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"CAME FROM YON FOUNTAIN": WORDSWORTH'S INFLUENCE ON VICTORIAN EDUCATORS

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH DIED AT EXACTLY MID-CENTURY, IN 1850. IN 1818 WILLIAM Hazlitt had written, "Mr Wordsworth's genius is a pure emanation of the Spirit of the Age. . . . He is the most original poet now living."¹ More than sixty years later, in 1879, it was Matthew Arnold's turn, introducing his edition of Wordsworth, to say that: "He is one of the very chief glories of English Poetry, and by nothing is England more glorious than by her poetry."² In between these two a whole line of eminent critics — gradually, sometimes with strong reservations and with certain notable dissenters — had spoken or written similar praise. Parallel with this line of tribute there also ran a line of thought suggesting a connection between Wordsworth's innovative poetic thrust and the vast new nineteenth-century interest in education. Early in the century, when Wordsworth's poetical power was highest, his writing makes clear more than once that his poetry is to be taken as didactic.³ Sixty years later, once more in 1879, Benjamin Jowett, prototype of the Victorian Classics don, stated that: "No poet has done so much as Wordsworth for the instruction of mankind."⁴ The leading romantic poet saw himself as an educator and was seen as one, but the nature of that second identification and the degree to which it was true are not clear-cut matters. Wordsworth did not have any explicit theory of education which the schools then adopted. His remarks on formal education are few and mis-

¹ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, ed. E. D. Mackerness (London: Collins, 1969), pp. 138, 143.

² Matthew Arnold, *Complete Prose Works*, ed. R. H. Super, 11 vols. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, 55.

³ For example: "There is scarcely one of my poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, of our intellectual constitution" (letter to Lady Beaumont, 21 May 1807, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press], I, 128).

⁴ Benjamin Jowett, *Life and Letters*, ed. E. Abbott and L. Campbell, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1897), II, 52.

cellaneous. Rather, the imaginative thrust of his writing on nature and the child, and the inference he drew that formal education should be provided for all by the state (*Excursion* IX, 293-335),⁵ had an effect that was real but general. My aim is to trace some of the evidence on the matter in anthologies, journals, letters, and biographies of the period. My conclusion, with reservations, is that Wordsworth's influence on nineteenth-century education was deep and pervading.

Between Wordsworth's time and that of Arnold and Jowett, the message of the supposed Wordsworthian "system" wove its way into the thinking of lettered society. Based mainly on the twin pillars of the "Immortality Ode" and *The Excursion*, this system consisted of belief in the morally and intellectually ennobling power of nature, a compounded benefit from nature if experienced in solitude, and a reverence for the young child as the first imbiber and carrier of its beneficent power. The use of a simple and unaffected poetic language to convey nature's power and the wish for a universal education by which its benefits could be realized were concomitants of the system. When taken together these two strands suggested also that the growth of English literature as an educational subject might be the right place for the teaching of the "philosophy" Wordsworth was supposed to hold. By mid-century Book IV of *The Excursion*, where the system was held to be encapsulated, and the famous passage on universal education in Book IX were constantly cited in educational contexts. So was the Ode's epigraph from "The Rainbow," but particularly one line: "The child is father of the man." The influence of the Ode as a whole tended to come rather later, but as Peter Coveney remarks it "became undoubtedly one of the central references for the whole nineteenth century in its attitude to the child."⁶ Since educated Victorians were always likely to cite lines of poetry in support of any present topic or sentiment, it might seem that the link between Wordsworth and nineteenth-century educational developments is broadly established.

But this picture is too neat. The evidence is there, but it is diversified and elusive, and open to various interpretations. First, we know little of what actually happened in the classroom in terms of how, and how much, Wordsworth's own poetry was taught. There is some indica-

⁵ William Wordsworth, *The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden, 2 vols. (London: Penguin Books, 1977), II, 276-277.

⁶ Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 82. One characteristic example of this is found in Pye Henry Chavasse, *Advice To A Mother* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1878) in which "The child is the father of the man" is a chapter masthead. Chavasse was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and President of Queen's College Medico-Chirurgical Society of Birmingham; his book went into thirteen editions.

tion of this from selections of poetry, both Wordsworth's alone and more general anthologies, published (as the subtitle usually went) "For The Use of Schools and Colleges" or "For Younger Children." A major selection of over three hundred pages of Wordsworth's poetry was published expressly for schools in 1831, edited by Joseph Hine.⁷ This contained well over eighty poems including several of the much longer ones such as "Michael," "Tintern Abbey," and "Peter Bell." Hine writes in the preface of his own experience in teaching poetry, states how often he has used the great poets, and then declares, "I need scarcely say how great was the effect, when Mr Wordsworth's poems were read: the pupils were in a glow of delight, and never failed to listen with much attention; were always deeply impressed by the matter, and eager to hear more; and numbers of them would apply to me to borrow the volume to read more and again." That is an impressive accolade. But Hine's was the only major school edition of Wordsworth to appear in the earlier period. Another came out in 1866 and a further one in 1874, and then there were no more school editions before a small spate in the early eighteen-nineties.⁸ In the *Journal of Education* for May 1881, a teacher reviewing a book has occasion to say, "My experience [is] that *simple* poetry is not most appropriate for boys. We as children were given 'Lucy Gray' and such things, as suitable for our age, and we certainly did not respect them; in fact, we considered it all bosh, and used to say it over to ourselves in absurd tones to indicate this."

I

The school editions of Wordsworth and the choice of his poetry for more general school anthologies betray some lack of conviction as to which poems were the most suitable. In the general school anthologies which appeared between 1851 and 1872, a total of seventeen different poems by Wordsworth appeared, but only four of these are found in

⁷ *Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth Esq Chiefly for the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, ed. Joseph Hine (London: Moxon, 1831). A different edition came out in 1847 from the same editor and publisher, *Select Pieces from the Poems of William Wordsworth*. I am gratefully indebted to Peter Manning of the University of Southern California for this information.

⁸ In the earlier period appeared the following: *Wordsworth's Poems for the Young*, with 50 illustrations by Maclewhite & Pettie and a vignette by J. E. Mullins (London & New York: R. A. Strahan, 1866), and *Selections from the Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, English Schools Classics (London: Remingtons, 1874). In the later period appeared: *Wordsworth's Shorter Poems*, English Classics for Schools, notes by Mrs. Edmund Helps (London: n.p., 1891); *Wordsworth for the Young*, Selections with introduction by Cynthia Morgan St. John (n.p., 1891); *Wordsworth for the Young*, with introduction and notes by J. C. Wright, n.p., 1893; and some others.

more than one selection. These were "To A Cuckoo," *Excursion* IV, 851-887, "Tintern Abbey" in whole or part, and the Westminster Bridge sonnet which was always printed under the title "London at Sunrise." The Lucy poems were common enough, but none appears more than once. One very curious edition of Wordsworth for schools contains only five poems. These were "The Tables Turned," "The Oak and the Broom," two sonnets, and — by far the longest — "Ruth."⁹

In the general school anthologies Wordsworth, though commonly present, is scarcely prominent and is often equalled or indeed outnumbered poem for poem by such poets as Robert Buchanan, Thomas Campbell, Felicia Hemans, Sir Walter Scott, R. C. Trench, Robert Southey, and T. B. Macaulay. In *The Advanced Prose and Poetical Reader* (Glasgow, 1854) edited by A. W. Buchan, Wordsworth has only one poem ("The Sailor's Mother") while there are four of William Cowper's and two poems or passages each from Hemans, Thomas Hood, Shakespeare, Milton, and Robert Burns. Three years earlier the Edinburgh writer and publisher W. R. Chambers had produced *Poems for Young People* (1851), a pretty little book with a frontispiece called "Kindness to Animals" and over eighty poems. These included pieces by Alexander Pope, Cowper, Robert Herrick, Thomas Gray, William Collins, Milton, and Shakespeare, as well as Mary Howett, Hemans, Scott, Shardis, Robert Southwell, Joseph Ritchie, Pardis, "American Poet," "Knickerbocker," and finally Michael Bruce, whose contribution is a barely disguised imitation of Wordsworth's "To A Cuckoo." Yet there is not one poem by Wordsworth himself. *The Poetical Reader* (London, 1863), edited by J. C. Curtis, contains twelve poems or passages by Shakespeare, five each from Wordsworth, Scott, and Campbell, and four or fewer from ten or so other poets. That is a little better from Wordsworth's point of view, but a later edition of the same book in 1872 lowers the Wordsworth tally to three, giving more than three to Alfred, Lord Tennyson; William Barnes; Francis Palgrave; Trench; Shakespeare; George Gordon, Lord Byron; and Percy Shelley, and three each to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Campbell, Edward Lytton, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Christina Rossetti. In 1865 W. R. Chambers produced *Chambers' Readings in English Poetry*, containing seventy-one poems. Wordsworth gets three of these while eight other poets get as many or more, although in this case the whole of "Tintern Abbey" is printed, along with *The Excursion* IV passage mentioned earlier. It seems that educational attention to Wordsworth is in-

⁹ *Selections from Wordsworth's Poems* (London: Allman's English Classics for Elementary Schools, no. 11, n.d.).

creasing, but slowly, and it may be that the prevalence in this evidence of publication by Scottish houses reflects a Francis Jeffrey anti-Wordsworth influence which took time to decline. The introduction to Charles Bilton's *Repetition and Reading Book (for Pupil Teachers and the Upper Classes of Schools)* (1866) contains this remark: "I have discovered more beauties in a passage of Shakespeare, a simple poetical narrative of Wordsworth, or even in an argumentative leader from *The Times* newspaper, when I have heard it read at sight by a student in a training college . . . than most people would be inclined to believe." This is the only reference to any writers in this short introduction. Yet in the text itself we find fourteen passages from Shakespeare, five poems each from Cowper and Byron, four each from Milton and Scott, three each from Macaulay and Longfellow, and two each from Pope, Oliver Goldsmith, Campbell, Shelley, and Tennyson, but only one from Wordsworth, namely "Grace Darling," hardly a representative or notable piece. An equally strange imbalance is found in the *Classbook of English Literature* (London, 1865) edited by R. Armstrong and T. Armstrong, who were obviously sympathetic to Wordsworth. In their introduction they say of him,

He reclaimed from the wilderness vast tracts that had been lying waste, and brought them within the poetic domain. In this way he has done a wider service to poetry than any other poet of his time. . . . In the world of nature, to be a revealer of things hidden, an interpreter of new and unsuspected relations, the opener of a new sense in man: in the moral world, the teacher of truths neglected or moribund, the awakener of the consciousness to the solemnities that encompass life . . . this is the office which he will not cease to fulfil as long as the English language lasts.

Their introduction gives three times as much space to Wordsworth as to any other poet. It is the more surprising then to find that Wordsworth is given six poems, as against seven each for Scott, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Byron, and six for Campbell. There are only four other poets in this selection. One's general conclusion is that if these teacher-anthologists did indeed think Wordsworth the most eminent poet of the age they must have had some reason for bringing the point home to their charges somewhat sparingly.

If we now turn to the sudden great proliferation of educational journals in the mid-nineteenth century, we find this same elusiveness, and perhaps contradiction, even more evident. The journals were plentiful and of greatly varying quality; I will examine five representative ones here. These five were generally agreed to have been among the most valuable and authoritative for both teachers and the wider public.¹⁰ They are

¹⁰ See Asher Tropp, "Some Sources for the History of Educational Periodicals in England," *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 6 (1959), 151-155.

the *Educational Magazine* (1835-41); the *English Journal of Education* (1849-57), later incorporating the *Museum* (1864-65); *Papers for the Schoolmaster* (1851-70); the *Educational Expositor* (1853-55); and the *Journal of Education* (1870-81), cited earlier. The journals carried articles on every kind of educational subject: practical teaching; arguments for state education; the education of all social classes; the whole range of the curriculum; sample examination questions; fieldwork material (for example, for botany or drawing); Sunday school material; teachers' professional experience; and much more. As to Wordsworth, one's impression from this material is dual. He is constantly and implicitly there, yet often silently, hovering in the background. Allusions to him are indirect or unacknowledged, or he is suddenly given great prominence preceded and then followed by long silence.

A frequent tendency is to cite Wordsworth's lines while not naming the poet himself. This occurs most commonly in lead articles. It happens at least twice in *Papers for the Schoolmaster*, in December 1851 and December 1853. In the December 1851 editorial, writing of observation, the author says, "It is not the making of mere matter-of-fact observers which should be aimed at [in nature study], to whom 'A primrose on the river's brim/A yellow primrose was to him — /And it was nothing more,' " taking these well-known lines from "Peter Bell." Earlier in the article "The child is father of the man" is also cited. Two quotations then from the same poet, none from any other poet, yet not even a brief reason is offered for using his work. In December 1853 the opening words of the editorial are "The time seems to have come," followed immediately by the passage from *The Excursion* IX to which we have already alluded and which was to be used widely later:

When prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this imperial Realm,
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
Them who are born to serve her and obey.

(ll.394-298).

The article is about state education, and yet again the poet is neither named nor discussed.

A similar pattern emerges strongly in the *Educational Expositor* for 1853 and 1854. In April of each of those years there is an article on state education. Neither mentions Wordsworth, yet in the 1854 number the whole of the Book IX passage is printed, over forty lines, but without any comment at all. This time the poet's name is given but, curiously, on another page. Furthermore, the passage is reprinted yet again,

also with no comment whatever, in November 1855. In January 1854, moreover, the passage had been given as an exercise for paraphrasing in a kind of competition for the journal's readers. Clearly the passage was seen as a valuable source of appeal in the debate about state education, and this was part of the wider advocacy of the Wordsworthian system in general. But also in the November 1854 number, the whole of Coleridge's "Love, Hope and Patience in Education" is printed with a very positive comment indeed. The lengthy comment includes the assertion that the poem is "perhaps the finest piece of poetry on this subject in any language." This poem is reprinted later, in April 1855, yet it has nothing like the exposure of the Wordsworth passage, here or elsewhere. One hardly imagines the writer had perused Spanish or Swahili to check on his extravagant claim, but anyway it seems a little hard on Wordsworth, for Coleridge had almost certainly borrowed at least his title, first line, and main theme from Wordsworth himself in the *Excursion* (IV, 763), "We live by Admiration, Hope and Love," a line also anticipated at line 660 and repeated at 768.¹¹

In *Papers for the Schoolmaster* (September 1860), Wordsworth was again the subject of unacknowledged reference, the more telling this time by virtue of its intriguing context. The context is a short moral fable about three imaginary and rather ethereal schoolteachers. Mr. Firmkind is in love with Miss Gentlehand. They are joined by the young and handsome Mr. Youthlove, who later marries Miss Gentlehand. So happy is she that, as she leaves the church on her wedding day (and the story ends there), she recites the last four lines of Wordsworth's "Simon Lee":

I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning;
Alas! The gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning.

Which men left Miss Gentlehand their gratitude, and for what favours, we are not told, nor is there enlightenment as to the kind Mr. Firmkind's fate.

Wordsworth's presence in these educational journals is also evident in the silent testimony of imitation. As in the wider literary and political journals of the day, the educational journals, too, published new poetry. The debt to Wordsworth in a great many of these poems is quite obvious. Of course he was not the only poet imitated, but he was clearly the main one. This fact could only be established convincingly by quot-

¹¹ This is strongly suggested in that Samuel Taylor Coleridge twice cites Wordsworth on "hope" in *On The Constitution of Church and State*, ed. John Colmer (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 58, 73. Once again Wordsworth is the only living poet cited in the book.

ing a very large sample of new poems of many kinds. But here are some of the more striking cases:

Night of beauty, lovely stream
 River flowing fast away
 Onward to the distant sea
 Like life into eternity
 Now upon these banks I stay
 Illumined by the midnight beam
 And mingle in the silent night
 My spirit with the heaven's light.

That is from "Night on the Deben" (*Educational Magazine*, July 1837) and contains clear echoes of "Yarrow Revisited," "The River Duddon," and "Tintern Abbey." The Deben, with its reedy banks and sandy spits, flowing through the flat silt-lands of Suffolk to the east coast, is as different from the rocky and tumbling rivers of the northwest and even the middle part of the Wye as anything could be, but the mode of writing is already prescribed. Many years later in the *Museum and Journal of Education*, January 1865, we find:

Earth hath nothing sweet or fair
 Lovely forms and beauties rare
 But before my eyes they bring
 Christ, of beauty source and spring.

The borrowing from the Westminster Bridge sonnet (already sometimes anthologized for schools, as we have seen) is followed by the infusing of a doctrinal tag at the end. This was a common feature. For example:

Hymns of praise are ringing
 Thro' the leafy wood
 Songsters sweetly singing
 Warble "God is good."

Morn amid the mountains
 Lovely solitude
 Gushing streams and fountains
 Murmur "God is good."

Now the glad sun breaking
 Pours a golden flood
 Deepest vales awaking
 Echo "God is good."

(*Papers for the Schoolmaster*, June 1851).

These stanzas make the doctrinal component quite pronounced, doubtless for singing or recital in an infant class. Wordsworthian phrases or words abound ("murmur" is especially notable) and the awkward rhyme

in the second stanza seems to result from trying to incorporate solitude into a Christian context. As late as August 1888 the *Journal of Education* published:

God's world is very wide
And two may, side by side,
Up the steep moor-land climbing
While valley bells are chiming
Each view a different scene.

Unless I am much mistaken the second line here echoes the notorious and finally rejected couplet from "The Thorn": "I've measured it from side to side, 'Tis three feet long and two feet wide." As a final example, in November 1853 there appeared these lines:

When first I looked upon thy face
O sister of the meek-eyed Dove
I wondered at its gentle grace
But never thought of love.

A number of imitation Lucy poems were about at the time, this stanza being most notable in getting Dorothy Wordsworth and Dove Cottage into the same line while actually referring to neither. This verse was printed in *Blackwood's* and not an educational journal. But *Blackwood's* was giving marked attention to the subject of education in the early eighteen-fifties as well as strongly championing Wordsworth in the years immediately after his death. One result of this approach was that *Blackwood's* printed Latin translations of the Lucy poems in an article on Latin versification in November 1854, although one should add that the article's author mercilessly chastised them. But Wordsworth was without doubt taken by the educational journals to be the best stylistic model for school pupils.

In this brief survey of evidence about the poet's educational influence, there is one important negative clue. In the *English Journal of Education* for February 1856, October 1856, and September 1858 appeared three articles, "Self-Education," "The Present System of Over-schooling," and "Education Out Of Doors." The *Educational Expositor* for January, May, and October 1855 published "The Use of Works of the Imagination in Education," "The Teaching of Common Things," and "The Influence of Our Popular Education on the Manners of the People." Earlier in 1851 the *English Journal of Education* had printed "The Education of the Poor in Rural Districts" and "The Education of Agricultural Labour." A strong interest in education as a natural, unformalized, and indeed rural thing was apparently growing in the decade after

Wordsworth's death, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that his influence is there; yet none of these eight articles names him once. Wordsworth cannot have been far from the editors' minds, however, for between the two rural education pieces there appears one of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets for parsing, and in between the 1856 articles in the *English Journal of Education* appears the sonnet "The world is too much with us," though without any comment. One might have expected Wordsworth in particular to have been gratefully cited as an authority in these contexts (which certainly the sonnet supports), especially because, as we shall see, ordinary working people were apparently quite fond of parts of Wordsworth's poetry. But he is not cited in the articles.

Perhaps one should not read too much into these journals' unacknowledged allusions to the poet's work and ideas. Perhaps they simply took Wordsworth's standing for granted, or simply illustrated their own views by citing his verse. Yet this does not explain the odd feeling of Wordsworth's presence even when he is not cited. The references are too often prominent and noncommittal at once; or a passage is cited but a strong implication avoided. The evidence from the anthologies bears out this impression. Furthermore, other poets received nothing like so uneven a treatment, largely because they apparently did not spring to mind so quickly as serviceable for quotation in illustration of educational matters. The truth seems to be that, in relation to Wordsworth, these educators were in a dilemma. On the one hand, as good Victorians, they could accept the undoubted force of the poet's general theme about the moral and ennobling uplift given by nature itself. Nature was a manifestation of God's power unsullied by the wickedness of man, the latter in its turn deriving from that central item in Victorian educational theology, original sin. But at the same time, educational writers were engaged in a massive programme to establish state and national education as a formal matter, a matter of institutions, of exact curricular content, and of scholarship. The earliest educational journals are very conscious of education as possibly a new science, a psychological technique which could be studied and which one could get right or disastrously wrong. In August 1834 the *Educational Magazine* had published a prospectus before its inception, describing its aim as that of "furthering the study of education with a view to its foundation as a science." Later the emphasis is on the statutory provision of schools for the expanding "lower orders," leading to the crucial Education Act of 1870, and leading also to the expansion of education for the new middle classes. Many new public schools were established — for example, Uppingham, Cheltenham, and

Marlborough — and many older ones developed, the most famous example of which was Rugby. The training of teachers and the development of an examination system are important concerns for all of these journals. Some of them in fact were strongly identified with the famous public schools as well as with the ancient universities. Speech-day events were reported; Oxford and Cambridge scholarship results listed, and there was much fond academic reminiscence. The journals also devoted many pages to reviews of school textbooks and examination syllabi for student-teachers.

Here then is the other horn of their dilemma in relation to Wordsworth. For with their focus on establishing formal institutions and educational processes, what could these educators have thought of the poet who urged them, "Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife"? Or of a poet who, in an age when science and literature were striving with each other for curricular supremacy, had written in the same poem, "Enough of Science and of Art,/ Close up those barren leaves"¹² In the long poem on his own life, Wordsworth had devoted most of a whole book to the disparagement of Cambridge. He disliked the university examination system, read books "with sickly appetite," and "did not love . . . the guise of our scholastic studies," although here one must remember that in these passages the poet blames himself as well as Cambridge. It seems that for writers about rural education, self-education, and similar topics, it was perhaps prudent not to enlist this educational renegade in support of their views, even though explicit extended reference to Wordsworth on these matters was occasionally possible. It can also be suggested, not surprisingly, that the editors and contributors were not intellectually sophisticated, though they did supply excellent coverage to meet the needs of teachers and student-teachers. Examination questions indicate a certain ingenuousness: "When did Spenser, Milton, Chaucer and Wordsworth live? Name a principal work of each." "Write in prose, not exceeding eight lines, the story of Margaret, as told by the Wanderer" (*Papers for the Schoolmaster*, August 1858, p. 136; March 1864, p. 18). These questions come from papers not for schools but for student-teachers.

The educators were also uneasy about the poet's attitude toward religious doctrine. As noted earlier, imitators of the nature poetry would on occasion feel constrained to insert a saving doctrinal clause into their

¹² Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned." The conflict between "science" and "art" was perhaps most memorably encapsulated in the exchange between Matthew Arnold and Thomas Henry Huxley.

efforts. Most of the journals, including the more liberal ones, were edited and largely written by clergy of the Church of England, and on the "Immortality Ode" in particular they were silent for a long time. In the wider literary journals, with the *British Critic* well to the fore, the Ode gets attacked as theologically deficient and misleading, failing to mention a Saviour, referring to a dubious pre-natal existence, and — even worse — suggesting that the child, far from bearing a load of original sin to be extirpated by orthodox upbringing, came into the world "trailing clouds of glory" which by earthly existence were to fade away.¹³ The less confident educational writers, unable to ignore Wordsworth's undeniably salutary educational ideas, took the safe middle line, citing the Ode's masthead precept alone ("The child is father of the man") which they could interpret in neutral, developmental terms. "The Rainbow" was, as a matter of fact, more commonly alluded to in educational journals than the Ode.

This broad difficulty about Wordsworth for the educationist had another aspect, deriving from Wordsworth's revolutionary poetic aim to write in the simple and real language of ordinary men. This too presented a dilemma. Again the educationists and editors seem not to have been simply against Wordsworth. If one is initiating an education to meet the needs of a broadly unlettered people one might be expected to value a new and simple poetry with which such people could identify and which they could understand. And this was so. As said already, there is some evidence that working people were not averse to Wordsworth's poetry. In January 1850, a lecture "On Wordsworth and Poetry" was listed on the evening programme of the Mechanics' Institute at Huddersfield, between one "On Vegetable Chemistry" and one "On the Wars of the Guelphs and Ghibilins, and the character of Castruccio Castracani." Such was the range available. Meanwhile over the Pennines at Stalybridge, the library of the Mechanics' Institute was being built up, and the decision was taken to purchase "Wordsworth and the British Poets," Wordsworth again being the only poet mentioned by name.¹⁴ N. S. Bauer has shown that Wordsworth's small-scale poems about birds and flowers particularly appealed to working people (Bauer, "Wordsworth's Poems," p. 68). Furthermore, in the journals we have been examining, Wordsworth was the nineteenth-century poet by far the most commonly adduced to exemplify good style. But once again this seems a midway course. To exemplify was simple

¹³ N. S. Bauer, "Wordsworth's Poems in Contemporary Periodicals," *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 9 (1978), 61-75.

¹⁴ Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957), pp. 215n., 241-246.

enough; to analyze was trickier. The larger question of the meaning of Wordsworth's poetry remained to be answered.

II

Wordsworth's supposed poetic simplicity had of course given interested Victorians considerable difficulty. He was attacked by many, most notably by Francis Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*, although in the early eighteen-fifties *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review* had gone some way toward countering Jeffrey.¹⁵ It seems that both critics and defenders felt the poet's tremendous power but did not know how to describe it. Wordsworth's poetry confounded traditional expectations of what poetry was supposed to contain. In Wordsworth rich and succulent vocabulary, classical and mythological reference, and theatre and ornament are discarded, as Hazlitt observed. In the light of these traditional views of poetry, Wordsworth's idea, at least to some, was elusive, and not simple at all. Many people eminent in the world of letters experienced Wordsworth's simplicity as dilemma. Harriet Martineau, writing in 1855, said of Wordsworth, "As to his poetic genius, it needs but to open Shelley, Tennyson, and even poor Keats . . . to feel at once that, with all their truth and all their charm, few of Wordsworth's pieces are poems." Yet only a few lines later she calls the poet "a benefactor to poetry and society" and goes on, "He taught us how to say what we had to say in a way not only the more rational but the more beautiful. . . . These are vast services to have rendered."¹⁶ The dilemma is caught even more acutely and — in the context of a discussion of education more importantly — by John Stuart Mill. As is well known, Mill testified in his *Autobiography* that the reading of Wordsworth's poetry brought him out of his nervous breakdown and taught him the true nature of happiness. And yet, Mill suggests, this occurred through Wordsworth's lesser, rather than greater, status as a poet: "There have certainly been, even in our age, greater poets than Wordsworth, but poetry of deeper and loftier feeling could not have done for me at that time what his did. . . . Wordsworth is much more fitted to give [poetic culti-

¹⁵ Francis Jeffrey died in 1850, the same year as Wordsworth's death. In September 1852 *Blackwood's* published a retrospective survey of Jeffrey's life and work, not without respect, but including a scathing criticism of Jeffrey's notorious attack on *The Excursion* in 1814. In March 1853 the *Quarterly Review* reviewed two memoirs of Wordsworth, one by the poet's nephew Christopher, and the other by January Searle.

¹⁶ Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, 2 vols. (London: Virago Press, 1983), II, 239.

vation] than poets who are intrinsically far more poets than he.”¹⁷ Perhaps Mill was being a little defensive about a personal admiration not yet socially endorsed. My own view is that Mill’s reading of Wordsworth, and its long-term results, was one of the seminal cultural events of the nineteenth century, profoundly affecting Mill’s view not only of liberty but also of liberal education. Yet in both his and Martineau’s accounts we find the curious suggestion, that although Wordsworth had great merit, he was not really a poet at all. It is this strand of the argument that one feels affected the educators, for it was not at all simply a matter of placing one more poet on a scale of ordinary poetic merit. If intellectuals of Mill’s and Martineau’s stature could doubt Wordsworth’s claim to the poet’s laurel at all, it is scarcely surprising that the somewhat less sophisticated educators and editors were perplexed as to where, and whether, to put him in the poetic canon, powerful as his effect on them was.

This matter of how to judge Wordsworth’s poetry was further compounded by the dominance in nineteenth-century education of the Latin and Greek classics. Not only were the competing claims of science and literature to be central to the school curriculum at the heart of the educational debate, but so was the question of whether and how to teach English literature. The educators had only the classical, that is the philological and analytical, model available. The most frequent exercises used with student-teachers and school pupils were parsing, analyzing, and paraphrasing. But Wordsworth’s poetry made such exercises problematic. His poetry’s most obvious feature is not merely simplicity but fluidity, involving an unsharp boundary between one word and the next. As Arnold later put it, “He has no style,” or as Walter Pater suggested, “His words are themselves thought and feeling.”¹⁸ Words do not stand out like little gems as the traditional idea of poetry would have them do. The tiniest, most common words — to be, if, but, perhaps, and so on — are subtly significant in countless passages, as are repetitions, double negatives, exaggerations, and many similar features. Line after line consists of monosyllables.¹⁹ As though to embody all this, the image of undifferentiated water is itself all-pervading. To parse single words in a poem like “We Are Seven” thus turns out not to be exacting, nor would the quality of the poem be caught by it, as it might more likely be in po-

¹⁷ John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works*, ed. John M. Robson, 21 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963-84), I, 152-153.

¹⁸ Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 52. Walter Pater, *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 58.

¹⁹ I have examined these characteristics in detail in *Wordsworth’s Language of Men* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), especially chapters 4 and 5.

ems by Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Keats, or Pope. And what of the more mysterious, or at least tenuous, dimension? How can you valuably paraphrase "A slumber did my spirit seal" or the elusive, tentative passages in "Tintern Abbey"?:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused, . . .
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

(ll. 93-96, 100-102).

These well-known lines are especially interesting here in light of a comment made on them by F. R. Leavis: "Wordsworth removes all incitement to the inquiry whether or not what he offers would be accepted as an explanation if it were rendered in prose."²⁰ It is just this quality of the writing, as Leavis in effect says, that renders it opaque to paraphrase. It was the inspirational idea behind romantic poetry that has in the long run undermined belief in the value, even the possibility, of paraphrasing poetry. But the Victorian educators were stuck with this classical and philological method. Of course there are passages in Wordsworth that can be approached in these ways, and they sometimes were, but in general parsing and paraphrasing seem to have been inappropriate.

An examination of some of the journals bears this out. In articles on good style or on writing generally, Wordsworth is commonly mentioned, but usually only in the most general fashion. In *Papers for the Schoolmaster* (August 1858), writing on "Style and Language in Teaching," the author advises, "Never be content to know what has been written about English Literature. Read for yourself the best works of those men who have made English literature famous, and who have secured a permanent place in its annals . . . and do not suspect that in the study of Milton, Pope or Addison, or Bacon or Locke, or Grote or Mill, or Wordsworth or Southey, nothing will occur which will help you in your daily work" (p. 136). Yet this salutary exhortation to attend to the text seems almost nowhere supported by evidence that the text's verbal nature or syntactical structure are what will repay attention. The imitative poems we quoted earlier were clearly printed as examples of how to

²⁰ Frank Raymond Leavis, *Revaluations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 161. An interesting footnote in the history of the teaching of English arises from this. Credit for the introduction of the creative rather than philological methods in teaching English is usually given to H. Caldwell Cook, who taught at the Perse School, Cambridge in the first two decades of this century. Leavis was a pupil at the Perse School during that period. See Margaret Mathieson, *The Preachers of Culture* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), pp. 61-63; and Peter Gordon and John P. White, *Philosophers as Educational Reformers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 86.

write, but these also seem to be offered only as general influences. For close analytical exercises, at least at first, Wordsworth was hardly in the picture; other poets were far more closely studied. In the *English Journal of Education* in 1851 one of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets ("Why sleeps the future . . . ?") is set for parsing, but this is extremely rare. In *Papers for the Schoolmaster* the examination papers of regional training boards were printed, and in them the most frequently used poets, by a very large margin, were Shakespeare and Milton. The next largest single category is that of poems by poets now almost totally forgotten, in effect one or other of the many poetasters of the day active in the educational or ecclesiastical world. After that come a group of four poets, John Dryden, Pope, Cowper, and Goldsmith, and the relative "prosiness" of these four may be why they were chosen for such exercises. Finally there is a long list of poets used only occasionally, perhaps once every five years. Not until October 1860 did the journal begin to offer passages from *The Excursion* as a regular feature.

It seems then that for many years the educators held Wordsworth somewhat at arm's length. He is a great poet and his moral philosophy of nature is highly regarded, yet the poetry's structure is left unexamined and certain themes both educational and religious are felt to be dubious. For these reasons he was not fully incorporated into the galaxy of "great educationists" at the time. But by 1860 the picture had begun slowly to change.²¹ Certainly the wider literary magazines had already drawn out the importance of Wordsworth to education, though certain criticisms and silences also carry on into later decades. But every date cited so far from the journals (apart from the imitative verses) has been 1860 or earlier.²² The change from 1860 forward is most evident in the journal *Papers for the Schoolmaster*, a progressive journal devoted among other activities to attacking the illiberal so-called "Revised Code" (educational "payment by results"), instituted by the Tory education minister Robert Lowe in 1862 but, thanks to the force of liberal pressure, gradually dropped over subsequent years. In the eighteen-sixties, *Papers* used extracts from *The Excursion* often and in a variety of ways. In 1861 passages from Book I are more and more frequently used in examination questions, and this tendency culminates in 1863 when a long and detailed series of lecture notes on the whole poem, taken book by book and spreading over several months, is printed for the use of student-

²¹ The date of the famous Thomas Huxley-Samuel Wilberforce debate in Oxford on evolution. The previous year had seen the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, and Mill's *On Liberty*, all seminal works for education.

²² The *Journal of Education* May 1881 reference near the start of this paper is retrospective.

teachers. In January 1865 it was the turn of the *Museum and Educational Journal* to become open about Wordsworth's significance for the first time, throwing down the gauntlet in a clear challenge to the Darwinian view of the natural world, which the advocates of high culture feared for its effect on human aspirations to unity and equality as against the "survival of the fittest." In a substantial lead article "The End of Intellectual Education" (the teleological rather than evolutionary cast of the title is surely deliberate) we read: "Literature often gives a truer idea of nature than science strictly so called. There is more real insight into nature and her operations in most of Wordsworth's poems than in many a treatise on natural science" (p. 364). In this article once again no other poet is mentioned. In a lead article called "On the Teaching of English Language and Literature" in April 1867 in the same journal, *The Excursion* is listed as a major work in English literature, this time in the surprising context of an attack on Matthew Arnold (Arnold was just then engaged in championing the study of French):

We cannot admit the truth of [Arnold's statement], so far at least as poetry is concerned. Goldsmith's *Traveller*, Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Gray's *Elegy* and *Odes*, some of Dryden's *Fables*, the *Paradise Lost* of John Milton, and [five plays] of Shakespeare, suggest a course of poetical literature, not only higher in tone, superior in genius, to anything that can be found among the literary treasures of France, but also far more valuable, in an educational point of view, applying more materials for the exercises of the scholars' faculties, involving more difficulties, requiring more research.

("On the Teaching of English Language and Literature," p. 5).

This defence of the educational value of English literature enlists Wordsworth in the curriculum debate against science and French literature. There is here a new sense of urgency, pointing ahead to the 1870 Education Act, that Wordsworth's poetry and his "system" be taught. He has entered the syllabus; he has become a sage "in an educational point of view." And it is *The Excursion* (and, more and more, the Ode) which becomes educationally canonical; not *The Prelude*, a poem about which, despite its presumably clear relevance to the subject of upbringing, the journals have nothing to say.

Two articles in particular demonstrate the poet's growing acceptance by educational theorists. They appeared within two years of each other, in the middle of the educationally vital decade of the eighteen-sixties. Both are lead articles and both take Wordsworth as central authority for their claims, something seemingly impossible ten years before. The first, in the *Museum and English Journal of Education* (December 1864), is entitled "Silent Education." It exactly captures the two features of Wordsworth's poetry which earlier had been most disquieting to other-

wise sympathetic educationists. These were the poetry's expressions of antipathy to educational institutions, and the apparent resistance of the poetry to traditional analysis. The writer says:

The most powerful influences under which men come are exerted on them silently, and received unconsciously. . . . Men educate one another in the daily contact of life, [and] it is little noticed in its progress, because it works so unobtrusively. . . . The educative power of nature and circumstance is far more potent on some minds than that of schools and universities. Yet in this busy practical age it is the phase of education of which least account is taken. We are so occupied with the objective work of filling and garnishing the mind, that we forget the subjective influences. . . . These silent influences play a great part in the upbringing of boys. Their pressure, like that of water, is equal, and in all directions. The boyish dislike of task-work, of direct teaching, has no place here. For there is no task-work to shun, and the teaching is that of example, not of precept.

(p. 321).

The writer concludes: "By no one has this silent influence of natural majesty been more truthfully sympathetically portrayed than by Wordsworth, himself the poet of nature, in his description of the Wanderer's youth" (p. 325).

The writer then cites pertinent lines from that story which underline the educational cast of the theme, the "lesson" of love learnt in boyhood (*Excursion* I, 194) and the "silent faces" of the clouds from which in youth he had read "unutterable love" (I, 204-205). In the 1860s perhaps it was becoming clear that Wordsworth's silent influence on education over the previous decades had itself been an example of Wordsworth's own educational idea. There is also the reference — perhaps again silently — to the sonnet "The world is too much with us," the only poem of Wordsworth's outside the passage from Book IX of *The Excursion* to have been printed without comment in one of the journals in the earlier period. But perhaps most fascinating of all is the allusion to water as the equivalent of the evenly spread pressure that silent education gives. Wordsworth's poetry is suffused with water imagery; the poetry might also be characterized as "equal" and "in all directions"; that is to say, inaccessible to too much analysis, it has rather a power to diffuse itself, in its interest in the intangibilities of mind and learning, across the face of educational thought. This pervasive, silent influence was certainly understood by Wordsworth:

Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sewn even as a seed,
Who that shall point as with a wand and say
"This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain"?

(*Prelude*, 1805, II, 211-215).

The other 1860s article which is worth some brief examination deals in part with the educational value of the "Immortality Ode," and

in an unexpected way. Called "Infancy," it is the major article in *Papers for the Schoolmaster* for September 1866. The writer opens by stating that nothing human is without interest, including human beginnings before "the years that bring the inevitable strife." The writer continues: "But apart from this, what a wonder it is how soon the child, 'A six weeks' darling of a pigmy size' begins to front the universe and try its best at coping with the difficulties 'of all this unintelligible world'" (p. 213, italics in original). The writer proceeds to consider the significance of the infancy of people finally deemed great. He then asks, "I wonder how many people have been struck in their own minds with the thought, touched on many writers — Wordsworth especially, but by Tennyson also and others — that children have had a previous existence in another world before they arrived in this. Certain shadowy recollections importing such a former life may have occurred to most of us." And he concludes: "Whatever there may be of truth in the fancy of Wordsworth and others, to which I have referred, Wordsworth's lines on the subject are well worth putting into the reader's memory; these especially, if I can manage to quote them correctly" (p. 215). The author does indeed quote them correctly, presenting stanza 5 of the Ode in its entirety.

The two 1860s articles mark a new, less reserved acknowledgment of Wordsworth's educational influence. But, as just suggested, the second article is notable in another respect. It is the first time in these journals that extensive consideration is given to the "Immortality Ode." Prior to this article, educators and editors had been chary of the Ode, preferring to cite the more obvious if less poetically inspiring championing of state education in Book IX of *The Excursion*, and only somewhat gingerly, though frequently, quoting the epigrammatic "The child is father of the man." The epigram appears to support a developmental view of education, one which has had considerable influence in educational practice for the past hundred or so years. But this message cannot be drawn from the Ode as a whole, nor were its originators particularly devotees of Wordsworth. These originators — Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel — looked back to a continental tradition and their progenitor is Jean Jacques Rousseau, and while there is a broad general comparison to be made between Rousseau and Wordsworth, it is not one which easily emerges from the Ode. The theme that most nineteenth-century British readers had taken from the Ode was the visionary one of the innocent child arriving here from a pre-natal existence. The general intellectual paradigm behind the theory of developmental education, on the other hand, is organic; it derives from the expanding sciences of biology, botany, and zoology.

Yet the article on infancy does make one other reference — fleeting and hardly recognized by its author — to “the years that bring the inevitable yoke.” This is reinforced by the phrase brought in from “Tintern Abbey,” namely “all this unintelligible world.” The import of the Ode is not merely that of a child’s vision from pre-existence, nor even that this vision fades away. It concerns the profound sense of loss that the fading away brings, and the only possible compensation for it, indicated in the strategically emphasized line, “The years that bring the philosophic mind.” What the years bring, switching from “yoke” to a meditative attitude, is the consolation. It is philosophical, not solely a matter of feeling or courage, although they are also involved. In “Tintern Abbey” the weary weight of the world is not just burdensome but “unintelligible.” It is this meditative dimension of the Ode’s consolatory power that had an increasing and ultimately great influence on education in the second half of the nineteenth century. Those who testified to its healing power were, moreover, not the ordinary teachers or educational editors or anthologists, but rather those who played the major part in the nineteenth century’s idea of higher education: “high culture,” and the university. The important figures here are Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman, and John Stuart Mill. The influence of Wordsworth on them, and theirs on higher education, is familiar enough. What impact did the Ode have on them?

III

Let us first consider Mill. Less an “educationist” in a formal sense than either Arnold or Newman, he is still seminal on three counts. These are the uniqueness of his own education as portrayed in his *Autobiography*; the immense importance he gave to universal education within his utilitarian and liberal theories; and finally his Rectorship of St. Andrews University in 1865. The last provided the background for his inaugural lecture on higher education which, although he kept his unfortunate audience three hours in the delivery of it, has become an educational classic in its written form.²³ As for Wordsworth’s influence on Mill, we can discern for simplicity’s sake three stages. As is well known, Mill started Greek when he was an infant, was taken into economics and logic well before adolescence, and met virtually nobody of his own age of either sex during that period. As he testifies, his education was en-

²³ In *James Mill and J. S. Mill on Education*, ed. F. A. Cavenagh (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1931).

tirely a "cultivation of the intellect," utilitarian and rational. When the mental breakdown occurred, it was not because he found himself refuting intellectually what he had learned. Rather it had "ceased to charm"; he suddenly experienced it all as a "dull dream" and found that "analytic habits . . . undermined all desires, and all pleasures" (Mill, *Collected Works*, I, 139). It was then a loss of that very happiness and pleasure the nature of which the utilitarians had so earnestly if aridly sought.

When at this very time Mill stumbled across Wordsworth's poetry, he found that it filled a void in the depths of his personality. The poems "expressed not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to me the very culture of the feelings, which I had been in quest of" (Mill, *Collected Works*, I, 152). But further, he makes clear which poem of Wordsworth's was most valuable to him, and it is the only one he mentions by name:

At the conclusion of the Poems came the famous *Ode*, falsely called Platonic, "Intimations of Immortality"; in which, along with more than his usual sweetness of melody and rhythm, and along with the two passages of grand imagery but bad philosophy so often quoted, I found that he too had had similar experiences to mine; that he too had felt that the first freshness of youthful enjoyment of life was not lasting; but that he had sought for compensation, and found it, in the way in which he was now teaching me to find it. The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it.

(Mill, *Collected Works*, I, 152-153).

The cultivation of feelings rather than intellect; the rejection of the supposed pre-natal existence (the "bad philosophy"); the compensation for loss; the explicit nomination of Wordsworth as teacher; and the totality of the recovery — all these are important aspects of Mill's account. He found the experience so salutary that he spent much time in the next three or four years studying poetry; he published two essays on poetry which have endured, and he visited Wordsworth at Rydal Mount in the summer of 1831.²⁴ But this brings us to the second stage of these events, for in talking to Wordsworth, Mill found that the "intellect" in which he had been educated for so long had another aspect. Mill wrote to his friend John Stirling about the Wordsworth visit, referring to the poet's "largeness and expansiveness of feelings," but also saying that "this does not appear in [Wordsworth's] writings, especially his poetry, where the contemplative part of his mind is the only part of it that ap-

²⁴ J. S. Mill, "What is Poetry?" and "The Two Types of Poetry," *Monthly Repository*, January and October 1833.

pears" (Mill, *Collected Works*, XII, 81). And this is "the extreme comprehensiveness and philosophic spirit which is in him." What is of interest here is that the "cultivation of the feelings" which Mill had found in Wordsworth's poetry comes not from some pure lyric emotion but from a new sort of intellect, one that Mill had apparently not previously encountered. It is still intellectual, but contemplative, meditative, in short "the philosophic mind," and not the bloodless analytical logic Mill had hitherto experienced exclusively. This clearly surprised Mill, and it led him to see Wordsworth not so much as a lyric poet, perhaps not even as a real poet at all, but more as a fully rounded intellect and personality, open to a full human experience, aware of pain and loss, but able to compensate for these through its own resources.

This brings us to the third stage. Mill's coming to terms with Wordsworth led him to a further view. It emerges as a feature of many of Mill's writings, its inculcation gradually became regarded as a central aim of liberal education, and in *On Liberty* it is applied to education explicitly.²⁵ It is the principle that, whatever side one takes in an argument or issue, one ought to give the most ample space possible to an acknowledgement and description of the other side. Now it is surely undeniable that such a principle could only be adhered to with such tenacity, not simply by deciding upon it intellectually, but by encountering it as a profound philosophical experience. It seems equally sure from the *Autobiography* that it was the reading of Wordsworth that gave Mill this experience. Its fruits are most clear formally in the parallel essays on *Bentham* and *Coleridge* (1838, 1840) and in the culminating classic of 1859, *On Liberty*. The whole strategy of *On Liberty* is one of going carefully and sequentially through every possible position counter to one's own, and, what is more important, giving all possible recognition to its merits. Though ultimately rejected, the opposing arguments must still be understood with their own merits intact. But what is so striking for the present discussion is that Mill makes only one exception to the liberty principle, and this is in the field of education. The only case where the liberty of citizens may be curtailed, according to Mill, is in the matter of denying their children education. (One other exception Mill mentions, that of selling oneself into slavery, is a limiting case.) Parents who fail in this respect should be fined. It is a remarkable exception in one for whom the principle of liberty was paramount. The only possible surmise is that Mill's own educational experience, at first restricted by paren-

²⁵ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1957), pp. 110-112.

tal dictation but later opening up to new forms of contemplation typified by Wordsworth, lies behind this solitary limitation.

Mill says more about education, and it is illustrative of exactly the same principle. To make sure that education takes place there should be public examinations. But the nature of the examinations "should not turn on the truth or falsehood of opinions, but on the matter of fact that such and such an opinion is held, on such grounds, by such authors, or schools, or churches" (Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 162). That is to say, the state may not influence opinion, but rather should make sure that all opinions are known, and that: "A student of philosophy would be the better for being able to stand an examination in both Locke and Kant, whichever of the two he takes up with, or even with neither" (Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 162).

Mill's early experience of unhappiness, of an emptiness, is what surely led him to value the position of an opponent, for he himself had known what it was to find a mental or spiritual gap filled in just that way. Mill's acknowledgement of everything good in Coleridge (while siding with Bentham) and every argument against liberty (while by that act promoting liberty as paramount) stem from that early experience. The "something that is gone," as Wordsworth put it, was happiness; this was why Mill so valued the Ode. And the search for what is lost leads to the highest, or deepest, level of philosophy and cultivation; in formal terms, to liberal education. Its compensation for the loss of early happiness lay in filling the void by hearing and absorbing the feelings and views of others; by cultivating "the philosophic mind"; in short, by the education of not merely the child — as Mill had good reason to know — but by the fullest and deepest education of the whole person.

This view of Mill's writings has not been accepted by all, and the counterview, associated especially with Gertrude Himmelfarb and Maurice Cowling has to be acknowledged.²⁶ This view, roughly, is that Mill was far less of a liberal and utilitarian than *On Liberty* would suggest. His obsessive psychological deference to his father James Mill long prevented him from publicly saying this, and moreover the writing of *On Liberty* was so influenced by his wife Harriet Taylor (on whom he was equally dependent) that, as he himself declared, it was really to be considered her work rather than his (Himmelfarb, 1962, Preface). The idea that reading Wordsworth's poetry led to the adoption of the principle of respect for opposing opinions would thus be neutralized. Himmelfarb's evidence is formidable, but it seems to me merely to show greater com-

²⁶ J. S. Mill, *Essays on Politics and Culture*, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1962); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

plexities within a picture still generally true. It was precisely because the paternal domination of James Mill was so great that the contrary experience of reading Wordsworth was so refreshing. Equally, Mill's deference to his wife, certainly in part a matter of having known too few women in his early years, is also a clear case of that compulsive leaning toward opinions other than his own which never escaped him. Regardless of whether John Stuart Mill or Harriet Taylor was ultimately responsible for *On Liberty* (and Himmelfarb's evidence about Harriet Taylor's "mediocre mind" suggests it was the former), I suspect that Mill found in its composition an immense release, an expression — perhaps idealized — of something long latent in himself, which the reading of Wordsworth's poetry first stirred there. Great classics often come from such tense conditions.

On Liberty appeared in 1859, and again one sees the significance of the start of the eighteen-sixties. The same year saw the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and the *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects* by Newman. These lectures later became the second part of *The Idea of a University* (1873), accepted as the definitive statement of the real nature of university education for over a hundred years. The original Dublin *Discourses On the Scope and Nature of University Education* had been published earlier, in 1853. A. Dwight Culler, who has provided one of the fullest accounts of Newman's intellectual development, has shown that Newman saw himself as an educator first and foremost.²⁷ Critics and commentators have been deflected from this view, Culler argues, by concentrating too much on the controversial material of Newman's conversion and on his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864). Newman does not seem, however, to have much connection with Wordsworth. His references to the poet are rare and brief. Indeed he seems not to have cared much for Wordsworth's poetry. In Wilfrid Ward's monumental biography we have this testimony from Father Ignatius Ryder, a novice under Newman at the Birmingham oratory: "I do not think [Newman] ever took cordially to Wordsworth. That poet's didactic tone, his almost sacerdotal pretensions, offended him, and he was wearied by his excessive deliberateness."²⁸ The "sacerdotal pretensions" are important, for Newman's own strong doctrinal positions meant that he could not be responsive to the poet's expansive reflec-

²⁷ A. Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Newman's Educational Ideal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), Preface.

²⁸ Wilfrid Ward, *The Life of J. H. Newman*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), II, 353. In a letter to Sir John Coleridge, 17 September 1873, Newman says, "Alas! I know little of Wordsworth," evidently in answer to a request for information (Newman, *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. Charles S. Dessain and Thomas Gornall S.J., 31 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961-84], XXVI, 367).

tions. In *The Tamworth Reading Room* (1841) he ridicules the idea that the contemplation of nature can lead either to religion or to a higher morality; and a little earlier, in 1838, he had accepted the editorship of the *British Critic*, the very journal which previously had attacked Wordsworth for his doctrinal shortcomings.²⁹ Much later, in 1872, Newman is still saying — in a letter to Matthew Arnold — “I should dread to view [the Bible] as literature . . . the great dogmatical truths of the Gospel are inculcated [into children as] the medium of the imagination and the affections.”³⁰ The disparaging echo of Wordsworth in that last phrase is evident.

But although Newman was unsympathetic to Wordsworth's poetry generally, this emphatically did not apply to the Ode. In 1872 Newman wrote to Edward Bellasis: “As to Wordsworth, you are quite right. He puts forward the Platonic doctrine, not the Christian. It is a most beautiful doctrine, and may be modified in a Christian sense. It is our common belief that every soul has its guardian angel, but, if so, is it possible that a good Angel should not whisper high truths to poor little heathen infants? . . . Wordsworth's *Ode* is one of the most beautiful poems in our language. It and Milton's *Lycidas* affect me more, I think, than anything in Shakespeare, in Dryden, in Gray, or in Scott” (Newman, *Letters*, XXVI, 56). In one who does not like the poet concerned, praise of this order must reveal something of special significance. What it does reveal can be shown from a further remark by Ward, who speaks of Newman's joyous sense of the palpably physical and real, referring to Newman's novel *Loss and Gain*, published anonymously in 1848, three years after Newman had entered the Catholic church. “Readers of ‘Loss and Gain’ will remember how scents and sounds are laden for him with memories. This joy of sense, especially in his early youth, had a full measure of the feeling in Wordsworth's *Ode* to which he was so devoted” (Ward, *The Life*, II, 336).³¹ Newman too had known painful loss. It was different from Mill's in that Newman's child-

²⁹ To point the contrast, the editor of the allied *British Magazine*, Rev. Henry J. Rose, a cordial friend of Newman's, had much earlier delivered a sermon pleading a case for the study of literature and supporting his proposals with explicit reference to Wordsworth's belief in poetry as a humanizing power. This sermon “fully accepts Wordsworth's definition of the poetic imagination as endowed with profounder moral insight, a deeper truth than that comprehended by a scientific mind” (D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies* [London: Oxford University Press, 1965], p. 18, cited in Mathieson, *Preachers of Culture*, p. 49).

³⁰ Matthew Arnold, *Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Arnold Whitridge, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), letter to Arnold, 24 May 1872.

³¹ The testimony from Father Ignatius Ryder already cited (see note 28 above) also makes an exception of the Ode, at least by implications: “But never shall I forget — I was a boy at the time, just recovering from an illness — his coming and reading to me the famous Ode ‘On the Intimations of Immortality.’ There was a passion and a pathos in his voice that made me feel that it was altogether the most beautiful thing I ever heard” (Ward, *The Life*, II, 353).

hood and youth had been happy. But Newman also had a species of breakdown in young manhood, collapsing in his Oxford Schools examination and taking a very low degree; recovering to take a fellowship at Oriel, yet finding himself forced to resign under heavy pressure from the Provost Edward Hawkins over a dispute about tutorial practice. Newman had experienced personal grief as well, notably because of the death of his father when he was quite young. But as with Mill, Newman's central ordeals were mainly associated with intellectual and spiritual matters within the constant context of educational institutions. Consequently, the passages in the *Discourses* depicting so humanly the philosopher's way of life as a bulwark against and consolation for anguish and loss, take on a new aspect. His own very personal hymn, "Lead Kindly Light," expresses this idea (the phrase "remember not past years" sounds sharply autobiographical). But this stress at the heart of Newman's spiritual journey, to use Meriol Trevor's term, surely throws light also on his own statement about the unceasing centrality of education in his own vocation. The sustaining purpose behind the education of British Catholics is perhaps his lasting achievement:

To me, conversions were not the first thing, but the edification of Catholics. . . . Catholics in England from their blindness cannot see that they are blind. To aim, then, at improving the condition, the status of the Catholic body by a careful survey of their argumentative basis, of their position relative to the philosophy and character of the day, by giving them juster views, by enlarging and refining their minds, in one word, *education* . . . from first to last, *education*, in this large sense of the word, has been my life.³²

There is a final, parallel piece of evidence for Wordsworth's presence behind Newman's attitudes to higher education. The title "Loss and Gain" is taken from *The Excursion*, and once more from the all-important fourth book; and the passage, though not taken from the Ode, bears a certain resemblance to its sentiments:

O blest seclusion! when the mind admits
 The law of duty; and can therefore move
 Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,
 Linked in entire complacence with her choice;
 When youth's presumptuousness is mellowed down,
 And manhood's vain anxiety dismissed;
 When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,
 Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung
 In sober plenty.

(*Excursion* IV, 1035-42).

The last two complete lines express exactly what Newman was later to state in another part of the university lectures. Wordsworth's "philosophic mind" as consolation for youthful loss is here presented as taking

³² J. H. Newman, *Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Henry Tristram (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957).

place in "sheltering leisure." It seems most probable that this passage, along with the apparently powerful effect on Newman of the Ode, amounted to a central formative factor behind Newman's famous depiction of the "gentleman of leisure" as liberal education's ideal outcome and consummation.³³

Newman was and is often accused of equivocation, and he attached an appendix on the topic to his *Apologia*. Is that remark about the Ode ("It is a most beautiful doctrine, and may be modified in a Christian sense") a piece of rationalizing to allow the poem a subtle recognition the aging cardinal felt it deserved? In answer to the letter from Newman cited above, Arnold wrote a letter containing an often quoted sentence: "There are four people, in especial, from whom I am conscious of having learnt — a very different thing from merely receiving a strong impression — learnt habits, methods, ruling ideas — and the four are, Goethe, Wordsworth, Saint-Beuve, and yourself" (Arnold, *Unpublished Letters*, 28 May 1872). Arnold of course was professionally concerned with education as an organized practice more directly than Mill and in one sense more than Newman. Not only was he an inspector of schools for two decades; he was also a major formative influence behind the Education Act of 1870, the first parliamentary dispensation of national education in Britain and possibly the chief milestone in nineteenth-century educational progress. The governmental minister responsible for the Act was Arnold's brother-in-law, W. E. Forster, and Arnold himself was delegated by the Newcastle and Taunton Commissions on State Provision of Education to report on continental education at the elementary and secondary levels. His visits resulted in his highly influential reports, *Popular Education in France* (1861) and *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (1868), which helped to get the 1870 Act passed. Arnold's somewhat ambivalent championing of Wordsworth as poet can be seen in this educational context.

Arnold's approbation, even adulation of Wordsworth over the years, despite his reservations, is clear.³⁴ His approval, however, did not extend to the Ode and *The Excursion*. As to the Ode, Arnold not only rejected any truth in its pre-natal vision, but he also found the poem "not wholly free from something declamatory" (Arnold, *Prose*, IX,

³³ J. H. Newman, *The Idea of A University*, ed. Ian T. Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 155, 179.

³⁴ "I doubt whether anyone admires Wordsworth more than I do" ("Address to the Wordsworth Society," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 48 [1883], p. 155); "He is one of the best and deepest influences of the century" (Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 339). "Wordsworth's body of work . . . is superior to that of any continental poet of the last hundred years except Goethe" (*Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-88*, ed. George W. E. Russell, 2 vols. [London: Macmillan, 1901], II, 182).

54). As to *The Excursion*, Arnold touches on it in his famous introduction to his selection of Wordsworth's poetry in 1879. Arnold lights on the very passage the educational journals had so valued ("O for the coming of that glorious time/When prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth" [IX, 293-294]), and dispatches it most unceremoniously:

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgement! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress: one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns: dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines from Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

(Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 50).

In the act of attempting to recommend Wordsworth to the public, Arnold singles out this passage for unmitigated criticism. He repeats the gibe, if more briefly, in his essay on Byron: "such a piece of pompous dulness" (Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 230). It is hard not to feel that, thinking of the passage he must so often have encountered professionally, Arnold now paints a picture not only of a "Social Science Congress" but also, perhaps, of one of the regional educational committees he frequently saw at work.

Any influence Wordsworth may have had on Arnold as an educator and thence on education itself must have occurred in another way. Arnold's sense of loss was also very great, as was that of Newman and Mill. But with Arnold it was not particular but general. There was not in his early years a psychological wounding such as Newman and Mill experienced, or indeed like that Wordsworth himself felt in his crisis summer of 1794. Although Arnold had earlier borne bereavement and trouble, these only impinged on his personality in the diffuse form of a pervading romantic melancholy rather than through the crisis of some particular catastrophe or failure. It is notable that unlike Newman and Mill, Arnold wrote no autobiography. There was thus for Arnold no single, early, self-lacerating experience to which childhood innocence was prior and against which it could be contrasted as "something that is gone." But Arnold's wider thought is of a general nature too. His central concepts, "culture," "perfection," "equality," "criticism of life," "the best that is thought and known in the world," and the state, are of this kind. His sense of loss had this same generality, and surfaced not in personal breakdown but in biting social satire. His poetry is of course full of this sense of loss: "this strange disease of modern life," "the sick disease, the languid doubt," and the men who make life "hideous, and arid, and vile." It is notable

how often his comparison of such evil with a previous better state is experienced by the reader as loss: "Dover Beach," "Bacchanalia," "The Scholar-Gipsy," "Consolation," and "Resignation," are only the more obvious examples.

The relations in Arnold's thinking between Wordsworth's poetry, poetry generally, culture as Arnold defines it, and the provision of universal education have to be acknowledged separately if one is to see the presence of Wordsworth's influence in Arnold's educational ideas. Arnold's general answer to the loss of faith and the "disease" of modern life is culture, "the way out of our present difficulties." It is described in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) as "criticism of life," which, as Arnold's introduction to his selection of Wordsworth makes clear, Wordsworth alone of modern poets superabundantly gives us. The means of spreading culture is, almost exclusively, education: state education, liberal education, middle-class education, the model Oxford provides, and this is the import of Arnold's governmental reports. The chief component of "culture," moreover, in the wake of religion's departure, is poetry. But what quality does poetry have, that gives it such great importance? It is its power to support and fortify us in our woeful human condition: "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. . . . In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find . . . as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay" (Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 161). And it is Wordsworth, chiefly and without equal, who has this consolatory quality: "Wordsworth has an insight into permanent sources of joy and consolation for mankind." Wordsworth has "a power with which [he] feels the resources of joy offered to us in nature [and] with which, in his moments of inspiration, he renders this joy" (Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 236). In Arnold's compact phrase, often cited, it is Wordsworth's "healing power."³⁵ And Arnold's praise carries more weight still when we see it as not fulsome but carefully gauged to fit his theory of culture: "Wordsworth's poetry stands higher for us, I think, than that of any modern poetry since Goethe's." For Arnold, "Wordsworth's poetry is the most important work done in verse, in our language, of the nineteenth century" (Arnold, *Prose*, IX, 231; X, 182).

Not surprisingly, then, Arnold worked hard to get Wordsworth known and taught, to insert him into the syllabus, and thus into educa-

³⁵ Mary Russell Mitford, recalling her literary life in her *Recollections* (reviewed in *Macmillan's Magazine* March 1852), uses the phrase "healing power" of Wordsworth's poetry to which she gives the fullest praise. Arnold's "Memorial Verses," where the phrase first appears, came out in *Fraser's Magazine* in June 1850. Doubtless Mitford saw it there.

tion.³⁶ My own view is that the power of the Ode was greater for Arnold than he knew (he did admit to a “warm admiration” for it [*Prose*, IX, 54]); his thought matches it too exactly, one feels, for that not to have been so; and it was strongest, perhaps, in the crucial decade leading up to the 1870 Education Act and to the publication of *Culture and Anarchy* the year before. This contention can be supported. Arnold’s reading lists in his notebooks show that he undertook a sustained study of Wordsworth in the years 1863-68.³⁷ Not until the 1880s does Wordsworth appear again in his lists nor had he before; moreover no other nineteenth-century poet is mentioned in Arnold’s notebooks during the same period. This is also the time when Arnold wrote his main report on higher education (*Schools and Universities on the Continent*, 1868). It is surely unlikely that the two things had no connection, although how the period’s events generally affected him is hard to guess. That loss, came his way is sadly too true. Both his sons died in 1868, an event tragically reminiscent (and Arnold must have thought of it) of Wordsworth’s own loss of two children in 1812. *Culture and Anarchy* came out the next year.

The experience of loss for Arnold, of whatever kind, seems to have precipitated a response to the Ode’s message in a way allegorical of the Victorian age’s wider sense of loss: loss of traditional views of the world, their accompanying stability and serenity. Loss affected Mill, Newman, and Arnold in different ways, but the only replacement seemed to lie in the “philosophic mind,” and education was the way such a mind could be institutionalized. This might be through the university, or more generally through “culture.” Either way, what was needed was the fullest, most adult education possible. It is this predisposition to think of feeling and even suffering as themselves actually necessitating the cultivated intellect in response that is Wordsworth’s chief legacy as far as nineteenth-century higher education is concerned.

The fountain continued playing. Some people were not much impressed by Wordsworth’s influence. Thomas Henry Huxley, himself a lib-

³⁶ As early as 1849 Arnold was writing to Arthur Hugh Clough, “Those who cannot read Greek should read nothing but Milton and parts of Wordsworth: the State should see to it” (*Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. H. F. Lowry [London: Oxford University Press, 1932], p. 96). Many years later he writes in more detail on the subject to his sister Frances: “My great desire in education is to get a few good books universally taught and read.” He says that “twenty is all I would have” (Arnold, *Prose*, VIII, 441, 459). That he would include Wordsworth in these twenty is made clear in an earlier letter: “We did well in the present century to return to the poetry of [the Elizabethan] age for illumination and inspiration, and to put aside, in a great measure, the poetry and poets intervening between Milton and Wordsworth” (Arnold, *Prose*, VIII, 316). Arnold’s edition of Wordsworth sold four thousand copies in the first few months and was reprinted five times before Arnold’s death.

³⁷ Matthew Arnold, *The Notebooks of Matthew Arnold*, ed. H. F. Lowry, Karl Young, and W. H. Dunn (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 568-584.

eral in education and Arnold's admirer and friend, nowhere mentions Wordsworth. Even Charlotte Mason, founding her college at Ambleside in the Lake District on the principles of "home education," does not appear to have been particularly influenced by the poet in her choice of location.³⁸ Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, on the other hand, with Arnold the strongest administrative advocate of state education in the period, was if not a devotee certainly a great admirer of Wordsworth's work.³⁹ Ruskin, effective founder of art education and one of the founders of working-men's education in nineteenth-century Britain, wrote in 1880 that: "I happen myself to have used Wordsworth as a daily text-book from youth to age, and have lived, moreover, in all essential points according to the tenor of his teaching." He took Wordsworth's line cited earlier, "We live by Admiration, Hope and Love," as something of an educational credo in his own work.⁴⁰ There is, last of all, the matter of Wordsworth's own family who were to take up positions of major ecclesiastical and educational significance in subsequent years.⁴¹ To chart in detail how he influenced them, and how this influence was then diffused across the entire cultural and pedagogical scene, would take a book-length study. The poet's younger brother Christopher became Master of Trinity College Cambridge; Christopher's son John was also a lecturer at Cambridge until John's death. John had been at Winchester College under the eminent headmaster Dr. Moberly, who later took Christopher's other son, Charles, on to his staff, to become second master later still. The third son, Christopher, wrote a memoir of the poet, had it contemptuously dismissed in the *Quarterly Review* of March 1853, but was not thereby prevented from becoming headmaster of Harrow, canon of Westminster, and finally bishop of Lincoln.⁴² Elizabeth Wordsworth, the poet's great-niece, had the distinction of becoming the first principal of the then new foundation for women students at Oxford, Lady Margaret Hall. Possibly most intriguing is William Wordsworth, the poet's grandson. He went to Balliol, was greatly influenced by Newman but then lost his Christian belief. The younger William was present at Ar-

³⁸ Essex Cholmondeley, *The Story of Charlotte Mason* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1960).

³⁹ F. Smith, *The Life and Work of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth* (London: John Murray, 1923). His biographer describes him as having "an intimate knowledge of an enthusiasm for Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth and Milton" (p. 8).

⁴⁰ John Ruskin. *Collected Works*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: Allen, 1903-12), XXXIV, "Fiction, Fair and Foul," p. 349. The two *Excursion* line citations are in *Fors Clavigera* (Ruskin, *Collected Works*, XXVII, 90; XXVIII, 255).

⁴¹ Much of the information for what follows comes from the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 22 vols. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1900), LXIII, and from *Modern English Biography*, ed. Fred K. Boase, 6 vols. (London: Cass, 1965), III.

⁴² Christopher Wordsworth, D.D., *Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet-Laureate, 1851*, (n.p.).

nold's renowned lecture "On the Modern Element in Literature," and wrote to Henry Crabb Robinson about it, "As a composition it was pointed and telling, though the matter little to my taste: he seemed to lust after a system of his own" (a small retaliation, perhaps, for Arnold's attacks on the "system" of young Wordsworth's grandfather?) (Arnold, *Prose*, I, 225). He later entered the Indian education service and ended up vice-chancellor of the University of Bombay.

Edward Thring, the innovatory headmaster of Uppingham, records meeting Elizabeth Wordsworth: "8 November 1881. Met and had a long talk to Miss Wordsworth, and went with her over Lady Margaret Hall, and started home at 4.35."⁴³ In 1900 John MacCrum, who had studied at Balliol under T. H. Green and matriculated in 1872, published a book called *The Making of Character*. It includes a chapter entitled "Wordsworthian Education of Nature." The chapter cites *The Prelude* and argues from it that nature and society must work together, not antagonistically.⁴⁴ The century closes, the fountain still playing, its drops sometimes sparklingly clear, sometimes only fleetingly so. Many, no doubt, remain invisible.

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⁴³ G. R. Parkin, *Edward Thring*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1898), II, 113-114.

⁴⁴ Published in *The Cambridge Series for Schools and Training Colleges* (no details given), cited in Gordon and White, *Philosophers*, p. 181.