsworth . . ." (Graham, p. 246). For whatever reason one may wish to assign, the Quarterly critiques of Wordsworth and the "Lake school" were milder than those of any of the other specifically literary reviews and coincide more nearly with twentieth-century opinion.

Although patterns of critical response to Wordsworth's works emerge during the years covered by this survey, they will not be discussed here. Patterns of individual magazines will be outlined in the introductory paragraphs of the following chapters; the overall pattern and this author's conclusions will be presented in the final chapter.

Only occasional facts about the authorship of individual articles come to light. Magazine articles

were always published anonymously, and it was beyond the purposes of this study to pursue the authorship of individual critiques. As far as I have been able to ascertain, no one, even scholars working in the special field of periodical publication, has attempted definitive research in this area. Certain authors have been identified by scholars in the course of other activities, such as the editing of correspondence. When I have happened upon such identification, I have noted it within the body of the study, in an introductory paragraph to the review in question.

A table of critical responses to each Wordsworth publication reviewed by the magazines surveyed appears at the end of the last chapter of the study.

Each chapter of this study deals with the criticism of Wordsworth's works in one periodical. Chapter I reviews criticism in Gentleman's Magazine; Chapter II the Monthly Review; Chapter III the Critical Review; Chapter IV the Edinburgh Review; and Chapter V the Quarterly Review. Chapter VI discusses the overall pattern of Wordsworth criticism during his lifetime.

I owe gratitude to many people for help in preparing this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Charles Walton, especially, for suggesting this topic initially and for his help and encouragement in pre-

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Emporia, Kansas

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CHAPTER I

GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE, 1794-1850

Gentleman's Magazine was first published in 1731 by Edward Cave (Mumby, p. 393), who initiated several publishing practices which have since become accepted, and indeed expected, in British magazines. Cave was the first publisher to apply the word magazine to a periodical publication; he was also the first publisher to print regular reports of Parliamentary proceedings, and he was Samuel Johnson's first publisher. As Cave put Gentleman's together, it comprised each month a long section of Essays, Historical and Geographical Subjects of Interest; a Review of New Publications; a selection of Poetry, Ancient and Modern; the Historical Chronicle, including proceedings of Parliament, foreign and domestic news, civil and military promotions, and births, deaths, and marriages "of notable persons"; and a miscellaneous end-section with a meteorological diary, a monthly bill of mortality, and a report of markets and stocks.

Edward Cave died in 1754; the magazine was, then,

edited by his nephew David Henry until Cave's son Richard was old enough to participate. Richard Cave and David Henry were editing jointly in 1778, when John Nichols bought a large block of stock. After Henry's death in 1792 and Cave's in 1800, the magazine remained in the hands of the Nichols family: John Nichols was succeeded in 1816 by his son, John Henry Nichols, who was editor for many years. Cave and his successors used the pseudonym "Sylvanus Urban, Gent.," as editors of the magazine. Contributors, regular and occasional, also used pseudonyms and were seldom identified in the columns of the magazine as long as they were alive (apparently revealing a contributor's identity after he died was acceptable.) This practice makes determining the authorship of each review next to impossible, but the general editorial slant is relatively easy to define--the editor restated it at least once a year in January--and it altered very little during the sixty-year span of this survey. The editorial policy was conservative in matters social, political, literary, and economic, but, on the other hand, rather advanced with regard to scientific matters, especially in the field of medicine.

The editors and readership of Gentleman's were apparently concerned with antiquarian interests, events which now would be called "news" (the odder the better),

and with ecclesiastical arguments and the proceedings of the Royal Society, more than with modern literature. In addition, the editors were also printers, and favored their own publications in "notices." These factors effectively limited the number of works of literature reviewed in the columns of the magazine, and may have contributed to the conservative bent of the reviews. Indeed, "conservative" is hardly a strong enough adjective: the reviewers of poetry held to neo-classical standards of taste well into the nineteenth century. This conservatism may explain why the most favorable reviews of Wordsworth's works seem to be of the worst poems, at least by modern standards. As a rule (though not an inflexible one), Gentleman's Magazine did not involve itself editorially in literary quarrels: it more often simply ignored publications which it could not approve and arguments being conducted via the columns of other publications. During the years 1800-1814, when the "Lake poets" were receiving their worst reviews, Gentleman's editors perhaps desired to remove themselves from the controversy. For whatever reason, after a fulsome review of An Evening Walk in 1794, the magazine did not review another of Wordsworth's productions until 1815. After that date, reviews or mentions of some kind occurred more frequently.

LXIV, Part II, March, 1794, 252-253.

This review of An Evening Walk is subtitled, "Reviewed by a Travelling Correspondent"; written in letter form, it is dated from Penrith as of September 6, 1793, and signed, "Peregrinator." The review is much longer, when the quotations are included, than is common for one concerned with the work of an unknown poet, in this magazine. "Peregrinator" introduces the poem by saying that he "chanced to meet with Mr. Wordsworth's poem" as he was completing a walking tour of the Lake District. He commends it both as a poem and as a description of the joys and beauties of nature. He was, he says, a contemporary of Wordsworth at Cambridge, though not well acquainted with him. He then summarizes the beginning of the poem, inserts five short quotations,[3] and concludes his precis with a quotation of fifty lines which describe the Northern lights and nightfall.[4] In his final paragraph,

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[3]William Wordsworth, The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, edited by Ernest de Selincourt, I, 4-39. The lines quoted by the reviewer are those of the 1793 edition, which was altered so much for the 1850 edition that de Selincourt has the two versions printed on facing pages. The shorter quotations are nearly identical with lines from the 1850 edition, ll. 19-20, 31-52, 139-149. Mr. de Selincourt's edition has the primary reference used in this study, and is referred to hereafter as de Selincourt.

[4]de Selincourt, I, 4-39. Much of this quotation, ll. 295-345 of the 1793 edition, has been removed from the 1850 edition.

the reviewer again recommends the poem to anyone who has made or plans to make the tour he has must concluded but warns readers "that no description of particular spots is nere aimed at," a comment made in the nature of a defense of the poetry. He concludes by expressing a hope that the poet will restore the credit of Cambridge University as a nurturer of poets and notes that Wordsworth has also published Descriptive Sketches taken during a pedestrian Tour in the Alps.

LXXXV, Part II, December, 1815, 524-525.

This unsigned review of The White Doe of Rylstone was apparently written by a staff member of the magazine and is strongly favorable to the poem and poet. The reviewer credits the poet with "richness of fancy and tenderness of feeling" and with exercising these powers to awaken similar emotions in his readers, and places him "in a high rank among the living Poets of his Country." He notes that Wordsworth has been censured for undignified diction and characters but thinks that, on those grounds, his critics will find nothing to ridicule in The White Doe of Rylstone. He, then, gives a brief resume of the sources of the poem and its story line, and observes that the poet has "constructed a singularly pathetic and interesting tale" from the materials. As examples of the "spirit and tender pathos" of the poem,

he transcribes three passages,[5] two describing the meeting of the insurgents and one dealing with the companionship of Emily and the Doe.

LXXIX, Part I, May, 1819, 441-442.

This review of Peter Bell, A Tale in Verse, is so favorable that one is tempted to think that it must have been written with tongue in cheek. The reviewer expects the poem to be admired in its own time and afterward. He devotes more space to Wordsworth's letter to Southey about the poem,[6] to a summary of the central episode, and to twenty-five lines quoted from the poem,[7] than to assessments of the elements that cause him to call the first ten lines "elegantly simple; perhaps sublime," and the whole Tale "pleasingly melancholy."

LXXXIX, Part II, August, 1819, 143-144.

The book reviewed is The Waggoner, A Poem. To which are added, Sonnets. The reviewer remarks, first, upon Wordsworth's long wait between writing and publishing The Waggoner, and secondly, upon Wordsworth's comparison of this poem with Peter Bell as noted in the poem's

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[5]de Selincourt, III, 281-340, ll. 687-708, 732-748, 1854-1870.

[6]de Selincourt, II, 331-332.

[7]de Selincourt, II, 331-381, ll. 1-10, 1121-1135.

inscription to Charles Lamb. He believes The Waggoner is "not less meritorious" than Peter Bell, and praises the language of the poem as "unaffected." The remainder of the review is chiefly taken up with a summary of the action in the poem and its digression into scenic description, and with lines transcribed from the work.[8] The sonnets are not discussed.

XC, Part II, October, 1820, 344-346.

This review of The River Duddon, A Series of Sonnets: Vadracour and Julia: and other Poems. To which is annexed, a Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes, in the North of England, is almost entirely made up of quotations from the work itself.[9] After noting the "apparent ease and elegant simplicity" of the poetry, the reviewer has transcribed more than two columns of poetry and prose from the sonnets, the memoir of Robert Walker, and the description of the Lake Country.

XCVII, Part I, May, 1828, 399-400.

From December 1827 through September 1828, the magazine printed a series of anonymous critical articles

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[8]de Selincourt, II, 176-205; I, 140-141; IV, 15-35, 61-66, 182-192.

[9]de Selincourt, III, 253-254, Sonnets XVII and XVIII are quoted in full. Prose quotations de Selincourt, III, 508-510, 522.

with the general title Some Speculations on Literary Pleasures. The eighth of the series dealt for the most part with a book of poetry, Pelican Island, by James Montgomery, but included six paragraphs, or a little more than a full column, on Wordsworth by way of comparison. This critic does not share the usual reviewer's enthusiasm for Wordsworth's works. He does not name any poem specifically in his criticism or cite any lines; yet conceding that "Wordsworth has his admirers, and . . . doubtless . . . his beauties," he takes Wordsworth to task on several grounds: his "beauties are thinly scattered through verbose dissertations"; he is reminscent of Dr. Erasmus Darwin and the Della Crusca school of sentiment; and his standards of society and literary taste are low. The writer calls Wordsworth "the Sterne of poetry," and develops the comparison in this way:

> He has, like his predecessor, endeavoured to extract sentiment where nobody else ever dreamt of looking for it, and has often exalted trifles into a consequence which nature never intended them to occupy.

CXX, Part I, January, 1842, 3-17.

This review of Poems of the Fancy and Poems of the Imagination is the longest, up to its date, of any review of Wordsworth's works contained in this periodical; it is given added prominence by its position as the

first article in the issue. However, much of the article is taken up with the reviewer's own distinction between "fancy" and "imagination." In the second paragraph, he writes that the poems are so beautiful, that, had he not already been interested in the above distinction, he "should have cared little to investigate, whether they were intended by their author to be considered as the progeny of the one faculty or the other." He, then, pursues his philological discussion into three languages and a consideration of several English authors other than Wordsworth, consuming nearly nine pages before returning to a discussion of Wordsworth's Preface; he says, in effect, that he does not feel competent to judge whether Wordsworth has performed according to the precepts of his Preface, a comment he does not wish to be construed as adverse. In his three-page summary of the Preface,[10] the severest remark that he makes is that of considering the language sometimes to be too general. His discussion of the poetry in the volume consists largely of quotations from "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle"[11] and "On the Power of Sound,"[12] with examples illustrating the use of Fancy

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[10]de Selincourt, II, 431-444.

[11]de Selincourt, II, 258, ll. 128-133.

[12]de Selincourt, II, 323-329, ll. 4-13, 27-40, 155-160, 185-192.

and Imagination. His comments on the poetry are all complimentary: he says that "Fancy and Imagination play alternately before us, and leave us at a loss which we should admire most." He concludes with a plea for language as "the interpreter rather than the mistress of philosophy."

CXX, Part I, February, 1842, 141-142.

From time, beginning in 1834, Gentleman's published extracts from Diary of a Lover of Literature, by Thomas Green. "Thomas Green, Esq. of Ipswich" was a gentleman of leisure who had published his first Diary in 1810. The editor of Gentleman's Magazine obtained manuscripts of the continued Diary from Green's son, some time after the father's death in 1825. Entries dealing with Wordsworth appeared in Gentleman's in February, 1842, and again in May of that year. As the entries are short, characteristic, and difficult to summarize, they are transcribed in full. I have not felt free to alter wording or punctuation, and the extracts appear exactly as they were printed in the magazine:

> Feb. 7, 1821.--Began Wordsworth's Collection of his Poems. The philosophy of the preface is most pitiable: his babyism and affected homeliness of thought and expression, unredeemed by any powerful strokes of thought and feeling, are utterly disgusting and provoking.--Read "The White Doe of Rylstone." The first cantos are very

delightful, but in the last he degenerates into his mysticism and inanity. He quotes in the supplement to his preface an observation of his friend Southey, which is deep and just, "That a great original writer must, in a great measure, create the taste that relishes his excellencies."

Feb. 20, 1821.--Pursued Wordsworth's Poems; the description of the feelings with which he first viewed romantic scenery in early youth is just and beautiful.--v. Poem on Tintern Abbey. The prologue to the poem of Peter Bell is uncommonly pretty. The "Thorn" is a pleasing and effective composition. The poem of P. Bell itself, though rich in the terrible and thrilling graces, and freer than most from his peculiar taint, violates my sense of fabular probability more than any of the Arabian tales.

CXX, Part I, May, 1842, 472-473.

This is the last of Green's entries which discussed Wordsworth. The epitaph translated by Wordsworth and quoted by Green, I have footnoted to its location in the de Selincourt edition.

March 14, 1821.--Finished Wordsworth's Poems. The Italian epitaphs which he has translated, are very elegant and beautiful, and shed a grace on death. The passage in the first,

"Ivi vivia giocondo, e i suoi pensieri
Erano tutti rosa," &c.

which he translates

"There pleasure crowned his days, and
all his thoughts
A roseate fragrance breath'd!"[13]

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[13]de Selincourt, IV, 248, ll. 12-13.

> stating that he had not the skill to come nearer the original: he might have rendered literally,
>
> "There lived he jocund, and his thoughts
> Were roses all---"
>
> with far richer effect. Wordsworth has unquestionably a fine strain of pure moral feeling, and an exquisite relish for the beauties of nature; but his homely peculiarities are still offensive; and his metaphysical defense of them in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads is but a confused piece of philosophy. Yet he is right in taking the origin of poetry from emotions recollected in tranquillity; and remarking how much the music of harmonious metrical language, by its impressions of pleasure, softens down and sweetens the pathos which would be heart-rending and grating in prose. --Walked to Bransford Hill in search of violets--little Worlidge there--disappointed.

This concludes the entries from Green's Diary which bear upon Wordsworth.

CXXIV, Part I, January, 1844, 63.

This is a very short, favorable review of Select Pieces from the Poems of William Wordsworth, a duodecimo edition ornamented with woodcuts and engravings. According to the reviewer, the editor has displayed good judgment in selecting poems calculated to be popular and to make Wordsworth's works more generally known.

CXXIV, Part I, March, 1844, 284.

This is a review of another volume of Select

Pieces from the Poems of W. Wordsworth, one dedicated to the Queen as a volume "of images of painting and beauty, and of lessons of truth and loyalty." An entire poem, "On the Erection of Rydal Chapel, Westmoreland,"[14] is transcribed as is Wordsworth's note on the poem.

CXXVII, Part II, December, 1845, 555-575.

Again, giving a volume by Wordsworth a prominent position, this long review of Poems: chiefly of early and late years, occupies itself with a resume of the poets's career, a comprehensive summary of The Borderers, and fifteen sonnets fully transcribed. The reviewer remarks on the "envy, malignity and dulness" which clouded the poet's early career and claims that Wordsworth has done more than any poet since Pope to raise the character of English poetry and poetic taste. He gives a short critical summary of the state of poetry and the work of each well-known poet from Gray to the mid-nineteenth century. The remarks on the romantic movement are wholly complimentary, as are those on Wordsworth, who," "while he gave in his poems specimens of his genius, at the same time unfolded with philosophical precision the nature of the system on which he worked."

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[14]de Selincourt, IV, 168-169.

He notes Wordsworth's rise in public esteem, despite censure and ridicule, and assesses his production as better than that of any of the Augustans, except for Pope.

Proceeding to a more specific review of The Borderers, the critic says that the drama "shows that philosophical power that can analyze with fine exactness the workings of the human mind." His resume of The Borderers occupies thirteen pages, with many lines quoted.[15] The only comment less than fully approving is that concerning the characterization of the beggar woman as being perhaps too poetical, and of Marmaduke as being over-credulous.

The end of the review includes entire sonnets[16] "partly from their excellence . . . and partly to produce

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[15]de Selincourt, I, pp. 128-115, ll.9, 86-87, 164-173, 192-209, 284-288, 364-369, 378-395, 397-406, 409-428, 446-450, 506-507, 515, 537-541, 543-554, 561-566. 580-581, 655-662, 678-683, 754-756, 774-786, 874-877, 903-906, 912-913, 953-954, 957-966, 1058-1064, 1120-1123, 1142-1144, 1180-1197, 1213-1227, 1257-1259, 1308-1314, 1377-1379, 1415-1416, 1430-1434, 1586-1588, 1724-1726, 2000, 2006-2009, 2065-2075, 2103-2126, 2137-2154, 2166-2172, 2206-2245, 2260-2281, 2287-2321.

[16]de Selincourt, III: "Plea for the Historian," 214: "Near Rome, in Signt of St. Peter's," 214; "The most alluring clouds," 52; "On a Portrait of the Duke of Wellington," 53; "Near the Lake of Thrasymene," 217; "To a Painter," 54; "To the Planet Venus," 59; IV: "On the Punishment of Death," 135-141, sonnets numbered III, IV, IX, XIII; "Poor Robin," 158; "On Various Recent Notices of the French Revolution," 130.

them as safe and elegant models for the imitation of younger poets." Although he believes that Wordsworth is the best English sonneteer since Milton even Wordsworth has erred in sometimes breaking "the established laws" of the Italian form.

Considering the effect of the whole article, one proposes that this review is the most balanced given to Wordsworth in Gentleman's Magazine during the time-span of this survey.

CXXVII, Part II, September, 1850, 256-257.

This is a review of The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey, but it contains an interesting early assessment of Wordsworth and his ability by Southey, who was a colleague and neighbor, and has been included for that reason. Southey scoffs at the idea of his and Wordsworth's "writing on one concerted school of poetry" and expresses admiration for Wordsworth, both as poet and human being. "Posterity will rank him with Milton," Southey wrote in 1814; and in the same letter he states that Wordsworth "is a truly exemplary and admirable man." His amusement at Jeffrey's famous indictment of The Excursion is expressed in a letter of the same year, to Sir Walter Scott:

> Jeffrey I hear has written what his admirers call a crushing review of The Excursion. He

> might as well seat himself on Skiddaw, and fancy that he crushed the mountain. I heartily wish Wordsworth may one day meet with him, and lay him alongside, yard-arm and yard-arm, in argument.

CXXXVI, Part I, June, 1850, 668-672.

Published in the obituary section of the June 1850 number, this Memoir of William Wordsworth, Esq.., also functions as something of a critical summation of Wordsworth's life work. The writer summarizes Wordsworth's early life and education and his first publications in a few paragraphs; he deals with the life and works from Lyrical Ballads on and with their varying critical reception in some detail. Coleridge is quoted regarding his early enthusiasm for Wordsworth's genius and for his much later judgment that Wordsworth "ought never to have abandoned the contemplative position." He notes the poor public reception of Lyrical Ballads and the scathing responses in the Edinburgh Review to The Excursion and Peter Bell, along with Byron's more favorable opinion of the two volumes published in 1807. Wordsworth's own sonnet on the reception of Peter Bell is reprinted,[17] and Lamb's request for The Waggoner noted. The writer approves of "The White Doe of Rylstone," despite the disapproval which greeted it, and says that The River

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[17]de Selincourt, III, 11.

Duddon contains "some of his finest poetry." Publications after this work, he believes, sustained rather than added to the poet's reputation.

Reviewing the public honors that began to come to Wordsworth in 1828, the memoirist quotes Dr. Thomas Arnold's satisfaction at seeing the poet so honored, saying that "his sonnets are among the finest in the language." He notes the Times obituary which commented on the Poet Laureate's exemplary character; the many who travelled to Grasmere for his funeral; and the projected publication of The Prelude under the direction of The Reverend Christopher Wordsworth, the poet's nephew. "Full of years, as of honours," the writer notes with satisfaction, "the old man had time to accomplish all that he was capable of accomplishing ere he was called away."

CXXXVII, Part II, November, 1840, 459-568.

This nine-page review of The Prelude, headed Wordsworth's Autobiographical Poem" and given first place in this issue, is a fair, careful and shrewd assessment of the work reviewed, as well as of the character of Wordsworth's poetry in general. The author first notes the great changes in the world since the time of The Prelude; then, he gives a very brief survey

of the periods of the poet's life covered by the fourteen books of the poem. The Prelude is

> at least equal to the best of Wordsworth's earlier published works, and in our opinion at least, superior to all of them, except his best lyrical ballands, his best sonnets, and his Ode to Immortality.

Wordsworth sometimes "went astray after a theory," and "by a perverse crotchet about diction, shackled the strength and freedom of his more mature works." Fortunately, however, his practice was often better than his precepts. The defects of The Prelude are those of his poetry, generally--occasional vagueness, and in passages dealing with a movement as violent as the French Revolution, "the sentiments of the philosopher rather than the citizen." The writer notes, also, Wordsworth's almost total lack of the erotic and dramatic elements of poetry: this lack, he thinks, may account for the lack of enthusiasm for Wordsworth's earliest works. Even admitting these deficiencies, he ranks Wordsworth with Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton.

Beginning his detailed analysis of the work at hand, the author quotes rather frequently,[18] but more

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[18]William Wordsworth, Poetical Works, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt. The Prelude, pp. 494-588; Bk. I: ll. 271-273, 326-339, 479-498; Bk. III: ll. 37-39, 368-398; Bk. IV: ll. 71-109, 128-138; Bk. VI: ll.193-195; Bk. VII: ll. 157-167; Bk. IX: ll. 139-161, 424-425, 509-520.

judiciously than was usually the case in Gentleman's reviews of the earlier years. He notes with apparent amusement that Hawkshead residents must have led "a luxurious schoolboy life"; and he recognizes the humor of Wordsworth at Cambridge getting tipsy in honor of Milton, the water-drinker. He says, also, that, while Hawkshead School probably did not predispose its graduates to Cambridge drudgery, Wordsworth's strictures on its dullness and inadequacy are proabably well-taken. He passes from this period to Wordsworth's long vacation and vision of the scholary Bedouin, to his return to to communings with Nature and himself. He compares the literary revolution wrought by Wordsworth and his contemporaries with the political changes which were begun by the French Revolution, and believes the latter had much to do with the cast of the poet's matured mind.

In his concluding paragraphs, the reviewer notes that Wordsworth owes a debt, largely unacknowledged, to Cowper and that the metrics of The Prelude resemble those of "The Task." He notes, also, a strain of irony in The Prelude which disappeared from later works. He notes with regret that the whole work of which The Prelude and The Excursion are fragments was not completed, and observes with satisfaction that the former

has been universally applauded. "It is seldom," he concludes, "that we have the privilege of noticing so masterly a work as this poem, still less seldom do we meet with one so rich in both historical and psychological interest."

CHAPTER II

THE MONTHLY REVIEW, 1794-1842

The Monthly Review of Literature was founded in 1749 as a political organ of the "liberal" party and continued through 1844 (Graham, pp. 208-211). The first editor, Edward Griffiths, was succeeded by his son, Ralph Griffiths, and then by his grandson. After 1801, the editorship passed to other men who are less well-known but who carried on the traditions of the magazine. The editors of the Monthly must have exercised firm control over the contents, as the magazine gives the impression of having a single critical and political stance and a dependably caustic tone, especially in literary criticism. Important contributors included two Norwich writers, William Enfield and William Taylor, Alexander Hamilton of Edinburgh, Richard Porson, Thomas Holcroft, A. L. Geddes, John Wolcot, Richard Sheridan, William Gilpin, Charles Burney, and Oliver Goldsmith.

As wearing as the critical tone which Graham characterizes as the "Invisible infallible" (p. 238) may become to the reader, the Monthly and its competitor, the Critical Review, were certainly important

in the development of literary criticism. The reviews of the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review employ much the same tone and express much the same opinions as the Monthly, only the reviews are better written in the newer magazines. Liberal political theory was obviously not paralelled by liberal poetic theory: the columns of the Monthly Review criticized Wordsworth and his fellows more harshly, and less wittily, than the Edinburgh Review at its most rabid.

The first moderation in attitude appears in 1820; after that date there is an eleven-year silence on the subject of Wordsworth; a growing acceptance is evident from 1831 on; and, in 1841, the last Monthly review of a Wordsworth work expresses complete acceptance and even admiration. A change of editors and growing public acclaim for the poet may have combined to cause the change.

XII, October, 1793, 216-218.

Descriptive Sketches and An Evening Walk are reviewed unkindly in this number's "Monthly Catalogue." The two articles are really one critique and can best be summarized together.

"More descriptive poetry! Have we not yet enough!" runs the first line of this review. The critic finds

faults in the poem very similar to those noted by the critic for the rival Critical Review. The introductory passage[19] is quoted, and poet accused of having "the purple morning confined . . . like a maniac in a straight waistcoat." He finds subsequent lines full of contradictions and continues:

> How often shall we in vain advise those, who are so delighted with their own thoughts that they cannot forbear from putting them into rhyme, to examine those thoughts till they themselves understand them? No man will ever be a poet, till his mind is sufficiently powerful to sustain labour.

An Evening Walk is briefly estimated as being much the same as the first poem, with similar failings.[20] The reviewer notes that some passages display imagination, but he recommends much rewriting to make the poems acceptable.

XXIX, June, 1799, 202-210.

The author of this review of Lyrical Ballads appears to have read many of the poems as political statements and to have criticized them according to

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[19]de Selincourt, I, 42-91, ll. 1-28 (1793).

[20]Four lines quoted were included in the 1793 edition only in a note; they were never restored and de Selincourt does not include them in his edition. They run: "Return delights, with whom my road begun,/ When Life-rear'd laughing up her morning sun;/ When Transport kiss'd away my April tear,/ Rocking as in a dream the tedious Year."

this reading. He could not have known of the joint nature of Lyrical Ballads and reviewed the volume as the work of one poet. Twenty-two poems are catalogued by title and briefly criticized, but only "Expostulation and Reply"[21] and "The Tables Turned"[22] are quoted as being more modern and less gloomy than the rest. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is dismissed as a cock-and-bull story, but one containing poetical touches.

As did other reviewers, this one equates the poems with the Dutch and Flemish school of "boorish" painters. He finds "Tintern Abbey" poetical, beautiful, and philosophical, if reflecting a rather narrow and gloomy social viewpoint, but says "The Yew Tree seems a seat for Jean Jacques." Most of the narratives are treated as if they had been intended as social criticism: e. g., Goody Blake could have been relieved by public funds instead of "the plunder of an individual"; conversely, the author should have prevented the sale of "The Last of the Flock." "The Female Vagrant" and "The Old Man Travelling" are regarded as anti-military polemics, and "The Convict" and "The Dungeon" as "misplaced commiseration" with criminals. "We Are Seven," Dramatic Fragment,"

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[21]de Selincourt, IV, 56 (quoted in full).

[22]de Selincourt, IV, 57 (quoted in full).

"Anecdote for Fathers," "On an Early Spring," and "The Idiot Boy" are rather neutrally received, while "Simon Lee, the old Huntsman," "Lines written near Richmond," and "The Nightingale" receive short sentences of commendation. The author's introduction seems also to serve as his judgment of the whole: he believes that the poet should not have imitated the style of ancient English authors at the expense of a "higher species of versification." He has been entertained by the originality of the pieces, but he cannot regard the works as poetry (italics his). He expresses, in conclusion, a hope to see more work from the poet, but on subjects more elevated and more cheerful.

XXVIII, June, 1803, 209.

The following "Monthly Catalogue" paragraph, on the second publication of Lyrical Ballads, is so brief that it can be better quoted in full than summarized:

> In our xxixth Vol. N.S. we gave an account of the first part of these Lyrical Ballads: which appeared without the Poet's name. As we then paid a particular attention to the style and manner of the unknown writer, we think it unnecessary to enlarge with critical discrimination on the character and merits of the poems now before us. Suffice it, therefore, to observe that we deem the present publication not inferior to its precursor; and to express our hope that this will not prove the last time of our meeting this natural, easy,

> and sentimental Bard, in his pensive rambles through the wilds and groves of his truly poetic, though somewhat peculiar, imagination.

The following review was obviously written in response to Charles Lamb's December, 1814, critique in the Quarterly. The writer sometimes quotes directly from that review and refutes statements made in it. LXXVI, February, 1815, 123-136.

In his opening paragraph, the author of this article on The Excursion serves notice that he has not changed his poor opinion of Wordsworth's poetry after reading The Excursion. Wordsworth's introductory note[23] is transcribed, and a short description of the plan of the poem is given. The action of Books One and Two is very briefly summarized, and the subject-headings of the Third, Fourth, and Ninth books are given in full, with an ironic apology for their "dryness"; the Fifth-through-the-Eighth books are characterized as being the most interesting, and the reader is referred to the works of Crabbe for an interesting comparison. The reviewer objects, however, to the philosophy put in the mouth of the pedlar; "The Solitary" is a suitable vehicle for "introducing the moral and philosophical creed of

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[23] de Selincourt, V, 1-2.

the author." The reviewer credits Wordsworth with "innate qualities of genius which it is even out of his own power wholly to conceal." In his moral and intellectual qualities, he resembles his model, Milton, but these qualities are shown only in occasional flashes of contrast with the general "heavy, confused heap of nothingness" which make up the work as a whole.

Wordsworth's doctrine of nature is taken to task as being far too literal; in direct answer to Lamb's review in the Quarterly, this author says he will not argue whether the poet's belief in animated nature is a strength or a weakness: he believes it to be an affectation, and quotes at length from Book I and Book IV[24] to demonstrate his objection. Mysticism is so much a part of the work that it appears constantly; granting the poet's lofty intentions in the work at hand, the critic submits that "neither mysticism nor enthusiasm is the best conductor of misguided mortals back to the precincts of a calm and rational religion."

The writer grants the originality of Wordsworth's "peculiar diction and manner" but maintains that, with regard to his philosophy, "almost all that is not too mystical to be comprehended is too common-place to be

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[24]de Selincourt, V, 1-312; Bk. I: ll. 118-162, 185-243; Bk. IV: ll. 1126-1150.

tolerated." Nevertheless, he finds in Wordsworth's love of nature the quality of a true poet, but one who perhaps has allowed his self-indulged feelings to lead him too far from the concerns of his contemporaries. The virtues of The Excursion are so mixed with defects that the only demonstration he can make of either is by quoted examples.[25] In his concluding paragraphs, he notes Wordsworth's humorlessness; and compares him with Milton in the quality of his blank verse. The concluding sentence expresses a wish for Wordsworth to emulate his master in subject matter as in execution.

LXXX, June, 1816, 221-222.

The author of this short review of A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns heartily concurs with Wordsworth's stated belief that either all the facts of the poet's life and all the available correspondence should be disclosed and readers left to judge the subject of the biography, or very little should be written about it. He quotes no passages except for a sentence in support of the argument that knowledge of the facts of a life does not guarantee knowledge of the truth about it.

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[25]de Selincourt, V, 1-312. Bk. II: ll. 688-724; Bk. III: ll. 299-324; Bk. IX: ll. 206-254.

LXXXII, January, 1817, 98-100.

The author of this review of the Thanksgiving Ode and the short poems published with it first states his dislike of this kind of poetry written to celebrate public events as always carrying a suspicion of currying favor. In any case, Wordsworth's Ode seems to have nothing to do with any public event, but to deal with Wordsworth himself and his good spirits on a fine Sunday morning in the Lake District. The thought is sometimes poetical, but the whole is "very pious . . . very quaint and very prosaic." The overall effect is that of "a moderate dose of magnesia, inspirited with a small quantity of lemon juice." One stanza is quoted[26] as exemplifying the tame style of the volume, and the writer expresses a conviction that only because readers have exercised much "unworthy patience and degrading toleration" toward the works of Wordsworth, Southey, et al, will be able to "swallow the latest dose." Four lines,[27] which the author claims rival the worst of methodist hymns, are quoted in conclusion.

LXXIV, December, 1817, 360-365.

This review of a satire of the popular poets of

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[26]de Selincourt, III, 155-161, ll. 36-56.

[27]de Selincourt, III, 155-161, ll. 161-164.

the time, Called The Poetic Mirror, makes a point of commending the satirist at the expense of the poets parodied. The satire on The Excursion, titled "The Stranger," is said to be better than its model. The satirist has included Wordsworth's supposed judgment of his fellow poets in a burlesque of his style in which Scotland is described as "barren alike of verdure, intellect and moral sense," a judgment with which the reviewer concurs.

LXXXVII, February, 1819, 132-137.

Much of this review of Coleridge's Biographia Literaria takes up Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth's works and extends it. The Biographia Literaria, according to the critic, points out so many errors of Wordsworth's theory and practice that Coleridge must be credited with unintentionally defending "good taste and good sense in poetry." Since Coleridge's objections, though professedly moderate, strike at the basis "of Mr. Wordsworth's plan for vulgarizing poetry," the reviewer concludes that Wordsworth's claims to being a poet of any kind, even a second-rate poet, are destroyed. Wordsworth's poetry is neither meritorious nor original, and his criticism of other poets is "capricious nonsense." Quotations from several of Wordsworth's poems are advanced as

examples of his supposed dullness and triviality.[28] The reviewer calls upon classical scholars and lovers of "genuine poetry" to notice Wordsworth's works only when an opportunity to censure them arises.

LXXXVIII, February, 1819, 254-255.

Another anonymous parody is reviewed in this issue, this one Childe Harold's Monitor. The reviewer says it is as well done as The Poetic Mirror and uses footnotes to comment directly on Wordsworth's "prattle." One suspects him of quoting the satire to "concur with the criticism without admiring the poetry, as in this couplet:

> But Southey! Wordsworth! -- are they verse, or prose?
> It is not every one that fact who knows.

Both Peter Bell and The Waggoner were parodied as soon as they were published: John Hamilton Reynolds' Peter Bell, A Lyrical Ballad, was on sale a few days before Wordsworth's Peter Bell, A Tale in Verse.[29] The Monthly reviewed the original and the parody in the same

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[28]de Selincourt, II: "The Last of the Flock," 43-46, l. 1010; "The Sailor's Mother," 54-55, ll. 19-26; "Resolution and Independence," 235-240, ll. 120-126; Vol III: "The Blind Highland Boy," 88-96, ll. 116-120.

[29]Elsie Smith, An Estimate of William Wordsworth by His Contemporaries, 1792-1822, p. 288.

issue and in what amounts to being the same review. The following month, The Waggoner and its first parody were similarly treated.

LXXIX, August, 1819, 419-423.

The author of this review regards the style of Peter Bell as being no better than that of a nursery-rhyme, and the subject-matter as being fit only for a tract "intended for the reformation of the lowest of the lower orders." Noting that parodies of Peter Bell and The Waggoner have been published, he maintains that Wordsworth is too much "nature's buffoon" to be travestied. Quoting from Peter Bell,[30] he comments that any child's nurse who used such language to her charges "would probably be dismissed without a character." Proceeding to a short comment on Reynolds' parody, he restates his position that Wordsworth caricatures himself better than any imitator; but he hopes that straightforward criticism and satire together will cause him to stop publishing his works.

XC, September, 1819, 36-42.

In this review of The Waggoner, the author at first professes to find an undertone of irony, that of

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[30]de Selincourt, II, 331-382, ll. 201-235, 761-785.

the poet laughing at his own mock-heroics; he next professes to find the scene of inebriation in The Waggoner too realistic to have been written by a habitually sober man.[31] Wordsworth is advised to cultivate his talent for burlesque, as it is his one true talent. The sonnets published with The Waggoner exhibit idiosyncrasies bordering on simple-mindedness; "Captivity"[32] is quoted in full, and four other lines from the sonnets are cited.[33]

Benjamin the Waggoner, the parody, which turns out to be about the character Peter Bell, is said to be too long and to suggest falsely that Wordsworth is sometimes "indelicate." The prose footnotes, which were pirated from Wordsworth's published prose, are said to expose the folly of his theories of poetic diction very successfully. The whole is enough like Wordsworth's style to prove that the style is a bad one, as "no good author can be thus degraded" (italics his).

XCIII, October, 1820, 132-143.

This review of The River Duddon; Vadracour and

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[31]de Selincourt, II, 176-205, ll. 83-116.

[32]de Selincourt, III, 33.

[33]de Selincourt, III: "Written Upon a Blank Leaf in 'The Complete Angler'," 9-10, ll. 5-6; "The Wild Duck's Nest," 9, ll. 13-14 (1819).

Julia, and other Poems, is not as hostile as the Monthly reviews before it; but the overall effect is still that of "damning with faint praise." The author begins by stating that the 1820 volume is a tacit recantation of the theory advanced since 1802. Criticism of Wordsworth's poetry, while it did not have an immediate effect of reforming his theory and practice, did purify contemporary taste and indirectly work an improvement in Wordsworth's poetry. The current volume would stand comparison with any contemporary poet, and even with the minor efforts of the classic poets. The classic poets are not precisely identified, and the reviewer limits his approval to some of the miscellaneous poems in the volume. He has never doubted Wordsworth's considerable talents, and these works prove the poet to have "acknowledged ability, and . . . great amiableness of disposition." Quoting "Composed at Cora Linn" in full,[34] he remarks that it is difficult to believe that it is from the same author who produced the Lyrical Ballads. "Dion,"[35] "Departing summer hath assumed,"[36] and "Ode on the

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[34]de Selincourt, III, 100-102 (1820).

[35]de Selincourt, II, 272-278, ll. 18-76.

[36]de Selincourt, IV, 99-100, ll. 25-48.

Pass at Kirkstone"[37] are quoted as further proof that Wordsworth has become "an altered and amended poet." Some expressions from these poems are isolated and cited as examples of "Wordsworthianisms," however.

Proceeding to a criticism of "Vadracour and Julia," the writer denounces it as prosaic, too much concerned with Wordsworth's theory of animated nature, and indelicate in its subject matter. He is especially displeased with the suggestion that Vadracour and Julia may have deliberately flouted law and custom, and trusted to Nature for the outcome.[38]

The "River Duddon" sonnets are only tenuously connected with their title and suffer much from animated and thoughtful watercourses and plants, stocks and stones, which really have no meaning at all: the difference in Wordsworth's plain and ornamented styles is that the first is perfectly intelligible but infantile and the second is figurative in language but vague in meaning. The reviewer grants the poet originality of thought, however, and concludes with a non-specific recommendation of several efforts (cited by page number only) and of the "Memoir of Robert Walker."

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[38]de Selincourt, II, 59-67, ll. 120-149.

New Series, II, August, 1831, 602.

After an eleven-year silence, the Monthly Review wrote a short and generally favorable "notice" of the publication of a volume of Wordsworth selections, intended for school use. The notice is very short and is transcribed here in full:

> This school book has long been a desideratum, and it gives us pleasure to find that it has been at length supplied. Although we do not deem ourselves worthy to be enumerated amongst those persons who are so enthusiastic in their admiration of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, that they prefer it to every other in the English language, and speak of it and of its author with a kind of reverence approaching to idolatry, yet we hope that we can feel the beauties of his natural imagery, and the simplicity of his diction, and the fervent glow of his thoughts, as fully as the most devoted of his worshippers. We will not, indeed, swear that "Peter Bell" is the most charming poem that ever was written; yet even in Peter Bell we can recognize some of Wordsworth's most peculiar merits. The selections here extracted from his works are for the most part judiciously made, and the volume is in every respect so well adapted to the purpose for which it is intended, that we hope it may find its way very generally into the hands of youth.

The following summary deals with a joint review of a work by James Montgomery, and Wordsworth's Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems, but each poet is reviewed individually. The six pages which discuss Wordsworth are wholly favorable; the terms of the review and even the quotations cited are so similar to those of the

July, 1835 Quarterly Review entry that they appear to have been written by the same hand.

II, August, 1835, 605-617.

The introduction to the article notes that few works of poetry have been reviewed in the past few years and assesses the causes for the lack as the death of some prominent poets, the scant production of others, and a change in the direction of public interest. Montgomery is given a very favorable review, but Wordsworth is said to surpass him and all other living poets. He has not declined in power through age, the reviewer says, but seems to have become, while living, one with the immortals. A stanza from "Ode Composed on May Morning"[39] and all of "A Jewish Family,"[40] "Incident at Bruges,"[41] and "If this great world of joy and pain"[42] are quoted of Wordsworth's complete mastery of lyric forms. An extract from "The Egyptian Maid"[43] is given as proof of the poet's narrative ability; part of "On the Power of

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[39]de Selincourt, IV, 116-118, ll. 17-24.

[40]de Selincourt, II, 321-322,

[41]de Selincourt, III, 166-167.

[42]de Selincourt, IV, 114.

[43]de Selincourt, II, 323-330, ll. 17-32, 49-64, 162-178, 193-224.

Sound,"[44] exemplifying his reflective thought, concludes the review.

II, June, 1837, 304-306.

This review of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth comprises a short paragraph of compliment on the production, and a complete poem[45] cited as demonstrating that the true poet can enliven even that hackneyed subject, the moon.

II, June, 1842, 270-283.

Although this article is titled as a review of Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years, it also functions as a general introduction to the study of Wordsworth, especially for young readers. While no one any longer dispraises Wordsworth, the writer of the article believes that many readers do not really enjoy his poems as much as they could and do not admit the difficulty of reading him. The author admits to Wordsworth's demands upon the reader, gives reasons for them, and suggests an approach to the works that he hopes will make them accessible to any intelligent reader.

He considers Wordsworth to be a serious poet, one

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[44]de Selincourt, II, 323-330, ll. 17-32, 49-64 162-178, 193-224.

[45]de Selincourt, IV, "To the Moon," 14-16.

who has given much thought to his vocation. He is a natural philosopher as well as a poetic philosopher, and his poetry is constructed on fixed principles in accordance with his ideas. In addition, he holds such a mastery over the English language and uses it so precisely that the reader needs to study the etymology of English words and phrases to appreciate him fully. However, the reviewer notes that there are many passages in his works that any reader can comprehend and love at once. He recommends the first two books of The Excursion as being easily read and so intertwined with the poet's train of thought as to afford a good introduction to his system of thought. Three well-known sonnets are transcribed as examples of both thought and lyric beauty.[46] "On the Power of Sound"[47] and "Tintern Abbey"[48] are cited as showing the breadth of Wordsworth's interests, and the depth of his mind. The reviewer believes that study of Wordsworth enlarges the mind and spirit, elevating them above petty things, and that Wordsworth

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[46]de Selincourt, III: "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," 38; "Milton! thou shouldst be living," 116; "Walton's Book of 'Lives'," 387.

[47]de Selincourt, II 323-330, ll. 177-224.

[48]de Selincourt, IV, 206 (quoted in full).

himself set an example of patience with his detractors that makes the lesson doubly useful.

Wordsworth is also a religious and moral poet, but not in any narrow, denominational sense. His mental and moral perceptions are exceptionally clear, and this characteristic shows in his works. An inscription, "Not seldom, clad in radiant vest,"[49] and lines from The Excursion[50] are cited as expressions of true religion and morality. Several short, memorable quotations[51] are given as examples of the compressed thought that one may expect to find in a careful reading of Wordsworth.

Proceeding to a discussion of the new works in the 1842 publication, the writer remarks that some were probably held back from publication because of the reception they might have received at the time they were composed. The Borderers presents the poet in a new light to the author, who was surprised to find that Wordsworth had attempted drama of any description. The thoughts and language are typical of Wordsworth and some are beautiful, but the qualities of plot, characterization, and

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[49]de Selincourt, IV, 206 (quoted in full).

[50]de Selincourt, V, 1-312, Bk. IX: ll. 20-22, 48-58, 113-118, 500-502.

[51]de Selincourt, III: "Say, what is honour?" 122-132, ll. 1-5.

dialogue which make good stage drama are absent. "It is plainly Mr. Wordsworth throughout who speaks," but as metaphysical poetry, The Borderers is worthy of its author. The expansion of "The Female Vagrant" into "Guilt and Sorrow" is noted, and several stanzas are transcribed.[52] As "characteristic samples" of Wordsworth, two extracts from the new work conclude the review.[53]

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[52]de Selincourt, I, 94-127, ll. 1-54.

[53]de Selincourt, III: "Musings near Aquapendente," 202-212, ll. 315-372; II: "Love lies Bleeding," 167 (quoted in full).

CHAPTER III

THE CRITICAL REVIEW, 1793-1829

The Critical Review, or Annals of Literature was begun in 1756 for the purpose of opposition to the "liberal" Monthly Review. The first editors were Tobias Smollet and Archibald Hamilton, and the magazine had the financial backing of the Tory party and the Church of England (Graham, p. 214). The plan of the magazine was exactly like the Monthly and the tone of the articles very similar, although perhaps keyed a trifle lower. The microfilmed "English Literary Periodicals" series has not copied the Critical Review beyond 1829, and the last comments on Wordsworth before that year were made in 1816. A pattern of critical reception of Wordsworth does not emerge with much clarity, since approving reviews follow acid ones in apparently random order. One element that appears to emerge in the very early reviews is the desire to disagree with the Monthly. Another factor that could have contributed to the change which seems to have occurred in the years 1814-1816 was a sudden loss of enthusiasm toward Lord Byron and

his works. From the turn of the century until mid-1814 Byron's works received long, prominently-placed and very favorable reviews in the Critical Review. During 1814, the tone of these reviews cooled rapidly while that of reviews of Wordsworth's works slowly warmed. In early 1815, Wordsworth appeared likely to replace Byron in critical esteem in this and other publications.

Second Series, VIII, July, 1793, 247-348.

In the "Monthly Catalogue" section there is a short review of An Evening Walk which is primarily approving but which notes some areas for improvement, in the patronizing tone usually reserved for young poets. The critic detects some obscurity in description and harshness of diction and takes the poet to task for using atop, which he says is a "barbarous" contraction, and "sugh," which is "a word too local to be used in any species of elegant writing." However, he also credits Wordsworth with "many touches . . . which would not disgrace our best descriptive poets" and with "new and picturesque imagery." For examples, he quotes three short descriptive passages[54] and the

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[54]de Selincourt, I, 4-39, ll. 170-171, 308, 311-312 (1793).

longer description of the swan.[55]

Second Series, VIII, August, 1793, 472-474.

This review of Descriptive Sketches is almost completely composed of extracts from the poem; the reviewer's commentary is brief and trenchant. "The wild, romantic scenes of Switzerland have not yet been celebrated by an English poet," he begins; a little further on, citing a Latin tag indicating that few poets "have both great perceptions and forceful expression," he concludes that "The objection is scarcely removed. Mr. Wordsworth's . . . versification is harsh and prosaic; his images ill-chosen, and his descriptions feeble and insipid." The introduction is characterized as being "almost unintelligible"; the rest of the review consists of passages cited to exemplify the faults of the poetry.[56]

According to Elsie Smith (p. 30), the following review was written by Robert Southey, who had quarreled with Coleridge at this time. The quarrel may have affected his critical vision; or he may not have known

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[55]de Selincourt, I, 4-39, ll. 170-171, 308 (misquoted), 311-312 (1793).

[56]de Selincourt, I, 42-91, ll. 1-12, 80-105, 201-214, 317-329 (1793).

which poems he was reviewing were by Coleridge and which by Wordsworth. In any case, the anonymous character of the publication of Lyrical Ballads and of the reviews in Critical Review lent the article an air of detachment and sincerity which may have been spurious.

Second Series, XXIV, October, 1798, 197-204,

This review of the first publication of Lyrical Ballads is severely critical of Wordsworth's ballads and of The Ancient Mariner but praises the narrative and lyric poems. Quoting the statement in the "Preface" that most of the poems are experimental in nature, the reviewer first summarizes "The Idiot Boy" and then transcribes an extract of sixteen stanzas,[57] with the comment that "no tale less deserved the labour that appears to have been bestowed upon this. It resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution." He is similarly "displeased" with "The Thorn" and the "tiresome loquacity" of the persona who narrates it; "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" might promote popular superstition. Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner is dismissed as "laboriously beautiful . . . but unintelligible" and "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity."

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[57]de Selincourt, II, 67-80, ll. 312-391.

The reviewer likes much better those poems that he characterizes as "serious." "The Foster-Mother's Tale," "The Dungeon," "Lines Left Upon a Yew-Tree Seat," and "The Female Vagrant" are of this number, and the last is quoted at some length.[58] Although "Tintern Abbey" is praised, it is suggested that the poet who composed it should never have condescended to write most of the ballads. A long extract from "Tintern Abbey"[59] is included as an example of the poet's powers, but the reviewer concludes that, for the most part, "The experiment . . . has failed . . . not because of the language . . . but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects." Nevertheless, the poet's talents, if not his employment of them, show him to be one of the best of living English poets.

The following review of Poems in two Volumes is the last harsh treatment Wordsworth was to receive in the Critical Review. The writer was probably C. V. LeGrice, who nursed an intense dislike of Coleridge which must have extended to Coleridge's friends and acquaintances (Smith, pp. 72-75). The review employs

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[58]de Selincourt, I, 94-127, ll. 271-369.

[59]de Selincourt, II, 259-263, ll. 65-111.

not only a turn of invective which must have required extensive use of a dictionary, but many short quotations taken out of context. Cited in this way, they are made to appear more typical of the work and considerably sillier than when read in context. The first line of "Stepping Westward," which Wordsworth had carefully noted as spoken by a Scotswoman, is attributed to the poet instead; the "Immortality Ode" is not commented upon. The next commentary to appear in the Critical Review was not published until July, 1816; it agrees with Wordsworth's views on the subject of biography writing. Succeeding critiques up to 1829 were sparse but approving.

Third Series, XI, August, 1807, 399-403.

This reviewer actually writes of his "magisterial chair," and the phrase perfectly characterizes the tone of the critique. He begins, "A silly book is a serious evil; but it becomes absolutely insupportable when written by a man of sense." The rest of the review is in the same vein and in language so strong as to be difficult to summarize. Such ridicule has been employed in an attempt to bring Wordsworth to his senses, but it has not availed. Now, he "entreats" the poet to detach himself from his fellow Lake poets and "consider seriously"

the words of the review. He acknowledges Wordsworth's poetical emotions, imagination, and command of the language as manifested in his earlier works, but he believes "the unlimited gratification of vicious sensibility" has perverted and debauched these qualities. He recommends that Wordsworth practice humility toward his craft, absent himself from the company which has encouraged him in his bad habits, and spend much time studying classic poetry. Nine lines from "Tintern Abbey"[60] are introduced as contrast with several examples of "drivelling" from the 1807 production.[61]

Fifth Series, IV, July, 1816, 51-58.

This critique of A Letter to a Friend of Burns uses Wordsworth's open letter as a basis for a general discussion of biography and biographers. There are several long quotations from the Letter, including the statement that biography, like fiction, is an art form, properly subject to social conventions, and the suggestion that, if Dr. Currie's Life of Burns is to be

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[60]de Selincourt, II, 259-263, ll. 75-83.

[61]de Selincourt, II: "The Redbreast and the Butterfly," 149-150, l. 108; "To the Small Celandine," 142-144, ll. 1-16; "The Kitten and the Falling Leaves," 170-173, ll. 1-6, 41-42; "The Glow-Worm," 466, ll. 19-20; "To a Sky-Lark," 141-142, ll. 20-21 (1807); "Alice Fell," 232-234, ll. 33-36; III: "Stepping Westward," 76, l. 1.

reissued, explanatory notes should be attached to clear up distortions arising from the more shocking of Burns's letters. The author of the article agrees with most of Wordsworth's strictures on excursive biographies, although he thinks that Wordsworth may err on the side of conservatism because he feels kinship with Burns.

The critic points out, in one paragraph, that Burns's use of unaffected language was similar to that of Wordsworth, for the very good reason that the young Burns knew no other, and that Wordsworth understands Burns, as man and poet, better than most readers because of their similarities. The article concludes by supporting Wordsworth's suggestion that a biography of Robert Burns should be written by Burns's brother, Gilbert.

The November, 1816, issue of the Critical Review contains two articles which comment favorably upon Wordsworth although they review publications that are not his. These remarks are the last comments made about Wordsworth through 1829, when the microfilmed series ends. They seem to mark the conversion of this magazine's editorial attitude toward Wordsworth's theory as well as his practice to one more approving. They mark also the beginning of a period during which little criticism of Wordsworth (or other poets) appeared in public.

Fifth Series, IV, November, 1816, 466-467.

In a generally disapproving review of The Poetic Mirror, the burlesque of living British poets, the critic occupies two pages with a brief account of Wordsworth's theory, his early reception, and his rise to general acceptance and admiration. The public, even the uneducated public, has developed a distrust of the ridicule of works that resemble the one under review, and this attempt has not even the merit of being perceptive. The attempts of the satire at ridiculing Wordsworth's poetry are "either dull exaggerations of peculiarities, or unhappy endeavours to be humourous, without the slightest understanding or relish of the admirable qualities of the author he tries to follow.

The growing esteem in which Wordsworth's works are being held is gratifying to this writer. Wordsworth's principles were repugnant to an earlier generation who were accustomed to looking for bombastic lines and erudite vocabulary as determinants of good poetry. However, "within the last few years a rapid improvement in this respect has taken place," and the public has come to expect not only fine words, but thoughtfulness, in poetry.

Fifth Series, IV, November, 1816, 568-573.

The central thesis of this review of Lord Byron's Prisoner of Chillon is that Byron has become a "tardy convert" to Wordsworth's poetic theory as advanced in the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads and that his style has improved in consequence. The reviewer suggests that conversion would be unavoidable for one who read Wordsworth with understanding and introduces two pages of quotations from The Prisoner of Chillon to support his thesis. In some instances, he believes, Byron has carried his imitation past simplicity until it approaches vulgarism; but on the whole the change is for the better.

CHAPTER IV

THE EDINBURGH REVIEW, 1802-1849

The Edinburgh Review was founded in 1802, with Whig party support under the editorship of Francis Jeffrey; other young Edinburgh wits (aged 23-31) who helped start the Review were Sydney Smith, Francis Horner and Henry Brougham. The writing in the new periodical was of a high standard, and contributors were soon paid so well that commissions were hard to refuse. Walter Scott, William Hazlitt, Thomas Hogg, Thomas Macauley, and William Carlyle, among others, all contributed articles from time to time (Graham, pp. 226-235).

The tone of the Edinburgh Review has already been characterized as superior, magisterial, and final; nevertheless, Jeffrey, who usually wrote criticism of Wordsworth for the magazine, was both fair and shrewd. He never accused Wordsworth of stupidity or lack of talent; and his columns are the only ones that state frankly that Wordsworth's works were popular, even when not well received by the critics. All the other periodicals

examined seemed to believe that they and their reviewers were the public--or all of it that mattered.

Jeffrey edited the Edinburgh Review until 1829; he contributed articles until 1840. When the critiques are by some other hand, the fact is readily detectable. Although Jeffrey never grew to like romantic poetry, the reviews became less dogmatic after 1820; they also became disappointingly sparse, after the fiery beginning of the early years. By 1849, a balanced and shrewdly perceptive appreciation of Wordsworth appears in the Edinburgh Review.

I, October, 1802, 63-83.

This, the first number of the Edinburgh Review, does not devote an article to Wordsworth, but Jeffrey's critique of Southey's Thalaba sets the tone for later criticism of Wordsworth's works. Thalaba is used as a departure point for criticism of the "Lake school"; Wordsworth is mentioned by name, and the "Preface" to the 1802 edition of Lyrical Ballads is quoted and used as a subject for criticism.

Jeffrey begins by identifying the standards of poetry which he believes to be the only acceptable ones: e.g., those of the eighteenth century. He employs an extended religious metaphor to state his quarrel with

the new style of poetry that he sees developing. The standards of poetry, like those religion, were fixed long ago and are equally closed to question. Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, in this metaphor, are leaders of a dissenting sect of poets, and their "creed" is analyzed and, Jeffrey hopes, destroyed. He proposes that the social and poetic principles of this group are all derivative: they have borrowed their philosophy from Rousseau, Calvin, Kotzebue, and Schiller and their diction from Cowper, Ambrose Phillips, Quarles, and Donne. Any reader could use this structure of borrowings and write poetry as correct as that of the "Lake school."

Quoting from Wordsworth's "Preface," Jeffrey accuses the whole group of an affectation of simplicity which leads them to suppose that the language of vulgar persons can be used to express refined sentiments. The different classes of society have different characters and feelings as well as different idioms, and the only interest which genteel readers can feel in commonplace characters is in the pathos of their situations, never in their sentiments or expression. Wordsworth's choice of subjects is singled out as particularly offensive in this regard.

Besides the use of low diction, Jeffrey writes, the worst offense of this new sect of poets is exaggeration

of thought clothed in sententious words. They ignore the blessings of civilization to concentrate on its disorders; they observe the vices of the lower orders with sympathy and show no interest in or sympathy for those whose sins are due to wealth. These childish concepts are wrapped in mysterious and unintelligible language, which "flows past with such solemnity, that it is difficult to believe that it conveys nothing of any value." Jeffrey, then, proceeds to criticize Thalaba on these grounds, which are the same ones that he will use in later issues when he devotes critiques to the works of Wordsworth.

XI, October, 1807, 214-231.

This review, of Poems, in Two Volumes, is the first in the Edinburgh Review to deal exclusively with Wordsworth; it is probably by Jeffrey. He notes that the author of the Poems is known to be one of a "brotherhood" of Lake poets and "is generally looked upon as the purest model of the school which they have been labouring to establish." The Lyrical Ballads are unquestionably and deservedly popular; despite some faults of vulgarity, affectation, and silliness, they show much originality and feeling and appear to have been written by an amiable and virtuous author. However, this popularity has led

to an uncritical admiration of the poems in some quarters which extends even to their defects. Wordsworth's admitted powers and the danger that his perverted system will gain credence are what lead the reviewer to criticize him harshly.

Although he professes himself disappointed in the quality of the new poems, he is glad to see his former judgment of Wordsworth's poetic theory vindicated. This volume is even more full of peculiarities than is Lyrical Ballads, and if it proves to be as popular, the reviewer promises to acknowledge that the poet's grasp of poetic principles is worthy of a more serious and respectful examination than he has yet accorded. He does not, he says, expect such an acknowledgement to become necessary.

The purpose of poetry, he believes, is to please, and any metrical composition that pleases the reader without overtaxing his intellect is poetry. The pleasures of poetry arise from the excitement of the readers' emotions; from the play of imagination and exercise of reason it causes in him; and from the character and quality of the diction of the poetry. On this last point he finds fault with Wordsworth. Two great beauties of poetic diction exist only for readers who possess a degree of scholarship: e. g., the pro-

priety of words exactly adapted to meaning, and the appropriate use of venerable and allusive expressions adapted from the ancients. Other beauties, those of sweet sound and pleasant associations, are accessible to all readers. There are low and mean expressions, as well as lofty and grave ones, and poetry containing the former can have only a temporary popularity at most. Mean expression is the fault of Wordsworth's poetry; and worse, this fault is founded upon a deliberate system. Wordsworth and his friends apparently spend much effort to maintain a low standard of diction and are as affected in their fashion as the worst of "magazine versifiers."

Wordsworth appears to court "literary martyrdom" by his choice of subjects as well as his method of diction. The objects of his verse must appear ludicrous to most of his readers, however seriously he may take them. Quoting from the Poems to prove his point, the reviewer condemns several short poems as affected, artificial, feeble, unmeaning, and "downright raving."[62]

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[62]de Selincourt, II: "To the Daisy," 135-138, ll. 9-24, 78-81; "Louisa," 28, ll. 1-6; "The Redbreast and the Butterfly," 149-150, ll. 1014; "The Small Celandine," 142-144, ll. 41-56; "To the Same Flower, 144-146, ll. 30-32, 49-56.

"The Character of the Happy Warrior," "The Horn of Egremont Castle," and "The Kitten and the Falling Leaves," are marginally acceptable to him, but the "Ode to Duty"[63] is described as an unsuccessful attempt at a higher vein of poetry. "The Beggars," which is quoted at some length,[64] the reviewer professes to believe the poet's favorite, and he dismisses it as "a very paragon of silliness and affectation." "Alice Fell," also quoted,[65] is considered an insult to the taste of the reading public, and "Resolution and Independence"[66] is worse, even, than anything Southey has produced. "Rob Roy," "An Address to the Sons of Burns,"[67] and "Yarrow Unvisited"[68] are tedious and dull; five more poems are quoted [69] with

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[63]de Selincourt, IV, 83-86, ll. 49-56.

[64]de Selincourt, II, 222-224, ll. 1-6, 13-18, 37-48.

[65]de Selincourt, I, 232-234, ll. 21-28, 41-60.

[66]de Selincourt, II, 235-240, ll. 48-49, 55-56, 75-84, 88-91, 99-105, 117-126, 139-140.

[67]de Selincourt, III, 69-71, ll. 13-18.

[68]de Selincourt, III, 83-85, ll.63-64.

[69]de Selincourt, I: "My heart leaps up," 226 (quoted in full); "On a Sparrow's Nest," 227, ll. 1-4, 11-14, (1807); II: "O Nightingale!" 83-85, ll. 61-64; "To the Cuckoo," 207-208, ll. 3-4, 15-16, 29-32; "To a Butterfly," 22-23, ll. 10-12.

comment that the author's striving after originality has produced only absurdity. "The Blind Highland Boy" is briefly summarized and quoted,[70] with the remark that if it is tolerated by the public, the wiping of shoes and the evisceration of chickens will be introduced into poetry before long.

"The Green Linnet,"[71] "Star Gazers,"[72] "Foresight,"[73] "Yes, it was the mountain Echo,"[74] and "To the Spade of a Friend"[75] are quoted but not commented upon except for their general "unmeaningness." The "Immortality Ode"[76] is excerpted at more length, as "beyond all doubt, the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication."

In support of his theory that Wordsworth does possess the ability which he is misusing to the danger

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[70]de Selincourt, III, 88-96, ll. 101-102, 113-114 (1807).

[71]de Selincourt, II, 139-141, ll. 6-8, 33-40 (1807).

[72]de Selincourt, II, 219-220, ll. 9-12, 16-20.

[73]de Selincourt, I, 227-228, ll. 1-10, 17-24 (1807).

[74]de Selincourt, II, 265, ll. 1-4.

[75]de Selincourt, IV, 75=76, l. 1.

[76]de Selincourt, IV, 279-285, ll. 51-57, 130-168.

of English poetry, the critic asks the reader to contrast the puerile works cited above, with the solemn grandeur of "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," which he summarizes and quotes extensively.[77] As further evidence of the quality of Wordsworth's productions when he departs from his own erroneous system, three sonnets are transcribed.[78]

Restating his earlier arguments briefly on the final page of the review, the writer concludes by stating the hope that Wordsworth's rebellion against the established practices of poetry will have burnt itself out with this volume, and that his bad example will serve as a warning to those who believe his theory or who would imitate his practice.

XXIV, November, 1814, 1-29.

This review by Francis Jeffrey of The Excursion is probably the most famous of all of those which are summarized in this study. It begins with the well-known "This will never do," and proceeds to consider the work in the light of Wordsworth's "peculiar system."

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[77]de Selincourt, II, 254-259, ll. 1-10, 87-101, 138-172.

[78]de Selincourt, III: "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic," 111-112; "London, 1802," 116; "I griev'd for Buonaparte," 110-111; all are quoted in full.

Jeffrey expresses admiration for Wordsworth's poetic talents at several points in the review and quotes several short passages which he finds praiseworthy near the end of the article. However, his final paragraphs sound a note of displeasure, so that the overall impression left is that of a thoroughly "bad" review. Jeffrey's central thesis is that Wordsworth is the possessor of undoubted poetic talents which have been so perverted by his choice of companions and his habits of thought that he is beyond the reach of criticism, and would be unable to reform his poetry even if he should wish to do so. The early poems, according to Jeffrey, were regarded by critics as a kind of experiment, attempted probably for the sake of notoriety; but now Wordsworth must be regarded as a sincere, if misguided, "convert to his own system."

Jeffrey objects, first, to the length of The Excursion, especially considering the few and trivial truths expounded within it. He characterizes the work as "a tissue of moral and devotional ravings," resembling "the mystical verbiage of the methodist pulpit." He observes that changes are rung upon a few simple, familiar ideas, but in words, phrases, and sentences so unwieldy as to be hard to decipher at best, and meaningless at worst. He notes that the work is intended to

be didactic but fails of its purpose because the characters in it are unsuitable examples for the teaching of others and the ideas too well-known to bear repetition. He identifies these ideas as a belief in a beneficent Providence and a conviction that there is much good sense and enjoyment in the humbler conditions of society. Wordsworth's doctrine of nature he finds "fantastic, obscure and affected."

Jeffrey summarizes in order each book of The Excursion; he grants that the tale of Margaret is well told and shows much understanding of the human heart, but he thinks the characters in most of the other tales are too low and the incidents too trite to be worthy of a serious poet. He considers the second book to be boring and too long for the material included in it and the third to be only a dull, mystical debate. He admits that the fourth has scattered expressions that are forceful, although most of it is a prolix exposition of truisms. He characterizes Book Five ironically as an edifying conversation; but Books Six, Seven, and Eight are barely summarized, with comment made only upon the lowness of the themes; Book Nine is chiefly "a harangue," and ends abruptly. Jeffrey uses several short quotations to illustrate the faults which he

sees in the work.[79]

To give readers an idea of the basis for his general criticism, he then introduces several long extracts in which he can find little or no meaning.[80] The description of the Pedlar's early years[81] he says is "affected . . . a raving fit . . . incomprehensible." Other passages are included to demonstrate straining after sublimity,[82] vulgarity,[83] tediousness,[84] and silliness.[85]

Having conceded earlier that Wordsworth does possess poetic powers, Jeffrey uses several extracts from the tale of Margaret,[86] the Solitary's narrative,[87]

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[79]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. I; ll. 118-119, 197-199, 324, 445-450, 463-465; Bk. IX: ll. 87-91, 782-783.

[80]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. IV: ll. 71-99, 130-137, 146-189, 214-227.

[81]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. I: ll. 148-161, 203-218, 262-277, 293-300.

[82]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. IV: ll. 508-539.

[83]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. III: ll. 967-987.

[84]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. II: ll. 412-433.

[85]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. IV: ll. 402-411.

[86]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. I: ll. 491-502, 516-519, 568-574, 585-589, 646-656, 686-696, 706-722, 734-738, 791-803, 813-822, 829-831, 906-916.

[87]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. III: ll. 480-487, 504-523, 532-549, 597-598, 650-652, 669-679, 699-701, 734-736, 745-758, 850-855.

and two tales told by the Vicar[88] as illustrations. The tone of each of these narratives is appropriate to the subject matter, although, here, too, Wordsworth sometimes uses words and incidents that Jeffrey terms vulgar. He approves of Wordsworth's concern with the effects of the industrial system on the poor, of his poetic treatment of the depopulation of rural areas,[89] and of his appeal for educational opportunity for the common people.[90] Several passages are cited for their effective description,[91] and Jeffrey finishes this portion of the review half-inclined, he says, to rescind his harsh judgment of the poet. He does not do so, however, because he feels the perversion of Wordsworth's undoubted powers to be extremely harmful. In particular does he object to the character of the Pedlar as the hero of The Excursion and as a philosopher. A real pedlar who went on in this

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[88]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. VI: ll. 787-792, 811-823, 869-879, 906-910, 916-927, 939-948, 969-987, 1000-1002, 1019, 1023, 1034-1037, 1049-1052; Bk. VII: ll. 714-740, 946-975.

[89]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. VII: ll. 167-185; Bk. VIII: ll. 262-282, 314-327.

[90]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. IX: ll. 238-247, 336-354.

[91]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. IX: ll. 437-451, 560-565; Bk. VII: l. 781; Bk. III: ll. 32-35; Bk. VIII: ll. 25-30; Bk. VI: ll. 292-298; Bk. V: ll. 378-381.

style would frighten the customers away, and Wordsworth's delineation of such a character is the absurd result of "a puerile ambition of singularity."

XXV, October, 1815, 355-363.

The White Doe of Rylstone, according to Jeffrey, "has the merit of being the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume." He sees it as a combination of all the faults of Wordsworth's school without any of the virtues, and says it would be suspected of being a parody, except for the fact that nothing in the nature of a joke could be so dull. Jeffrey seems to have liked drawing extended figures of speech, and in this article his chosen metaphor is one of intoxication: Wordsworth's self-admiration is a form of indulgence which has the same effects of extravagent speech or maudlin sensibility on the poet that drunkenness may have upon a dinner companion. The result is a composition modelled upon the old ballads which exhibits their "hobbling versification, mean diction and flat stupidity" without attaining their energy, simplicity, or occasional vivid expression.

The remainder of the review is of the excerpt-and summary variety that was standard for the older magazines,[92]

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[92]de Selincourt, III, 281-330, ll. 79-82, 100-104, 185-189, 308-309, 330-345, 352-357, 368-378, 380-395, 404, 454-475, 530-545, 713-714, 783-788, 792-794, 1012-1015, 1117-1118, 1123-1125, 1213-1219, 1393-1416, 1470-1475, 1496.

except for the fact that the author's tone in summarizing the action of the poem is flippant rather than neutral. For example, in summarizing the sixth canto, he remarks that Francis's journey home from the battle is a situation so forlorn that any poet except Wordsworth would have stirred the emotions of his readers in describing it. Canto Seven,[93] containing the history of Emily after the death of her brothers and father, is so written as to avoid giving pain to the most sensitive reader; moreover, Jeffrey's version of her clothing is "a worsted gown and flannel nightcap." The poet's final apostrophe to the Doe[94] he says is no doubt a great compliment, if only one could understand it.

XXXV, March, 1821, 134-137.

In reviewing Chandos Leigh's The View, and other Poems, the author of this article occupies three introductory pages with a description of the state of English poetry. Because these introductory statements show a highly-publicized critic in the process of changing his mind about the romantic poets, they are summarized here.

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[93]de Selincourt, III, 281-330, ll. 1665-1671, 1680-1683, 1694-1701, 1829-1831.

[94]de Selincourt, III, 281-330, ll. 1905-1910.

The "school of poetry" to which Leigh belongs is unnamed but is one which the reviewer characterizes as unambitious of correctness of diction, if not sometimes actually ambitious of inaccuracy. Poets of this school, according to him, are occasionally brilliant but uneven in their effects. Poetry of the last twenty years has been rich in originality of imagination and abundant in production, but hardly one poem of the period would have been accepted by Pope or Goldsmith as sufficiently correct for publication.

The reasons for this revolution in poetry, he thinks, are threefold: the first is the great increase of readership, demanding such a great output of poetry that precision has been sacrificed to rapidity; the second is the pedantry of those writers who affect to despise a brilliantly finished work as being too artificial; and the third, and most important, reason is simply the fact that the field of human knowledge has increased so much in one hundred years as to make poetry, by proportion, less important. A cultivated taste for poetry is still regarded as an important accomplishment, but it is no longer accounted an education in itself. Literature may be impoverished by this change, but neither the poets nor their audience can be blamed for not running counter to the dictates of history.

The author of the review which follows was almost certainly not Francis Jeffrey, who would not have engaged in the personal innuendo which this reviewer practiced throughout his critique. Neither would Jeffrey have cited lines from works which he claimed were unworthy of notice, or distorted the meaning of a sonnet which is general in character, into specific references which were then attributed gratuitously to the poet. The whole article is such a mixture of personal slurs upon Wordsworth for accepting a position with the Post Office, references to political events during 1820 which apparently divided British public opinion into two distinct camps, and what seems to be a defense of Napoleon's career, that it is nearly impossible to summarize intelligently. The method of summarization finally used was simply that of summarizing each statement and citation in the order in which they appeared. The implications of the article are lost to modern readers, but they must have conveyed decided meanings to readers in 1822, because Blackwoods took the Edinburgh Review to task during the following month for the scurrilous implications of this article, which also elicited a response from a respected London preacher, the Reverend Edward Irving (Smith, pp. 356-357.)

XXXVII, November, 1822, 449-456.

"The Lake School of Poetry, we think, is now pretty nearly extinct" is the opening sentence of this review of Memorials of a Tour on the Continent. The reviewer claims that Coleridge has embarrassed his former associates with the publication of "Christabel"; Southey's position as Poet Laureate seems to have smothered his inspiration; and employment at the Stamp Office has had a similar effect upon Wordsworth. The River Duddon series of sonnets, Ecclesiastical Sketches, and the present work are all characterized by this reviewer as being "prosy, solemn, obscure, feeble . . . garnished with shreds of phrases from Milton and the Bible . . . without nature and without passion . . .." The work is poetical only in the sense that it is all in verse.

The first sonnet, "Fish Woman.--On Landing at Calais,"[95] is cited (the title is misquoted) as unworthy of notice; of the two sonnets written on Bruges[96] he writes, "It is very hard to get at the subject of either." He thinks that only a singular person could have passed by all of the striking scenes of this tour without

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[95]de Selincourt, III, 165, ll. 8-10.

[96]de Selincourt, III, 265, ll. 1-6.

notice, as Wordsworth has done, and have written instead upon trivial and ordinary objects.[97] When Wordsworth varies this practice, according to the reviewer, it is obviously only the loyalty of the office-holder at work. He notes that, instead of commenting upon Napoleon's genius, Wordsworth chooses only to lecture upon his fall: "He begins in a passion, and . . . charges the other party with being angry."[98] Wordsworth, so he claims, actually calls Napoleon a dreamer, a fool, and a buffoon. He asserts that Wordsworth's political sentiments are those of the trashy daily newspapers, and that his facts are gathered from similarly unreliable sources. "The Germans on the Heights of Hochheim"[99] is cited as evidence of failure to separate fact from local legend. The sonnet on Leonardo's "Last Supper"[100] is a poor imitation of Milton: and "Processions"[101] is typical of the poet's "solemn unmeaningness." "Echo on the Gemmi"[102] and

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[97]de Selincourt, III, "Composed on the Simplon Pass," 189-190, ll. 21-25.

[98]de Selincourt, III, "On Being Stranded Near Boulougne," 142-143," ll. 1-3.

[99]de Selincourt, III, 183-184, ll. 5-14.

[100]de Selincourt, III, 142-143, ll. 5-8.

[101]de Selincourt, III, 191-192, ll. 64-71.

[102]de Selincourt, III, 184-186, ll. 66-72.

"The Eclipse of the Sun"[103] are similarly impotent. He thinks that "Between Namur and Liege"[104] is the best effect of the volume, showing what Wordsworth can do when he chooses to be rational. "In a Carriage Upon the Banks of the Rhine,"[105] this reviewer interprets as bearing "an obvious and most perverted" allusion to political events during 1820; moreover, this and "After Landing.--The Valley of Dover"[106] show him to be "a mere creature of the Ministry."

LXII, April, 1833, 114-121.

In a review of a prose translation of Faust the writer occupies several pages with a discussion of Wordsworth's poetic theory and practice. The discussion is an intelligent one and is the first genuine attempt at explicating the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads to appear in the Edinburgh Review. The translator, in his preface, had quoted Wordsworth's theory that the language of poetry is in large part the language of prose. Using this quotation as a starting place for his discussion, the reviewer says that Wordsworth's theory

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[103]de Selincourt, III, 167-168, quoted in full.

[104]de Selincourt, III, 169, ll. 1-7.

[105]de Selincourt, III, 197-198, ll. 1-4.

[106]de Selincourt, III, 198, ll. 1-4

is now in nearly as much danger from the zeal of its friends as from the mockery of its enemies. Wordsworth himself has slowed his own rise to eminence by applying his theory too literally, too exactly, and sometimes too extensively. Combined with this fault is the intimidating nature of part of the "Preface" which states that readers will have to give up much that they have enjoyed in poetry in order to appreciate his works. This, says the reviewer, does not conciliate readers who love all poetry, especially if they are indolent or hurried.

Noting in passing that good poets have often not been able to write good prose, the author of the article states that his main objection to Wordsworth's theory is its exclusiveness. It has served very well for Wordsworth, whom he acknowledges as a great poet, but his view is often too narrow. Wordsworth, he thinks, may have recognized this flaw, since his arguments for retaining metre and rhyme in poetry are rather weak. The reviewer feels that poetry is not simply an imitation of nature; we can admire a construction or expression in poetry which we would find inappropriate at the moment of the event which calls it forth. The mischief that may arise from Wordsworth's theory, however, derives not from Wordsworth but from prose writers who would reverse the application of his theory and write over-

ornamented "poetic" prose. The writer than proceeds with the discussion indicated in the title of the article.

LXVI, January, 1835, 356-357.

In a review of Glassford's Lyrical Translations, the anonymous critic gives a general overview of English sonnet-writing. He points out that English lyrists have written many beautiful fourteen-line poems, but that very few of them conform exactly or even closely to the Italian laws of sonnet rhyme. He notes that although Milton has proved that such perfect sonnets can be written in English few English poets have followed him. He discovers that a few of Wordsworth's sonnets are exactly of the Italian measure, but in most Wordsworth does not follow the law that the rhymes of the second quatrain shall correspond with those of the first, as in the case of two of his best sonnets, on Milton and on the extinction of the Venetian republic. Wordsworth is a master, however, at bringing out the one leading idea of which a sonnet should consist; he does this gracefully, but without the epigram-like ending of too many continental sonneteers. For this reason, the sonnets of Wordsworth and Milton are, in the reviewer's opinion, the best models for English poets.

LXXXIX, April, 1849, 358-359.

Within a review of Henry Taylor's Eve of Conquest, the critic includes a general discussion of the narrative verse of contemporary English poets. His paragraph on Wordsworth is short and perceptive; I have transcribed it in full.

> Mr. Wordsworth's narratives are instinct with profound reflection, and a yet more profound humanity. He feels, however, more for man than for men. If the human mind be "his haunt and the main region of his song," he sings of it not as manifested in individuals merely, but as it exists archetypally. Within it, as in a western sky, he recognises "a spirit more deeply interfused," of which it is the mansion; and his especial gift is to follow the traces of a love larger than human,--which yet ebbs and flows along the channels of the human affections. The nature which he celebrates is itself more than half supernatural; a nature, which, if unredeemed, is also in a large measure unfallen; a nature as different from that which imparted to the masculine writings of Crabbe their hard, dry sadness, and half-cynical, yet ruthful truthfulness, as it had belonged to another planet. This fact is not always observed by those who discuss the religious bearing of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry; and who in deprecating the glories which he seems to attribute to unassisted human nature, have perhaps never pondered the meaning of those lines of his, a needful comment on his philosophy:--
>
> By grace divine,
> Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine.[107]

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[107]de Selincourt, IV, "Not in the lucid intervals," 4-5, ll. 16-17.

XC, October, 1849, 417-418.

The excerpt which is transcribed below is from a review of an anthology of Poets After the Restoration. The review is, in fact, a discussion of English poetry which is largely independent of the work under review. The author, in his discussion, divides English poetry into two main streams: the "national" school manifested in Cowper, Burns, Wordsworth and Coleridge; and the "classical" school represented by Shelley, Keats, and Landor. The discussion is compact, fair, and illustrative of the position of Wordsworth in English letters just before his death. The writer has covered his ground so well and with such brevity that an abstract could hardly do justice to his argument; therefore, I have transcribed it in full.

> Whenever the poetic genius of England has been most powerfully developed, both have flourished together--united like the Latin and Saxon elements of our compound language. The poetic mind of England, on its revival towards the end of the last century, again as of old, manifested itself in the form of two schools which, with much in common, still represented, notwithstanding, the northern and southern hemispheres of our literature. Wordsworth and Coleridge were the chief examples of our national school; though in Coleridge the national frequently passed into a mystical inspiration; Shelley and Keats of the ideal. These were not perhaps the most popular poets of their time; but they were the most characteristic, and they have exercised the most enduring influence. We have referred to but a few of the names most generally known; but to each school belonged many writers whose works

will long be remembered.

The word School, we are aware, is an inadequate one; and we use it but for the convenience of classification. The growths of the same region, however, diverse in detail, have yet characteristic features in common: and it is thus also with the growths of the mind. In Mr. Coleridge's poetry the reasoning faculty is chiefly that of contemplation and intuition; in Mr. Wordsworth's the meditative and the discursive prevail; but to both a predominance of the thoughtful is common; and in that respect both poets not only illustrate the peculiar genius of their country, but are also fit interpreters of the spirit of their age, as distinguished from the fashion of the moment or the sentiment of the hour. In both, too, there is a remarkable absence of the versatile faculty, as exhibited in one of the modes to which we alluded;--and accordingly, in the poetry of both, little change has taken place except that of growth. Till their genius had found out its own nature and scope it would rehearse no other part. The "Laodamia" of the latter shows at once what he might have done, and what it was foreign to him to do; nor does any great poet, medieval or classical, seem to have ever drawn either of them into the sphere of his separate attraction, and detained him there. In the drama, also, neither had versatility enough to avoid a certain psychological effect--the result of a knowledge of character which was metaphysical rather than dramatic. In both, however, we find a deep-seated patriotism, a reverence for the hearth, a love of local traditions, an English enjoyment of nature, a humanity, mournful not seldom, and even in its cheerfulness grave--as though cheerfulness were less an instinct than a virtue or a duty. Most of these qualities exist also in the poetry of Mr. Southey, in which, with less both of thought and imagination, and a style less pregnant and felicitous, there is more of invention, and a more determined purpose. It is thus that with' many and important differences, poets whose individuality is complete, yet admit of being classed together.

CHAPTER V

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, 1809-1842

The Quarterly Review was begun in 1809 with the backing of the Tory party for a complex of political, personal, and literary reasons. The Edinburgh Review editor, Francis Jeffrey, was a Whig, and the magazine reflected his views more than some of his contributors found comfortable. In addition, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Southey, who had been writing for the Edinburgh Review, had been offended by harsh reviews of their works in the magazine, and were in a state of mind to welcome and to contribute to another magazine. The five men who planned and executed the Quarterly in the early years were George and Stratford Canning, Tory administrators; John Murray, an energetic young publisher; Sir Walter Scott; and William Gifford, the first editor. Both Scott and Southey were frequent contributors to the Quarterly and probably served to moderate criticism of the "Lake poets" (Graham, pp. 236-246). The Quarterly's most conservative contributors, at least with regard

to literature, were Gifford himself and John Wilson Croker. Other writers included John Gibson Lockhart, John Taylor Coleridge (both chief editors later on), H. H. Milman, Miss Rigby (Lady Eastlake), Charles Lamb, Henry Nelson Coleridge, Henry Taylor, Walter Sterling, Whitwell Elwin, Francis Palgrave (also a contributor to the Edinburgh Review), Isaac D'Israeli, George Ellis, Abraham Hayward, and Washington Irving.[108]

XI, April, 1814, 177-183.

In a discussion of Coleridge's The Remorse, the reviewer occupies the first six pages of his article with a criticism of the "Lake poets" generally. He is, he says, attempting to remedy the fragmented way in which the philosophy of the Lake poets has been presented by them in their works. On the whole, he thinks their poetical theory contains much truth "for purposes of poetry." Beginning with an admiration of Shakespeare, Milton, and other earlier poets, he notes that they analyzed "by metaphysical aids" the principles which their models used and which made them great, and found that these principles operated more on the imagination than on the reason of

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[108]Quarterly Review, C, Centenary Number 419, April, 1909, 746-753.

the reader. This philosophy is very well, he concludes, except for the fact that the more recent poets have carried their inquiries too far and have been led by their habits of thought into defects. They have become more the commentators on nature than the painters of her, and have willfully sacrificed general popularity for devotion from a few admirers. By continually examining their own slight emotions he feels that they have been led into philosophic error; like the flatlander who "makes mountains out of molehïlls" or a man watching his own feet while he walks, they have overestimated both the grandeur of the Lake District and the importance of their own feelings. "They are not the tasteful admirers of nature, nor the philosophic calculators on the extent of her riches, and the wisdom of her plans; they are her humble worshippers." Their error lies in attributing moral animation to nature. A facet of this error is Wordsworth's tenet of the celestial purity of infancy, a tenet which the author of the article believes is beautiful but philosophically, Scripturally, and experientially unsound.

Those areas in which the Lake Poets rank above their predecessors and contemporaries, in his estimation, are in their presentation of the domestic virtues as more exalted than the heroic ones; in their portrayal of women

as "lofty but meek"; and in their purifying of love from "the grossness of passion." Concluding his general discussion before beginning a specific analysis of Coleridge's work, he notes that the "school" appears to be a chance gathering of congenial minds rather than a rigid discipline and that his remarks do not apply with the same force to all of the Lake Poets. He singles out Southey as more popular and easily understood but less powerful than some of his more "wildly eccentric" friends.

XII, October, 1814, 100-111.

This review of The Excursion is almost wholly approving. The writer gives a short summary of Wordsworth's introduction to the poem and of the story of the Wanderer himself. He notes that the poem is didactic, with many interesting narratives which "lovers of Cowper and Goldsmith" will appreciate; but he says that the "prevailing charm" of the poem lies in the frequent descriptions of its setting in the hills of the North of England. He notes that, to Wordsworth's mind, the sights and sounds of nature teach, not in dim symbols, but by direct insights. Quoting long and short passages as illustrations[109]

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[109]de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. I: ll. 486-490, 871-986; Bk. II: ll. 247-248, 694-725; Bk. III: ll. 850-855; Bk. IV: ll. 165-186, 611-621, 729-762, 837-841, 1058-1078, 1170-1174, 1132-1147; Bk. VI: ll. 457-521; Bk. IX: ll. 437-451.

he outlines the creed developed by the poet and describes it as "an expanded and generous Quakerism." Because some readers may object to "a kind of Natural Methodism" in the story of Margaret, he wishes that the story might have been presented later in the poem. He considers the fourth book, "Despondency Corrected," the most valuable of the poem. He praises the versification of this book as well as its content, but observes that it is so completely integrated into the poem that it cannot be separated out and discussed apart from the subject matter and the philosophy. The argument, he says, is "to abate the pride of the calculating understanding, and to reinstate the imagination and the affections in those seats from which modern philosophy has laboured but too successfully to expel them." He summarizes briefly the "ministry of fear" as described by the Wanderer and uses a transcribed passage to demonstrate Wordsworth's presentation of ancient Eastern religions.[110] Proceeding to a discussion of the tales told beginning in Book V, he cites the introduction as being especially good and gives a long excerpt from the conclusion of the story of "the Jacobite and the Hanoverian" as an example of "thoughtful playfulness."[111]

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[110]de Selincourt, V, 1-312; Bk. IV: ll. 729-762.

[111]de Selincourt, V, 1-312; Bk. VI: ll. 457-521.

In the final paragraphs of the essay, the reviewer answers to the criticisms that have been made of Wordsworth's earlier poetry. He believes that the poet's lack of popularity is the result of "the boldness and originality of his genius" and his refusal to confine himself to the limits prescribed by others as suitable for the sentiments and sympathies of poetry. As elements that have displeased critics, he notes the poet's enthusiasm for nature, his presentation of simple persons as "elevated to a level of humanity with himself," and his reverence for the state of childhood. He thinks that even those who have disapproved of Wordsworth's earlier works will have to reconsider their opinions in the light of the improvements evident in The Excursion. Forseeing objections to eloquence and philosophy from the mouth of a pedlar, he notes that Wordsworth has troubled to give the character a superior education and he points out that Piers, Plowman is a much admired work. He suggests, in conclusion, that those who cannot overcome their objection to the pedlar should silently substitute Palmer or Pilgrim each time the word occurs. This review was probably written by Charles Lamb (Smith, p. 168).

XIV, October, 1815, 201-225.

This review considers both the 1815 edition of

Wordsworth's collected poems and The White Doe of Rylstone. As most of the poems in the collected edition had been published earlier in Lyrical Ballads or elsewhere, the reviewer confines his discussion of the collected poems principally to the essays which prefaced them. He states in his first paragraph that he does not want his admiration for Wordsworth's talents to be construed as a complete approval of the poetical system that the poet has outlined. Although the poetry shows that Wordsworth possesses a mind richly stored with the raw materials of poetry, he notes that the poet does not always use his endowments wisely. Although Wordsworth professes to be content with his small audience, the reviewer thinks that his lack of popularity, when contrasted with the popularity of poets of no greater ability, must be "a very mortifying distinction." The author criticizes the tone of the prefaces: the claim that all greatly original poets have been unpopular for time does not prove that Wordsworth is a genius, and the public and the critics have as much right to dislike Wordsworth's taste as he has to dislike theirs. In any case, he thinks that the public does not dislike Wordsworth's poetry because of the theory on which it is formed; they dislike it because they do not read poetry for metaphysical instruction but for pleasure. Further, he disagrees completely with Wordsworth's stated

belief that the elemental passions are best seen among scenes of "low and rustic life"; the key to enjoying poetry is not in the facility of understanding the subject but is proportionate to the difficulties which must be overcome. The "few and simple objects" that simple people know and understand do not call forth "those higher and rarer qualifications, which have their foundations in the understanding," and Wordsworth's advocation of the language of "low and rustic life" is no more acceptable to the reviewer than is his choice of subject matter. This language, "purified from its real defects," will simply result in an impoverished vocabulary. He agrees with some of Wordsworth's strictures on post-Restoration poetic diction: though perfectly intelligible to the reason, this diction is too indirect and ornamented for poetry addressed to the heart and imagination of the reader. Wordsworth is sometimes very successful in striking exactly the right key for this kind of poetry, but "unfortunately these hours are not so frequent with Mr. Wordsworth, as lovers of poetry could wish."

Passing to criticism of the poems themselves, the author criticizes Wordsworth's selection of topics as not being of broad enough interest. Instead, he believes that the poet concentrates on self and his own feelings and loses the interest of readers who do not share his

"exurberant sensibility." The reviewer thinks that this "poetic sensibility" is not an advantage but a disadvantage as distinguished from "human" sensibility linked with superior powers of expression. The reviewer concludes his remarks on this subject with a statement that, unlike Wordsworth, he sees "nothing at all wonderful or mysterious" about the art of poetry, nor "any reason to suppose that it requires greater or more uncommon talents than any other among the higher productions of human intellect."

The reviewer accords The White Doe of Rylstone a heavily qualified recommendation. Although the narrative as such is interrupted and lacks interest and the poet sometimes strains too hard for simplicity of language, the reviewer feels that the whimsical nature of the subject happens to be well suited to Wordsworth's peculiarities, and that the poem possesses many beauties of tender feeling and truly simple language. In an extended summary of the background and action of the poem, with many lines cited[112] the reviewer commends the description of the Nortons on the march and Francis watching from a hilltop and the opening of Canto IV.

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[112]de Selincourt, III, 281-340, ll. 1-30, 48-62, 73-74, 79-81, 126-151, 381-397, 527-620, 715-752, 938-1019, 1302-1311, 1501-1523, 1590-1604, 1629-1664, 1743-1750, 1811-1825, 1879-1950.

He is irritated, however, by the description of Emily in Canto VII, which "is directly the reverse of simple," and some phrases which, he says, "are absolutely devoid of meaning." As an example of such a phrase he quotes the following (ll. 1352-1353): "For deepest sorrows that aspire/ Go high, no transport ever higher . . . ." These faults are redeemed only by "that true feeling of poetry with which the poem is pervaded"; the writer concludes that Wordsworth, if he attends to criticism, may become a public favorite: if not, he can blame only himself.

XLI, November, 1831, 20-23.

In the course of a long review of John Wilson Croker's edition of James Boswell's Life of Johnson, the reviewer disputes Wordsworth's strictures on exhaustive biographies. He quotes the central argument of Wordsworth's essay, that biography is an art form in which ugly truths should not be made public merely to satisfy curiosity, but only to serve some obvious moral or intellectual purpose. He maintains that poets especially are best known by their published works and that details of their lives may be embarrassing for their families and are certainly superfluous.

In his editorial comment, the author finds Wordsworth's argument weak and his example, Horace, ill-chosen. One author of the stature of Horace or

Dr. Johnson, he thinks, does more to influence his contemporaries and the history of his nation than does the most important statesman of his day: the pity is that so few lives can stand the close scrutiny of which Boswell has subjected Johnson.

LII, November, 1834, 317-358.

This article is a long one (thirty-one pages) and amounts to a comprehensive summary of all aspects of Wordsworth's work up to that time, though it is titled as a review of the Collected Poems of 1834. One cannot separate theory from practice in Wordsworth's works and this critic did not try to do so; but his article does fall into fairly distinct sections: a discussion of Wordsworth's prefaces; a consideration of his philosophy as shown in his meditative poems; a treatment of the narrative poems and the sonnets; and finally a study of the poet's attitude toward his early critical reception and his gradual rise to critical and public esteem. Though the beginning and the end of the article seem contradictory on the subject of Wordsworth's ignoring criticism, it is overall a balanced and perceptive appreciation, with quotations quite well chosen to demonstrate the author's main points.

Choosing not to participate any further in

controversy regarding Wordsworth's theory of correct poetic diction, the critic indicates that Wordsworth's standards of poetic vocabulary have become the accepted ones. He notes that, although old abuses have been conquered, some new ones have arisen to take their places: certain words, such as "wild," have become stock poetic words used with little attention to intrinsic meaning. Bad taste, he points out, will always exist in some poets and some readers. In his opinion, the change in poetic standards might well have been brought about by the example of the poetry alone, without all the irritation caused by the prefaces. He concludes that knowledge of the poems is, in any case, much more widespread than study of the theory and that the poetry is no longer a subject for jokes and ridicule only. He seems unable to decide whether he should blame the criticism of the turn of the century, which was "infected by a spirit of sarcasm," or Wordsworth's refusal to accept the critics' strictures for the poet's early unpopularity.

As an example of Wordsworth's "wantonly" exposing himself to ridicule, the reviewer cites the poet's defense of "The Idiot Boy"[113] as a poem of serious intent, while readers of the poem could not decide whether it

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[113]de Selincourt, II, 67-80, ll. 402-406.

was intended to be grave, as Wordsworth indicated, or comic, as parts of it were. He notes that these same faults occurred in portions of "Peter Bell"[114] and other early poems, and that the poet's repeated refusal to comply with the dictates of public taste did not ease matters. The straining after simplicity in "Peter Bell" is set against the successful attempt of "The Fountain,"[115] and early reviewers are criticized for writing as if "Peter Bell" were more characteristic of Wordsworth's work than "the nine-tenths of his writings" which exemplified genuine simplicity.

Added to the misapprehensions described above is the opinion of some serious readers that Wordsworth is more a great thinker than a great poet; that one must learn a whole new philosophy before one can read his poetry with pleasure. Wordsworth is a philosopher, he thinks, only in the sense that Shakespeare or any writer of great stature is one: he has not invented a new system of philosophy, but has formed the habit of regarding everything he observes in the light of his own temperament, a habit which gives to his varied perceptions a certain unity of direction. To illustrate this "portion of truth"

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[114]de Selincourt, II, 331-382, ll. 366-370.

[115]de Selincourt, IV, 71-72, ll. 16-52.

given to Wordsworth by his temperament, the reviewer quotes the conclusion of "Lines Left Upon a Yew-Tree Seat"[116] and imagines them addressed to a pupil who already shows promise of becoming a philosophic poet: as such, they are far better instruction than the poetry of Burns, because they lead the reader to contemplate the subject of humility instead of the disdain of the poet for the wealthy and powerful. The author does not believe, however, that this doctrine of humility can be extended to worldly affairs; contempt for evil-doers, he thinks, is a salutary weapon for controlling lawless elements in society. When enjoined upon men of "the lyre" as opposed to those of "the sword, the axe, and the halter," these sentiments reinforce the strengths of the abstract thinker who needs to rise above the "violent and disturbing passions" of mankind. He notes that closely allied with this repudiation of harsh feelings manifested in Wordsworth's poetry is the poet's devotion to nature. The love of nature is, of all pleasures, the least dangerous to men of sensibility, allowing them to contemplate a beauty that is enduring, as human beauty is not, and calming, while human beauty often causes disturbances. Profound emotion and profound composure

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[116] de Selincourt, I, 92-94, ll. 23-24, 48-64.

are the joined gifts of the contemplation of nature, and intellect is fed in this way by the feelings. He cites as a further example of this state of mind the poem "Tintern Abbey,"[117] which he sees as eminently characteristic of Wordsworth's work and vividly presenting man as a part of the nature he contemplates.

The author thinks that Wordsworth has sometimes been led too far, not philosophically but poetically, in his apprehension of nature's power over the mind. He represents inanimate objects as seats of feeling and indulges poetic license by overusing what must be seen by most readers as merely powerful figures of speech. The reviewer thinks that if Wordsworth has this fault he also has its correlated virtue: he can indeed penetrate very far into the passive properties of living things and convey to readers the uses of a being who can do little or nothing, as in "The Old Cumberland Beggar."[118] He observes that Wordsworth, too is imbued with a high sense of the dignity of his calling, and so is able to inspire others who are not poets but who may be lifted above trivialities and pettiness by this inspiration. The

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[117]de Selincourt, II, 259-263, ll. 35-57, 72-93, 102-111.

[118]de Selincourt, IV, 234-240, ll. 6-66, 72-133, 162-197.

combination of passionate feeling with serious study may enable a weaker person to maintain his moral standards under stress. As an example of this inspiration, the author offers a quotation from the "Ode to Duty";[119] the happy nature described in the second stanza is, he thinks, confined to persons who operate in a small sphere of activity. For less circumscribed natures, the third stanza of the "Ode" is suggested as a guide to a general life plan; or as a description of a life discipline that is successful for the philosopher-poet.

Proceeding from the philosophy evident in Wordsworth's poetry, the author considers the narrative poems. There is, he points out, nothing very "romantic" in most of the characters portrayed and apparently nothing striking in the language used. What is characteristic and striking in this poetry, however, is the poet's ability to interest the reader in the small events and simple persons he has observed. It is in these narratives that Wordsworth displays practicality in his concerns as well as sympathy with the characters he portrays and language fit to describe them for the reader. "Michael" is quoted at length and summarized as an excellent

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[119]de Selincourt, IV, 83-86, ll. 9-16, 17-24.

example of such a narrative;[120] and "The Female Vagrant" is analyzed at some length.[121] The reviewer points out that by approaching the subject of this poem through her childhood, the poet succeeds in interesting readers who would not usually have much patience with such a "low" subject. The events of this poem are interesting and pathetic, he says, and the narrative is skillfully constructed to keep the reader's thoughts on the events of the poem and not on the beauty of the language in any isolated portion. This accomplishment allows the poet to sustain a long narrative and the reader to enjoy it without undue strain.

Commenting on the sonnets in this edition, the author of the article notes that the more confined form has the effect of lessening the "peculiarities" of Wordsworth's style. He has only good things to say of them: for example, the subjects are well chosen and the execution graceful, free from "antithesis and false effects." Hardly any of the three or four hundred sonnets in the volume ends in a point; instead of "going off with a bang,: Wordsworth's sonnets end in "a soft

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[120]de Selincourt, II, 80-94, ll. 44-77, 120-122, 140-163, 170-176, 194-203, 385-398, 448-466.

[121]de Selincourt, I, 95-127, ll. 199-279, 367-450.

of brightness." The reviewer notes the "dignified and melancholy" anger of "Sonnets to Liberty" and transcribes three of them.[122]

Though he does not treat The Excursion extensively, he recommends that it be studied only after the reader has acquainted himself thoroughly with Wordsworth's other works. The Excursion is not brilliantly sparkling on every page but is sustained because the poet has employed a variety of versification, sometimes almost prose, and only occasionally a marked melody and rhythm. Noting that this poem has been ignored for more than twenty years, the author recounts its sarcastic reception by earlier critics and accuses them of gaining a cheap notoriety by indulging in ridicule. Wordsworth himself did not succumb to the temptations of popularity-seeking, if indeed he was tempted, and has seldom even mentioned the fortitude necessary to withstand hasty and unfair judgment in his works. His few comments on the subject will be of much interest to later generations interested in the poet's life.[123] He waited patiently for recognition

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[122]de Selincourt, III: "Scorn not the Sonnet," 20-21; "To Touissaint L'Ouverture," 112-113; "Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland," 115.

[123]de Selincourt, III: "Sonnet to Haydon," 51; "Tintern Abbey," 259-263, ll. 123-134.

and has lived his own ideals and practiced his own standards of poetry consistently.

LIV, July, 1815, 181-185.

This review of Yarrow Revisited and other Poems contains not one sentence of adverse criticism. Noting the long review of the Collected Works in November, 1834, the reviewer writes only four pages on this occasion, and more than half of these are taken up with lines of poetry cited as examples of Wordsworth's mastery of various verse forms. After saying in his first paragraph that the volume is "almost without the reach of periodical criticism," he compares Wordsworth with Goethe in his mastery of short poem forms. "A Jewish Family"[124] is transcribed in full as an example of lyric beauty; "The Russian Fugitive"[125] is quoted as an "elegant" narrative poem; and "Incident at Bruges"[126] is offered as a skillful handling of the English ballad stanza. "If this great world of joy and Pain"[127] and a long excerpt from "The

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[124]de Selincourt, II, 321-322.

[125]de Selincourt, IV, 183-194, iii, ll. 177-200.

[126]de Selincourt, III, 166-167 (quoted in full).

[127]de Selincourt, IV, 114 (quoted in full).

Egyptian Main"[128] are included, as are two sonnets, "Why art thou silent!"[129] and "Adieu, Rydalian Laurels!"[130] The reviewer notes the thoughtfulness of the poems in this latest volume, which gives it an autumn-like tone, but he observes that Wordsworth has retained his "kindly fellowship with nature." In conclusion, he directs his readers to the abstract thought in certain sonnets and to the prose postscripts of the volume as portraying Wordsworth the man for "the delight and instruction of his readers."

LXIII, September, 1840, 447-449.

The subject of this review is Thomas Carlyle's Works, but author uses just over two pages (before he discusses any of Carlyle's works in detail) to assess the debt of English literature and thought to Wordsworth and Coleridge. Coleridge is credited with being the more vigorous intellect, but Wordsworth with being the sounder philosopher of the two. He observes that revolutions in thought have often been begun by two minds working side by side, and he feels that this is the case

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[128] de Selincourt, III, 232-243, ll. 298-336.

[129] de Selincourt, III, 51 (quoted in full).

[130] de Selincourt, IV, 20 (quoted in full).

with Wordsworth and Coleridge. The philosophical truth taught to ordinary men by Wordsworth's poetry is "the value of little things"; philosophy may be defined as the translation of matter into spirit and art as embodying spirit back into material forms. He points out that Wordsworth has led his readers from a sense of wonder and fear to humility, and finally to faith. These two poet-philosophers, he believes, have caused a new school of thought and feeling to begin forming itself, to the improvement of England and perhaps even to countries abroad.

LXIX, December, 1841, 1-51.

Much of this review of Wordsworth's Collected Sonnets is occupied with their subject matter as it impinges on social and political topics of the time and is more valuable as social history than as literary criticism. Excluding one discussion in which the reviewer seems to me to have credited Wordsworth with a theory not well supported by his works, this summary is limited to the remarks made on the poetry.

The writer's stated intention is to consider the Sonnets with reference to the whole body of the poet's works and especially to engender further consideration from those intellectual leaders who still profess not to understand Wordsworth's poetry. In practice, the earlier

work to which he refers most often is The Excursion; Lyrical Ballads and the prose works are seldom used as points of reference.

The reviewer has ordered his discussion according to the topical arrangement of the Sonnets. He begins with the two poems which deal with the sonnet form, "Scorn not the Sonnet"[131] and "Nuns fret not."[132] The first is credited with containing history, biography, and criticism in a compact but not crowded form. "Nuns fret not" is noted as being more abstract in subject matter but as accessible, if one takes time to consider it carefully. It deals with discipline, whether imposed, natural, or self-chosen, and the use of moral or intellectual restraint as a means to spiritual liberty. "The Pass at Kirkstone,"[133] "Three years she grew,"[134] and the "Ode to Duty"[135] are quoted as touching upon various aspects of this topic.

The sonnets which urge temperence in grief are considered next, and the melancholy peculiar to the

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[131]de Selincourt, III, 20 (quoted in full).

[132]de Selincourt, III, 1-2 (quoted in full).

[133]de Selincourt, II, 278-280, ll. 49-60

[134]de Selincourt, II, 214-215 (quoted in full).

[135]de Selincourt, III, 22 (quoted in full).

poetic temperament is differentiated from the self-indulgent and theatrical melancholy popularized by Lord Byron. The reviewer notes that "Mr. Wordsworth's melancholy is not that of a languid self-occupied recluse," and he illustrates this point by referring to "From the dark chambers of dejection freed"[136] and The Excursion.[137] He observes that the exercise of intellectual powers urged by Wordsworth is far more likely to restore the spirit than advice to be patient and exercise fortitude, which may only cause the sufferer to hide his grief. Wordsworth's sonnet to Sir Walter Scott[138] is used as a final example of the poet's creative melancholy and as transition to discussion of the friendly relations among the romantic poets. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Scott were friends, not because they set out to form "a school," he says, but because their hearts and intellects were great enough to be in harmony and to be above rivalry. Comparing Wordsworth with Coleridge, the author notes that Wordsworth is the sounder philosopher of the two because his philosophy is rooted in

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[136] de Selincourt, III, 22 (quoted in full).

[137] de Selincourt, V, 1-312: Bk. K: ll. 361-363.

[138] de Selincourt, III, 265 (quoted in full).

practical experience and not only in erudition and meditation. Having formed the habit of expecting his decisions to affect his friends and neighbors, Wordsworth gives the commonplace its proper proportion in his mind and loves "old truths along with the new." This consideration of the commonplace is one element in Wordsworth's belief that poetry should be the servant and interpreter of nature. The author argues that Wordsworth's philosophy explains his early lack of popularity: the artificial standards of the late eighteenth century, he believes, had made reflective poetry so unfashionable that "verse had almost ceased to be regarded as a vehicle for thought." The Sonnets, expressing deep thought in a highly polished diction and accepted verse form, should invite those who have not found Wordsworth's works comprehensible to a renewed study of them. Three sonnets of the "River Duddon" series are transcribed[139] as examples of non-doctrinal verse in which the subject-matter is easily accessible and the diction especially fine; the writer calls particular attention to the poet's use of English consonants.

In a long evaluation of those sonnets which

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[139]de Selincourt, II, 244-261; sonnets ix, x, and vii are quoted in full.

deal with political and social topics, the author first notes the sonnet on the spinning wheel[140] and ties it to Wordsworth's concern with the evils of the factory system. Proceeding to the series of Political Sonnets and the series "On Liberty," he quotes first "A Roman Master stands on Grecian ground"[141] as an illustration of Wordsworth's concern with the concept of liberty in all its senses, moral, spiritual, and political. Admiration for a despot, in this case Napoleon,[142] is one human weakness which can sap moral as well as physical liberty; in the case of Britain, the physical protection of the English channel is equalled only by the protection of God's mercy.[143] The author's argument that political liberty is a mixed blessing which may lead to grasping after wealth and so destroy spiritual freedom is illustrated by "The world is too much with us,"[144] "O thou proud city,"[145] and "These times strike

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[140]de Selincourt, III, "Grief, thou hast lost," 11-12 (quoted in full).

[141]de Selincourt, III, 146 (quoted in full).

[142]de Selincourt, III, 140 (quoted in full).

[143]de Selincourt, III, 224-225, ll. 9-14.

[144]de Selincourt, III, 18-19 (quoted in full).

[145]de Selincourt, III, 115-116 (quoted in full).

monied worldlings."[146] This is the discussion during which the reviewer seems to have been carried rather beyond his sources. The contention that the love of money is the root of all evil is quite removed from the defense of social and political stratification which the writer sets forth in the succeeding paragraphs. The only support advanced from Wordsworth is a one-and-one-half line quotation from "Lines Left Under a Yew-Tree Seat," indicating that pride "Howe'er disguised/ In its own majesty, is littleness."[147]

Proceeding to a discussion of the "Itinerary" sonnets, the reviewer notes that Wordsworth seldom writes poetry that is purely descriptive. He then transcribes several poems[148] and lines from The Excursion[149] that illustrate the allusive content of the poet's works. Also illustrated is the poet's difficulty in accepting

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[146]de Selincourt, III, 119, ll. 9-14.

[147]de Selincourt, I, 92-94, ll. 51-52.

[148]de Selincourt, III: "What lovelier home," 167-168; "There's not a nook," 267; "In a Carriage Upon the Banks of the Rhine," 169; IV: "Broken in fortune," 34; "On the Frith of Clyde," 36-37; "Steamboats, Viaducts and Railways," 47.

[149]de Selincourt, V, 1-312, Bk. V: ll. 178-182, 190-193.

machinery as a continuum of the works of nature and not a separation from them. Apparently responding to a charge that Wordsworth has disparaged science, the reviewer contends that, on the contrary, he has given scientific thinking its due regard. This regard, both the author and Wordsworth agree, may be somewhat less than that owed a great imaginative intellect, but both would prefer not to be pushed so far in the direction of arranging kinds of minds in rank order. Two sonnets[150] and some lines from The Excursion[151] are used in the defense.

Wordsworth's series of "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," the reviewer remarks, are the first in which the poet has drawn more from books than from nature and imagination. "Recovery"[152] is briefly discussed as showing the imaginative cast of mind that may fear contemplated evils more vividly than present ones; the sonnets which deal with the offices of the Church, of which two are transcribed,[153] he thinks the best of this series.

Proceeding to the series on "Punishment by Death,"

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[150]de Selincourt, IV, "Desire we past illusions," 31-32; III, "The pibroch's note," 267 (both quoted in full).

[151]de Selincourt, V, 1-312, Bk. I: ll. 105-106.

[152]de Selincourt, III, 345 (quoted in full).

[153]de Selincourt, III, 341-407, Part II: ii, iii.

the reviewer gives a resume of the changes in the Criminal Code made in 1837 and 1838. Stated briefly, this revision ended capital punishment for all but the most serious crimes. After reviewing the arguments for and against abolishing capital punishment, the author takes up Wordsworth's handling of the subject as suitable for one who has always "considered the sentiments and judgements which he utters in poetry with as deep a solicitude . . . as if they were delivered from the bench or the pulpit." He says that Wordsworth's opinion is that abolition of the death penalty would be a less Christian action, considering the possible results, than the retaining of it as a deterrent measure. The sonnets in the series are transcribed in full,[154] and the arguments in them are elaborated by the reviewer.

Returning to his original purpose of justifying Wordsworth's almost universal acclaim, the reviewer notes with what patience the poet laureate, now seventy, has awaited public acceptance. For those who still find the poetry obscure, he recommends a studious appraisal of this volume and studious reading of the rest of Wordsworth's works as the only path to judicious criticism.

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[154]de Selincourt, IV, 135-141.

LXX, September, 1843, 394-395.

Wordsworth is discussed briefly within a review of Alfred Tennyson's Poems. This reviewer states the purpose of poetry is that of "a refuge from the hardness and narrowness of the actual world." Wordsworth's poetry accomplishes this escape, he thinks, but only because the poet overpowers his readers with the strength of his own mind and compels them into "his own severe and stately school of thought." The reviewer notes that in "At the Grave of Burns"[155] Burns is presented as interesting not for his own sake but for his effect on Wordsworth. He feels that Wordsworth has accomplished part of the poet's task in a difficult and ugly age and that he deserves the gratitude of his fellows for it, but that he has not "given us back our age as a whole transmuted into crystalline clearness and lustre."

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[155]de Selincourt, III, 65, ll. 31-36.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Only one really firm conclusion can be drawn from this particular survey: 1822, the year in which Memorials of a Tour on the Continent was published, marked the first general critical acceptance of Wordsworth in Britain. After that year, his works met with growing critical acclaim. Before 1822, the issues are so confused by magazine rivalries and by irritation or confusion caused by the "Prefaces" that even the table of critical responses is not really very helpful. Reviewers who contributed to more than one periodical, expressing similar opinions in each article add to the confusion: for example, if John Doe contributed three articles on The White Doe of Rylstone, to three different magazines, he affects what appears to be the critical reception of the work three times as much as we would expect one critic to do. Even before 1822, serious discussions and appreciations of Wordsworth's works were creeping into the periodicals by way of passages in critiques which dealt primarily with the productions of other authors.

As early as 1831, a special edition of Wordsworth

was published for use in school; this publication indicates a public demand for it, and, therefore, a public acceptance of Wordsworth's poetry that was already some years old. Even unfriendly reviews indicate that the public was interested in Wordsworth's poetry: if no one read his poetry, why did the critics trouble to write any reviews at all? Certainly almost all the longer reviews were written by men of honesty and conscience to express opinions honestly held. Only the Monthly reviewers ever professed to doubt Wordsworth's ability to write poetry; and the Monthly was given, generally, to extreme positions. If the critics were reluctant in later years to admit publicly that in this instance, at least, they were not the arbiters of public taste, they merely displayed a characteristic human failing. The first thorough exploration of the body of Wordsworth's work appears in the Quarterly Review in 1831. Quarterly reviewers had been friendly since the magazine's inception; perhaps Wordsworth had been correct in his statement that, to appreciate his poetry, the reader must study, and those who patiently did so arrived at an appreciation earliest.

To answer the questions posed in the prefatory chapter of this study: with the exception of Gentleman's

Magazine, whose reviews were always favorable, Wordsworth's early works received mixed reviews, a fact which may indicate only a quick reading of them for the qualities expected in poetry. The five years from 1814 through 1819 were the period when critics, perhaps led by Jeffrey, responded most unfavorably to Wordsworth publications. By 1822, his works were received with a favor almost as surprising (if one has been reading only official critiques of Wordsworth works) as the earlier disfavor. The whole pattern, especially considering the favorable opinions of Wordsworth's work expressed but concealed within other reviews, argues that the critics were following, rather than leading, the public. If this conclusion is valid, it indicates a pattern that has occurred in the case of other authors since Wordsworth's time; William Faulkner's long period of disfavor is an obvious parallel. Like Faulkner, too, Wordsworth lived to see the pattern work itself out and to receive complete critical and public acclaim in his own lifetime.

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APPENDIX

CRITICAL RESPONSES TO WORDSWORTH PUBLICATIONS

Only critiques dealing primarily with Wordsworth are tabled; "F" indicates a friendly review, "U" an unfriendly one, "N" a neutral tone, and "M" a mixed or undecided response. The abbreviations for magazine titles are, I think, obvious; the year indicates that of publication, not necessarily of the review.

YEAR	WORK	GM	MR	CR	ER	QR
1793	An Evening Walk	F	U	F		
	Descriptive Sketches		U	U		
1798	Lyrical Ballads (1st ed)		U	M		
1802	Lyrical Ballads(3rd ed)		N	M		
1807	Poems in Two Vols.			U	U	
1814	The Excursion		U		U	F
1815	The White Doe	F			U	M
	Collected Poems					M
1816	Thanksgiving Ode		U			
1819	Peter Bell	F	U			
	The Waggoner	F	U			
1820	River Duddon	F	M			
1822	Tour on the Continent				U	
1831	Selected Poems		F			F
1834	Collected Poems					F
1835	Yarrow Revisited		F			F
1837	Poetical Works		F			
1841	Poems/Fancy/Imag.	F				
	Poems/Early and Late	F	F			
	Collected Sonnets					F
1844	Select Pieces	F				
1845	Poems/Early and Late	F				
1850	The Prelude	F				