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WORDSWORTH AND GODWIN : A STUDY OF INFLUENCE

(Volume I : Text)

by

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Volume I : Text

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SUMMARY

This thesis explores the relationship between William Godwin and his ideas and William Wordsworth in the context of the significant reappraisal of Godwin since 1950 (which has gained further momentum in the 1980's) and more recent questioning of the biographical status of The Prelude, so long accepted by critics. The purpose is to challenge the inadequacy of earlier over-simplistic views of Godwin's rationalism, which have led (ever since Legouis' identification of Godwin as a significant "influence" in Wordsworth's thinking) to critical acceptance of Wordsworth's account of Godwin's role in the poet's development, culminating in the rejection of Godwin and what he represented during the period of alleged "moral crisis".

Such a view fails to respond to both the complexity and development of Godwin's ideas in the period from the publication of the first edition of Political Justice to The Enquirer. It also fails to respond to the conscious artifice of The Prelude and evidence of Wordsworth's manipulation, in his poetry, of the facts concerning his life and development.

The complexity and development of Godwin's ideas over this period will be shown to be paralleled in the pattern of Wordsworth's responses to Godwin's ideas and in his own poetic development. The early poem Descriptive Sketches is examined to establish the manipulation that characterises Wordsworth's poetry, and questions are identified early on with regard to some of the tensions evident in The Prelude concerning the poet's claims regarding his radicalism and his humanitarianism, prior to a detailed examination of Wordsworth's drawings

upon Godwin. These range from the initial undigested response to the first edition of Political Justice in the Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, through the gradual crystallisation of his ideas in his writing and development of the Salisbury Plain poems (reflecting both Godwin's and Wordsworth's shift from an essentially reformist to a psychological focus). Recognising the significance of the revisions in the 1796 second edition of Political Justice, Wordsworth's play, The Borderers, is seen as pivotal, and symptomatic of the literary crisis that Wordsworth presents (in The Prelude) as a moral crisis; this play is seen as a conscious (but unsuccessful) literary experiment, intended to challenge Godwin's empirical perfectibilian morality and psychology.

In the light of the above evidence it can now be seen that Wordsworth, having established his poetic vision over the period of composition of the 1798 and 1800 Lyrical Ballads, manufactures, in The Prelude, a pre-history for that vision, even at the cost of re-inventing his past. This allows him not only to provide a motivation for his sudden rejection of the theoretical principles in favour of lived experience in the development of his vision; he is also able to ennoble his own achievement and win the sympathy of his readers as he portrays his imaginative recovery.

Thus, an alternative is offered to the established critical view of the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin, based on The Prelude as biography. This suggests that, in its portrayal of Wordsworth's period of rationalistic enquiry and the subsequent developments, The Prelude represents a conscious myth-making, a re-invention by Wordsworth of himself. A re-examination of the Wordsworth/Godwin relationship is less important for itself than for what it reveals about

Wordsworth's intent and method in The Prelude (offering an explanation for many of the tensions in the poetry) and indicating in the 1805 Prelude a more conscious and sophisticated artistry than has generally been acknowledged.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following are the principal abbreviations used throughout the text and notes of this thesis:

- ASP William Wordsworth, Adventures on Salisbury Plain, in The Salisbury Plain Poems, ed. Stephen Gill, Cornell U.P., Ithaca, 1975.
- Chronology,EY Mark L. Reed, Wordsworth, the Chronology of the Early Year, 1790-99, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 1967.
- Chronology,MY Reed, The Middle Years, 1800-1815, 1975.
- CS William Godwin, Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury: 2nd October, 1794, D.I. Eaton, London, 1794.
- EY The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. E. DeSelincourt, The Early Years, 1787-1805, revised Chester L Shaver, O.U.P., Oxford, 1967.
- LB William Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads: Wordsworth and Coleridge, the text of the 1798 edition with additional 1800 poems., ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones, Methuen, London, 1963.
- MY The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. E. De Selincourt, The Middle Years, 1806-11, revised Mary Moorman, Oxford, 1969.
- PJ93 William Godwin, An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, 2 Vols., London, 1793. (the first edition)
- PJ96 William Godwin, An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, 2 Vols., London, 1796. (the second edition)
- PW The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. De Selincourt, Vol. I, 1940, Oxford, 1940
- SP William Wordsworth, Salisbury Plain, in The Salisbury Plain Poems, ed. Stephen Gill, Cornell U.P., Ithaca, 1975.
- STCL The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs, Vol. IV, O.U.P., Oxford, 1959.

PREAMBLE

Why yet another study of Wordsworth and Godwin? It is a subject upon which much has been written; and there certainly might be a view that, whether one judges Godwin to be a major or insignificant "influence" on Wordsworth's early writing makes little difference to our understanding of Wordsworth's achievement. This study will challenge and re-examine many of the views and assumptions that have emerged concerning the Wordsworth/Godwin issue since Legouis first raised it.(1) It will also suggest that a full understanding of the relationship between the two men is essential to respond appropriately to certain observable tensions in The Prelude. In doing so, it will be necessary, not only to re-examine the writings of Wordsworth, but also of Godwin, particularly in light of the renewed interest in the philosopher and his works that has developed since 1950, and especially in the past ten years, which has led to a substantial reappraisal of Godwin's ideas and their impact. Wordsworth criticism has not benefited as yet in any significant measure from the more recent studies of Godwin, and the existing discussion of the relationship between the two men tends to be unreliable.

To give one or two examples, Alan Grob in his 1967 article(2) re-assessing the Wordsworth/Godwin issue, (an article which he clearly regards as being his final comment on the subject since he refers readers to it in his later book The Philosophic Mind(3)) states early on in that article:

A letter of 1796 [by Wordsworth] briefly alludes to the second edition of Political Justice as "a barbarous piece of writing" with "scarce one sentence decently written."(4)

What the letter actually states is:

I have received from Montagu, Godwin's second edition. I expect to find the whole work much improved. I cannot say that I am much encouraged in this hope by the perusal of the second preface, which is all I have yet looked into. **Such a piece of barbarous writing** I have not often seen. It contains **scarce one sentence decently written**. I am surprised to find such gross faults in a writer who has so much practice in composition.
(my emphases)(EY,170)

This brief comment by Wordsworth does not express his reaction to the second edition of Political Justice, as Grob erroneously suggests by his selective quotation. (5) Grob's error is repeated in the work of one of the more recent studies of Godwin. (6) As recently as 1988, Nicholas Roe (7) writes:

By mid 1796, however, Wordsworth's enthusiasm for Political Justice had cooled; he told Mathews in March that Godwin's "second preface" was "a piece of barbarous writing" and that **he had not been encouraged to read any further**. (My emphasis.)

This is a very liberal interpretation of Wordsworth's statement in the letter quoted above. Roe also quotes Pitt's alleged comment regarding the price of Political Justice having been three guineas, (8) strangely enough, using as his source, Don Locke (9) referring to the same page in which Locke establishes the actual cost as having been one pound, sixteen shillings; a figure now well established in Godwin commentary. (10) Gill, in his 1989 Life of Wordsworth, after commenting favourably upon the Preface to the second edition of Political Justice, suggests, with no evidence to support his statement.:

Possibly Wordsworth even ploughed through the revised Political Justice and found it rebarbative.

On the same page, he then states:

Wordsworth may not have got beyond the Preface to the second edition of Political Justice... (11)

If, as Bateson has stated, the matter of Godwin's influence has become a "veritable King Charles's Head" (12) in Wordsworth criticism, then one reason

for this may be that Wordsworth scholars have not looked at the evidence of the relation between Godwin and Wordsworth carefully. Another is that they have too often argued from the basis of a simplified version of Godwin, leading to a continuing misunderstanding of the Wordsworth/Godwin relationship and its implications.(13)

It is such a limited response to Godwin's own work that leads to such oversimplistic judgements as that by Merchant in his 1942 article assessing Wordsworth's Godwinian period. (14), where he writes of Wordsworth and The Borderers:

It is, however, already significant that [Wordsworth's] humanitarian sympathy and his exaltation of domestic affections in opposition to Godwin do not blind him to the necessity of seeking further than surface evidence of social evil. (p 23)

Whilst this may hint at the interest Wordsworth had developed in the question of motivation (a result of his interest in Godwin's Caleb Williams and the second revised edition of Political Justice), it fails to recognise the place of Godwin in the development of Wordsworth's humanitarianism, and suggests a view of Godwin's thought on the "domestic affections" that fails to recognise the increased importance of these in the works of Godwin just mentioned. Much more recently, in Roe, 1988,(15) we again find a willingness to cite such passages from The Prelude as the following:

This was the time when, all things tending fast
To depravation, the philosophy
That promised to abstract the hopes of man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
For ever in a purer element,
Found ready welcome. . . (1805,X,805-10)

as a source for arguing that the

privileged working of passions among devotees of Godwin's philosophy is a sly jibe at Political Justice, which had denied emotion for the "purer element" of reason (p 7).

What this fails to recognise is that Wordsworth's "sly jibe" is based upon a misreading, intended or not, of Godwin.

Such views as that of Godwin representing "naked Reason"(16) have persisted, as has the idea of Wordsworth's "discipleship" to Godwin, a notion introduced by Legouis(17) and Harper(18) and to be found as late as 1962 in a work on Godwin.(19) Similarly, the view, again instigated by Legouis, and strongly followed in such studies as those by Havens,(20) Moorman,(21) and still evident in Gill (though he is considerably more cautious,(22)) which underwrites The Prelude as biography and therefore as a reliable source from which to challenge suggested alternative views on such matters as Wordsworth's relationship with Godwin, continues to accept the reality of Wordsworth's alleged "moral crisis" (23) which few critics have seriously challenged.(24)

It is in response to these issues that this study is undertaken. It will be necessary to acknowledge, take issue, or otherwise respond to the well-established "debate" over the Wordsworth/Godwin relationship. Account will be taken particularly of the most recent commentaries on Godwin which have done so much to illuminate the significance of Godwin's ideas and their impact.

In attempting such an examination, the manner of proceeding will be essentially chronological. There would appear to be sound reason for this: the intention is to show that parallels of development can be identified in the work of the two writers. Without pre-empting the ensuing argument, (and again at the risk of some

over simplification) this development can be seen as a move from an essentially "reformist" concern to one which is informed by a "psychological" and "sociological" context - but, in relation always to a clear moral concern. The Prelude will be considered pivotal. Not really surprising; but the specific interest will be the question of Wordsworth's "landscape of memory"(25), his tendency to interpret or re-interpret what has already happened in accordance with some envisaged purpose.

I will not be concerned with the kind of influence that results in verbal echoes. What is examined here is the sustained and complex relationship between the two men and their ideas, and the significant role that Godwin played in Wordsworth's early development, and in the composition of Wordsworth's greatest achievement, The Prelude.

CHAPTER ONE : GODWIN'S POLITICAL JUSTICE 1793.

Part 1: The Ideas and Arguments of Political Justice.

Overview.

The purpose of this first chapter is to examine briefly the central ideas of Political Justice, 1793 in the light of recent critical comment on Godwin, recognising the complexity⁽¹⁾ of his ideas and the coherence of the philosophical and moral construct he presented. Any discussion of Political Justice must take account of the context of Godwin's work, its reception, and Godwin's decision to produce a second, substantially revised edition (and, of course, subsequently, a third edition). Whilst debate and comment still continue regarding the significance of Godwin's revisions in the second edition, it is only since 1950 that there has been any real challenge to De Quincey's view of the second edition as a "palinode"; ⁽²⁾ this, in turn, has increasingly led to a re-appraisal of the first edition, its intent, and the impact of the work. Although disagreement is still evidenced, for example recently, in the challenge to the traditionally held view of Godwin as an early utilitarian thinker ⁽³⁾ by giving greater weight to the influence of the dissenting tradition⁽⁴⁾ in the development of Godwin's ideas, there can be little doubt that Godwin scholarship over the last twenty-five years or so has done much to rescue Godwin from the obscurity into which he had sunk; such studies have focussed less upon Godwin in the context of reaction to the French Revolution, and have examined more carefully Godwin's own integrity and the integrity of his arguments and beliefs.

Wordsworth criticism has scarcely benefited from the re-appraisal of Godwin, or from the now-acknowledged complexity of his ideas; the more simplistic view of the "cold rationalist" generally still colours Wordsworth commentary. Central to any considered view of Godwin's moral and philosophical stance is his belief in the concept of private judgement and the role and power of truth. The place of "reason" has, of course, historically been the central focus of comment on Godwin, and, in some ways, rightly so, since Godwin sees reason as the necessary agent whereby truth will eventually be perceived and error banished. Yet it is also his belief in the power of reason which opens Godwin most easily to dismissive criticism, suggesting a naivety that warrants little attention. Yet, important as reason is in Political Justice, it is not the central tenet of Godwin's work; that is undoubtedly his belief in and commitment to the right of "private judgement".(5) It is Godwin's interest in the individual that is central to his ideas from the earliest stage; and it was Godwin's ideas on the motivation and morality, of the individual especially that attracted the attention of Wordsworth, and played a significant role in the development of his early poetry, to a greater extent than the reformist or political ideas of the first edition; or even "reason", upon which Wordsworth chooses to focus in his alleged rejection of rationalism and Godwin in Book X of the 1805 Prelude.(6)

Yet, because of the nature of Political Justice in the first edition, because particularly of the manner in which Godwin wrote it(7) (sending it off to the publisher in parts and unable to reflect on the developing work as a whole prior to publication), because of certain claims he himself made with regard to influences upon him(8) and because, above all, of the timing of its appearance

following upon Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, it is surely not surprising that the first edition of Godwin's book was seen by some (9) as a political tract and, in some ways, a fairly extreme one (though extreme in its ultimate utopian vision rather than its view of revolution - against which Godwin clearly takes a stand in the first edition). There is no doubt when reading the first edition of its unevenness as a work; but that very uneven quality, especially in the early books also contributes to its immediacy of impact. To read the first edition is an experience different from that of reading the second edition (a fact which deserves greater attention than it has had up to now), (10) but even in the first edition, Godwin was writing philosophy, not practising politics. Although Godwin would, in due course, become actively involved in the political scene through his publication of Cursory Strictures (11) at the time of the 1794 treason trials, even then he would do so from a reasoned and philosophical stance. This must be borne in mind when trying to understand any "influence" that Godwin is claimed to have had upon Wordsworth, and also when examining the genesis of Wordsworth's political ideas from Beaupuy (Wordsworth's acknowledged mentor of this period) and Godwin. But, ultimately, Godwin's politics are less important for Wordsworth than his central ideas on the morality and psychology of the individual.

This opening chapter gives a brief account of two things: first, what, in the light of recent scholarship, are seen to have been the central ideas of Godwin's Political Justice of 1793; second, it looks briefly at the reception of that work, to see how it was perceived (as well as received) on its publication.

The context of Political Justice: the centrality of "private judgement".

Any modern reader coming to the early chapters of Political Justice is struck above all by their uneven quality; Godwin had not fully thought through his ideas as he was writing, as is evident in repetitions and contradictions(12). There is, however, a forcefulness in the style of the early chapters (and elsewhere in the book) which suggests a "revolutionary" spirit, yet the sometimes tortuous arguments reject violent revolution as a means of reform. There are various references and acknowledged debts, yet Godwin soon leaves these behind to develop his own committed, individual and ultimately absurdly idealistic vision. It is a book which one feels would inevitably have drawn attention in England at the time of a growing reaction against the French Revolution, and yet that was not the immediate context of Godwin's work.

Political Justice is not a political tract; yet, especially in those earliest chapters, (as well as the earlier chapters of the second volume of the book) anyone could be forgiven for reading it as such. Even as late as the first chapters of Book IV, we read:

The true answer to these questions lies in the observation with which we began our disquisition on government, that this boasted institution is nothing more than a scheme for enforcing by brute violence the sense of one man or set of men upon another, necessary to be employed in certain cases of peculiar emergency. (PJ,'93,I,192)(13)

and, a few pages further on, Godwin concludes some of his arguments on the situation regarding France:

To recur once more to the example of France, the works of her great political writers seemed for a long time to produce little prospect of any practical effect. Helvetius, one of the latest, in a work published after his death in 1771, laments in pathetic strains the hopeless condition of his country. "In the history of every people, " says he, "there are moments,

in which, uncertain of the side they shall choose, and balanced between political good and evil, they feel a desire to be instructed; in which the soil, so to express myself, is in some manner prepared, and may be easily impregnated with the dew of truth. At such a moment the publication of a valuable book may give birth to the most auspicious reforms: but, when that moment is no more, the nation, become insensible to the best motives, is by the nature of its government plunged deeper and deeper in ignorance and stupidity. The soil of intellect is then hard and impenetrable; the rains may fall, may spread their moisture upon the surface, but the prospect of fertility is gone. Such is the condition of France. Her people are become the contempt of Europe. No salutary crisis shall ever restore them to liberty."

But in spite of these melancholy predictions, the work of renovation was in continual progress. The American revolution gave the finishing stroke, and only six years elapsed between the completion of American liberty and the commencement of the French Revolution. Will a term longer than this be necessary, before France, the most refined and considerable nation in the world, will lead other nations to imitate and improve upon her plan? (PJ, '93, I, 223/4)(14)

To anyone in England in 1793, such statements might easily suggest that Godwin's intention in publishing Political Justice was a direct response to the French Revolution,(15) and actively political; at the very least, the quotation from Helvetius concerning "the publication of a valuable book" might be seen as a reference to Godwin's own book. In fact, as early as the Preface to the first edition, Godwin proclaimed his **moral** intent to be the most important, and did see his book as **actively** promoting not political but "moral improvement".(16) These sections have been quoted selectively to see how they can easily be taken out of context of the argument that Godwin is (rather loosely) trying to develop; an argument that is concerned essentially with what Godwin sees as the fundamental "right" (in the sense of a "duty", not a "liberty") of **private judgement** in the pursuit of truth. It is a theme which proclaims itself throughout Political Justice. In Book I, Chapter VI, entitled Of the Exercise of Private Judgement, Godwin warns:

The universal exercise of private judgement is a doctrine so unspeakably

beautiful, that the true politician will certainly resolve to interfere with it as sparingly and in as few instances as possible. . . (PJ,'93,I,129)

having earlier concluded Book II, Chapter III with the statement:

a virtuous disposition is principally generated by the uncontrolled exercise of private judgement, and the rigid conformity of every man to the dictates of his conscience. (PJ,'93,I,103)

With regard to government, in Book IV, Chapter I, Of Resistance Godwin asserts:

wherever government subsists, the exercise of private judgement is substantially entrenched upon... (PJ,'93,I,193)

The same chapter opens with the paragraph:

It has appeared in the course of our reasonings upon political authority, that every man is bound to resist every unjust proceeding on the part of the community. But who is the judge of this injustice? The question answers itself: the private judgement of the individual. Were it not so, the appeal would be nugatory, for we have no infallible judge to whom to refer our controversies. He is obliged to consult his own private judgement in this case, for the same reason that obliges him to consult it in every other article of his conduct. (PJ,'93,I,191-2)

And when one reads the opening sentence of the key chapter on private judgement, with its statement that,

To a rational being, there can be but one rule of conduct, justice, and one mode of ascertaining that rule, the exercise of his understanding. . .
(PJ,'93,I,120)(17)

we glimpse the challenge that Wordsworth was to take up in The Borderers and how it would be possible for him after the emergence of the poetic vision of Lyrical Ballads and Tintern Abbey to represent his rejection of such rationalistic over-confidence (and naivety) in the guise of an alleged moral crisis. For, although I intend to reject the established view that Wordsworth endured some deep moral crisis (in some manner involving his relationship with Godwin's ideas), it is important even at this early stage to recognise the centrality of private

judgement in Godwin's thought; a centrality Wordsworth himself came to recognise.

This belief in "private judgement" rather than any contractual or utilitarian position such as would have derived from the "philosophes"(18) is what is so unique to Godwin's beliefs and arguments, even in this first edition. And it is upon this belief that so much of his reformist construct is built: it is this that makes him "revolutionary" yet anti-revolution:

The true instruments for changing the opinions of men are argument and persuasion. (PJ,'93,I,202) (19)

Therefore:

We must carefully distinguish between informing the people and inflaming them. Indignation, resentment and fury are all to be deprecated. . . .
(PJ,'93,I,203)(20)

Although Godwin admits of what was in effect an eighteenth century Lockean commonplace, that resort to force is allowable in extreme circumstances, he warns, again in Book IV, Chapter I, Of Resistance:

as to the doctrine of force in general, that is in no case to be employed but where every other means is ineffectual.(PJ,'93,I,196)

In fact, perusal of the whole of the first edition of Political Justice reveals a somewhat ambivalent attitude to violent reform. For instance, whilst Chapter I of Book IV (entitled Mode of Effecting Revolutions) is a sustained argument against violent reform and a warning, as we have seen, that it is important to

distinguish between informing the people and inflaming them;...
(PJ,'93,I,203)

Godwin admits that it is still possible

that the impetuous multitude will run before the still and quiet progress of reason;...

and that one should not

pass sentence upon every revolution that shall by a few years have anticipated the term that wisdom would have prescribed.(PJ,'93,I,204)

Whilst noting here that there are other instances of such an ambivalent attitude to violent reform,(21) it will be more appropriate to deal with this later in the context of Wordsworth's own attitude as evidenced in the Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff.(22)

Nevertheless, Godwin's general argument is against the use of force, as the way to genuine and lasting reform. Godwin even links this with his suspicion of political associations:

associations must be formed with great caution not to be allied to tumult.
(PJ,'93,I,208)(23)

Godwin is suspicious of people associating to effect reform, which, he feels, will come instead from "study and reflection" (PJ,'93,I,206) and there is a pointed force in his statement:

There is nothing more barbarous, cruel and blood-thirsty, than the triumph of a mob.(PJ,'93,I,208)

Godwin's view of reform stems not from any revolutionary zeal but from a belief in the individual in his role in society, a belief founded upon the role of private judgement; one that is strongly and sincerely held by Godwin and logically argued to the extent of proposing the absurdities of his utopian anarchism in his Houyhnhm-like vision of the parishes. But it is not to the easily remembered extremes of optimism(24) in the parishes that we should look to find the essential arguments of the first edition; these lie in his premises regarding the role of the individual in society and the place of individual thought, motivation and judgement.

The Individual and Social Reform: necessity and perfectibility.

Godwin's vision of the reform of society is dependent upon his view of the individual and his role in society. It is to the individual and the process of his motivations that we must turn next to understand the coherence of Godwin's developing argument: his idea of perfectibility and the necessitarian basis of achieving this; and, in the first edition, his "perfectionist" rather than utilitarian stance in his application of the power of reason in the exercise of private judgement for the pursuit of truth and the exclusion of error.

Godwin's stance on necessity and its role in relation to reason and the perception of truth is crucial to his view of perfectibility and the propitious development of mankind.(25) Despite Godwin's note as to the nature of these "abstruse speculations", (PJ,'93,I,284) (26) for the student of Godwin as moralist and reformer, the stance Godwin takes on necessity warrants careful examination and is crucial to any understanding of Godwin's belief in the human species as infinitely malleable, but also as moulded by his environment and circumstances. Only such an understanding can reveal the origin of the tensions within a poem such as Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain and the role of such a text in understanding Wordsworth's poetic and humanitarian development.

It is from Godwin's necessitarian stance that are developed the moral and psychological foundations of many of his ideas.(27) In Chapter V of Book IV, he sets out, under the title Of Free Will and Necessity, to discuss "those general principles of the human mind"(PJ,'93,I,284) and at once states:

 this doctrine of moral necessity includes in it consequences of the highest moment, and leads to a bold and comprehensive view of man

in society, which cannot possibly be entertained by him who has embraced the opposite opinion.(PJ,'93,I,284)

But what does Godwin mean by necessity and how does he describe it in this first edition (for there are significant revisions in the later editions, influenced heavily by Godwin's reading of Hume)? His exposition of necessity draws heavily from Hartley, and from Priestley who took a less materialistic line of approach than that material automatism to which Godwin took exception in Hartley's work. Godwin's definition of necessity in the first edition is as follows:

He who affirms that all actions are necessary, means, that, if we form a just and complete view of all the circumstances in which a living or intelligent being is placed, we shall find that he could not in any moment of his existence, have acted otherwise than he acted.(PJ,'93,I,285)

Godwin then goes on from this deterministic stance, however, to find the source of his determinism **not** in any "principle of causation"(PJ,'93,I,289) but through experience:

Association of ideas obliges us, after having seen two events perpetually conjoined, to pass, as soon as one of them occurs, to the recollection of the other; . . .(PJ,'93,I,289)

The mind, in effect, after having observed consistent patterns, connects these and develops a "species of foresight". (PJ,'93,I,289)

Upon this foundation Godwin builds his ideas of "character", "the result of a long series of impressions" and the "original and essential connexion between motives and actions"(PJ,'93,I,291) as the basis of "the idea of moral discipline". Essentially, Godwin is building a psychological and moral construct which is based upon the idea that to perceive the full consequences of any act will of necessity produce a certain action; all that is required is that the understanding be directed towards benevolent consequences, and these will, again of necessity be

sought in any action; thus, "necessity" will make "perfectibility" inevitable. It is a bold statement, the kind of statement that Godwin often makes in his commitment to his ideas and beliefs, and which ultimately leave him open to charges of absurdity, not least because he tends to **assume** rather than prove or even demonstrate benevolent intent in man (28) (perhaps showing Wordsworth's Rivers, in The Borderers to be a well-targeted challenge to a singularly weak link in Godwin's argument).

However, Godwin wishes to take his arguments further, and does so principally in his chapter Of the Mechanism of the Human Mind (Book IV, Chapter VIII), where he acknowledges his debt to Hartley (but not Priestley from whom much of his subsequent argument derives). (29) In the note early on in that chapter, (PJ,'93,I,320) however, he points out that his chapter "may be considered as giving further stability to his principal doctrine, by freeing it from the material automatism with which it is unnecessarily clogged." Godwin is utilising Hartley's associationist ideas and adapting them to his own view of necessity in order to assure the process of perfectibility. Also to find a place for reason and motivation that will create a system which allows foresight of the consequences so that appropriate choice (i.e. motivation) of action can necessarily follow, Godwin becomes tied up in an argument over the nature of **thought**:

All that the adversary of automatism is concerned to maintain is, that thought is an essential link in the chain; . . . (PJ,'93,I,324)

which allows Godwin eventually to conclude, in the final paragraph of this chapter:

[thought] is the medium through which operations are produced.
(PJ,'93,I,340)

Godwin has now established a process of mind, a "psychology" based on necessity and association which utilises the impressions received by way of thought and which will, through the susceptibility of the process of thought to the powers of reason, establish a process of continuing improvement.

Even the brief discussion here suggests that Godwin's argument requires further elaboration to support his ideas and ensure, for example, that where choice is involved, the appropriate choice is made: that which is going to produce the greatest benefit. (It was not until the revisions and additions of the second edition in 1796 - particularly the new Book I, Chapter V The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions - that Godwin was able to do this.) In Chapter VIII of Book IV, Of the Principle of Virtue (to be replaced by Chapter X of Book IV, Of Self Love and Benevolence in the 1796 edition), we see some reference to Godwin's distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary" actions, (PJ,'93,I,342) where Godwin states:

One of the first inferences therefore from the doctrine of voluntary action, is the existence of the understanding as a faculty distinct from sensation,.....

It is thus that man becomes a moral being. He is no farther so than he is capable of connecting and comparing ideas, of making propositions concerning them, and of foreseeing certain consequences as the result of certain motions of the animal system.(PJ,'93,I,343)

Godwin then takes this further:

But, if the foresight of certain consequences to result may be the sufficient reason of action, that is, if there be such a thing as volition, then every foresight of that kind has a tendency to action. If the perception of something as true, joined with the consciousness of my capacity to act upon this truth, be of itself sufficient to produce motion in the animal system, then every perception so accompanied has a tendency to motion.
(PJ,'93,I,343-4)

What Godwin is arguing towards here (only fully explored in Book I, Chapter II of the second edition) is the role of reason in identifying **truth** which will in turn motivate towards choice and action to the inevitable benefit and improvement of mankind. It is in this same chapter that Godwin rejects the notion of self-love as the prime motivating influence and asserts the principles of impartiality and benevolence upon which, once again, he seeks to build his necessitarian construct and ensure the soundness of his doctrine of the perfectibility of man. It is to this idea of perfectibility that we must now turn if we are to understand the full process that Godwin envisages in Political Justice, for if his necessitarian stance is essential to ensure the inevitability of that process, perfectibility is required to give direction to it. Despite Godwin's general lack of a historical perspective in Political Justice, the second chapter of Book I, History of Political Society, outlines the political and social conditions he seeks to counteract through improvement of the human condition. It is in relation to this that he develops his doctrine of perfectibility, (30) which he introduces, in the first edition, in Chapter III of Book I, The Moral Characters of Men Originate in their Perceptions (a chapter greatly expanded as Chapter IV of Book I in 1796(31)). Even the original chapter adopts an overtly sensationalist stance, as Godwin very quickly rejects any "innate principles" theory, (PJ,'93,I,12) stating:

We bring into the world with us no innate principles: consequently we are neither virtuous or vicious as we first come into existence.

He later reinforces this:

We bring neither virtue nor vice with us at our entrance into the world. But the seeds of error are ordinarily sown so early as to pass with superficial observers for innate. (PJ,'93,I,16)

Then, having acknowledged his sources in a footnote, (32) he indicates the

implications of this:

From these reasonings it sufficiently appears, that the moral qualities of men are the produce of the impressions made upon them, and that there is no instance of a propensity to evil. Our virtues and vices may be traced to the incidents which make the history of our lives, and if these incidents could be divested of every improper tendency, vice would be extirpated from the world. The task may be difficult, may be of slow progress, and of hope undefined and uncertain. But hope will never desert it; and the man who is anxious for the benefit of his species, will willingly devote a portion of his activity to an enquiry into the mode of effecting this extirpation in whole or in part, an enquiry which promises much, if it do not in reality promise everything. (PJ, '93, I, 18)

This very brief chapter, with the quoted footnote, points up characteristically the qualities of Godwin's first edition of Political Justice; for although the 1796 extended chapter develops Godwin's thinking much more logically and in a more substantiated manner, the earlier text has a "crusading" tone which the later editions do not share, one which would have appealed to the young Wordsworth, recently returned from France and filled with reformist zeal.

However, the importance for Godwin of establishing this view of "character" is two-fold: it focusses early in Political Justice on the individual, and presents that individual as a malleable being, capable of being improved. Both of these points are critical in Godwin's argument and in his ultimate vision; Godwin is somewhat unclear as to how any form of government (33) (even his idea of the parishes) might relate to the idea of perfectibility, and therefore it is to the implications of his idea of perfectibility **for the individual** that he turns his greatest attention, since he sees society as the sum of those individuals, and assumes that as individuals are increasingly improved, so there would be less need for any form of government. (34)

Whilst Godwin's idea of perfectibility was not new, and has a long tradition

behind it, (35) Godwin himself seems to feel the need to establish forcibly evidence to demonstrate a tendency in humankind to improve its condition (not, incidentally, by way of any primitivistic ideal - which he rejects from early on in his book(36) and throughout it(37)).

But if it can be shown that man can and already has improved himself (and it is worth stressing the links in Godwin's argument between malleability and perfectibility, relying heavily upon such malleability leading to improvement, rather than the opposite), the reason **why** man might wish to improve himself is one Godwin finds less easy to identify.

It is important to stress, albeit briefly at this point, that Godwin's concern for improvement, regarding both the individual and society, is contextualised by a humanitarian concern that is a sustained feature of Political Justice; a feature it will be more appropriate to illustrate later on.

Truth and Sincerity

In his attempt to understand and present the **motivation** for perfectibility, Godwin turns to his belief in the idea of truth. In a passage rewritten for the more reflective and carefully composed second edition, Godwin opens his original Book IV, Chapter IV, Of The Cultivation of Truth, with the following preamble:

Perhaps there cannot be a subject of greater political importance, or better calculated to lead us in safety through the mazes of controversy, than that of the value of truth. Truth may be considered by us, either abstractly, as it relates to certain general and unchangeable principles, or practically, as it relates to the daily incidents and ordinary commerce of human life. In whichever of these views we consider it, the more deeply we meditate its nature and tendency, the more we shall be struck with its unrivalled importance. (PJ, '93, I, 230)

Godwin's vagueness over exactly what truth is is evident here; the naivety of his belief in the all-encompassing power of truth may make us smile; but his belief in his views is evident in the energy and rhythms of his prose. It is in such a pursuit of truth that Godwin appears to locate the motivation for his doctrine of perfectibility: he speaks of "the tendency of truth to the improvement of our political institutions", (PJ,'93,I,137) and in the long Appendix, Of the Connection between Understanding and Virtue offers the view that "virtue consists in a desire of the benefit of the species". (PJ,'93,I,255) In Book IV, Chapter IV, Section II, Of Sincerity, Godwin opens with the assertion:

It is evident in the last place, that a strict adherence to truth will have the best effect upon our minds in the ordinary commerce of life. This is the virtue which has commonly been known by the denomination of sincerity; . . . (PJ,'93,I,238)

Two pages further on, again in prose that exemplifies the energy and enthusiasms of the first edition, (38) Godwin claims:

Animated by the love of truth, my understanding would always be vigorous and alert,..... Animated by the love of truth, and a passion inseparable from its nature, and which is almost the same thing under another name, the love of my species, I should carefully seek for such topics as might most conduce to the benefit of my neighbours, anxiously watch the progress of mind, and incessantly labour for the extirpation of prejudice. (PJ,'93,I,241)

Yet such arguments, no matter how forcefully expressed, are tenable only if we can assume that sincerity, truth and virtue exist in all human beings; Godwin seems more anxious to assume this than to prove it, but he does this in order to further his argument that there is an underlying wish for improvement in mankind; one which will continue, thus underpinning his view that man is ultimately motivated to improvement, to perfectibility. (39)

It is difficult to overstate the importance of truth and sincerity in Godwin's view

of the achievement of virtue and the perfectibility of man; it is as much a cornerstone of his philosophy as is his belief in the right of private judgement. Whether he sees this motivation as being on utilitarian or teleological grounds is problematic; this need not detain us long for the purposes of this thesis, but it is important to note that Godwin has been seen as essentially utilitarian(40) in his thinking. However, although there does seem much evidence to support this in Godwin's constant references to benevolence and his explanation of motivation in terms of desire for pleasure and aversion from pain, this seems to ignore the sheer force behind his assumption of a striving after truth, as well as the Platonic view evidenced in the first edition of Political Justice. It is important to recognise the significance of a recent view expressed that Godwin's stance in the first edition is not utilitarian, but is, rather, a "perfectionist" position deriving in fact from a teleological viewpoint.(41) This is strongly suggested in statements by Godwin such as:

It is in the disposition and view of the mind, and not in the good which may accidentally and intentionally result, that virtue consists.
(PJ,'93,I,356)

In Chapter XIV of Book V, Godwin states:

The road to the improvement of mankind is in the utmost degree simple, to speak and act the truth. (PJ,'93,II,494-5).

Then, in a passage deleted after 1793, he asserts:

Once establish the perfectibility of man, and it will inevitably follow that we are advancing to a state, in which the truth will be too well known to be easily mistaken,...(PJ,'93,II,495)

Finally, in Chapter XXIII of Book V, he asks:

How great would be the progress of intellectual improvement, if men were unfettered by the prejudices of education, unseduced by the influence of a corrupt state of society, and accustomed to yield without fear to the guidance of truth,...?(PJ,'93,II,569)

It is clear from statements such as the above and many others like it, which feature frequently in the prose of the first edition of Political Justice, that Godwin's belief in human perfectibility and in the pursuit of truth are inextricably linked, and arise from a belief in truth itself and in man's tendency to follow truth when it is perceived, rather than any explicit utilitarian or contractarian stance (albeit Godwin does use the language of utility at times to discuss the implications of such motivation towards improvement). The danger (or naivety) of such a claim and such a passionate belief in the power and perception of truth through the rational process was one Wordsworth was to recognise in due course.

Essentially, Godwin's interest is in the individual and the right of private judgement, rather than man's role in society; as he states in Book II Chapter VI,

Of the Right of Private Judgement.

So,... it ultimately appears, that no man is obliged to conform to any rule of conduct, further than the rule is consistent with justice. (PJ,'93,I,129)

However, by 1798, it is worth noting that Godwin reinforces the theme of this argument in this chapter, by putting his assertion of the centrality of private judgement much more forcefully in his revision:

So,... it ultimately appears, that the conviction of a man's individual understanding is the only legitimate principle, imposing on him the duty of adopting any species of action. (PJ,'98,I,181)

This ultimate and key belief in the right of private judgement logically leads Godwin to his conclusion in Book III Chapter II, Of the Social Contract:

Lastly, if government be founded in the consent of the people, it can have no power over any individual by whom that consent is refused. . .
(PJ,'93,I,148)

and, in a more forceful passage in this same concluding paragraph, deleted again from later editions, he states:

The rules by which my action shall be directed are matters of a consideration entirely personal....No consent of ours can divest us of our moral capacity. This is a species of property which we can neither barter nor resign; . . . (PJ,'93,I,148)

Not, above all, to any elected or other form of government. It is this intense individualism, leading to Godwin's anarchism, that makes essential Godwin's belief in perfectibility, in truth, and now in "reason"; reason being the agent or instrument whereby truth will always be identified and distinguished from error, leading to the defeat of vice and the pursuit and triumph of virtue - to the advancement of the human condition.

The Place of Reason.

It is as the "man of reason" that Godwin is most remembered and portrayed, often exaggeratedly and inaccurately. It is perhaps worth making the point that in reading the first edition of Political Justice, by the end of the first volume, there has been only very limited use of the word "reason" (though the role ascribed to reason is crucial in the exercise of private judgement and the perception of truth). As we shall see, one of the effects of the 1796 revisions is to change this, and the impression given of the role of reason is much enhanced. Yet even in this first edition, there are statements which appear to ascribe to reason a role that is more than just a means to perception of truth:

Reason is the only legislator, and her decrees are irrevocable and uniform. (PJ,'93,I,166)

Even here, in the context of Godwin's discussion in this chapter on legislation, his view of reason is of its being the only authority to whose judgement we can rightly submit. Reason therefore is, for Godwin, a means whereby we perceive truth and distinguish it from error. Again, there can be little doubt that the role

of reason as well as that of "understanding" and "thought" are much more fully explicated and developed in the second edition of Political Justice.⁽⁴²⁾ However, even in this first edition, it can be seen that if the perception of truth was, for Godwin, inevitable, all that was necessary was to identify the mechanism by which truth is necessarily revealed, and that means is reason:

In a word, either reason is the curse of our species, and human nature is to be regarded with horror; or it becomes us to employ our understanding and to act upon it, and to follow truth wherever it may lead us.

(PJ,,93,I,201)

These words from Book IV Chapter II, Of Revolutions, Section I, Duties of a Citizen⁽⁴³⁾ show us, in his first edition, Godwin's belief in and enthusiasm for his view of reason being the means of perceiving truth, and disposing of error.⁽⁴⁴⁾ And the role of reason therefore, in Godwin's doctrine of perfectibility is seen in Section II of the same chapter, in the concluding paragraph:

There are two principles therefore which the man who desires the regeneration of his species ought ever to bear in mind, to regard the improvement of every hour as essential in the discovery and dissemination of truth, and willingly to suffer the lapse of years before he urges the reducing his theory into actual execution. With all his caution it is possible that the impetuous multitude will run before the still and quiet progress of reason; nor will he sternly pass sentence upon every revolution that shall by a few years have anticipated the term that wisdom would have prescribed. But if his caution be firmly exerted, there is no doubt that he will supersede many abortive attempts, and considerably prolong the general tranquillity.(PJ,'93,I,204)⁽⁴⁵⁾

As this quotation shows, despite his ambivalence over the pragmatics of violent revolution, already referred to, Godwin's essential belief is in a rationalistically-guided reform. In this sense, reason will play its crucial role in social improvement.

It is difficult at times to understand the "mechanics", so to speak, of Godwin's concept of reason. At the end of the famous Fenelon incident in Book II Chapter

II, Of Justice, Godwin states:

But understanding is the faculty that perceives the truth of this and similar propositions; and justice is the principle that regulates my conduct accordingly.(P.J.'93,I,82-3)

However, elsewhere, we find Godwin stating that:

There can be no doubt, that the proper way of conveying to my understanding a truth of which I am ignorant, or of impressing on me a firmer persuasion of a truth with which I am acquainted, is by an appeal to my reason.(PJ,'93,I,132)(46)

Whether or not Godwin sees "understanding" and "reason" as synonymous is unclear; it certainly does not seem to be the case in the second quotation. What Godwin does seem to suggest is that if understanding is seen as one of our faculties, reason is to be understood in more active terms: as the exercise of understanding. Above all, reason is seen by Godwin as important not for its own sake, but in its role in the identification of error and the pursuit of truth for improvement of the individual who, in turn, will contribute to the good of the sum of those individuals: society.

Even in this relatively brief discussion of this Political Justice it can be seen that there is a complexity and coherence in Godwin's ideas; ideas, many of which, borrowed from a variety of sources,(47) represent, in Godwin's use of them and in his own developing vision of "perfectibility", more than simply a response to the French Revolution or to the imported ideas of the philosophes; but rather a consistent (and Lockean) view of human individuality which he pushed to a stage of development which, today, we find absurdly optimistic. This shows Godwin's first edition of Political Justice, with its central focus on the belief in private judgement, its assertion of the power of truth and the role ascribed to reason in the context of these as a more complex attempt to systematise a

perfectibilian construct for the individual (and hence for society) than earlier more simplistic views of "cold rationalism" have suggested. Furthermore, it is worth repeating at this stage that the radicalism of the ideas and the reformist energy emerging from the early chapters particularly express a crusading reformist tone which almost counteracts the support of gradualist and rational reform. As we shall see from a close examination of reviews of Political Justice, it is possible to imagine two levels of response to the book (which would not be the case with the revised 1796 edition): a "summary" reading might quickly be attracted to the radicalism of the text and the strong arguments against the various oppressions of government; whilst it takes a closer study of the book (particularly those chapters which Godwin had suggested the reader might pass over (48)) to recognise and digest the motivational process in his necessitarian and perfectibilian stance (somewhat unsatisfactorily presented in 1793, and the subject of the most substantive revisions in 1796). As we shall see, there is much evidence (both textual and external) to suggest that Wordsworth's contact with Political Justice and Godwin and his ideas involved a developmental process of study and increasing understanding of Godwin's ideas.

For anyone in England in 1793 seeing the French Revolution as the beginning of social and political regeneration, and then faced with the horrors of the Terror with its seeming repression of individual in another barbarous way, the alternative that Godwin offered must have seemed, if not attractive, at least worthy of some consideration. To the young Wordsworth, returning from the traumas of his recent visit to France in what was an emotionally charged state (as The Prelude does make clear even without any admission of his affair with Annette Vallon, but

concentrating on the poet's acknowledged response to the Revolution), it is difficult to believe that Political Justice and its reception could have escaped his attention.

Part 2. The Reception and Impact of Political Justice.

The comments of two very different modern writers, E.P. Thompson and Marilyn Butler,(49) reflect recent views on the impact of Godwin and Political Justice.

In his essay The Poverty of Theory, E.P. Thompson, speaking of the Godwinians and their impact states that :

Godwinism. . . .which freaked out the young intelligentsia in England between 1794 and 98, was....a moment of intellectual extremism, divorced from correlative action or actual social commitment..... those Godwinians represented the only moment when the English intelligentsia adopted, in their theory, an ultra-Jacobin posture [and] had some spirit about them. (p 181)

Marilyn Butler, in her Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries writes:

The radical classics of the mid-1790's, Godwin's Political Justice and Paine's Age of Reason, seemed subversive at a profounder level than any campaign for legal relief the Dissenters had ever engaged in, for they challenged secular and religious authority at its very roots, in the individual's simple habit of belief. (p 49)

The much earlier and often-quoted words of Hazlitt in his famous essay(50) appraising Godwin tells us, that, for a brief period,

he was in the very zenith of a sultry and unwholesome popularity....no-one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was there, his name was not far off.

De Quincey, a harsher critic of Godwin(51) nevertheless states that as a political philosopher Godwin

carried one single shock into the bosom of English society, fearful but momentary, like the electric blow of the gymnotus.(52)

The above strikes at the heart of the problem of assessing the importance and limitations of Godwin's impact, and especially the reception and impact of the first edition of Political Justice in 1793. Godwin's radicalism was not that of Paine's Rights of Man; it was an intellectual reformism. Despite the impressive sales

of the first edition,(53) Godwin's actual popularity deserves the epithets Hazlitt attaches to it. Godwin's was an ephemeral fame, and in view of the rather unattractive impression he made in social intercourse, he was not the person to develop an extensive network of close friends or acquaintances. Those who did attach themselves closely to him were few (e.g.Horne Tooke, Montagu and even Coleridge) It is certainly **not** to this group that Wordsworth can be assigned. The very indeterminate nature of the Godwin-Wordsworth relationship(54) together with the rather summary comment on the reception and impact of Political Justice has limited the external evidence relevant to Godwin's influence on Wordsworth.

However, returning briefly to Thompson's point, it is in the very **intellectual** nature of Godwin's radicalism, a matter increasingly acknowledged in more recent studies of his work(55) and stressed in the first section of this chapter, that the real clue to the impact of Godwin is to be found: an intellectual and philosophically-based radicalism to which Wordsworth initially responded, and against which, ultimately, he reacted.

It is therefore as essential to recognise and understand the reception and impact of the first edition of Political Justice as it is to understand the intention and thrust of the book itself; though its sales were impressive, it is obvious that many, unable to read the work itself, would have read the various reviews written of it in the weeks and months immediately following its publication. Although commentators on Godwin(56) have remarked on the reception of the first edition, most seem to have concentrated on the effect of its publication on Godwin's public standing, and even those giving some account of its reception have not paid

adequate attention to comment on the the book. Yet, from a reading of these, we can perceive exactly what areas of Godwin's ideas and arguments caught the interest of the reviewers.

Godwin's book did attract a considerable amount of attention from some of the major journals of the time. Although the political leanings(57) of the journal concerned and the authorship of some of the reviews(58) have to be taken into account, it is clear that Political Justice was, in general, received favourably - though not with unqualified applause in even the most supportive reviews; it was also seen by all of them to be a very bold and even extravagant work.

However, before going on to discuss the opinions of the reviews, it is well worth making one rather obvious point: as well as offering some critical comment on Political Justice, these articles also undertook that other purpose of reviews very effectively: namely, the dissemination(59) of Godwin's ideas. Whilst inevitably the selection of the reviewer affected this, it should be noted that several of the extended reviews, over three months, are devoted to little more than extensive quotations from Godwin's book; and, as will be seen, although the various reviews do summarise Godwin's arguments it was often the same key issues and sometimes even the same passages that received attention. As we shall see, such passages tend to focus upon Godwin's criticism of oppression by government, his more overtly political passages.

Therefore, whilst a reflective review such as the brief summary of Godwin's topics in Political Justice in the New Annual Register for 1793/4 (pp 218-9) simply gives an outline of all his chapter titles, the more immediate responses

in other reviews can be seen to concentrate on some of the seminal ideas in Godwin's book, as well as some of the ideas most likely to attract attention at such a time in English and French history. Godwin's central belief in the right of private judgement, and the oppressive and coercive limitations of government and the law on such judgement, is discussed at some length in the Analytical Review for June 1793, pp 125-6, (60) and is highlighted by Holcroft in the second instalment of his review in the Monthly Review, of April 1793, where he quotes Godwin:

That government therefore is the best, which in no one instance interferes with the exercise of private judgement without absolute necessity. (p 435)

Readers of these reviews would be left in no doubt as to Godwin's belief in the right of private judgement.(61) Yet one is struck by the fact that this and some of the other ideas that Godwin sees as seminal in the development of his argument are not those consistently disseminated or highlighted.(62) The role of truth and sincerity,(63) the doctrine of perfectibility,(64) receive attention with supporting summary quotation, as do his ideas on the role of thought, or, as the scathing reviewer in the British Critic puts it:"Man is a machine".(65) But these are not the topics which consistently pervade the reviews of Political Justice. For anyone reading the reviews, two themes would seem to characterise the writer who had published this work: these are Godwin's belief in the need for gradual reform allied to his anti-revolutionary stance, and, secondly, his stand against coercion by institutions and oppression, especially the oppression and inequities of monarchy and aristocracy.

It is this view of Godwin as a reformist, albeit in a rationalistic and philosophical

context, that is the consistent theme of these various reviews. For instance, Price, in the Analytical Review of June 1793 quotes Godwin's assertion:

When a great majority of any society are persuaded to secure any benefit to themselves, there is no need of tumult or violence to effect it.
(p 124)

And after having spent much of this review summarising Godwin's arguments against government and legislation and the manner in which these endanger and repress private judgement, he closes this particular instalment of his review with references to Book IV, particularly the sections on resistance and revolution, with some of Godwin's assertions concerning his belief in "argument and persuasion"(66) as opposed to revolution. Similarly, the Critical Review of April 1793, having opened this first instalment of its three-part review by quoting from Godwin's arguments on the causes of war, soon turns to his arguments against revolution, stating:

We have already intimated that Mr. Godwin is a declared enemy to force and violence in effecting changes in government. -On this subject we think his whole chapter deserving the attention of our readers.(p 367).

Then quoting a lengthy passage, including Godwin's statement in his argument against political associations that there is

nothing more barbarous, cruel and bloodthirsty than the triumph of a mob.(p 369)

There is a sense in which these reviews in fact overstate or perhaps oversimplify Godwin's rejection of revolution as a means of reform; for, as has been indicated in the previous section of this argument,(67) Godwin does, in this first edition, admit the legitimacy of less passive means of reform when no other alternative is available. However, despite the oppressions of the poor catalogued by Godwin, it is made clear by the reviewer that Godwin does not count-

enance violence as the answer to such oppression, but promotes gradual reform.

The second instalment in the Critical Review in July 1793 opens by drawing attention once again to Godwin's anti-revolutionary reformist stance:

Whatever may be the political heresies of our author,
says the reviewer,

there is one article of his faith which has completely exempted him from our censure; and that is, that no revolution, no change of government, no innovation should be attempted, which is not preceded and called for by a radical and universal change of sentiment in the people-(p 290)

The reviewer then states, in the second paragraph:

While Mr. Godwin lays down so safe a principle as this, as the basis of his speculations, he is entitled to lenity, and even respect, respect from those who differ from him on particular topics; and we cannot but compliment his sagacity, which has been so amply justified by the unhappy situation of France, even since the publication of his volumes. Other writers on the side of democracy have been less cautious, and we have therefore treated them with less reserve, as we shall ever do those whose writings are calculated to produce disorder or discontent in this country.(p 291)

Godwin is clearly being portrayed as no threat to the state, no instigator of violent upheaval, but as a rationalist and reformist **thinker**.

Even the very early and more summary review in the Literary Magazine and British Review of March 1793, notes Godwin's reformist stance:

Reasoning, he observes, is the legitimate mode of revolutions, and the only good mode of effecting them; here too persuasion is the proper instrument.(p 225)

In the first of Holcroft's three-part review in the Monthly Review, also of March, 1793, he introduces Godwin's book by saying:

but that which ought to endear it even to those whose principles it may offend, is the strength of argument adduced in it to prove, that peace and order most effectually promote the happiness after which political reformers are panting; -that, as the progress of knowledge is gradual, political reform ought not to be precipitate; - and that convulsive

violence is dangerous,...(p 311).

However, on the second page of the April 1793 instalment of the review, Holcroft quotes from Godwin:

The objections (p.195.) that offer themselves to an exertion of actual force, where there are no hopes of success, are numerous.(p 436).

Holcroft has obviously spotted that strain of ambivalence in Godwin's attitude to violent reform, but having acknowledged it briefly in this way, quotes at length arguments from Godwin against violence in pursuit of reform.

The second principal theme to feature consistently in the reviews of Political Justice is Godwin's stand against oppression by institutions monarchical and aristocratic. Godwin, as summarised by his reviewers, emerges as a rationalist reformer, but also a highly political one in his thinking. Price's second instalment in the Analytical Review of August 1793, whilst giving considerable attention to Godwin's belief in the role and power of truth and sincerity, quotes at length from Godwin's arguments against monarchy and despotism; and Godwin's views on the "education of a prince" are also quoted at great length.(68) (As we shall see in a moment, his chapter on the education of a prince is the one most consistently focussed upon by all of the reviewers; a chapter, where, in his description of the upbringing of a monarch, all of his empirically-based deterministic views and his stand against institution as an infringement of private judgement coalesce.)

The Critical Review of April 1793 quotes voluminously Godwin's arguments concerning the oppression of the poor by governments, legislation, and by the rich who,

keep their inferiors at a distance, [with] the splendour of their equipage, the magnificence of their retinue, and the sumptuousness of their enter-

tainments. The poor man is struck with this exhibition; he feels his own miseries; he knows how unwearied are his efforts to obtain a slender pittance of this prodigal waste; and he mistakes opulence for felicity.
(p 365)

In the second instalment of the review in July 1793, the reviewer quotes again directly from the chapter, On the Education of Princes, immediately thereafter rehearsing Godwin's anti-monarchical arguments:

Hence the well-known maxims of monarchical governments, that ease is the parent of rebellion, and that it is necessary to keep the people in a state of poverty and endurance, in order to render them submissive.
(p 292)

However, the reviewer then, in a paragraph of comment that is hard to understand in the context of a generally supportive though not uncritical review, expresses support for the nobility of England in an argument based upon title rather than wealth.(69) One wonders if such a comment might not have made readers more sympathetic to the consistency of Godwin's arguments.

In April 1793, the Literary Magazine in its review quotes at length from Godwin's arguments against monarchy and aristocracy, again giving prominence to "the education of the distinguished mortal destined to a throne" and notes how Godwin "concludes on its total inaptitude to the purpose designed." (70) After lengthy quotation from Godwin's arguments regarding the education of a prince, the review concludes:

Mr Godwin concludes that monarchy is founded on imposture; whether he is just in this conclusion, we must refer to those who have perused the book.(p 308)

Finally, in the Monthly Review of April 1793. Holcroft gives early prominence to what is little more than lengthy quotation from Godwin's arguments on the education of a prince and to his arguments against monarchy and its

institutional trappings,(71) eventually quoting Godwin's challenge:

Is it well, that so large a part of the community should be kept in abject penury, rendered stupid with ignorance, and disgusting with vice, perpetuated in nakedness and hunger, goaded to the commission of crimes, and made victims to the merciless laws which the rich have instituted to oppress them? Is it sedition to enquire whether this state of things may not be exchanged for a better?(p 444)

It is clear therefore that the perception of Godwin's ideas disseminated by the major reviews appearing immediately after the publication of the first edition of Political Justice is of Godwin as concerned reformist, but committed to gradual reform in the interests of the individual against such institutions as government (particularly monarchical government). His ideas are viewed as open to criticism, but are also admitted to be challenging: the ideas of a thinker who, in the political turmoil of the times, has not been afraid to publish such a work.

Most reviews are favourable with the obvious exception of that in the British Critic (72) Whilst others are not uncritical, (73) they are generally highly supportive. Price opens his comment in the Analytical Review of June 1793 by stating:

We deem it our duty therefore to encourage every attempt, the object of which is, to illustrate the principles of sound and rational morality, and to establish the theory of a more equitable government. And we conceive, that the politician or philosopher whose labours are directed to this end, possesses a just claim to our most grateful acknowledgements.
(p 121)

The more qualified support of the Critical Review of April 1793 nevertheless opens with a most laudatory paragraph:

There is certainly no employment in which the most eminent talents can be more laudably engaged, than in tracing out that scheme of political oeconomy which may most extensively promote the happiness and improvement of mankind. This is a subject which has occupied occasion-

ally the greatest minds, from the days of Plato and Aristotle to those of Locke. We cannot therefore entirely agree with our author, "that the science of politics is yet in its infancy," though there undoubtedly is still much room for improvement; and in this view the public are under considerable obligations to the very ingenious author of this elaborate treatise.
(p 361)

Then, in response to Godwin's concerns expressed in his Preface over possible reaction to his book, it proclaims:

We cannot for a moment believe that a British minister would attempt to fix shackles on the freedom of philosophical speculation, or that the nation would endure such an attempt.(p 361)

However, by October, in the third instalment of this review, the enthusiasm is much more reserved:

The mind of the author is evidently warped by the false philosophy of the times, and however free he may fancy himself, writes more in fetters than any author we have lately perused. Where he disengages himself from these prejudices, and reasons with coolness and candour, we frequently discern the efforts of a vigorous mind, and have generally to admire his ingenuity, even where we cannot applaud his judgement.(p 154)(74)

Holcroft's review in the Monthly Review of March 1793 opens by drawing attention to the context of Godwin's latest publication:

It may be doubted whether, at any period, since the fatal contest between Charles I and his parliament, the minds of men have been so much awakened to political inquiry, as they are at this moment.(p 311)

It continues:

we have no small degree of pleasure in announcing the present work to our readers; as one, which, from the freedom of its inquiry, the grandeur of its views, and the fortitude of its principles, is eminently deserving of attention.(p 311)

This is immediately qualified by Holcroft's stating that he does not necessarily hold with all of Godwin's views and ideas.

That Godwin's work was received favourably can certainly be argued; that it was received with interest, puzzlement, excitement and even some dismay is evident.

Looking back on the impact of Political Justice, the New Annual Register for that year catches the tone of the import and impact of Godwin's book very effectively

We have been the more full in our account of the subjects discussed in this work, as it has greatly excited public attention.... The author possesses a well-informed, bold and vigorous mind, . . .(p 219) (75)

It applauds Godwin's courage in publishing at the time:

Unfettered by system, and fearless of offending the prejudices of mankind, he contends for what appears for him to be truth, with an ardour, which it would be doing him an injustice not to ascribe to the best and most praise-worthy motives.(p 219)

And whilst even this review qualifies its support, it cogently finds Political Justice highly deserving of the attention of philosophical politicians.(p 219)

It is this view of Godwin as sincere if somewhat fanciful in developing his ideas, as a thinker committed to individual liberty and to the benefit of mankind that emerges from the reviews of the first edition of Political Justice. Yet, if one compares the experience of reading Political Justice itself with that of reading the reviews of it, the tendency of the reviews either to summarise very succinctly or for other reasons spend less time upon some of Godwin's more abstruse arguments in relation particularly to, for example, necessity and his motivational construct in relation to perfectibility(76) has the effect of suggesting a more immediately politically oriented and directly reformist work than is actually the case. It is such an impression that might have caused many readers to read Political Justice itself, in the expectation of finding a political treatise, prior to reading Godwin's very full and complex arguments in the philosophical context in which they rightly belong.

In approaching the question of Wordsworth's "radicalism" and the role that Godwin's thinking played in that, such a distinction should be remembered. Whether or not Wordsworth read any of the reviews is not known, but in examining his first substantial (but unpublished) prose piece following upon the publication of Political Justice, certain points emerging from this examination of these reviews and their portrayal of Godwin's ideas are worth bearing in mind. Those two sustained themes of Godwin's philosophic approach to reform and his strong attacks on the oppressions of government are important. If Wordsworth did read some of the reviews, it would have been difficult to avoid either of these issues. Moreover, the reception of Political Justice in the reviews might well have spurred him to read the book, not least because of the philosophic (rather than Painite) approach it offered. This, as we shall see, becomes relevant from the very opening sentences of Llandaff.

It will, of course, be more appropriate to examine the details of the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin in the ensuing chapters; only in such a way can the pattern of correlations emerging between Wordsworth's development and Godwin's writings be understood. For, just as any simplistic idea of "influence" through mere verbal echoings or occasional parallels of details of themes or ideas has already been rejected, so the understanding of the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin is a complex one, which rests on no single issue or piece of evidence, but, rather, a series of interrelationships and patterns of development.

Yet, even at the end of an introductory chapter such as this, where it has already been apposite to suggest some of the seminal issues and themes in Godwin's

Political Justice that will be relevant to the emerging argument here, it is useful to re-iterate certain key points. Above all, the fact that the first edition of Political Justice has a complex coherence and a structural unevenness; a philosophic stance allied to a crusading tone and sometimes a crudity of style : all of this points to the potential for a variety of response to the text. It offers radical protest, yet an intellectualised philosophical and nascent psychological construct (flawed, and difficult to understand at times). It demonstrates a humanitarian spirit and a genuine interest in the individual, allied to a personalised anarchist belief that hinges on the pivotal role of a seemingly unfeeling rational principle.

All of which suggests a work that would take time to explore, assimilate and ultimately accept or reject. To this, in time, was to be added the exposition, testing and development of these ideas in the fictional presentation of Caleb Williams and then the substantive revisions of 1796. Perhaps then, a priori, it is not difficult to accept that this might be a book (and a person) with whom a young, impressionable and initially radically-oriented poet might have a developing relationship involving a variety of responses.

Such, it will be shown, is indeed the case with regard to Wordsworth and Godwin. It will be essential in this study to chart the nature and variety of Wordsworth's responses, first of all to the first edition of Political Justice; an initial response that, not surprisingly, whilst responding to the essential philosophic character of the work, nevertheless focusses, in the borrowings evidenced in Llandaff, on its radicalism, that leads to a need to respond to the complexity of Godwin's construct, ill-fitted though it is in the manner in which Wordsworth is to draw upon it in Salisbury Plain. And, looking beyond the first edition of

Political Justice, to Caleb Williams and to the revisions of 1796 Political Justice, as well as Wordsworth's acquaintance with the philosopher during the time of the revision of these works, again a clear progression in Wordsworth's response can be evidenced.

However, with regard to the first edition and Godwin's role in the political reaction and repressions of 1793 and 1794, it is necessary first of all to consider aspects of what might be referred to as Wordsworth's radicalism.

CHAPTER TWO : WORDSWORTH'S RADICALISM - THE ORIGINS OF HIS MORAL AND HUMAN CONCERN.

Part 1: The claims of The Prelude and the evidence from Descriptive Sketches.

Exactly how far Wordsworth became involved in the radical movements of his time can only be uncertain. His assertion that he had read "the master pamphlets of the day"(1) and his account of what he saw in France, as well as his correspondence later on with William Mathews (and other brief letters dealing with radical issues(2))leave a sketchy picture.

The purpose of this initial argument is to identify preliminary evidence that raises questions concerning Wordsworth's claims in The Prelude regarding the early stage of his radical development. It will be the purpose of the concluding chapter of this thesis to revisit these questions, and, in light of the evidence emerging from detailed examination of key texts (as well as external evidence) to offer answers to those questions. Nevertheless, it is essential to identify at this early stage the existence of these questions by challenging Wordsworth's claims in The Prelude concerning the development of his radicalism; this will be done by focusing upon key passages in The Prelude in relation to evidence emerging from the much earlier composition, Descriptive Sketches.

Such a challenge should focus, at least initially, upon the role Wordsworth ascribes to Michel Beaupuy in the development of the poet's political, social and ultimately moral concerns. In Book IX of the 1805 Prelude Beaupuy is presented as the political, social and moral "mentor" of the young poet:

Oft in solitude

With him did I discourse about the end
 Of civil government, and its wisest forms,
 Of ancient prejudice, and chartered rights,
 Allegiance, faith, and law by time matured,
 Custom and habit, novelty and change,
 Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
 For patrimonial honour set apart,
 And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
 For he, an upright man and tolerant,
 Balanced these contemplations in his mind,
 And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
 Into the turmoil, had a sounder judgement
 Than afterwards,...(1805,IX,328-341)(3)

The closing lines of this quotation are a clue to the **self-consciousness** one finds in Wordsworth's references to the period 1793-95, the period to be treated in Book X of the 1805 Prelude. Whilst Wordsworth's writings of that period do offer evidence of a tormented soul, they raise questions regarding that "sounder judgement" in the various radical themes Wordsworth claims as the result of his conversations with Beaupuy. What examination of such texts as Llandaff and the first two versions of the Salisbury Plain poems suggest is a much more tortuous and complex process of coming to terms with these radical themes than the impression given, ascribing his clearest understanding of them to the discussions he had during his walks with Beaupuy. Whilst it would probably be impossible to distinguish exactly what, in the lines quoted above, Wordsworth learned from the radical ideas of the time, what he learned from a figure such as Godwin, (some of whose principal themes were indeed those such as "civil government", "prejudice", "rights") and what in fact he did absorb from his conversations with Beaupuy, Wordsworth's suggestion in The Prelude that the soundest and most lasting of his radical and political ideas came from Beaupuy alone raises fundamental questions as to whether or not this is true; and if it is not, as to why

Wordsworth chooses to argue such a case.

An examination of Descriptive Sketches (published soon after Wordsworth's return from France, a poem he was probably writing at the time of his meetings with Beaupuy(4)) provides two essential clues in this early examination of Wordsworth's claims. First of all, through investigating Wordsworth's treatment in this poem of his love affair with Annette Vallon (and particularly the effect of his later revisions upon that treatment), evidence will be shown of a tendency in Wordsworth to mask or otherwise distort certain matters that he later found uncomfortable to reflect upon. This has considerable significance for later examination of The Prelude and Wordsworth's reflective presentation of certain events in his development (again with later textual changes often being an important clue as to his intent - witness the much quoted "crisis" ascribed to his period of rationalistic enquiry, a "crisis" **added** after the 1805 Prelude was completed). Secondly, evidence of the character of Wordsworth's radical thought in Descriptive Sketches will be shown to compromise his claims regarding Beaupuy's role and influence in his development; and hence further to reinforce the need to question and re-examine Wordsworth's claims in The Prelude regarding the development of his radical thought, especially in regard to the role played by William Godwin.

Descriptive Sketches 1793 and 1836-49 : Wordsworth's treatment of his affair with Annette Vallon.

Given the period of composition of Descriptive Sketches and the assumed timing of Wordsworth's affair with Annette Vallon,(5) it is inconceivable that Wordsworth wrote the poem unaffected by his feelings for her; yet critical comment

has scarcely taken account of this. For instance, in the case of the opening lines of the poem, despite the assertion by Legouis(6) that Wordsworth is probably displaying in this poem(7) a response to the sentiment of Melancholy as a vehicle of form (a view with which I would not wholly disagree), that critic soon finds himself having to admit, but failing to explain adequately, the "despair" which greets the reader of the opening lines of the 1793 edition of Descriptive Sketches, most particularly the effect of the word "Pain"(8) (changed to "distress" in the 1836 edition), and also lines 13-16 of the original:

But doubly pitying Nature loves to show'r
Soft on his wounded heart her healing pow'r
Who plods o'er hills and vales his road forlorn,
Wooing her varying charms from eve to morn.
No sad vacuities his heart annoy,...

By 1836, these lines have been considerably softened:

Yet not unrecompensed the man shall roam,
Who at the call of summer quits his home,
And plods through some wide realm o'er vale and height,
Though seeking only holiday delight;...(9)

This example points early on the effect of Wordsworth's revisions, which is to enhance the conventional "melancholy" from which nature can easily draw the poet (the whole effect is very stylised, and the emotions recorded have much of affectation and convention about them); the effect of the revision, however, is also to remove the poignancy of the original - the sense of despair and real pain. The overall stylistic effect of this revision is scarcely an improvement, not least in the unfortunate "holiday delight". There are several examples of similar selective revisions to alleviate the sense of grief by deleting the more sharply expressed sorrows, and by replacing a word or phrase with one more in harmony with the general assumed context of poetic melancholy.(10) A reading of the

1793 edition also points to what seemed (presumably to the older Wordsworth) a weakness in lines 13-42, where the supposedly comforting balms of nature seem somewhat unequal to the task of bringing solace to the poet; not so in the 1849 version, where the much diminished sorrows easily accede to the soothing balms of Zephyrs etc. Even in the closing lines of the two editions, 1793 presents a still-pining spirit, whilst there is an optimistic confidence pervading the close of the 1849 version.

What, then, is the cause of this despair and sorrow in the original edition? Has Wordsworth's assumed melancholy burst the bounds of its own convention? Are the revisions and the intent behind them merely stylistic, as the more experienced poet revises this early text? Perhaps another parallel and consistent set of revisions and deletions points to the cause.

Although Wordsworth does not delete the "dark-eyed maids" and other young female figures that populate his scenes in this poem,⁽¹¹⁾ nor remove all references to "love" or "passion", there is a careful and selective assuaging of their overall effect within this poem. Particularly interesting is the deletion of the following lines:

Farewell! those forms that, in thy noon-tide shade,
Rest, near their little plots of wheaten glade;
Those stedfast eyes, that beating breasts inspire
To throw the "sultry ray" of young Desire;
Those lips, whose tides of fragrance come, and go,
Accordant to the cheek's unquiet glow;
Those shadowy breasts in love's soft light array'd,
And rising, by the noon of passion sway'd.
-Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams,
Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams...(1793, 148-157)

Whilst these lines are not very good,⁽¹²⁾ one must ask if the revised form of 1836

is any improvement:

Farewell those forms that in thy noon-tide shade
Rest near their little plots of wheaten glade;
Those charms that bind the soul in powerless trance,
Lip-dewing song, and ringlet-tossing dance.
Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illumine
The sylvan cabin's lute-enlivened gloom.
-Alas! the very murmur of the streams
Breathes o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams,... (1836, 127-34)

or, particularly, the 1845-49 further revision:

But now farewell to each and all-adieu
To every charm, and last and chief to you,
Ye lovely maidens that in noontide shade
Rest near your little plots of wheaten glade;
To all that binds the soul in powerless trance,
Lip-dewing song, and ringlet - tossing dance;
Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illumine
The sylvan cabin's lute-enlivened gloom.
-Alas! the very murmur of the streams
Breathes o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams,...(1849, 127-36)(13)

Perhaps "sultry ray" in the original deserved to go - but so also surely did "the little plots of wheaten glade". The total effect of the revision (especially by 1849), is absurd. At least the "beating breasts", "young desire", "tides of fragrance" and "cheeks unquiet glow" lead, in some form of climax, to the "voluptuous dreams". The same can scarcely be said of the "Lip-dewing song" and "sparkling eyes". Again, there are similar examples of this kind of revision to effect some diminuendo of an originally sharply (if sometimes clumsily) perceived consciousness and emotion.(14)

The questions must now be asked: why did Wordsworth make these revisions (often risking so much); and what was the cause of the sharp intensity of that grief in the original poem? It seems odd that most of the significant critics of this period in Wordsworth's development seem to offer no real explanation; they

become vague or speculative. (15) The general impression is that the later revisions are attempts to improve the style of the original. This is not always the result; but so obviously not in this case, that I doubt the view that stylistic improvement was the reason. As to the reasons for the despair, there seems to be no satisfactory explanation, until it is realised that although Descriptive Sketches recounts the happenings of the first journey to France, it does not confine itself to a description of Wordsworth's journey in 1790. There is no disagreement that the effect of the French Revolution and the developments of 1792, and also of the meeting with Beaupuy are all reflected in this poem.

So also, I would contend, is the matter of the love affair with Annette Vallon. This is the grief that Wordsworth feels so poignantly; this is his "wounded heart", (1793,14) the desperate love of which he is only too aware throughout the writing of much of this poem. And his memory of "those shadowy breasts"(1793,154) is only too recent and painful. It is just these poignant elements in the original poem which are removed by the 1849 version. What is allowed to remain (as with the later Vaudracour and Julia (16)) is only the most veiled reference to "every charm"(17) of an incident in Wordsworth's life which only this very early text betrays in some of the fullness of its intensity, and which Wordsworth is anxious to present re-interpreted within the carefully affected version of 1849.

Exactly why Wordsworth would have wished further to obscure an incident in his life that was undoubtedly extremely and personally painful to him, and to which, elsewhere, he makes virtually no reference, we can only speculate upon: whether for reasons of pride, concern for his former lover, the changing attitude of a much older man coming to revise an early text, it is impossible to say with

certainty. But that he **did** in the early text express a sense of pain and personal feeling is clearly evidenced in 1793; that he sought, in a pattern of revisions, to remove those feelings and substitute for them a more affected emotion associated with the convention of the original poem is equally evident. To explain this pattern of revisions on stylistic grounds alone contradicts the evidence of some of those revisions.

What is important to note is that, in revising an earlier text such as Descriptive Sketches, Wordsworth, through a process that might be presented as stylistic revision, in fact alters significantly the character and emotion of the original text; in a sense, he "re-invents" the assumed consciousness behind the poem.(18) It is a feature of his work that should be borne in mind when considering his claims in The Prelude as he reflects upon earlier and sometimes very personal incidents in his life.

Descriptive Sketches 1793: the evidence of Wordsworth's radical thought.

In the context that the above examination of Descriptive Sketches offers regarding Wordsworth's treatment of his affair with Annette Vallon, it is now appropriate to turn to the claims Wordsworth makes regarding Beaupuy's influence on him: in effect rejecting (in the later Books X and XI of The Prelude) any lasting role in his political, humanitarian and moral development for Godwin or any other theoretical source, citing as his philosophical inspiration his conversations with Beaupuy (as well of course as the role nature was to play). There are mixed views from the critics regarding Beaupuy's influence in this poem.(19) Wordsworth's admission that most of Descriptive Sketches "was

composed during my walks upon the banks of the Loire in the years 1791-1792"(20) and the knowledge that he and Beaupuy had many of their longest conversations walking along the banks of that river in the same year (1792) point to the probability that Beaupuy's ideas would find their way into a poem on which Wordsworth was working. However, examination of Descriptive Sketches, the first text to come from Wordsworth's pen immediately after his contact both with French Revolutionary thought and with Beaupuy's ideas, offers little evidence of the seminal influence Wordsworth claims Beaupuy had upon his ideas.

Descriptive Sketches began as an account of Wordsworth's journey in the previous year (1790); in a sense, therefore, it would be difficult for Wordsworth to incorporate the ideas to which he was just being introduced. The initial impression is of confusion. It is difficult to see exactly where Wordsworth might be drawing upon Beaupuy's thoughts; much is presented in a very sketchy manner, and it is impossible to extricate what might be attributed to a particular figure such as Beaupuy from the language of a surface - albeit sincere - response to the common "revolutionary" ideas that Wordsworth might have heard during his stay in France.(21) There would appear to be some dispute in established critical thinking over exactly where the evidence of Wordsworth's political beliefs begins in this poem;(22) certain passages have obviously drawn attention, and need further examination in light of the specific enquiry here. References to what might be termed "man's condition" (for a fairly wide term is needed to describe the various causes Wordsworth contrives to espouse in this purported

account of the previous year's tour) appear as early as line 158, with the mention of "Slavery forcing the sunk mind", or the rather interesting conjoining in line 163:

And smiles to Solitude and Want impart. . .

whilst line 197 informs us that:

Hope, strength, and courage, social suffering brings.

There is the impression of a scattering and variety of comments by Wordsworth that are sincerely felt, yet ill thought out, and lacking any sound or cohesive basis at this stage.

The same is the case with the more extended passages. The passage referring to Lake Uri and the incident of the boatman seems little more than a rather stylised apostrophe to "Freedom";(23) whilst the metaphors of the "chamois" and the "chamois-chaser" and also the "Demon of the snow" and the threats to liberty and humanity that are apparently suggested evoke little more than a very general sense of concern for mankind.(24) Similarly, the passage referring to "Man entirely free"(1793,520ff) is clearly reminiscent of Rousseau, but scarcely specific enough to justify any assertion that linked Wordsworth's knowledge or understanding of Rousseau with Beaupuy's teaching. It is here that the form of the poem and Wordsworth's over-elaborate style obscures anything but the most general impression of Wordsworth's sympathies.(25)

Lines 598-661 clearly represent another section to which anyone interested in Wordsworth's developing social concerns might turn. The sixty-two lines to which attention is drawn here - with their constant reference to e.g. "Penury" (ll. 598 and 638), the "general sorrows of the human race" (l.603), "human ignorance" (l.660), "Pain" (ll. 639 and 653) and "Labour" (l.639) - suggest more than merely

the immediate context of the difficulties of life in the Alps.(26) There is here the same nascent expression of general human concern, but one which is ill-defined, and presented in a manner which pays more heed to the style and form in which Wordsworth is writing this poem (especially with its grand sweeps of emotion and endless personifications) than the concern Wordsworth clearly has felt (not only during his trips through the Alps but also as a result of some of the "penury" he must have seen in France in 1792). It is as if the need for some firmer philosophical basis and a style more appropriate to such matters already make themselves apparent in this section of the poem.

There is also a stronger suggestion of the more "immediate" inspiration of the section examined above in the lines:

In the wide range of many a weary round,
Still have my pilgrim feet unfailing found,
As despot courts their blaze of gems display,
Ev'n by the secret cottage far away
The lilly of domestic joy decay;
While Freedom's farthest hamlets blessings share,
Found still beneath her smile, and only there.(1793, 719-25)

The unfortunate "lilly of domestic joy" is an echo of the earlier "little cottage of domestic Joy"(601) - though, admittedly, "joy" has lost its capital letter; but there seems to be suggested, despite the obfuscation of the tortuous syntax, a causal relationship between the "decay" of the "domestic joy" and the "despot courts" to which "Freedom" can bring some relief. However, it is all very vague.

It is in the last seventy-three lines of the poem, beginning:

And thou! fair favoured region...(1793, 740ff)

that the clearest indication comes of Wordsworth's contact with those associated with the revolutionary cause, and probably also with Beaupuy. These

lines, belonging to 1792, are somewhat at odds with Wordsworth's last-minute attempt in the closing four lines to return to a tone more in harmony with the original intent of the poem. This whole section is poor stylistically,(27) but it is the very "high seriousness of purpose" (28) in these lines that causes a further weakness. That Wordsworth's enthusiasm for political liberty is displayed is not questioned; indeed this determination to profess his beliefs in a poetic form originally adopted for a very different purpose and theme shows Wordsworth's artistic immaturity at this stage (the lists of personifications, especially, undermine his intention here) suggesting the sheer strength of feeling that went into these ungainly lines.

But I cannot agree with the view expressed that the ideas in these lines derive from Beaupuy.(29) Indeed the question must be put: beyond an intense enthusiasm for liberty over oppression (surely a very widely expressed feeling in England as well as France at the time), what are Wordsworth's beliefs as presented here? He speaks out against pride, conquest, avarice, machination, and persecution; but presents these in a list of personifications that are merely condemned by being opposed to "Freedom's" omnipotence. Who, in revolutionary France would not have heard similar sentiments (and often equally unqualified) in many places? "Love and Truth" are mentioned and linked - perhaps an idea suggested by Beaupuy, perhaps not. "Justice" is also mentioned, and deleted by 1849 along with many of the other personifications in the list, as if Wordsworth had seen, by that time, the inadequacies of this section. There is even confusion over some of the more detailed concepts: "war's dischordant habits" (1793,746) seems a clear condemnation of violence; yet a few lines later

on, Wordsworth writes:

-Tho' Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise
Red on his hills his beacon's comet blaze;
Bid from on high his lonely cannon sound ,...(774-6)

Does this now register approval for some violent support of Liberty's advance?

It is not clear (and, as we shall see, contrasts with the stance Wordsworth is soon to adopt in his Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff after the publication of Political Justice). Very little here is terribly clear, except that a new enthusiasm has gripped Wordsworth; one that he feels compelled to express, but which the form and style of the poem he was then writing scarcely assisted. It is almost as if he has lost patience with the poem he was then writing.

Despite the general support that critical comment has provided for Wordsworth's claims regarding Beaupuy,(30) the lack of any semblance of ordered or structured thought in Descriptive Sketches casts doubt upon those claims. As well as making us wonder why, in the face of such extant textual evidence Wordsworth nevertheless insists in 1804 in ascribing so much to Beaupuy, it raises questions as to why he either rejects or simply ignores other sources that so clearly must be considered likely to have played a significant role in the development of his radical thought. With the perspective that a knowledge of Wordsworth's ultimate poetic vision (of Lyrical Ballads and Tintern Abbey) brings, with his belief in the role of experiential nurture in his poetic development, the possibility must be considered that Beaupuy, as a man of the **spoken** word and as a man of action appealed to Wordsworth as a symbol and as a rhetorical device to which he might ascribe the principal source of and inspiration for his radical, humanitarian and moral belief.

Whilst it will be appropriate to consider this possibility further, later on, in the light of more evidence regarding the development of Wordsworth's ideas, it is appropriate now to look at further evidence of tensions in the poetry of The Prelude as Wordsworth offers an account of his radicalism, and also, ironically, Wordsworth's admiration for and attraction to Beaupuy as a man of action.

Wordsworth's radicalism:The Prelude.

Apart from the question of the degree of veracity or otherwise in Wordsworth's claims regarding Beaupuy, what such a passage also exemplifies is a series of tensions that can be found in other key sections in The Prelude relating to Wordsworth's radicalism. What they suggest is that, in giving us an account of the development of his radical thinking and its place in the emergence of his poetic consciousness, Wordsworth is, at times, uneasy in selecting what he wishes to present to us. Such uneasiness can be observed in the addition by 1850 into Book VI of the account of the sack of the Convent of Chartreuse,(31) the addition of the passage praising Burke in Book VII(32), and also the deletions in the account of Wordsworth's response to England's waging war on France in Book X(33) as Wordsworth tries, in his late revisions to his poem, to "manipulate" the view of his development that he presents to us. It is worth making the point that the poet himself admits that during his earlier trip to France and the Alps in 1790, he felt little involvement with the earlier stages of the Revolution:

I looked upon these things
As from a distance-heard, and saw, and felt,
Was touched, but with no intimate concern-(1805,VI,694-6)

Yet there are two other important links with the Beaupuy passage that should be

considered here: the first is Wordsworth's mention, just before describing his time with Beaupuy, of the influences which had already pre-disposed him to a sympathy with the radical cause. Wordsworth is somewhat inconsistent over this, since he claims that he was:

untaught by thinking or by books
To reason well of polity or law,
And nice distinctions - then on every tongue.-
Of natural rights and civil,...(1805,IX,201-4)

He continues:

Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what my soul
Mourned for, or loathed, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.(1805,IX,212-7)

However, he admits, a few lines later, that his anti-monarchical and aristocratic views were also one

Of many debts which afterwards I owed
To Cambridge and an academic life
That something there was holden up to view
Of a republic, where all stood thus far
Upon equal ground,...(1805,IX,227-30)(34)

But, again, a few lines further on, and just before the introduction of Beaupuy,

Wordsworth speaks of his first reactions to the Revolution being muted:

If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course-
A gift that rather was come late than soon.(1805,IX,250-4)

It is such seemingly conflicting statements that create a tension in Wordsworth's attempts to portray the development of his thinking; he seems unsure as to his own motivations and the influences upon him, yet seems anxious to demonstrate

the role of the experiential and nature as the seminal source of his radical humanitarianism, at the expense of any admission of "theoretical" principles. Such tensions inevitably draw attention to themselves, and raise questions regarding Wordsworth's intent.

The second point again demonstrates a tension; one which lies at the heart of some of Wordsworth's evident discomfort over his portrayal in The Prelude of this difficult and confusing period in his life. In all of his admiration for Beaupuy, no facet stands out more than Wordsworth's assertion that the soldier was, above all, a man of action:(35)

Oh, sweet it is in academic groves-
Or such retirement, friend, as we have known
Among the mountains by our Rotha's stream,
Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill-
To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
On rational liberty and hope in man,
Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil
(Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse)
If Nature then be standing on the brink
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
Of one devoted, one whom circumstance
Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
In action, give it outwardly a shape,...(1805,IX,397-409)

But it is not so much Wordsworth's acclaim of Beaupuy's active involvement in the radical cause here, but the almost self-deprecating quality of the opening of this passage that suggests the tension, as Wordsworth addresses Coleridge as some companion "armchair radical". Whilst the thought and syntax here are almost as abstruse as the "thoughts" that Wordsworth claims such "interchange of talk" generated, there seems little doubt that, by 1804, the poet is rather uncomfortably (but, to his credit here, apparently honestly) pointing up the difference between the role played by himself and the active role of Beaupuy. This

is an issue he raises again early in Book X as he turns to describe in the very uneven and involved structuring of that Book his contact with and involvement in the Revolution. Even in his recounting of these events, Wordsworth, as well as expressing the agitation(1805,X,117) he obviously did feel at that time, becomes extremely self-conscious:

these are things
Of which I speak only as they were storm
Or sunshine to my individual mind,
No further.(1805,X,103-6)

Then comes his admission,

Yet would I willingly have taken up
A service at this time for cause so great,
However dangerous.(1805,X,134-6)

There is no conclusive evidence that Wordsworth ever did become actively involved in the cause of the Revolution, and this statement can only vindicate the view that he did not. Yet it is clear that he did feel a yearning to become involved at that time; and that, by 1804 (when this section was probably being written), he still remembered and wished to reflect upon that yearning; or he wishes us, as readers, to think this. I say this because, having already raised questions and cast doubts on Wordsworth's intent in the portrayal of his development, it is possible now to see that earlier "honest" admission of his passivity (in contrast to Beaupuy's action), and also in this last incident, Wordsworth's obscuring of a fact that it was perhaps uncomfortable for him to remember. It is possible, if we move forward to 1794, to discover in the lives of Wordsworth and Godwin a possible reason as to why Wordsworth might have been hesitant to acknowledge any debt to Godwin. I refer to the period of Wordsworth's correspondence with William Mathews concerning the proposed monthly periodical, and of Godwin's

significant involvement in the political and legal repressions of the time, particularly the celebrated Treason Trials.

Radicalism, active and passive : Godwin and the reaction of 1793/4, and Wordsworth's correspondence with William Mathews.

Godwin acquired, and perhaps still has, the reputation of being something of an armchair radical; a thinker (and not a particularly brilliant one) as opposed to an activist. It is easy, but, as more recent scholarship on Godwin has shown, mistaken to label Godwin merely as a bookish reformer.

To do so is to ignore the part played by Godwin during the treason trials of 1794 and the period of the suspension of Habeas Corpus. Though accounts have been given of this,(36) they have tended until very recently to be somewhat fragmented and have generally underplayed the significance of Godwin's role. Moreover, a full understanding of this issue is another clue in the puzzling relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin.

E.P. Thompson has again summed up the context for Godwin not simply as author of Political Justice but as the active defender of human liberty in the face of reaction against the French Revolution:

If the distribution of Rights of Man was nationwide, so also was the promotion of anti-Jacobin societies. Hence, in England, the revolutionary impulse had scarcely begun to gather force before it was exposed to a counter-revolutionary assault backed by the resources of established authority.(37)

That this reaction was indeed an assault on basic human freedoms cannot be doubted: witness the establishment of the Committee of Secrecy which, at the beginning of its first lengthy report states:

The Committee have, therefore, thought it their indispensable Duty in the First Instance, to submit to the House the general view which they have been enabled to form of these Transactions, reserving a more particular statement for a subsequent Report

From these it appears, that during almost the Whole of that Period, (end of 1791 - May 1794) and with hardly any considerable Interval, except during the Part of the Summer in 1792 and 1793, this Society (Constitutional Reform) has, by a Series of Resolutions, Publications and Correspondence, been uniformly and systematically pursuing a settled Design which appears to your Committee to tend to the Subversion of the established Constitution, and which has of late been more openly avowed, and attempted to be carried into full Execution.(38)

It concludes that examination of all the evidence suggests

a Traitorous Conspiracy for the Subversion of the established Laws and Constitution, and the introduction of that System of Anarchy and Confusion which has fatally prevailed in France.(39)

Even before the celebrated arrest of Hardy and the others, there were earlier signs of the severity of establishment reaction, and from this period, Godwin was willing to voice his criticisms publicly, particularly through the letters of "Mucius".(40) Moving closer to the period associated with the treason trials (and into the initial stages of the reaction in England against the French Revolution), Godwin contributed further letters of "Mucius" to the Morning Chronicle in February and March, 1793, and all of the letters completed in manuscript by 18th January (before the publication of Political Justice) find him championing such issues as the individual (e.g. a tallow-maker who had fallen foul of the new repressive measures) against the government's measures, freedom of speech, and in a letter entitled,

To such persons as may be appointed to serve upon juries for the trial of seditious and treasonable words.

which is a plea to future jurors to be impartial and not respond to government pressure:

Do you know what miserable wretches the people of England will become, if they live in hourly fear of such prosecutions?

A year later, Godwin's beliefs were to be put to the full test.

The sentence to transportation in August 1793 of Thomas Muir(41) whereby Muir was to be treated merely as a common felon ran so counter to Godwin's principles that he joined the outcry against the sentence in his letter to the Morning Chronicle. It is important to see in this letter that Godwin is not questioning the court's verdict, but the way in which the sentence as felons was being used by the government as an example, a warning against all proponents of reform. Godwin is quite open about the target for his attack: the "officers of Government", "the Secretary of State for the Home Dept. and the rest of the Cabinet Junta":

Tiberius, and his modern anti-type, Joseph the Second, are mere novices in the arts of cruelty, compared with our blessed administration,...(42)

Godwin was taking **actively and personally** into the public and political arena the beliefs he had discussed in his recently published book; in view of the attention that book had already attracted,(43) this letter shows considerable moral courage.

Godwin had not known Muir, nor was he a supporter of the corresponding societies with whom Muir was linked (indeed the recently published Political Justice, in its chapter on political associations(44) showed Godwin's mistrust of such associations). But the next person to become a victim of the government's reaction was a friend of Godwin, Joseph Gerrald; Gerrald's almost martyr-like determination to face trial aroused Godwin's admiration, and Godwin's letter

to him while he awaited trial seems to explain Godwin's behaviour in the trial of Hardy and the others:

For myself [Godwin writes to Gerrald] I will never adopt any conduct for the express purpose of being put upon my trial, but if I ever be so put, will consider that day as a triumph.(45)

This tendency of Godwin not to seek political martyrdom, but to be willing to face any consequences in defence of justice(46) and tempered with a strong loyalty to his close friends(47) is borne out to the full in his behaviour during the trials of Hardy, Horne Tooke, Holcroft and Thelwall. (Unfortunately, so also is his tendency to indulge himself later in the resulting acclaim.) The facts of Hardy and the others' arrest, trial and eventual acquittal are well enough known; the importance of that acquittal should not, however, be underestimated, for it represented an important victory not only for future reformist activity (though in the longer rather than the immediate term) and a rejection of this attempt by government to restrict individual liberty. Even if the prose of Hazlitt's account seems to reflect his enthusiasm for Godwin(48) the comment of Crabb Robinson, a lawyer, and one who does not mention Godwin's part in the trials, still shows the jubilation with which the acquittal was greeted:

During the trial I was in a state of agitation that rendered me unfit for business. I had to beset the Post Office early, and one morning at six I obtained the London paper with "NOT GUILTY" printed in letters an inch in height, recording the issue of Hardy's trial. I ran about the town knocking at people's doors, and screaming out the joyful words.(49)

Godwin's diary,(50) at this time, records his dates of visiting the accused in Newgate (which he did frequently), and also the period of the trials (written vertically down the page). More important is the entry on the day of Hardy's trial again written vertically down the page in a heavier ink, as follows:

Cursory Strictures(51) - To this pamphlet Mr. H.T. frequently declared

that he was indebted for his life. One day, in mixed company, having insisted that the author should tell him without circumlocution whether it were of his own writing or no, and being answered in the affirmative, he called the author to him, and taking his hand conveyed it suddenly to his lips, vowing that he could do no less by the hands which had given existence to that production.(May 21,1795)

Jan. 29,1809.

Examination of Godwin's diary for 21st May, 1795 shows that Godwin did in fact dine at Batty's with Tooke and the mixed company of which he speaks, but, interestingly, not with Hazlitt who records this incident(52) and who surely must have heard it either from Godwin himself or perhaps from Tooke, whom he knew. Godwin made this superscription. There are few examples of Godwin going back to add things to his diary. It might reasonably be presumed that Godwin who, in 1809 was very much in his years of "decline", might have found some solace in such a form of reminiscence.(53)

Godwin's Cursory Strictures, first published anonymously in the Morning Chronicle on October 20th, 1794 - several days before the start of the trial - can be seen as a culmination of this early period of Godwin's career: both in terms of his active defence of individuals against government repression and also his acting on the principles enunciated in Political Justice. Godwin had written in protest after the legal injustices to Muir and Palmer; in this case, he was determined not simply to write, but to forestall the inevitable injustices. Hence, at the end of Cursory Strictures, he writes:

I anticipate the trials to which this Charge is the Prelude. I know that the Judge will admit the good intentions and honest design of several of the persons arraigned: it will be impossible to deny it; it is notorious to the whole universe. He has already admitted, that there is no law or precedent for their condemnation.(CS,p 25)

In his argument and in the language in which that argument was couched,

Godwin's perspicacity and courage are evident.(54) His anonymous authorship of Cursory Strictures might seem an important personal protection, but that is doubtful; equally, it should be remembered that he did not choose to reveal his authorship publicly after the acquittals when he would doubtless have reaped public acclaim. There can be little doubt that Godwin showed what he meant by "sincerity" and showed an active moral courage which belies his reputation as an armchair radical.(55)

It is therefore important to remember that, by the time Wordsworth actually met Godwin, in 1795, (56) the philosopher was more than simply the author of Political Justice and Caleb Williams. Wordsworth had himself responded to the repressions and the treason trials in a very different manner. It has to be said, to be fair to Wordsworth, that the two men were in very different positions.(57) It is difficult, as we have seen, to assess the role Wordsworth played in liberal reforms and activities. His visits to France seem more rooted in his indecisions over his future than any commitment to a radical or reformist cause, at least at first; and it would not be unjust to say that given the financial predicament of his family, his second visit to France was not simply self-indulgent, but extremely irresponsible.

However, by the time of the treason trials, which Wordsworth alludes to only briefly in The Prelude, (58) Wordsworth had written, but failed to publish his Letter to the Bishop of Landaff (59) and was now, in correspondence with William Mathews, planning to publish a "monthly miscellany" with overtly liberal (and Godwinian) reformist intent. In the first of the letters that refer to that plan, on 23rd May, 1794, after the Muir and Palmer sentences and very soon

after the arrest of Hardy and Horne Tooke and the suspension of Habeas Corpus,

Wordsworth writes:

I solemnly affirm that in no writings of mine will I ever admit of any sentiment which can have the least tendency to induce my readers to suppose that the doctrines which are now enforced by banishment, imprisonment, etc etc. are other than pregnant with every species of misery.
(60)

That Wordsworth, even before this, must have been expressing abroad some of his views is evidenced by the fact that, on the same day as Wordsworth wrote this, Richard Wordsworth wrote to him a warning:

I hope you will be cautious in writing or expressing your political opinions. By the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Acts, the Ministers have great powers.(EY,pp 121-2)

This did not daunt Wordsworth, for in June he wrote his lengthiest and most politically forceful letter concerning his intentions, determining to go ahead with the journal. But on 7th November (interestingly, two days after the acquittal of Hardy, though Wordsworth may not have heard of it), he tells Mathews that he feels they should withdraw from the scheme, and it is interesting to note the language in which he does this:

The more nearly we approached the time fixed for action, the more strongly I was persuaded we should decline the field.(EY,p 134)

He then makes further brief reference to the treason trials, stating,

I cannot in conscience or in principle abet in the smallest degree the measures pursued by the present ministry.(EY,p 134)

But neither, it would seem, was he prepared actively(61) to stand up against or speak out against the repressions. When, therefore, he refers directly to Tooke in his letter of 24th December, 1794,(62) his comments are accompanied by a very muted comment upon the significance of the events:

The late occurrences in every point of view are interesting to humanity. They will abate the insolence and assumption of the aristocracy by

shewing it that neither the violence, nor the art of power can crush even an unfriended individual, though engaged in the propagation of doctrines confessedly unpalatable to privilege; and they will force upon the most prejudiced this conclusion that there is some reason in the language of reformers.(EY, p 137)

Why this change of heart? Was Wordsworth heeding Richard's advice? Did he fear government reaction (for after the acquittal of Hardy, they still pressed ahead with Tooke's and Thelwall's trials)? The other important matter is that, throughout October 1794, Wordsworth was involved in negotiations regarding the legacy he was to be left by the dying Raisley Calvert; this would mean that since it was intended that Wordsworth should look after Calvert through what was expected to be a lengthy illness, he would have little time to devote to writing, but the prospective legacy also took away the more pressingly immediate need for money.

Did Wordsworth eventually learn of Godwin's role in the trials? There is no direct evidence that he did; but it is inconceivable that he did not. Wordsworth knew Hazlitt and even met Tooke later.(63) It is fruitless to speculate on whether or not Godwin and Wordsworth spoke of the matter,(64) and when, but it is valid to consider what might have been Wordsworth's thoughts as he composed the lines in The Prelude which allude to this period.

Perhaps it is these events that are in Wordsworth's mind when, coming to his account of the repressions,(65) Wordsworth tells us that

 this is passion over-near ourselves,
Reality too close and too intense,
And mingled up with something, in my mind,
Of scorn and condemnation personal
That would profane the sanctity of verse.(1805,X,640-4)

Whilst I would not disagree that part of Wordsworth's intention here is to reflect the personal disgust he felt at these incidents, the evidence considered above not only fails to support the strength of feeling Wordsworth claims here (certainly the references to these events in the letters to Mathews show no evidence of the kind of fervour noted in the prose of Llandaff). That evidence also suggests another reading of Wordsworth's "scorn and condemnation personal": namely, his failure to act in the public manner he had proposed in his plans for The Philanthropist. And in the closing lines of this passage, Wordsworth's reference to the agents of the British government

As vermin working out of reach,...(1805,X,654)
in order
to undermine
Justice, and make an end of Liberty.(1805,X.655-6)

have such a ring of the language and protests of Godwin (66) that I find it impossible not to believe that some reflection on his own behaviour at this time and an uncomfortable awareness of the role Godwin had played were at the back of his mind; and that these considerations explain in some considerable measure the tensions and uneasiness in this passage. It will later be appropriate to return to this passage in light of fuller evidence.(67)

Returning now to trace Wordsworth's own account of the development of his radicalism, it is clear from Book X, its repetitious and uncertain structure as well as what it records, that Wordsworth's experiences in France affected him deeply. One of the ways in which his distress and his determination, when writing Book X, to record his feelings and the role played by these in his poetic development can be seen, is in the manner in which, especially after recording his arrival in

England in December 1792(1805,X,202ff), Wordsworth continues to return to his experiences in France. The effect is at times confusing, but one of the issues Wordsworth is trying to present through this structuring is the tension and conflict he felt in relation to his own country as it responded to and reacted against the situation in France. Hence Wordsworth's allusion to the period of the treason trials; and recording of the shock to his "moral nature" at the time of the declaration of war on France.(68)

When, therefore, immediately following his brief reference to the treason trials of 1794, Wordsworth returns to "my own history" (1805,X,658) and to early summer 1792 and his meetings with Beaupuy, there is again a tension here in Wordsworth's assertion that his belief in

what there is best in individual man...(1805,X,666)

and his arguments concerning "civil polity"(1805,X,660) stemmed simply from his own earlier experiential development. What I am suggesting is that much of the uncertain structure of this Book, though intended to be reflective of Wordsworth's confusion at the time, also reveals a consistent attempt by the poet to ensure architectonically that his poem will sustain his view that his early experiential education and nurture (particularly through nature) was what ultimately guided him and brought him to the point at which he has arrived by the time of writing Tintern Abbey. I am suggesting that the tensions identified so far raise the possibility of a conscious and sustained "re-inventing" of himself by Wordsworth in The Prelude to a particular purpose. Whilst it will be the intention of later arguments in this thesis to provide full evidence to substantiate that view and suggest the reason for such an intent, it is appropriate here to offer some

further limited evidence for the validity of raising such a question.

The resulting tensions in the poetry of Book X can be seen particularly in the lengthy section where Wordsworth returns to his time in France (1805, X, 657-756) as he seeks to maintain the view of himself as a "child of Nature" (1805, X, 752) throughout these experiences; whilst, at the same time he records with enthusiasm the role played by reason:

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchanter to assist the work
Which then was going forwards in her name. (1805, X, 697-700)

This **could** be a reference to Godwin but Wordsworth has refused to acknowledge this by placing it prior to the appearance of Political Justice (i.e. in 1792 in France and ascribing it to the "Reason" of the philosophes which underpinned much of the thinking behind the French Revolution (69)). Similarly, in the lines closely following the "promise" (1805, X, 702) of that time, there is the image of

The budding rose above the rose full blown. (1805, X, 705)

This is potentially as evocative of the idea of "perfectibility" as it is of the general ferment of ideas and hopes of the radicals at this time. (70) Again, a few lines further on, describing himself now as an "active partisan", (71) he refers quickly to his generally benevolent and optimistic view of man as something naturally within him:

I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still predominant,
When erring, erring on the better side,
And in the kinder spirit... (1805, X, 738-41)

Yet, even as he records here what might be seen as his innate tolerance in reacting to some of the violence of the Revolution, the lines closely following,

that time
Gives rights to error; on the other hand
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of license as of liberty;...(1805,X,744-7)

not only echo some of the ideas extant in many of the radical writings of the time, but reflect, for anyone who has read Political Justice or, as we shall see, Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, ideas from sources other than only the personal experiential development Wordsworth seems so determined to present as the only lasting source of his humanitarianism.

It is at this stage in The Prelude that Wordsworth eventually arrives at the point which, in less than two hundred lines, gives an account of the period during which he wrote his unpublished Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, the two Salisbury Plain poems and The Borderers (as well, of course, as planning his monthly miscellany with William Mathews); a period of complex development, but a period which Wordsworth, in The Prelude, introduces as a time when

a way was opened for mistakes
And false conclusions of the intellect;...(1805,X,765-6)

However, the tensions already identified in Wordsworth's account of his radicalism must surely make us at least suspicious, and question whether the textual evidence of that period (along with other appropriate external evidence) bears out Wordsworth's summary dismissal of this time. It is, in my view, valid to re-examine the textual evidence of this period, in light of such external evidence concerning, for example, the treason trials, and the evidence now available on the personal relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin.

The purpose of this initial examination of Wordsworth's claims in The Prelude has been to identify those tensions in the poetry which draw attention to these

clues and raise questions. A tentative thesis has been advanced that the reason for these tensions can be located in the relationship between what Wordsworth claims and what evidence will support. If it can be shown that Wordsworth obscures, distorts or in other ways re-interprets or even re-invents what happened, the question arises, why is this done?

Only with a full examination of some of the early texts in Wordsworth's development, and of his relationship with William Godwin, can the evidence of the veracity of the first of the first part of the question posed above be tested. The place to begin that process is with the unpublished Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff, and then further attention must be given to the correspondence with William Mathews.

Part 2: The Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff and Wordsworth's Correspondence with William Mathews.

Critical commentary on the "influence" of Godwin on Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff(72) has produced conflicting views.(73) This text deserves fuller examination in its context: ostensibly a reply to Watson's Appendix, but also the next major piece to appear from Wordsworth's pen after he had met Beaupuy, after he had completed Descriptive Sketches, and very shortly after the well-publicised publication of the first edition of Political Justice. The matter of Wordsworth not having a copy of Godwin's book in his library at his death and not alluding directly to the first edition(74) are only two of the objections that have been raised on external evidence to reject any meaningful link between the poet and the philosopher. However, it is upon textual evidence that judgements must be based.

Whilst Wordsworth's enthusiasm for republicanism is evident throughout the Letter, probably fired by his conversations with Beaupuy, this, though at odds with Godwin's ultimate rejection of all forms of government and associated positive institutions, does not preclude Wordsworth's drawing upon Godwin (though it is probably one of the principal factors which prevents his movement from a conventional moral stance to a Godwinian view of social reform). Indeed, it must be acknowledged from the start that Wordsworth's Letter is indebted to several sources: Burke, Paine, and, I strongly believe, Godwin being the principal ones. Perhaps inevitably, the Letter is unsatisfactory as a coherent argument; yet it represents a significant development from the inchoate outpourings of Descriptive Sketches.

In this development, Wordsworth's drawings upon Godwin will be seen to have played a key role. Whilst therefore acknowledging the influence of other sources, and that previous critics have already identified certain details from Godwin's work upon which Wordsworth has drawn (mostly in relation to arguments concerning monarchy, reform of government and the vagaries of the law, which will be acknowledged), it is argued here that there are more fundamental drawings upon Godwin playing an important part in this text, and which point to important aspects of Wordsworth's development. The three central issues are: Wordsworth's adoption of a controlling rhetoric through which he expresses the obvious outrage he felt over Watson's Appendix; the philosophical manner and basis of his arguments (which relate to the style and tone of his arguments); and Wordsworth's ambivalent attitude to violent revolution in pursuit of reform. Additionally, it will be useful to add some further discussion of Wordsworth's drawing upon Godwin's criticisms of positive institutions in his attacks on monarchy, aspects of government, and the law. Such an examination is intended to demonstrate more than verbal echoings,(75) and will also consider the relationship of Wordsworth's Letter to Watson's Appendix, including the ordering of arguments.(76) Paine's influence on some of Wordsworth's arguments is acknowledged, but the view that Wordsworth has drawn upon Paine **through** Godwin for some of his arguments is accepted;(77) but, as I shall show, the philosophico-moral import of the Letter draws upon a reading of Political Justice.

The dating of the Letter is problematic,(78) but important; for it is necessary to consider whether or not Wordsworth had read Godwin's book, and with what

degree of care;(79) or whether he had simply read one or more of the reviews which, as we have already seen, appeared very quickly after the publication of Political Justice. Wordsworth's writing of the letter can be narrowed down to between January 21st, 1793 when Watson's reprinted sermon appeared with the Appendix attached (80) and early August, before Wordsworth set out on his walking tour from Salisbury to North Wales; the dating I assume is that of Spring, 1793, probably nearer to June.(81)

Two things must have stung the young Wordsworth into the fervour with which he writes the Letter; a text which so frequently transgresses its purported intent of being an objective and considered response to Watson. The first was certainly Watson's praise of the British constitution (of which Wordsworth had apparently felt so proud only two years earlier(82)):

I hope there is not a man in Great Britain so sensible of the blessings of that free constitution under which he has the happiness to live, so entirely dead to the interests of general humanity, as not to wish that a constitution similar to our own might be established, not only in France, but in every despotic state in Europe;...(83)

Bearing in mind the situation in England with the signs of establishment reaction (which was to lead soon to the treason trials of 1794 and the suspension of Habeas Corpus), as well as Watson's anti-liberal outbursts against the French Revolution elsewhere in the Appendix, Wordsworth's indignation can be understood. The second thing was the wide advertisement (in at least three daily newspapers(84)) of the publication and reception of the new work by William Godwin: the Preface of Political Justice not only proclaimed the general intent, but identified "politics to be the proper vehicle of a liberal morality", (85) and spoke stridently of "the omnipotence of truth".(86) These, as we shall see, are

themes which underpin Wordsworth's argument in the Letter:

I shall not preclude myself from any truths, however severe, which I may think beneficial to the cause which I have undertaken to defend.(87)

The several reviews of Political Justice that had already appeared by June 1793,(88) with their generally supportive response to Godwin's ideas and the manner in which Godwin argued his gradualist reformist case from a philosophical viewpoint, as well as the approach and language of Political Justice itself, demonstrated a manner of protest that had shown itself capable of challenging the establishment view, gaining a significant degree of acceptance, and avoiding direct confrontation with the government. To anyone reading the Letter, the possibility that, either from reading some of the reviews or Political Justice itself, this had impressed itself upon Wordsworth, has to be considered. For, just as the first edition of Political Justice (especially those early chapters) has a force of argument and reformist fervour that the prose at times strains to control, so, in Wordsworth's Letter, the sheer energy of the poet's outrage gains most of its effectiveness as argument through restraint of the prose in which Wordsworth has sought to express it, and the method of argument with which he has attempted to direct its force.

Godwin's philosophic stance : (i) Wordsworth's controlling rhetoric.

Anyone who has read Political Justice will be struck by the closeness of its tone to that of the opening of Wordsworth's Letter. It is in the opening three or four paragraphs of the Letter (generally ignored by critics) that the first strong hints of a recent reading of Godwin are evident. These paragraphs are not a direct response to the opening of Watson's Appendix - they represent a preamble to

Wordsworth's main arguments - and the tone, much of the lexis used, even the syntactic structuring which carefully controls the "indignation", (89) reflects that of the early chapters of Godwin's book. For instance, the opening sentence of the third paragraph of the Letter is almost a repetition, not just in thought but also in tone and emotion, of the Preface and to some extent the first chapter of Political Justice:

On opening your Appendix, your admirers will naturally expect to find an impartial statement of the grievances which harrass this nation, and a sagacious enquiry into the proper modes of redress. (39-41)

Whilst it might be suggested that a figure such as Paine could have inspired the substance of such a challenge, this could not be said of the style! The "sagacious enquiry" derives from Political Justice, and is almost certainly drawn from Godwin's closing sentence of Book I Chapter III (a chapter, which, as we shall see, frequently attracts Wordsworth's attention considerably):

the man who is anxious for the benefit of his species, will willingly devote a portion of his activity to an enquiry into the mode of effecting this extirpation in whole or in part,.. (PJ, '93, I, 18)

Throughout these early paragraphs in the Letter, the quality of language vindicates this view: "unseduced and undismayed", (11-12) "an enlarged and philosophical mind". (35) The somewhat archly controlled language and thought is not that of the more forthright Paine; it has both the force and, at times, the inelegance of the "philosophical" manner of Godwin's writing. For Wordsworth has set out, from the start, to attack the superficial ideas and objections of Watson from a deeper basis than that of simply reformist (or even revolutionary) politics; he wishes to present the **moral** arguments against Watson. And, in doing so he adopts, in some measure, the ideas and the manner of Godwin's writing in Political Justice.

(ii) Wordsworth's drawings upon Godwin's philosophy.

Obviously Wordsworth's drawing upon Godwin's language and style relates closely to his adoption of the substance and method of Godwin's philosophic argument. In this preamble to his main challenge to Watson's arguments, Wordsworth does something which points forcibly to a recent familiarity with Godwin's ideas and method of argument, as in these early paragraphs, he touches on a subject he is later to take up more fully (while he is carefully working his way through the arguments in Watson's Appendix): namely, the matter of the clergy. Wordsworth's early mention of it here is nothing to do with Watson's complaints about the seizure of property from the church in France.⁽⁹⁰⁾ It is, in fact, part of Wordsworth's "address" to Watson where he singles out the prelate from the ranks of the English clergy acknowledging Watson's earlier more liberal and humanitarian stance:

While, with a servility which has prejudiced many people against religion itself, the ministers of the church of England have appeared as writers upon public measures only to be the advocates of slavery civil and religious, your Lordship stood almost alone as the defender of truth and political charity.⁽²⁷⁻³²⁾

Wordsworth clearly does not adopt the atheistic stance of Godwin. But what is obviously in Wordsworth's mind is the concatenation of ideas he had no doubt heard in radical circles, and also Godwin's particular development of these ideas in Part II of Book I, Chapter VII, entitled Of National Characters, which opens with the paragraphs on The Character of the Priesthood.⁽⁹¹⁾ This brief but very powerfully-voiced criticism of the clergy is very reminiscent of what Wordsworth is stating in the sentence quoted above, as Godwin links the "imperious dogmatical" (PJ, '93, I, 61) manner of priests as "patrons of prejudice and implicit

faith" to their being "enemies of freedom". What Godwin has set out to show is that

there are particular professions, such as that of the priesthood, which must always operate to the production of a particular character... (PJ,'93,I,60)

His conclusion is that

priests of all religions....will have a striking similarity of manners and disposition.

These are essentially **oppressive**. Godwin then adds immediately:

In the same manner we may rest assured that free men in whatever country will be firm, vigorous and spirited in proportion to their freedom, and that vassals and slaves will be ignorant, servile and unprincipled. (PJ,'93,I,61)

The juxtapositioning of these arguments points its message only too clearly, and Wordsworth has not missed the point as he uses it to try to distinguish between the earlier Watson, champion of freedom, and the author of the Appendix.⁽⁹²⁾ Worthy of note also here is the use of the terms "slavery" and "servility" by both Wordsworth and Godwin; only two pages further on, Godwin uses the term again and juxtaposes it with a reference to the priesthood:

The advantages of liberty over slavery are not less real, though unfortunately they are less palpable.....Every man has a confused sense of these advantages, but he has been taught to believe that men would tear each other to pieces, if they had not priests to direct their consciences,... (PJ,'93,I,62-3)

Of course Godwin uses the term "slavery" throughout Political Justice to denote the state that political oppression produces; nonetheless, this is the first section in the book where it occurs so frequently; his use of the term is also different from that of Paine.⁽⁹³⁾ Wordsworth had indeed also used the term in Descriptive Sketches in an ill-defined manner;⁽⁹⁴⁾ his use of it here is much more precise and, as has been shown, links civil and religious "slavery", as does Godwin

throughout the passage referred to.

Wordsworth continues to draw upon Godwin's ideas, and particularly the challenge to independence of thought in these early paragraphs, when, in the fourth paragraph, he states:

Sensible how large a portion of mankind receive opinions upon authority, I am apprehensive lest the doctrines which they will find there should derive a weight from your name to which they are by no means intrinsically intitled. (42-5)

Once again, the importance of this lies in Wordsworth's challenging the **external authority** on which a prelate such as Watson could presume to act and speak.

Watson's opening statement that he hopes his Appendix will have

some effect in calming the perturbation which has been lately excited, and which still subsists in the minds of the lower classes of the community... (95)

is presented with an assumed authority which Wordsworth sees as dangerous.

This is exactly the basis of Godwin's criticism of the priesthood, upon which Wordsworth has already drawn. And seeing that "the lower orders of the community" (96) are likely to accept this "authority" unquestioningly, Wordsworth is anxious to insist, prior to challenging Watson's arguments, that even clerical arguments must be examined on their own merits. This, above all, is Godwin's method of argument; it so pervades his work that any reading, no matter how cursory, cannot fail to note it. And once again it is possible to point to specific instances **early in Political Justice** whence Wordsworth might have drawn part of his argument. For instance, the empiricism of Chapter III of Book I, which denies any form of "innate principles". Or perhaps Wordsworth might have been drawing on another paragraph (under the title, Foundation of Obedience) in the critical chapter Of Obedience, where Godwin states

You present a certain proposition to my mind, to which you require my assent. If you accompany the proposition with evidence calculated to shew the agreement between the terms of which it consists, you may obtain my assent. If you accompany the proposition with authority, telling me that you have examined it and found it to be true, that thousands of wise and disinterested men have admitted it,... I may assent to your authority; but with respect to the proposition itself, my understanding of its reasonableness, my perceptions of that in the proposition itself, my understanding of its reasonableness, my perceptions of that in the proposition which strictly speaking constitutes the its truth or its falsehood, remain just as they did.(PJ,'93,I,170-1)

And, of course, a similar line of thought (without any specific mention of "authority") lies in Godwin's important chapter, Of the Exercise of Private Judgement,(97) which, as I have argued earlier, is the one "right" which Godwin recognises, and the central belief in his complex web of argument.

It is indeed such a threat to private judgement, in the form of an assumed external authority, that Wordsworth is challenging in the opening of the Letter. The rejection of acquiescence to any such authority, especially that which rests merely on a habit of obedience or assent from the past, is the essential challenge with which Wordsworth opens his arguments against Watson's Appendix. For this reason, he has warned at the outset, that it is crucial, in approaching Watson's arguments, not to

confound with argument a strong prepossession for [Watson's] talents, experience, and virtues.(47-8)

One can almost hear the spirit of "the more firm and independent habits of thinking" (PJ,'93,I,73) that Godwin advocates from the earliest stages in Political Justice. Later on in the Letter, Wordsworth returns(98) to the issue of "obedience" along with that of equality; although the detailed argument referred to here(402ff) probably derives more immediately from Paine, the cautions regarding e.g. "equality", "liberty", "perfection", "general good", and, above all,

the "necessity of obedience" relate to Godwin's chapter, Of Obedience, as does, above all, Wordsworth's clear challenge to Watson:

Is your lordship to be told that acquiescence is not choice, and that obedience is not freedom? (569-70)

In that chapter, Godwin stresses the relationship between authority and obedience as a threat to private judgement, a view which Wordsworth adopts here. What we see, therefore, in Wordsworth's opening to the Letter is an argument founded on the Godwinian premise of the right of every individual to exercise his private judgement.

Another attempt by Wordsworth to draw upon one of Godwin's fundamental philosophic arguments (one which, perhaps predictably, shows his failure as yet to to have fully assimilated what he has read) is evidenced in his argument concerning Watson's response to the execution of the French monarch. Wordsworth's reaction to Watson's outcry against the "murder" of Louis XVI is very exaggerated in its tone; but we have to recognise the full context of what he is reacting against.⁽⁹⁹⁾ What has upset Wordsworth is not simply the sanctimonious tone of Watson's argument, but, additionally, the nature of the argument, or rather the appeal that Watson makes to his readers' **feelings**.

The key to Wordsworth's anger can be seen in the following lines from his letter:

The passion of pity is one of which, above all others, a christian teacher should be cautious of cherishing the abuse: when under the influence of reason, it is regulated by the disproportion of the pain suffered to the guilt incurred.(74-8)

Wordsworth is rather obscure here. (It is only one of several passages and sentences where an idea becomes the victim of the syntax within which it is presented.) But it is impossible not to recognise Godwin in this. What

Wordsworth is suggesting is that any application of **reason** shows that although the pain of Louis at his death might have been great, it was considerably less than the guilt incurred throughout his reign; the "guilt" clearly refers to his moral responsibility for the oppression of (and pain consequently suffered by) the people of France. The inference is equally clear: that the death of Louis was of greater benefit (to a greater number of people) if a reasoned view is taken. Whilst it must be accepted that some of this argument and the emotion behind it, as evidenced in the earlier sentences and the exaggerated tone of Wordsworth's reaction, no doubt relate to Wordsworth's own recent experiences in France, the attempt to argue this case in a moral and quasi-philosophical form derives from Godwin; particularly, the celebrated Fenelon incident.(100)

What Wordsworth has done here is to confuse, or possibly try to extend the notion of the "passion of pity" from Godwin's arguments based on the closely related matters of "family affection" and "gratitude" (PJ,'93,I,83) (the question of feelings and emotions which Godwin himself acknowledged he had underplayed in the first edition, and which he consciously sought to redress in the second edition), where an overbearing feeling is seen by Godwin to be erroneous if not subjected to examination by reason. Wordsworth's extrapolation of Godwin's point is understandable, particularly in light of the fact that Godwin has dealt with the question of "pity"(PJ,'93,I,16) in the earlier Chapter III of Book I (a chapter, which, as we have just seen(101) has already attracted Wordsworth's attention), and has dealt with that issue in terms of

the existence of pain in one subject and of pleasure and benefit in others,...
(PJ,'93,I,16)

What Wordsworth is doing here, once again, is drawing partly on Godwin's

ideas; but, more important, drawing upon Godwin's philosophical approach to moral judgement to counter Watson's arguments. The lack of any philosophical foundation or systematisation of thought noted earlier in Descriptive Sketches is giving way to an attempt by Wordsworth to systematise his thinking; and it is upon Godwin that he principally draws in this attempt.

There are two further examples in the Letter of Wordsworth drawing upon Godwin's philosophic approach and arguments. The first concerns Wordsworth's response to Watson's criticism of republicanism.(174-5) Whilst Godwin was not a believer in republicanism,(102) Wordsworth's arguments here concerning republicanism take Watson's arguments deeper and further than simply challenging the points Watson makes. For the real issue once again is of political oppression which produces a state of "slavery" (103) which, as has already been shown,(104) is a constant theme of Godwin's. What Wordsworth is determined to advocate is resistance to that oppression as he argues that even

when redress is in our power and resistance is rational, we suffer
...because we are taught from infancy [my emphasis] that we were born
in a state of inferiority to our oppressors.(188-91)

This is Godwin, as Wordsworth draws again on the crucial Chapter III of Book I, The Moral Characters of Men Originate in their Opinions:

But the seeds of error are ordinarily sown so early as to pass with
superficial observers for innate.(PJ,'93,I,16)

Wordsworth is drawing upon Godwin's central and seminal empirical stance to undermine Watson's case. Further proof of this can be found on the next page of Political Justice:

In this case we instil in them the vices of a tyrant; but we are in equal danger
of teaching them [children] the vices of a slave.
(my emphasis) (PJ,'93,I,17)

And Wordsworth, continuing to speak of those "fatal prejudices"(105) and the role they play in oppression, uses the term "prejudice" as Godwin defines it in the paragraph entitled Nature of Prejudice and Judgement Described:

An individual surrenders the best attribute of man, the moment he resorts to adhere to certain fixed principles, for reasons not now present to his mind, but which formerly were.(PJ,'93,II,668)(106)

Even within the paragraph that opens with Wordsworth's admission of republican sympathies, (107) there is another reminder of Godwin, as Wordsworth, noting the limitations of Watson's argument, goes on to state:

a philosopher will extend his views much further; having dried up the source from which flows the corruption of the public opinion, he will be sensible that the stream will go on gradually refining itself.(272-5)

While the idea of perfectibility pre-dates Godwin, the context of this perfectibilian reference strongly suggests, as its source, Godwin's perfectibilian response to the inevitable oppressions of individual freedom and private judgement of all forms of government (though, clearly, Wordsworth's republican stand does not go so far). The use of the word "philosopher" characterises the philosophic stance Wordsworth again adopts in his approach to challenging Watson's arguments. This is now immediately followed by a reference to the "coercive power" that "is of necessity so strong in all the old governments"(108) and Wordsworth's admission that

a people could not but at first make an abuse of that liberty which a legitimate republic supposes.(276-8)

The parallel with Godwin's chapter Of Coercion considered as a Temporary Expedient (109) is obvious. Godwin there speaks of the temporary evil of anarchy which may be the immediate result of the overthrow of despotism;

exactly what Wordsworth is discussing here. Wordsworth's interest in Godwin's perfectibilian stance can also be detected in Wordsworth's later accusation that Watson has sought to "lull the people of England" into a belief

that they have already arrived at perfection in the science of government,... (640-1)

The earlier metaphor of the "stream" being capable of further improvement is clearly at the back of Wordsworth's mind.

Godwin and Wordsworth's attitudes to violent reform.

Wordsworth and Godwin both admit the likelihood of a temporary anarchy resulting from the overthrow of despotism,(110) and this is only one example in a significant similarity of attitude to be detected in both writers in their attitude to violence and its role in the reformist or revolutionary process. On the question of revolution, Wordsworth challenges Watson:

What! have you so little knowledge of the nature of man as to be ignorant, that a time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty. Alas! the obstinacy and perversion of men is such that she is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence.(99-104)

The whole of this argument(111) again draws upon Godwin. For, whilst the view is often taken and was certainly promoted in the reviews of Political Justice (112) that Godwin rejected revolution, and a reading of Book IV, Chapters I and II (Of Resistance and Of Revolutions) gives some support to this view, it has already been shown earlier (113) that Godwin's view took account of the Lockean stand that, in certain circumstances, violent revolution might be justified. Indeed, a reading of the **whole** of the first edition of Political Justice and some attention to references to physical resistance in other chapters (which

were either deleted or heavily revised to tone them down in the second edition (114)) reveals a complex picture of Godwin's views on violent reform in this first edition.(115)

The first example of the somewhat ambivalent nature of Godwin's attitude to physical resistance (to which attention has already been drawn(116)) occurs in the chapter Of Resistance, where Godwin, after apparently rejecting the idea of physical resistance in favour of achieving change "in a milder and more liberal way", immediately states:

as to the doctrine of force in general, that is in no case to be employed but where every other means is ineffectual.(PJ,'93,I,196)(117)

This indeed points the tenor of many of Godwin's statements on the question of the use of force to promote reform, and suggests that the reviewers of this first edition of Political Justice disseminated, in their summaries, a rather more simplistic interpretation of Godwin's views on the use of force than is warranted. Only four pages further on, Godwin, speaking also of the "English constitution", asserts:

He that desires a revolution for its own sake is to be regarded as a madman. He that desires it from a thorough conviction of its usefulness and necessity has a claim upon us for candour and respect.

(PJ,'93,I,200)(118)

There are several other references to the possible necessity of the temporary expedient of force if it will lead to greater benefit in the long term; also, that the temporary result may be a state of affairs which not only resembles but might even surpass the violence and oppression of despotism before the new-found improvement arrives.(119)

Perusal of these passages from Godwin, which were to be heavily revised or mostly deleted in the 1796 revisions, suggests that Wordsworth's arguments derive strongly from Godwin's stance. Wordsworth's arguments concerning revolution have not been gleaned simply from the reviews of Political Justice which present Godwin as standing out unequivocally against violence; nor, I suggest, do they derive only from his own experiences in France in view of his recorded reaction to the excesses of the Terror.(120) Even the pattern of Wordsworth's language throughout this section with terms such as "benign", "best affections", "the very arms of despotism", "habit of oppression" are reminiscent of the language Godwin uses. Of course Paine does make reference to violence, but in a much more limited way, and does not anticipate Wordsworth, as does Godwin in accepting the possibility of a necessary temporary commotion as a prerequisite to a more permanent order.

Political and legislative institutions and processes.

Wordsworth's criticism of monarchy, aristocracy and the law have already been acknowledged as drawing upon Godwin, and it is appropriate here simply to acknowledge Roberts' very full and clear case regarding this,(121) and add some brief additional comment. In challenging Watson's sympathy for the executed Louis XVI, Wordsworth again challenges Watson on some fundamental premises : first of all that the situation of the monarch is an unnatural one. As is the case with several passages in the Letter, whilst there might seem to be echoes of Godwin's chapters on The Education of a Prince(122) (a chapter, which, we have seen, attracted considerable attention in the reviews of the first edition of Political Justice) and The Private Life of a Prince,(123) the concluding paragraph

of which speaks of "the unnatural office of a king", I find it impossible to distinguish with any certainty what has been derived from Godwin, and what from Paine. (124) Wordsworth's drawing upon Godwin up to this point is enough to suggest that he was equally aware of the views of both Paine and Godwin on this question. What is more important is Wordsworth's conclusion here:

Any other sorrow for the death of Louis is irrational and weak.(89-90)

The premise upon which Wordsworth bases this conclusion is more likely to come from Paine (since he seems to show some regret for the overturning of the law, for which Godwin shows scant regard), but the manner of the conclusion derives from Godwin, as it insists upon a "sorrow" that gains legitimacy only in so far as it is rational.

The long argument regarding reform of government(125) has attracted much attention; it is a passage where any attempt to extricate one influence out of Wordsworth's reading of radical texts, his links with radical circles, and his experience of revolutionary France is almost certainly doomed to failure. Reading Wordsworth's assertion that he appears "the advocate of republicanism", (126) my own conclusion is that although drawings upon Godwin could be cited, Wordsworth's sympathies are generally with Paine here.

Turning to the question of the law and its oppression, Wordsworth's argument develops over several pages on a theme on which Godwin obviously felt strongly.(127) The first echo of Godwin comes when Wordsworth states that

laws.... would be enacted only from an almost universal conviction of their utility...(320-2)

What Godwin had said is:

If on the contrary justice be a result flowing from the contemplation of all the circumstances of each individual case, if the only criterion of justice be general utility, the inevitable consequence is that, the more we have of justice, the more we shall have of truth, virtue and happiness.

(PJ,'93,II,771)(128)

The difference here is that Wordsworth is willing to accept and speak of "laws", but only if they are "the expression of the general will";(129) Godwin sees not the law but "justice" as the essential concept. But Wordsworth is seeking the same thing - a system of justice to the benefit of the greatest number, the same quasi-utilitarian stance that Godwin adopts.

When Wordsworth indicates his intention to "repeat some of the objections, which have been made to monarchy",... (360-1) it is clear that he is indeed repeating arguments drawn from Godwin amongst others. (130) Similarly, Wordsworth's sources for his arguments concerning "the distinction of wealth which will always attend superior talents and industry"(131) are no doubt many; Godwin being one of them:

But it has been alleged, "that we find among different men very different degrees of labour and industry, and that it is not just they should receive an equal reward".(PJ,'93,II,794)(132)

And when Wordsworth objects to a system of distribution of wealth designed

to compel the workman to be **content** with arbitrary wages, evidently too small from the necessity of legal enforcement of them.(451-3)

we are again reminded of Godwin's questioning of the division of labour and its consequences in human terms in such statements as:

The most industrious and active member of society is frequently with great difficulty able to keep his family from starving. (PJ,'93,II,794)
(133)

For accepting that the subject of the poor is a theme to be found constantly in

the writings of the period, this concern for individuals, especially the oppressed poor in Wordsworth's arguments against the law and its "forced disproportion of their possessions" is very reminiscent of Godwin's arguments (expressed more poignantly in the first edition) as early as Book I, Chapter V:

Vast numbers of their inhabitants are deprived of almost every accommodation that can render life tolerable or secure. (PJ,'93,I,34)
(134)

Also, in this chapter, Of the Aristocratical Character, in the paragraph entitled Aristocratical Distribution of Property, Godwin states:

No man can be a useful member of society, except so far as his talents are employed in a manner conducive to the general advantage.
(PJ,'93,II,484)

Indeed, almost all of Wordsworth's economic arguments here, and his arguments concerning oppression and equality are to be found in Godwin; (135) also Wordsworth's initial arguments on maldistribution of property, like Godwin's, are juxtaposed to a comment on "titles" (136), while his arguments against hereditary wealth (505-8 and 534) also strongly echo Godwin's argument:

Hereditary wealth is in reality a premium paid to idleness,...
(PJ,'93,II,804-5)

What, therefore, can be drawn from an examination of Wordsworth's Letter in relation to Godwin's Political Justice? To see the appearance of Political Justice as a major "influence" on Wordsworth at this time is to fly in the face of the evidence that is available; however, to see Wordsworth simply as having a "jackdaw" approach to Godwin's ideas is equally unfair. Wordsworth is no plagiarist, neither is he totally original nor particularly skilled in an ordered presentation of his arguments. But if we compare the order and structure of Watson's Appendix, we can see Wordsworth drawing upon the most appropriate

areas in Godwin's argument to counter that of Watson, yet often going beyond the limitations of Watson's views as Wordsworth adopts Godwin's philosophical method of argument and his politico-philosophical perspective.

Above all, what is evident in his response to Watson is his emerging deep concern with a **moral** standpoint that goes beyond revolutionary politics. He has, I suggest, been attracted by Godwin's humanitarian concern (137); and he has seen, in the philosopher's writings, the complexities which arise in any attempt to arrive at some kind of ordered response to oppression.

Wordsworth also has beliefs from which he chooses not to deviate : in his belief in Christianity, and in republicanism, and in the possibility of a more just legal system, he does not go as far as Godwin. Hence some of the difficulties in trying to apply Godwin's ideas.

The development, however, from Descriptive Sketches is of significance. Given the formal differences between the texts and granting Wordsworth's original intent in writing the poem; given also that Wordsworth had, in the poem, touched on many libertarian themes due to his recent experiences, what is new in the Letter is the depth of thought and the attempt at some systematised(138) and ordered thinking and argument from a quasi-philosophical stance. Above all, the emergence of an attempt at an argued, morally-based humanitarian concern which seeks to address itself to the contemporary concerns of humankind is what strikes the reader of this early text of Wordsworth. Godwin's recently published Political Justice has provided for Wordsworth a potential frame-

work(139) for the disparate radical and moral ideas we have seen merely touched upon in Descriptive Sketches.

Despite Wordsworth's adoption of a philosophical stance and tone to challenge Watson's case, and despite his sharing with Godwin an ambivalent attitude to violence in relation to reform as well as many aspects of Godwin's criticisms of "positive institutions", it is important to reiterate that Wordsworth's moral stance remains essentially conventional; as yet, he has not accepted (or perhaps not even understood the full implications of) the Godwinian philosophy which rejects all restrictions upon the central right of private judgement with the philosophical anarchism that resulted.

However, although the Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff was not published, Wordsworth's continuing politico-reformist intentions and his interest in the thinking of Godwin is much more clearly evidenced in his correspondence with William Mathews concerning his plans to publish a monthly periodical. Though there is no need to repeat comment already acknowledging the influence of Godwin on Wordsworth's plans(140) several points are worth making.

The earliest letter by Wordsworth to Mathews of November 1791 (EY,61-3) shows little more than an exchange of news, and Wordsworth acting as a sort of mentor to the indecisive Mathews over his future career, whilst the letter from Blois of May 19th, 1792(141) gives little information on Wordsworth's reactions to the Revolution;(142) there is certainly no evidence here as yet of the impact of Beaupuy, such as is claimed in The Prelude.(143)

It is in the letter of 23rd May, 1794,(EY,118-20) some considerable time after

Wordsworth has written Llandaff and also his first version of Salisbury Plain (144) that we have Wordsworth's first reference to the "monthly miscellany"

he plans with Mathews. His assertion of his "democratic principles" and his reaction to the treason trials and suspension of Habeas Corpus.(145) In this letter, we have, in Wordsworth's intention to make his publication

a vehicle of sound and exalted Morality.(EY,119)

a first hint of his drawing on Godwin, which is reinforced in the next sentence as Wordsworth complains of too many periodical miscellanies being

written to maintain the existence of prejudice and to disseminate error.
(EY,119)(146)

But it is in the letter of 8th June, 1794,(EY,123-9) that we find sustained evidence of Wordsworth's absorption of the ideas of Political Justice. As early as the fifth and sixth sentences of this letter, we find what is surely an effective summary of Godwin's stance, now being assumed by Wordsworth:

I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions and privileged orders of every species I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement: hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British constitution. (EY,123-4)

This is more than simply a reflection of the general radical outpourings at this time; it is an advance on Wordsworth's position in Llandaff as he makes clear that he is no longer interested in any modification of despotic governments, and cites "the progress of human improvement" as his key focus: this willingness to countenance the "most atrocious doctrines to be recommended"(EY,124) rather than "restrain the liberty of the press"(EY,125) reflects the more extravagant qualities of the first edition of Political Justice and its approach to reform, as does Wordsworth's sustained, tortuous and perhaps rather tortured debate in this letter over the likelihood of whether open revolution would effect reform.

He states,

The destruction of those institutions which I condemn appears to me to be hastening too rapidly. I recoil from the bare idea of a revolution; yet, if our conduct with reference to both foreign and domestic policy continues such as it has been for the last two years how is that dreadful event to be avoided?(EY,124)

He then admits that, although it is a writer's role **actively** to

convince the people that they can only be preserved from a convulsion by oeconomy in the administration of the public purse and a gradual and and constant reform of those abuses...(EY,124)

abuses, which, he points out, can

render even a revolution desireable.(EY,124)

Again, a few lines further on, he speaks of the need to

diffuse by every method a knowledge of those rules of political justice,... (EY,124)

so that

if a revolution must afflict us, they alone can mitigate its horrors and establish freedom with tranquillity.(EY,124)

This is the very stuff of Godwin; of the first edition of Political Justice with its ambivalent attitude to revolution.(147) Equally, Wordsworth's wish to identify himself as an "enlightened friend of mankind"(148) and his commitment to

Freedom of inquiry...(EY,125)

reflect Godwin's manner of philosophico-political reform, just as Godwin's rather naively expressed belief in truth in the first edition (149) is reflected in Wordsworth's claim: "truth must be victorious."(EY,125)

So, also, his warning

I severely condemn all inflammatory addresses to the passions of men, even when it is intended to direct those passions to a good purpose. . .

(EY,125)
reflects Godwin's own reservations over political associations in the pursuance
of reform, e.g. his warning that we must

distinguish between informing the people and inflaming them.
(PJ,'93,I,205)(150)

And when Wordsworth, referring to "the suspension of **habeas corpus** act"
(EY,126) claims

We must then look for protection entirely amongst the dispassionate
advocates of liberty and discussion;...(EY,126)

there can be little doubt that, whether or not Wordsworth was aware at that time
of the role of Godwin in the treason trials (which seems very unlikely), he is
drawing upon the stance Godwin adopts in his approach to reform.

Reflecting both Wordsworth and Godwin's early contact with the dissenting
tradition, we see in the poet's rather more pragmatic discussion of the likely
audiences and sources of patronage for his periodical his assertion that the clergy
of the Church of England "will turn from us", whilst

dissenters...[or at least some of them]..would receive a work like ours
with pleasure.(EY,126)

And in his commitment to

advancement of the human mind in moral knowledge...(EY,126)

we hear the influence of Godwin stridently; and expressed in a potentially more
systematic statement of intentions.

Yet, as seen in the earlier discussion of the role played by Wordsworth at the time
of the treason trials,(151) the next letter, only five months later,(7th Nov.,1794,
(EY,134-6) shows Wordsworth retreating from his position, and by December
1794, it is a much more "mellowed" reformer we hear as Wordsworth now states

that the experiences and acquittals at the trials

will convince bigotted enemies to our present constitution that it contains parts upon which too high a value cannot be set.(EY,137)

There is surely a strong irony here as Wordsworth, so contrary to the view expressed in his June letter, apparently sees the responsibility for the acquittals lying with the processes of law, not with the arguments of Cursory Strictures penned by Godwin who had expressed no faith at all in the process of the law.

Perhaps the last point to be made, significantly, is that it is in his last letter to Mathews (of 21st March 1796) that Wordsworth makes the rather biting (and much mis-quoted) comment on the Preface to the second edition of Political Justice.

What does all of this mean? Does it suggest that Wordsworth, after having read and drawn upon Godwin in Llandaff, and then set in train plans to publish a periodical motivated by Godwin's approach to reform(152) simply turned his back on all of this, that he, to quote from The Prelude:

Yielded up moral questions in despair?(1805,X,900)

Such a view is clearly simplistic and erroneous, and it is unlikely that that claim in The Prelude refers to 1795-6. Yet there is a point to be made here. For, despite Wordsworth's later collaboration with Coleridge on The Convention of Cintra, or even his earlier fragment known as the Essay on Morals, (153) his announcement that he intended not to pursue his plans with Mathews over the periodical does mark the end of a stage in Wordsworth's radicalism. His overt interest in political radicalism and any intention of playing an active role has been increasingly

coloured by his interest in moral issues, especially as related to his developing human concern, and it is to the moral and humanitarian dimensions of Wordsworth's and Godwin's thinking that we must now turn.

Recognising, therefore, the limited role that Godwin and the first edition of Political Justice has played so far in the systematising of Wordsworth's ideas, it is appropriate to return to 1793, and to trace the development of Wordsworth's earliest versions of what have come to be known as the Salisbury Plain poems, in relation not only to Political Justice, but also to Godwin's fictional evocation of the principles of that work, in Caleb Williams.

CHAPTER THREE : WORDSWORTH'S "love of mankind" - THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORAL HUMANITARIANISM IN THE EARLY POETRY.

Part 1: The Claims of The Prelude.

My present theme
Is to retrace the way that led me on
Through Nature to the love of human-kind,...
The Prelude
1805,Bk.VIII,586-588

A very small but significant textual change between the versions of The Prelude of 1805 and 1850 in Book VIII points the need to question Wordsworth's claims regarding the development of his humanitarianism. In the 1805 text, Wordsworth, speaking of his human concern, writes

until not less
Than three-and-twenty summers had been told,
Was man in my affections and regards
Subordinate to her,her awful forms
And viewless agencies-...(1)

Wordsworth is here identifying the time when his interest in nature was made "subordinate" to his concern for man. By 1832 (published in 1850), Wordsworth has changed this to "two-and-twenty summers" (my emphasis). (2) A small change; yet the dating is critical.(3) The 1805 text refers to the summer of 1793: after the publication, and Wordsworth's first reading, of Political Justice, and his writing of Llandaff. In particular, it refers to that period, that summer, of his composition of the first and (as we shall see) the most overtly and clumsily "Godwinian" version of Salisbury Plain; a poem which offers the first real evidence in Wordsworth's poetry of his concern for man. This poem is obviously important to him as evidenced by its mention at the close of Book XII of the

1805 Prelude (discussed more fully in Chapter 6).(4) The dating given in the 1850 version of course, is equally critical, since it places this claimed development in Wordsworth's thinking during the period of his brief friendship with Beaupuy (April to July, 1792); which fits neatly with the impression Wordsworth has tried to create regarding the seminal influence of Beaupuy in the development of his human concern.

It is futile to base an argument wholly upon which date is likely to be the more reliable; obviously, in 1804, when Wordsworth was writing this section, he was nearer to the events than at the time of his revision, but the problem of Wordsworth's memory in relation to events in his life is well documented. Just as certain tensions in The Prelude have raised questions regarding Wordsworth's presentation of the development of his radicalism, so a revision such as this, and other tensions in the poem, warrant some re-examination of Wordsworth's claims regarding the development of his humanitarianism. Such an examination must focus initially, at least briefly, upon Wordsworth's claimed intentions in writing The Prelude and also on Book VIII.

In a letter to Francis Wrangham of late January or early February 1804, Wordsworth, writes:

At present, I am engaged in a poem on my own earlier life which will take five parts or books to complete, three of which are nearly finished.
(EY, 436)

Then, in a letter of 6th March, he tells Coleridge:

When this next book is done which I shall begin in two or three days time [referring to Book V of the five-book Prelude] I shall consider the work as finished.(EY, 452)

Yet, by the end of the same month, after sending off the five-book version to

Coleridge, Wordsworth again writes to him indicating that he has started to compose further material for the poem.(5) Exact dating of the composition of Book VIII is possible;(6) it can be ascribed to October 1804, but it is not being unfair to treat that book (along with the others composed over late 1804 to Spring 1805) as conceived as additions to the intermediate five-book version(7) of The Prelude (mentioned in the letter quoted above), itself a major extension of what we now recognise as the two-part Prelude of 1798-99.

It is, doubtless, partly the haste with which Wordsworth executed these additional books(8) which contributes to the loose and repetitious structure of Book VIII.(9) However, another reason for the rather erratic quality of this Book can be seen if a close study is made of what Wordsworth is trying to assert regarding the development in himself of that rather vague idea to which he refers in the title of this Book as "love of mankind".(10) As will be seen, Wordsworth's earliest references to this subject in Books VI and VII demonstrate the same weaknesses, as he relates his gradual awakening humanitarian interest to those crucial "spots of time", (11) so important to his own view of his development. The title, Retrospect thus gives Book VIII a pivotal role in the development of his human concern, following his claims in Books VI and VII, and preceding Books IX to XI on the subjects of his experiences in France, his alleged moral crisis and subsequent imaginative restoration.

However, if instead of simply accepting the claims of Wordsworth, we again compare these with the evidence available in his poetry and prose of the period concerned (that part of the development of a poet's mind available to students of Wordsworth), it will be seen that important questions are again raised. These

questions, raised in Part 1 of this chapter, regarding the structure and architectonics as well as the stylistic presentation of Wordsworth's claims regarding the development of his humanitarianism, will be set against evidence in Part 2, demonstrating in the Salisbury Plain poems a search for a philosophic and moral humanitarianism that does derive from Godwin. That this fails to be acknowledged by Wordsworth continues to raise further suspicions that Wordsworth's "love of mankind" as presented in the landscape of memory of The Prelude is an imaginative recreation which makes The Prelude no less a great poem, but which sheds some doubt on it as truly representing the development of this poet's mind.

The Prelude: theme and intention.

Examination of the intention behind Wordsworth's writing of The Prelude as well as the history of its textual development attests to Wordsworth's wrestling with the idea behind the poem. This also involves, in some measure, the part played by Coleridge, (12) one that is very difficult to evaluate due to the lack of evidence from the "notes" he was supposed to provide as well as the very fragmentary nature of other evidence. Such comments as that by Coleridge on the two-part Prelude of 1799 as being Wordsworth's "divine self-biography" (12th October, 1799), (13) and then his reference (26th March, 1804) to

the first two parts of the biographical, or philosophico-biographical Poem to be pre-fixed or annexed to The Recluse.

show Coleridge fairly confident regarding the nature and purpose of The Prelude.

Yet it is difficult in this correspondence to find a similar confidence in Wordsworth's statements regarding his own intent. Despite Coleridge's comment quoted

above, Wordsworth restricts any intention of writing a philosophical poem for his plans for The Recluse, a "moral and Philosophical Poem" (letter to De Quincey of 6th March 1804, EY, 454). He does inform Wrangham, as mentioned earlier, of his intention to write "a Poem on my earlier life", and it is, indeed, such phrases as "my own earlier life" (again in the letter to De Quincey) or; in the same letter, simply "my own life", but with the qualification that of the three planned poems (The Prelude, The Recluse and The Excursion), that "on my own life" is "the least important of the three" that characterises his own description of The Prelude at this time.

However, in correspondence with Sir George Beaumont in the period approaching completion of the 1805 Prelude, Wordsworth first refers to the poem's theme as "the growth of my own mind" (25th December, 1804, EY, 518); and then, on 1st May 1805, informing Beaumont that he is within two Books of finishing his poem, a note of uneasiness enters the letter when, admitting to a planned overall length of not "much less than 9000 lines", Wordsworth exclaims:

an alarming length! and a thing unprecedented in Literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit as you will know well, that has induced [me] to this, but real humility; ...
(EY, 586)

Humility or not, Wordsworth is clearly self-conscious about it, a tension which is reflected in the genesis and structuring of the poem, not least when Wordsworth is presenting the development of his humanitarianism.

However misleading(14) the Preface to the later Excursion may or may not be, it reinforces a sense of Wordsworth's anxiety over the theme of the poem which began as the 1798-99 Prelude. By 1805, the first Book of that text reinforces this

view. Even as he speculates on the theme of his poem, Wordsworth writes:

Sometimes it suits me better to shape out
Some tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts,
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, with interchange of gentler things.
But deadening admonitions will succeed,
And the whole beauteous fabric seems to lack
Foundation, and withal appears throughout
Shadowy and insubstantial. (1805, I, 220-8)

Then, after a reference to his aspirations regarding The Recluse, (15) he quickly reverts to some of the very earliest material composed at Goslar, somewhat revised, but essentially recognisable as one of the earliest recorded fragments from MS JJ (which was eventually to contribute to what is now recognised as the two-part Prelude of 1799):

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this didst thou,
O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
Near my "sweet birthplace", didst thou, beauteous stream,
Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
Which with its steady cadence tempering
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm
Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves? (1805, I, 271-285)

Here the confidence of Tintern Abbey (so recently completed and strongly evoked both stylistically and thematically in the JJ manuscript version of this passage) re-asserts itself. Yet even in the development of that earliest form of The Prelude, Wordsworth's revisions show uncertainty regarding the nature and purpose of the poem he was composing, as can be seen, for instance, from the lines which, by 1805, read:

Meanwhile my hope has been that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years,
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power

May spur me on, in manhood now mature
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
Be vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
Harsh judgements if I am so loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things,...(1805,I,648-660)

This part of the conclusion of Book I underwent several revisions(16) even in its early stage;(17) MS JJ, the earliest recorded manuscript of the developing two-part Prelude, has no record of these lines except for what appears to be part of an intended conclusion to the poem.(18) Yet by MS 15, we find introduced into what is now emerging as the closing of the first book an apostrophe by Wordsworth suggesting the concern he has for the theme of his developing poem:

To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was fram[ed]
Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
Harsh judgements if I am so loth to quit
Those recollected hours...(19)

Wordsworth's self-consciousness here is reflected in the "dread" of "Harsh judgements", (not evident in the JJ version, to which he has now added). And this is further reinforced when Wordsworth, in the same manuscript, further revises the passage:

Reproaches from my former years, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honourable toil. Yet, should it be
That this is but an impotent desire
That I by such enquiry am not taught
To understand myself,...(20)

The reference to "Reproaches from my former years" reinforces this sense of self-conscious tension in his act of creation here.(21) (This version is consolidated in MS U and MS 16.(22))

Even such a brief summary as this can scarcely conceal Wordsworth's unease over the danger that his poem might be seen merely as self-indulgent.

"Spots of Time": humanitarianism and the architectonics of re-invention.

One of the ways in which, throughout the development of The Prelude, from the 1798-99 two part version, through the proposed and almost completed five-book version, to the 1805 text, Wordsworth manipulates the perception of his development is through the device of the "spots of time". In his moving of the critical "spots of time" passage from Part I of the 1799 Prelude(23) first of all to the final book of the five book version of The Prelude (with which he had intended to conclude that version(24)), and then to Book XI of the 1805 text,(lines 257ff) we see the wavering hand of Wordsworth which architectonically undermines what was supposed to be the early focus of philosophical unity of his earliest version of The Prelude, and which points once again to his unease and his desire for some philosophical coherence in his poem.(25)

It is indeed this shift of his essential "spots of time" passage and the unease felt in the early drafts and the first book of The Prelude which draw our attention to his attempts to explain the development of his human concern. His assertion that it is not his intention to

parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square;...

indicating a knowledge of

the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed;...(26)

must be respected and understood for what it is; not a snipe at Godwiniam

"reason", but as an explanation of Wordsworth's belief in the imagination's unifying perception, which the idea of the "spots of time" was intended to explain from a coherent philosophic basis **in advance** in the earliest version of the poem.

MS RV shows(27) that the reference to

.....that false secondary power by which
In weakness we create distinctions,...
(1798/99 Reading Text, Second Part, 251-2/1805, II, 221-2)

is clearly an addition and very much a secondary thought to a developing argument in the poem, the main point of which is to try to justify Wordsworth's presentation of his theme in his poem. The result again reflects his unease over the intention behind and the philosophic basis of his poem. Such an addition was unnecessary, having the effect of disturbing the movement of the poem in one of its more triumphant passages as it stood in 1799, a disturbance exacerbated by the further addition in 1805 of the unexplained and ill-contextualised reference to science.(28)

In both of the revisions discussed above, Wordsworth's intention becomes clear if we consider their implications for earlier incidents in The Prelude: namely, to disavow any debt to a conventional or theoretically based source of inspiration in the poem, and to vindicate the roles of nature and the imagination as being the original source of his human concern. Yet, as will be shown, this was simply not the case, and it is not difficult to identify certain passages in The Prelude which betray Wordsworth's uneasy awareness of this.

For instance, Wordsworth identifies in himself towards the end of Book IV (Summer Vacation) a growing awareness of humanity, as evidenced in the lines:

A freshness also found I at this time

In human life, the life I mean of those
Whose occupations really I loved.(1805,IV,181-3)

or, more extensively:

Nor do I less remember to have felt
Distinctly manifested at this time,
A dawning, even as of another sense,
A human-heartedness about my love
For objects hitherto the gladsome air
Of my own private being, and no more-
Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit
Or angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
Might love in individual happiness.(1805,IV,222-30)

But these assertions seem to come from nowhere. It is surely not adequate, as critics have done,(29) merely to admit puzzlement over exactly what Wordsworth is trying to distinguish here; it has to be said that the problem is not simply that his account of those "plain-living people"(1805,IV,200-7) and the other descriptions of individuals in these passages lack conviction and feels insubstantial. Any attempt to find proof of this "dawning...of another sense" in early texts meets with little success (perhaps not surprisingly in light of the very few and immature poems he had written by that time). More significant, the placing of these claims in this book seem much more of a prelude to the "dedicated spirit" passage and the incident of the discharged soldier which conclude this book; thus allowing Wordsworth to reinforce his view of himself as the solitary observer who developed his love of humankind out of such observations, rather than acknowledging any other influence.

The episode of the discharged soldier, the original version of which is to be found in the Alfoxden Note Book,(30) is the first of Wordsworth's extended descriptions of solitary figures on which he relies so much to explain the development of his humanitarianism and the role of memory and imagination in the conversion

of observation into true perception. The fact that some kind of original equivalent of this incident, dating from approximately 1798, exists is important, showing Wordsworth drawing upon an emerging poetic vision coincident with that of the earliest edition of Lyrical Ballads as well as the nascent Prelude.

Wordsworth's placing of this incident in Book IV of the 1805 Prelude is unfortunate, (31) following the very brief introduction,

From many wanderings that have left behind
Remembrances not lifeless, I will here
Single out one, then pass to other themes.(1805,IV,361-3)

This, immediately followed by the description of Wordsworth's solitary wandering prior to spotting the discharged soldier (an introduction he felt a need to extend by the 1850 text,(1850,IV,353ff) albeit still unsatisfactorily, and after several attempts at revision(32)), renders this incident rather lacking in motivation. It is here that the revised position of the "spots of time" causes difficulties, for if this incident is intended to show how Wordsworth's human concern was awakened and nurtured by such events, then, with no advance warning of the intended significance of such events (such as the original earlier placing of the "spots of time" passage would have achieved), the poem fails to make its point here. The discharged soldier episode sits uneasily where it has been placed, and for anyone who has read the much earlier 1793 and 1795 versions of the Salisbury Plain poems, this incident obtrudes and points up the tension in the poem that Wordsworth clearly recognised and sought to remedy in his struggles with those later revisions.

Apart from a very brief and rather vague reference to "mankind" in Book VI,(1805,VI,469ff) Wordsworth does not return to this theme until Book VII,

where his description of the prostitute's "blasphemy" (1805, VII, 413ff) seems more an extension of the account of his time in London, after returning from France, and the effect of that on his consciousness. This is rather abruptly and self-consciously concluded, and is followed by an equally self-conscious and rather obtrusive opening to the next passage:

I quit this painful theme, enough is said
To show what thoughts must often have been mine...(1805, VII, 436-7)

This uneasy conclusion to what Wordsworth presumably considered to be one of the important "spots of time" in his developing concern for mankind is mirrored again in Book VII in the account of the blind beggar, where Wordsworth, in a rather unconvincing account of his feelings, (33) turns equally unconvincingly to open a new section with the lines:

Though reared upon the base of outward things,
These chiefly are such structures as the mind
Builds for itself. Scenes different there are-
Full-formed - which take, with small internal help,
Possession of the faculties:...(1805, VII, 624-8)

and proceeds to catalogue a number of such "scenes".

So far, Wordsworth's attempts to use his "spots of time" and the workings of the imagination upon memory as the locus for his humanitarian concern seems to be responsible only for the "hiccups" it introduces into the flow of the poem.

It is, in fact, only towards the final lines of Book VII that we find evidence of Wordsworth attempting to indicate what it was that he gained from the experience of London: (34)

O, blank confusion, and a type not false
Of what the mighty city is itself
To all, except a straggler here and there-
To the whole swarm of its inhabitants-

An undistinguishable world to men,
The slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
Living amid the same perpetual flow
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end-
Oppression under which even highest minds
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.(1805,VII,696-707)

Whilst there is an energy here, both aesthetic and moral, which derives in great measure from the scenes he has just described, this rather didactic reflective summary suggests a very ambivalent attitude in Wordsworth: for there is as much disgust over the sight of the "trivial" activities he observed as humanitarian sympathy with the lot of those labouring under such "oppression". Even in his protest against the lack of concern for the individual and the effect upon even "the highest minds" (concerns that Godwin had also expressed in Political Justice), this judgement is unconvincing in its expression, not least because of the impressiveness of the description by Wordsworth earlier of those trivialities he now wishes to condemn. Frankly, he sounds rather a self-righteous spoilsport!

This all undermines his claim, a few lines later that

though the picture weary out the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath.....
.....a feeling of the whole.(1805,VII,708-13)

Wordsworth presents the cacophonies of London enthusiastically enough to outweigh the humanitarian perceptions that this spot of time is supposed to have brought. We are not convinced.

Book VIII.

Book VIII,entitled Retrospect, Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind. can

now be examined from two perspectives: Wordsworth's attempt, in that Book, to consolidate a perception that his love of nature was what led in some mysterious way to his "love of mankind"; secondly, his apparent anxiety to establish a firm sense of his human concern being a powerful, if perhaps latent, force within him prior to his "radical" period. The importance of the latter point is that he can then explain some aspects of his involvement in radical life and his contact for example with Godwinian philosophy as a temporary aberration from which he recovered, partly through the help of Dorothy and partly because he had this essential foundation of a love of nature and mankind which his re-vitalised imagination restored.

In view, therefore of the importance of this Book, its failure to achieve its purpose is even more significant. From the opening lines of the Book, Wordsworth's inexplicable resort to a pastoral and idealised view of man seems totally unjustified in view of the fact that Wordsworth must have been aware of how untrue a reflection this was of the life of shepherds:

The elements, and seasons in their change,
Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there
The heart of man- a district on all sides
The fragrance breathing of humanity,
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object;... (1805, VIII, 148-53)

Nor is it valid either in terms of imagination or memory to present such a scene without laying himself open to the charge of sentimentalising. His discomfort over the whole passage can be seen in the changes and deletions at the opening of this section between 1805 and the final 1850 version. (35) There is further evidence of this in his self-conscious admission of his selective approach to what he is portraying here ("I have singled out/Some moments" (174-5)), his attempts

to deny any "Arcadian"(36) quality in what he has presented (despite the lines quoted above), and then the very unsatisfactory "parable" of the shepherd that follows (deleted by 1850, Wordsworth presumably having recognised later how poorly all of this illustrated the point he was trying to make).

What strikes the reader about this last lengthy description of the shepherd's life (lines 222ff) is indeed how poorly it portrays what it was intended to,

Man suffering among awful powers and forms:
..... enough to make
The imagination restless...(1805,VIII,213-5)

compared with the humanitarian fervour of even the earliest and least effective version of Salisbury Plain. As in the case of the discharged soldier, there is a strong impression here of Wordsworth trying to fill a gap in the experiential development he intends to portray; a gap caused by his unwillingness to acknowledge the humanitarianism that, as we shall see, exists in Salisbury Plain in a form overtly derivative of the thinking from William Godwin.

The result of this opening section of Book VIII is that, by line 410, when Wordsworth informs us,

Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before mine eyes,
And thus my heart at first was introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature;...(1805,VIII,410-4)

we are unconvinced by the experience Wordsworth purports to share with us, and we feel the heavy hand of a self-justifying and retrospectively imposed didacticism. At the same time, it is becoming more and more clear that, for Wordsworth, some explanation or re-invention of how his humanitarianism developed is seen as a crucial theme of this great poem; one which he is

determined, that somehow, he must address before coming to deal with the period of his links with and experience of radical thought. Yet any reader will search in vain for some evidence, contemporary with the period Wordsworth is describing here, to support his repeated and self-conscious assertions on this theme.

As if he were aware of such developing suspicion in his readers, Wordsworth issues a clear challenge in the next section:

Call ye these appearances -
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man,
A shadow, a delusion?- ye who are fed
By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,...(1805,VIII,428-32)

It is an important challenge, in which Wordsworth rejects mere empiricism as the basis of perception and asserts the power of the perception of the ideal (in this case, with reference to man) as a necessary prerequisite to understanding of, as well as an ability to cope with, the more temporal accidents of the "coarse manners, vulgar passions"(1805,VIII,450-62) around us.

It is a bold assertion, and the language and rhythms of Wordsworth's verse betray no uncertainty in this passage. Though it is difficult to find contemporary evidence in the juvenilia and early poetry to support this, it is fairly easy to see a reason for the confident, even defiant tone of his challenge here. Wordsworth has, here, laid the foundations of a perceptive awareness, guided (perhaps unconsciously at this stage) by the vision of the imagination which, although it will suffer the storms of the events recorded in Books IX to XI, will ultimately provide the foundation for the "imagination restored" of the final books. For Wordsworth, the flaws and tensions in his argument up to this point melt away

in the face of his vision of how the closing books and argument of his fast-emerging poem would be structured from here on; the relative speed and likely order of composition bearing this out.(37)

It is also worth noting that immediately after this section, Wordsworth's note of caution returns:

Yet do not deem, my friend, though thus I speak
Of man as having taken in my mind
A place thus early which might almost seem
Preeminent, that it was really so.(1805,VIII,472-5)

Wordsworth returns to the subject of the Book in hand, perhaps conscious of the exaggerated confidence of the challenge in the previous lines, and concludes with the statement regarding the "three and twenty summers" as marking his recognition of the supreme importance of humanity. In its full context as discussed here, Wordsworth's choice of dating becomes even more critical.

Nevertheless, Wordsworth's confidence in his view of nature having led to his love of mankind re-asserts itself, to the detriment of the poem, as he informs us yet again of his increasing awareness of this feeling(38), and even at this stage he tells us:

It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
Common to all?) that, seeing, I essayed
To give relief, began to deem myself
A moral agent,....(1805,VIII,665-8)

Even if this refers to Wordsworth's Cambridge days, as it would seem to, not only is it as obscure as the passages discussed earlier, it also is used to introduce into Wordsworth's account of his developing love of mankind an overtly moral dimension, which, as we shall see, becomes such an important, but highly derivative, feature of his early poetry. Again, there is no other contemporary

textual support for this; Wordsworth's juxtaposed portrayal of London scarcely supports the rather idealised or reverential view of man he claims to have developed. We find it difficult to accept the logic of his belief that such experiences and "the history" of his "native land" (line 770) gave him a sense of man's endurance and gave him "individual remembrances" (line 787), which, through the process of imagination, produced "vital functions of the soul" (line 789) resulting in elevating thoughts of human nature".

It sounds an unlikely alchemy! We remain unconvinced, and read with some surprise Wordsworth's assertion that all of these experiences did not cause his belief in "what we may become" (line 807) to waver. Such optimism seems unjustified, but its presentation in undisguised "perfectibilian" terms, so reminiscent of Godwin who was the most popular (though not the only) exponent of that philosophy, makes us even more suspicious about this repetitious, contradictory Book, a Book which closes with the touching and famous portrayal of the man with the sickly child which, for all its undoubted power and poignancy, scarcely justifies or explains the "unity of man" (line 827) or the optimistic pathos of "human creatures..." in "that vast abiding place"

Profusely sown with individual sights
Of courage, and integrity, and truth,
And tenderness,...(1805, VIII, 837-41)

We conclude Book VIII less than satisfied with the integrity of Wordsworth's conclusion:

Thus from a very early age, O friend,
My thoughts had been attracted more and more
By slow gradations towards human-kind,...(1805, VIII, 860-2)

Even given the overriding structural implications of Wordsworth's idea of the

"spots of time", those "slow gradations" often seem more like haphazard remembrings linked by obscure passages of "philosophising"

If such a criticism seems over- harsh or simplistic, or, above all, open to Wordsworth's own challenge of being inspired by the "dead letter", it is worth drawing attention to Wordsworth's brief opening to Book IX where, we see his relief at being able to turn from such retrospective philosophising (reflected in the tortuous syntax and halting rhythms of the opening lines) to the energy and force of the narrative which, however painful in terms of the actual experiences recorded, lends itself to the blank verse he so clearly enjoys writing:

But now we start afresh: I feel
An impulse to precipitate my verse.
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Whene'er it comes,...(1805,IX,9-12)

It is, however, a long time before Wordsworth returns to the subject of his human concern; for, with the exception of a rather obtrusive reminder to the reader to note that the events of the French Revolution were being observed by

one tutored thus, who had been formed
To thought and moral feeling in the way
This story hath described,...(1805,IX,243-5)

Wordsworth is taken up with the question of his involvement in the Revolution and his response to it, and also in the radical thought of the period from which begins to emerge the human and moral concern which is to colour the poetry he is to write between 1793 and 1798. It is to this period and to the earliest of those poems that we now turn to examine what Wordsworth has chosen generally to ignore, to distort, and to challenge with his thesis in The Prelude of nature's nurture of his humanitarianism. It is to Godwin and the importance of Godwin's writings and thought in Wordsworth's attempts to develop and establish a

philosophical and moral basis for his human concern that we now turn in an attempt to offer an alternative view to that presented by Wordsworth himself in The Prelude, an explanation which reinforces the view that the tensions in his own purported view are caused, in no small part, by his attempts to disguise what other earlier texts clearly demonstrate: the role played by the thinking of William Godwin in his poetry.

Part 2: The Salisbury Plain Poems of 1793 and 1795.

Whilst Wordsworth criticism has increasingly acknowledged the relationship between the Salisbury Plain poems(39) and the ideas of Godwin, such recognition has not included the important role of Godwin's ideas in the earliest version, the 1793-94 Salisbury Plain, though most recent commentators now acknowledge the influence of Godwin in the revised Adventures on Salisbury Plain of 1795.(40) However, even in the case of the latter poem, the role of Godwin's novel, Caleb Williams has not had the attention it merits, though it is now increasingly recognised as an important source for the revised poem.(41) Above all, the full significance of Godwin, not only in Wordsworth's poetry of protest,(42) but in the poetry of suffering(43) has not been recognised (and, of course, as is now becoming clear, would not have been acknowledged by Wordsworth himself). Without doubt, the unwillingness of earlier critics to recognise the role of Godwin in the protest of the earlier Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff and Salisbury Plain derives as partly a critical reluctance to disturb Wordsworth's own insistence on the greater importance in his development of lived experience rather than theoretical principles. One reason critics seem more willing in their handling of the second version of the poem to admit a significant role for Godwin may be that, in considering that version, they have the evidence of Wordsworth's letters to Mathews (with their Godwinian import), and the start of social intercourse between Godwin and Wordsworth. (44) Yet to understand the role Godwin played only as an alternative to the explanations of Wordsworth in terms of his own lived experience is both to simplify the complexities of the relationship, and to play into Wordsworth's hands.

The purpose of this chapter is not only to draw upon these more recent critics who have accepted Godwin's influence on the 1795 Adventures on Salisbury Plain, but also to establish the influence of Godwin on the earlier Salisbury Plain. Only then can the nature of Wordsworth's borrowings and the relationship between the poet's experiential sources and his use of Godwin's ideas be established. What emerges will be a revised conception of the role of Godwin in Wordsworth's emerging poetry of suffering; his nascent moral humanitarianism.

The Origins of Salisbury Plain: the claims of the Fenwick Notes.

Before turning to the text of Salisbury Plain, it is necessary to deal with the question of dating and Wordsworth's claims regarding the origins of Salisbury Plain. There seems little doubt from the Fenwick Notes to Guilt and Sorrow and The Female Vagrant(45) and from the researches of the most recent editors of Wordsworth that the composition of this first version can be ascribed to the period 1793-94;(46) within a year of the publication of the first edition of Political Justice when Godwin's reputation was high and his book and ideas were being circulated widely. Less certain, in my view, is exactly what inspiration lay behind the poem. Most commentators (47) have been content to accept Wordsworth's explanations of the origins of the poem as recorded in the Fenwick Notes. In the Note to The Female Vagrant, he states briefly:

The chief incident of [The Female Vagrant], more particularly the description of her feelings on the Atlantic are taken from life.(48)

The Note to Guilt and Sorrow elaborates on this:

All that relates to the suffering as a sailor's wife in America, and her condition of mind during the voyage home, were faithfully taken from the report made to me of her own case by a friend who had been subjected to the same trials and affected in the same way.(49)

Without doubting completely the reliability of these statements, but already cautious of a poet who at the much earlier period of the 1805 Prelude has already shown a taste for representing observation and the spoken word as virtually the only source he is willing to acknowledge in his own poetic development, certain problems emerge from Wordsworth's claims. The Note to The Female Vagrant suggests that Wordsworth derived from life merely the skeleton of a plot on which to hang his ideas and attitudes. The Note to Guilt and Sorrow seems to go further, suggesting that much of the detail came from Wordsworth's own memory - but in which version? The Note seems to suggest the 1793-4 Salisbury Plain, which differs considerably from the two later versions. Yet the Note is attached to Guilt and Sorrow, though perhaps only because this was the first occasion of publication of the complete poem. There is an area of confusion here, and I would tend to give greater credence to the Female Vagrant Note, a view which internal examination of the poem will bear out.

Another issue is Wordsworth's account in the Advertisement to Guilt and Sorrow of how he was inspired to write what must have been the 1793 Salisbury Plain:

Not less than one-third of the following poem, though it has from time to time been altered in the expression, was published so far back as the year 1798, under the title of The Female Vagrant. The whole was written before the close of the year 1794, and I will detail...the circumstances under which it was produced.

During the latter part of the summer of 1793, having passed a month in the Isle of Wight, in view of the fleet which was then preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war, I left the place with melancholy forebodings. The American war was still fresh in memory. The struggle which was beginning, and which many thought would be brought to a speedy close by the irresistible arms of Great Britain being added to those of the allies, I was assured in my own mind would be of long continuance, and productive of distress and misery beyond all possible calculation. This conviction was pressed upon me by having been a witness, during a long residence in revolutionary France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country. After leaving the Isle of Wight, I

spent two days in wandering on foot over Salisbury Plain.....
The monuments and traces of antiquity, scattered in abundance over that region, led me unavoidably to compare what we know or guess of those remote times with certain aspects of modern society, and with calamities, principally those consequent upon war, to which, more than other classes of men, the poor are subject. In those reflections, joined with particular facts that had come to my knowledge, the following stanzas originated.
(50)

This, of course, reflects the account in Book XII of The Prelude (51) of Wordsworth's visionary experience on the Plain of Sarum; but two points are worth raising here. First, where in either the poetry of Wordsworth written in the period 1793-94 or even in his letters do we see evidence of what he claims about his state of mind at this time and what he had seen in France? There is very little text from this period, but what there is scarcely supports what he claims in this much later Advertisement (written when his beliefs had changed fundamentally). As we have seen, even in Descriptive Sketches, in those clumsy final ninety lines describing the "Fair favoured region", (DS, 1793, 740ff) Wordsworth appears to support even violent overthrow of oppression:

-Tho' Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise
Red on his hills his beacon's comet blaze;
Bid from on high his lonely cannon sound,
And on ten thousand hearths his shout rebound;...(774-7)

In Llandaff, Wordsworth's admission of the possible need for violent upheaval is clear enough as we have seen him drawing upon Godwin's acceptance of the possible the need for temporary upheaval to secure further permanent improvement.

And a study of Wordsworth's sparse correspondence of the period 1792-94, before completion of the second version of the Salisbury Plain poems, shows a similar picture. Wordsworth's references to the war, or even to violent upheaval

while he was in revolutionary France, its morality and the resultant suffering, are very few. There are, in fact, only two letters written from France: the first from Orleans, dated 19th December, 1791, unsurprisingly, gives little evidence of any real revolutionary fervour or response to what he sees:

We are all perfectly quiet here and likely to continue so; I find almost all of the people of any opulen (ceare) aristocrates and all the rest are democrates. I had imagined that there were some people of wealth and circumstance favourers of the revolution, but there is not one to be found.. I have every prospect of liking this place extremely well...(EY,70)

The second, from Blois, of 19th May, 1792 initially introduces the events of France almost "by the way".(52) Then ,in the same letter, we have some mention of Wordsworth's feelings in relation to the calamities of war, admittedly only a report he had heard:

The horrors excited by the relation of the events consequent upon the commencement of hostilities, is general. Not but there are men who felt a gloomy satisfaction from a measure which seemed to put the patriot army out of a possibility of success. An ignominious flight, the massacre of their general, a dance performed with savage joy round his burning body, the murder of six prisoners, are events which would have arrested the attention of the readers of the annals of Morocco, or of the most barbarous of savages. The approaching summer will undoubtedly decide the fate of France. It is almost evident that the patriot army, however numerous, will be unable [to] withstand the superior discipline of their enemies. (EY, 77-8)

Wordsworth's attitude and feelings are difficult to pin down here; but he seems more concerned with taking the side of the patriot army than with any real expression of distress over the carnage of war; indeed, his description of the atrocity over General Theobald's body has a very detached tone.(53)

The few references to war in letters of 1794 (54) confirm that there is no contemporary documented evidence to substantiate Wordsworth's claims in his Advertisement. Of course it can be argued that Wordsworth had no occasion or

reason to present on paper what he was feeling and so we must inevitably turn to the relevant passages in The Prelude; but this is not totally satisfactory. The subject matter of some of the letters does give a potential opening for Wordsworth to write about what he later claims he felt so passionately at the time, but he does not take the opportunity.(55)

The second point concerning the Advertisement derives from the third paragraph. The reference to the "monuments and traces of antiquity" which led Wordsworth

unavoidably to compare what we know or guess of those remote times with certain aspects of modern society, and with the calamities, principally those consequent upon war, to which, more than other classes of men, the poor are subject

seems to me an unlikely piece of logic; it smacks more of Wordsworth again returning after the event to what he has created and trying, so to speak, to re-create its inspiration in terms of what was achieved, though Salisbury Plain itself scarcely supports Wordsworth's claimed intent here.(56)

Though I would be unwilling to reject all that Wordsworth claims, there is undoubtedly another and unacknowledged influence at work here: Godwin. That influence will, as we shall see, contribute much to the failures of this poem as Wordsworth draws on the philosopher's thinking yet fails to harmonise Godwin's ideas with his poetry.

Godwin on War.

In examining the text, particularly of Salisbury Plain, considerable attention should be paid to the nature of the war that has caused the sufferings of the vagrant.

It is a war, it is hinted, not related to a cause such as liberty versus oppression, but a war stemming from motives which are clearly described in Book V of Political Justice.

The chapters of particular interest in Political Justice, it should be stressed, are easy to find: namely, chapters XVI to XX of Book V, the first of these entitled Of the Causes of War. (We have already seen Wordsworth attracted to this particular Book (PJ,'93,II, 512ff), in which is also to be found Godwin's most concerted attack on the abuses of despotism, aristocracy etc.) In the first of these chapters, after Godwin has established that the causes of war are to be found in "those two great political monopolies, monarchy and aristocracy", (57) he goes on to note, with regard to a state of war and conquest, that their

tendency is to elevate a few at the expense of the rest... (PJ, '93, II, 512)

A few pages further on comes a much more important statement by Godwin as he takes issue with Rousseau:

One of the most essential principles of political justice is diametrically the reverse of that which imposters and patriots, have too frequently agreed to recommend. Their perpetual exhortation has been, "Love your country. Sink the personal existence of individuals in the existence of the community. Make little account of the particular men of whom the society consists, but aim at the general wealth, prosperity and glory. Purify your mind from the gross ideas of sense, and elevate it to the single contemplation of that abstract individual of which particular men are so many detached members, valuable only for the place they fill."

The lessons of reason on this head are precisely opposite. Society is an ideal existence, and not on its own account entitled to the smallest regard. The wealth, prosperity and glory of the whole are unintelligible chimeras. Set no value on anything, but in proportion as you are convinced of its tendency to make individual men happy and virtuous.

(PJ,'93,II,513-4)(58)

This passage must surely have caught Wordsworth's eye; and as he remembered the suffering he had witnessed in France and considered England's role in going

to war with France, he must have come to agree with Godwin's view that "patriotism" is a misplaced feeling;(59) he must also have agreed with Godwin's views expressed here that a man's attachment should be to a cause and not to a country.(PJ,'93,II,515) That war, like all evil, has originated in "error" when individuals and then governments

suffered their apprehensions of justice to be perverted by a bias in favour of themselves.(PJ,'93,II,515/6)

Godwin then continues:

We can have no adequate idea of this evil, unless we visit, at least in imagination, a field of battle. Here men deliberately destroy each other by thousands without resentment against or even knowledge of each other. The plain is strewn with death in all its various forms. Anguish and wounds display the diversified modes in which they can torment the human frame. Towns are burned, ships are blown up in the air while the mangled limbs descend on every side, the fields are laid desolate, the wives of the inhabitants exposed to brutal insult, and their children driven forth to hunger and nakedness. It would be despicable to mention along with these scenes of horror, and the total subversion of all ideas of moral justice they must occasion in the auditors and spectators, the immense treasures which are wrung in the form of taxes, from those inhabitants whose residence is at a distance from the scene.(PJ,'93,II,516-7)

What Godwin does here, very powerfully and very succinctly, is to illustrate not simply the evils of war in general, but the error out of which war is bred, war perpetrated by a few from the aristocratical classes to further their own avarice on such a pretext as the "vindication" of "national honour";(PJ,'93,II,519) all to the extreme detriment of the individuals of the lower classes. In other words, almost exactly the thematic and moral focus adopted by Wordsworth in the Salisbury Plain poems.(60)

At this time, it is appropriate to make two points. First, as I would concede, Wordsworth's own experiences in France must have played a significant role in his inspiration to write a poem of protest against war and its effects. What a reading

of passages such as that quoted above did for Wordsworth was to focus his experiences into a moral context (a formal one, in this case based on Godwin's philosophic arguments against war, oppression, and, as we shall see, the error of war), and thus crystallise for the poet the significance of his experiences in relation to the social and moral protest he wished to make; above all, the protest against sufferings caused to **individuals** by the oppression of war. In their comments on Wordsworth's 1795 revisions to the poem, critics have almost all been anxious to quote Wordsworth's comments in the closing sentence of his letter to Wrangham of 20th November, 1795:

I have made alterations and additions so material that it may be looked on almost as another work. Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law and the calamities of war as they affect individuals.

(EY, P 159)

However, despite the fact that Wordsworth uses the terms "may" and "almost", and refers to the effect of war on "individuals", a theme so obviously affecting the traveller and the vagrant in Salisbury Plain, critics have been unwilling to see this earlier poem in the light of Wordsworth's comment on the revisions, or in relation to the passages in Political Justice that I have indicated.

It is also worth noting that in Chapter XVII, Of the Conduct of War, Godwin returns to the theme of the effects of war upon "every individual who is not actually in arms", (PJ, '93, II, 530) and immediately follows this with a strong objection to "the capture of mercantile vessels" and indeed a suggestion that "naval war" in particular "should be proscribed" (ibid). Again, it is worth highlighting the fact that Godwin's marginal paragraph headings are particularly frequent and detailed here, making accessibility to his ideas particularly easy.

This paragraph is in turn followed by one entitled Humanity in which Godwin again points to the dangers of war brutalising man's nature - though this is not explored in any detail. This is an important point. Despite the obvious links here and in the next paragraph on Military Obedience (where Godwin explores the danger of such a concept making soldiers "machines"), between Godwin's ideas on necessity and his empiricism (e.g. war and military service as environmental influences which - in modern terminology - can "condition" individuals), the conscious linking of the two ideas requires some careful study of Political Justice, a study which Wordsworth had not yet completed, but which will be evidenced in the later 1795 revised poem, further re-inforced by Wordsworth's knowledge of Caleb Williams.

More immediately relevant to the earlier Salisbury Plain, Chapter XIX, Of Military Establishments and Treaties also reveals an idea taken up by Wordsworth: that of the **isolation** of the soldier from society. One has to be careful here, because Godwin is in one of his more equivocal moods as he struggles with conflicting ideas: on the one hand, his wish to remove the need for any army, on the other hand (for Godwin is no "idealist"), the pragmatic problem of the defence of liberty. In this rather confusing (and unconvincing) discussion of the difference between a standing army and a universal militia, Godwin extrapolates on the environmental and psychological implications of "the man that is merely a soldier" (PJ, 93, II, 535) (drawing, of course, on his doctrine of necessity). Godwin points out that such a man "is cut off from the rest of the community", (ibid) and then goes on to examine the "immoral tendency" (his paragraph title here) of the role of a soldier; an examination that has, once again, a distinctly psychologi-

cal (if, inevitably, a necessitarian/behaviouristic) orientation. Then, in an exceptionally unclear passage, Godwin again reaffirms the link between error and military discipline:.

If it be replied, "that the generating of error is not inseparable from military discipline, and that men may at some time be sufficiently guarded against the abuse, even while they are taught the use of arms;" it will be found upon reflection that this argument is of little weight. Though error be not unalterably connected with the science of arms, it will for a time remain so. (PJ,'93,II,536).

I find it impossible not to believe that Wordsworth had read these chapters before writing Salisbury Plain. Another parallel between the philosopher and the poet further reinforces this. Godwin tends, at times, to be the victim of his own conflicts (his dilemma over the duties towards the individual and towards society being the best example); this matter of the link between error and military training is a case in point. As was noted in my earlier argument on Llandaff, Godwin advocated, in several places in Political Justice the possibility of temporary violence in the interests of permanent improvement. Yet his own arguments against wars started by the aristocratic classes could equally be turned against what will be perpetrated in a temporary anarchy by those whose attachment is to a cause and not to a country. (PJ,'93,II,515) The same "anguish and wounds" (PJ,'93,II,516) will result. (Of course, Godwin never followed his thought through to this extent in his statements supporting necessary violent revolution.) So, Wordsworth follows Godwin. In Llandaff, he admitted the possible need for violence, even the execution of the king, in the interests of permanent improvement. In Salisbury Plain, by contrast, he couches his arguments against war in the context of war perpetrated for the gain of a few at the expense of the many.

Is this coincidence? I think not. Without totally rejecting Wordsworth's Fenwick Notes and other statements regarding the sailor's wife, his watching the fleet off Portsmouth, his wanderings over Salisbury Plain, it can be seen once again that Godwin's thought and manner of thought has once again provided for Wordsworth a formalisation of his moral stance, a crystallisation of the significance of his own earlier experiences. In themselves, the sources Wordsworth cites could not have produced Salisbury Plain as it was written; and certainly not the fuller Adventures on Salisbury Plain.

Even matters as accepted as Wordsworth's attitude to individuals and the idea of the "solitary" have to be questioned and re-examined at this early stage in his development. Whence came this sudden interest in the individual? For it is not much in evidence in the poetry he has written to date. As to isolation and solitariness, these have been seen, in a sense, but not in the same manner in which they are presented in Salisbury Plain: isolation from society which brings the solitary a sense of desolation and unhappiness in his predicament.

But the greatest proof of Godwin's influence in Salisbury Plain comes in the poem itself - in its strengths, and, more important, its failures. For though we see some considerable advance upon Descriptive Sketches there is still a substantial failure to fuse the morality and the poetry in this earliest version. I turn now to the text.

Salisbury Plain

Salisbury Plain(61) is, in most respects, ultimately a failure; it has its moments of power, but structurally (even admitting the problem of the missing stanzas) the

poem is fragmented. The rather pedantic opening stanzas on the plight of the "hungry savage" do not, as Wordsworth intended, prepare us for the vagrant's tale in any other than a clumsy and obtrusive manner:

reflection on the state
Of those who on the couch of Affluence rest
By laughing Fortune's sparkling cup elate,
While we of comfort reft, by pain depressed,
No other pillow know than Penury's iron breast.(SP,3,23-7)

This is rather shallow stuff: the oppression of the poor by the rich, the cliché of any radical of the time. Yet it is worth noting that Wordsworth points the moral intent of his poem so early; and does so in a poem in which he intends to present the miseries of war as an extreme example of oppression born out of error, i.e. how a few benefit from wars only at the expense of the many, a view he will elaborate upon later in the poem, and which, as noted above, is exactly the view of Godwin, upon whom Wordsworth now proceeds to draw for some of the details of his moral argument in the poem.

Following on from the introductory section, the wanderings of the traveller seem more convincing and perhaps do bear out Wordsworth's note about his own wanderings on Salisbury Plain; however, the wanderings are interrupted with the unconvincing "Gothic" interludes as the traveller comes across Stonehenge and then the House of the Dead, and finally hears the vagrant's tale of superstition. Those "monuments and traces of antiquity" which, Wordsworth claims in the 1842 Advertisement, led to his comparison between ancient and modern society and their respective cruelties, produce an unconvincing picture:

And oft a night-fire mounting to the clouds
Reveals the desert and with dismal red
Clothes the black bodies of encircling crowds.
It is the sacrificial altar fed

With living men. How deep it groans - the dead
Thrilled in their yawning tombs their helms uprear;
The sword that slept beneath the warrior's head
Thunders in fiery air: red arms appear
Uplifted thro' the gloom and shake the rattling spear.(SP,21,181-9)

This stanza, intended to suggest that both ancient and contemporary war produce sacrifice, paints a very stiff and unconvincing picture, especially following the rather impressive stanzas describing the solitary wanderings of the traveller and the desolation of the plain.(63) Given that these stanzas concerning Stonehenge are deleted in the second version of the poem, does Wordsworth, therefore, in 1842, really expect us to accept that they are representative of what is central to the idea of the poem, and that "monuments and the traces of antiquity" were the inspiration of his central themes? For, as we shall see, it is the themes of moral and social protest, and the psychological enhancement of these, that are the focus of the revised poem.

Whilst I would accept the idea of a conscious pattern of contrasts(64) in the poem, especially as it relates to the descriptions, moods and colours in the nature imagery of the poem (though these patterns at times obtrude rather clumsily in places), such patterning does not disguise the structural weaknesses of the poem. What it does is to try to point up, rather clumsily, the poem's moral stance which lies at the heart of the vagrant's tale.

Before going on to the vagrant's tale, one further weakness in the poem merits some consideration. Attention has often been drawn to the traveller, introduced in some detail, but relegated to the role of a companion, listener, and occasional commentator. It is as if Wordsworth intended his role to be more considerable, and, of course, the potential parallels, especially his isolation and solitariness,

underscored by the patterns of desolation in the natural imagery, make this lack of development seem even more frustrating.

Two points should be noted. There seems little doubt that Wordsworth did see the traveller's role as that of a listener or commentator, and probably tried to develop this further: a futile task, as can be seen from an interesting addition to the poem prior to the re-writing that became Adventures on Salisbury Plain. Wordsworth apparently intended to insert around line 400(65) an elaboration on the existing incident of the traveller's "Striving with counsel sweet"(SP,45,403) which would give the traveller even more of the role of a moral commentator, but Wordsworth's uncertainties over this can be seen in the revisions he makes to the addition he never printed.(66) It is a very unhappy attempt which seems doomed to failure from the outset.

The probable reason for his not going ahead with this line of development is related to the second point that should be made: a point concerning the isolation or solitariness of the traveller. This is the first real occurrence in Wordsworth's poetry of the extended treatment of the "solitary" as a figure; and to anyone familiar with the later version of this "type", the difference in Wordsworth's attitude at this early stage is marked, if somewhat uncertain. What is at once clear is not simply the sense of isolation, but the traveller's consciousness of this and his unhappiness over it, as seen in stanzas 5 to 8, for instance:

Then sought, in vain, a shepherd's lonely thorn
Or hovel from the storm to shield his head.
On as he passed more wild and more forlorn
And vacant the huge plain around him spread;...(SP,7,59-62)

The inhospitable natural scenery is suffused with the traveller's sense of

isolation. Why? Clearly, he will parallel and become a natural companion to the vagrant; but that scarcely justifies the care with which Wordsworth paints him (these stanzas are, in my view, some of the best in the poem). We have to accept the fact that Wordsworth is possibly painting some kind of "tone picture" of individuals he has seen battling against the winds over the plain; but that is still not enough. Wordsworth is interested in this man's isolation, but he does not go on to explore or explain it yet. He will, however, do so in Adventures on Salisbury Plain by portraying the man as a soldier and as a murderer - after he has read Caleb Williams. What is so interesting is how easily, by rejecting much of the Gothic in the first version and simply retaining and building on his characterisation of the traveller of Salisbury Plain, he is able to effect the transformation. Most commentators have seen the change as a radical one;(67) but it is not. The "sailor" (and to some extent the "soldier" who makes a brief appearance) grow easily out of the "traveller". Could it be that Wordsworth already had in mind a reason for the traveller's isolation? It is difficult to say. But it is not difficult to see that this traveller does not have the resignation of other later solitaires; he feels, like the vagrant, unhappy in such a position of isolation from his fellow man: a view, seminal to Political Justice,(68) and which we have seen in the context of Godwin's discussion of the role of the soldier and military discipline. As we shall see, this is greatly reinforced in Caleb Williams and is reflected strongly in Wordsworth's revisions in 1795 in Adventures on Salisbury Plain.

The vagrant's story points, most dramatically, the moral of this poem (and it comes as a somewhat welcome relief after the unfortunate mixture of the

didactic and the "Gothic" which precedes it). There is little that is difficult here. The vagrant is ousted from her idyllic girlhood home by oppression - "cruel chance and wilful wrong" (my emphasis), and in stanza 29 it is made quite clear that Wordsworth is pointing to the despotic oppression by the aristocracy of the lower class (her father lived in a "cottage" looking after a "little flock"). The oppression is quite deliberate:

Oppression trampled on his tresses grey:
His little range of water was denied;...(SP,29,257-8)

It is possible that Wordsworth may have drawn this from personal memory;(69) but that does not explain why he introduced the incident as a precursor to the more central theme of the oppression of war, drawing a clear parallel between the two forms of oppression. Perhaps it is only something we might expect to hear from anyone with Wordsworth's sympathies at this time; yet his having read Political Justice, his letters to Mathews of the period 1793-94, especially the quintessentially Godwinian letter of 8th June 1794 with its disapproval of monarchy and aristocracy,(70) and his use of this incident in parallel with the woman's misfortunes as a result of war (war fought for gain, "for empire", as we read in the later stanza 50), all of this points to Wordsworth drawing on those criticisms voiced by Godwin in the chapter, Of the Causes of War, and a decision to use this incident of civil oppression as a conscious parallel.

And in the vagrant's account of what she suffered, the treatment she received, the starvation of herself and the children, the "dog-like wading at the heels of war" we are reminded of Godwin's invitation to visit, "at least in imagination, a field of battle", with

the wives of the inhabitants exposed to brutal insult; and their children
driven forth to hunger and to nakedness,

and of the whole thrust and development of Godwin's criticism of the evils of war being greatest in their effect on those not directly concerned with war. Wordsworth's theme is Godwin's theme.

Suspicion that Wordsworth is using Godwin's moral stance, war as another form of oppression against individuals, as the moral basis of his poem is vindicated when, after the very unsatisfactory close of the vagrant's tale (another weakness Wordsworth will try to rectify in Adventures on Salisbury Plain by drawing, for a resolution, on Caleb Williams), Wordsworth returns to an unfortunate combination of the didactic and the declamatory in the closing stanzas.

As early as stanza 48, Wordsworth appeals, in a somewhat problematic reference to "reason":

Though from huge wickers paled with circling fire
No longer horrid shrieks and dying cries
To ears of Daemon-Gods in peals aspire,
To Daemon-Gods a human sacrifice;
Though Treachery her sword no longer dyes
In the cold blood of Truce, still, reason's ray,
What does it more than while the tempests rise,
With starless glooms and sounds of loud dismay,
Reveal with still-born glimpse the terrors of our way?(SP,48,424-32)

The Gothic element here is as unconvincing as ever. But the main import of this stanza is clear enough: only through reason can the errors of war be revealed. (If the phrase "still-born" sheds some doubt on what otherwise is clearly a Godwinian line of thought, Wordsworth's earliest revision of the poem, before going on to write Adventures on Salisbury Plain, re-inforces the Godwinian thrust as he changes "still-born" to "short".(71)

The drawings upon Godwin are reinforced as we read the following stanza:

For proof, if man thou lovest, turn thy eye
On realms which least the cup of Misery taste.
For want how many men and children die?
How many at Oppression's portal placed
Receive the scanty dole she cannot waste,
And bless, as she has taught, her hand benign?
How many by inhuman toil debased,
Abject, obscure, and brute to earth incline
Unrespited, forlorn of every spark divine?(SP,49, 433-41)

Here we have repeated the arguments from Godwin on the effects of war on those not involved in the theatre of battle, (72) as well as an extension from this to Godwin's view of the brutalising effects of unremitting toil.(73)

Then, in stanza 50, the term Justice is used:

Not only is the walk of private life
Unblessed by Justice...(SP,50,442-3)

Wordsworth is drawing upon Godwin's fundamental ethic here; Godwin states that we must

assume the term justice as a general appellation for all moral duty. . .
(PJ,'93,I,80)

and, clearly, following his criticisms of the oppression of war, such treatment of individuals is not just, as Wordsworth points out. This is particularly true in wars motivated by some acquisitive interest at the expense of individual suffering. Wordsworth makes just this point, as, in the same stanza, he states:

The nations, though at home in bonds they drink
The dregs of wretchedness, for empire strain,...(SP,50,447-8)

In stanza 57, Wordsworth juxtaposes his declamations against and address to monarchs with an appeal to reason:

Say, rulers of the nations, from the sword
Can ought but murder, pain, and tears proceed?
Oh! what can war but endless war still breed?
Or whence but from the labours of the sage
Can poor benighted mortals gain the meed

Of happiness and virtue, how assuage
But by his gentle words their self-consuming rage?(SP,57,507-13)(74)

Godwin's belief that the exercise of reason, and not war, can alone bring happiness and improvement is expressed in the metaphor of the "labours of the sage" in this rather lyrical passage, which fits ill into the stanza and the experience of the poem as we have understood it. It is rather immature stuff. Just as the stylistic failure emanating from the inability to fuse the moral didacticism of the poem with the narrative form was evident early in the poem, for example, in the lines,

When men in various vessels roam the deep
Of social life,...(SP,4,32-3)

which, as a metaphor, fails miserably, so in stanza 58, Wordsworth does little more than catalogue (in a manner reminiscent of sections of Descriptive Sketches) the distortions that war causes, using, as the centre of his theme, the three ideas so central to Godwin's book: justice, truth and the law:

Insensate they who think, at Wisdom's porch
That Exile, Terror, Bonds, and Force may stand:
That Truth with human blood can feed her torch,
And Justice balance with her gory hand
Scales whose dire weights of human heads demand
A Nero's arm. Must Law with iron scourge
Still torture crimes that grew a monstrous band
Formed by his care, and still his victim urge,
With voice that breathes despair, to death's tremendous verge?
(SP,58,514-22)

The poetry is very poor, but Godwin would, no doubt, have approved of the sentiment: this rejection of the view of the "insensate" who promulgate war and thus distort truth and justice and bend the institution of the law to their own purpose.

The final stanza is easily recognisable as drawing upon Godwin:(75)

Heroes of Truth pursue your march, uprear
 Th' Oppressor's dungeon from its deepest base;
 High o'er the towers of Pride undaunted rear
 Resistless in your might the herculean mace
 Of Reason; let foul Error's monster race
 Dragged from their dens start at the light with pain
 And die; pursue your toils, till not a trace
 Be left on earth of Superstition's reign,
 Save that eternal pile which frowns on Sarum's plain.(SP,61,541-9)

With its appeal to "Reason" as a manner of resisting oppression, this is surely too obviously Godwinian in its source to require comment; perhaps the mention by Wordsworth of "Error" should be highlighted as Wordsworth concludes the poem with Godwin's fundamental perception of vice as error which can only be overcome by the perception of truth through the process of reason, reinforcing that earlier image of "reason's ray" in stanza 48 (428-31). But the only merit of the verse here is that it does indeed sum up the moral stance of the poem. Despite the use of the metaphor of conflict between truth and error, so evocative of the language of the first edition of Political Justice,(76) Wordsworth's determination to reveal the error of war as deceit by those who promulgate it and seek to gain by it at the expense of others and to proclaim the role of reason in perceiving such error is at the expense of some pretty heavy-handed didacticism, under which the poetry creaks and protests; except, perhaps, for the final line which has a rhythmic and bleakly triumphant assertiveness. Yet, ironically, that line also fails as do all of the final three lines; for we have, by this time, virtually forgotten those early stanzas about Stonehenge. As to "superstition", Wordsworth has not properly explained this point throughout the poem, though he clearly wishes to relate it to error and the failure of reason.

There is so much that is unsatisfactory in this poem. It fails structurally. Stylistically, it has its moments of power, in the description of the traveller

on the plain, in parts of the vagrant's story; yet, in general, it is a failure. But that is not the final verdict.

For coming after Descriptive Sketches (and, of course, An Evening Walk), it excites any reader of Wordsworth. It is imbued with the same feeling and the same conviction as Llandaff; (77) it strains to contain that conviction within a form and style over which Wordsworth does not, as yet, have adequate control. Unlike the two earlier poems, Wordsworth shows less rigid adherence to traditional form; (78) also, he has something specific to say here, and though he rarely succeeds in saying it well, he does not deviate from his theme. Where he fails is in his attempts to find a form and a style whereby he can most effectively and convincingly present his convictions. The power of Salisbury Plain lies, for the reader, in this conviction which permeates the whole poem. There is a spontaneity here, not inspired by "monuments" or other remains of antiquity; but by a belief in the moral and social arguments he presents, and the suffering he wishes to portray. But those experiences upon which he has drawn to present this have been crystallised and focused with a didactic force from another source. His themes originate partly from his own experiences, but also, as they are expressed in this poem, in large measure from Godwin. The logic of Godwin's thinking is evident, not simply in the development from those early ill-defined liberal generalisations towards the close of Descriptive Sketches, but also in the way in which it underpins the moral and thematic arrangement of this poem.

In many senses that is why it fails; for Wordsworth is so anxious to present these ideas that he becomes rather repetitive. He demonstrates, in the vagrant's tale, the criticisms Godwin levels against war; and then he insists on further sum-

marising his position in the unashamed didacticism of the final stanzas, going over the same ground.

What Wordsworth has failed to do, perhaps not surprisingly, is to harmonise his ideas and his art. But the fervour with which he seeks to express his obvious moral and emerging human concern, the struggle to express that in terms of a "borrowed" philosophy (still ill-comprehended yet, I would suggest, sincerely embraced), the latent sense of a new **purpose** to his poetry all show the contribution of Godwin to Wordsworth's faltering poetic development: namely, a spur to throw off the earlier poetic models to which he still clings, and create a poetic form that will allow the freedom to express belief in and understanding of the human condition as both Wordsworth's observations of man and his reading and response to the ideas of the time develop. Seen in this way, Salisbury Plain and the attempt to import Godwin's ideas into that poem must be seen for the failed but bold experiment they are.

Caleb Williams

Between Wordsworth's completion of Salisbury Plain and his commencing the substantial revision that became Adventures on Salisbury Plain, came two important developments. The first is the publication by Godwin of his novel Caleb Williams, and the second is the beginning of what was to become a lengthy if somewhat erratic acquaintance between the poet and the philosopher. Considerably more light has been shed on this personal relationship by researches into Godwin's diary through such sources as the Abinger papers;(79) and Moorman has given a comprehensive account of the meetings between the

two in her biography of Wordsworth. However, my own researches suggest her account is not yet complete, and evidence of further contact between Godwin and the Wordsworths, through Richard Wordsworth, as well as an unpublished letter by Wordsworth to Godwin make it important to have, as part of the developing argument here, an up-to-date summary of what is known of the relationship between Godwin and Wordsworth. **This is included as Appendix I to this chapter.**

The publication of Caleb Williams(80) in May, 1794, was an important stage in the development of Godwin's ideas as well, as those of Wordsworth. It is an injustice to the novel to see it simply as a fictionalised version of Political Justice. It obviously draws heavily upon Godwin's magnum opus, but, in this novel, Godwin takes the opportunity to explicate and present more clearly the implications (especially the human implications) of his theories; and, as he does this, he develops some of these further.(81) For the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary to limit a discussion of Caleb Williams to those aspects in the novel upon which Wordsworth draws.

In his Preface dated 12th May, 1794, (withdrawn from the original edition of the novel and printed in the second edition of 1796(83)) Godwin immediately draws attention to what was originally the title, Things as They Are;(84) a subject which, he claims,

is the most interesting that can be presented to the human mind.(85)

There can be little doubt that Godwin, in this very politically oriented Preface intends this novel to be seen (in his own words) as "no refined and abstract speculation..." but, rather

a study and delineation of things passing in the modern world....a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism, by which man becomes the destroyer of man.

Thus, the conscious concern of the novel and Political Justice are made clear: an interest in individual liberty, in the relationship of individuals to each other. Yet, in its presentation of the essential role of truth, so central to the vision of Political Justice, the novel goes beyond the claims of the Preface to the first edition, as Godwin himself was later to acknowledge. For in his choice of the novel form, Godwin showed himself aware that such a literary form(86) could offer something beyond the theorisings of a tract such as Political Justice. Godwin's later reflection on his writing of this novel (in the Preface to the Standard Novels edition of Fleetwood, dated November 20th, 1832) draws attention to the importance of feeling and emotion in Caleb Williams. Thus, Godwin speaks of how his "imagination revelled the most freely" in:

the analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind, employing my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating impulses...
(87)

This psychological focus in a novel that does draw heavily upon the earlier Political Justice shows how a study of Godwin's novel often throws light on the ideas and motives behind Political Justice, to the extent that the novel often explains the **feelings** behind statements in the philosophical work, even though it was not made explicit there.(88)

Despite the variety of themes explored in Caleb Williams, the central concern of the novel is with **truth**.(89) However, the final triumph of truth in this novel is not a simplistic one; it brings, in fact, no pleasurable outcome or happiness to either of the protagonists. For what we see in Godwin's novel is an emergence

of the teleological perfectionist stance we have sometimes glimpsed in Political Justice. Godwin's concern with motivation reflects a perfectionist belief in the necessary triumph of truth. What must result from such a triumph of truth is justice; not necessarily happiness. Thus, in the final scene of confession by Falkland, neither Caleb nor Falkland stands triumphant before us; indeed, it is Caleb's sense of melancholy after so long a pursuit of truth and his perception of his own self-deceptions that gives added power and credibility to the novel and forces us to examine what is the positive outcome of the experience of the book.(90)

That such a concern with truth should be the principal focus of Caleb Williams should come as no surprise.(91) The final sentence of the first paragraph of the novel states:

My story will, at least, appear to have that consistency which is seldom attendant but upon truth. (CW, p 3)

It is also, of course, through the perception of truth that Caleb will seek those other central moral concerns of Political Justice that are also mentioned in this first paragraph: justice and sincerity. Against these values, Godwin lays many snares: tyranny (in the guise of Tyrrel and, eventually, Falkland); the injustices of the law; the "honour" of Falkland; and the curiosity of Caleb. In a novel that Godwin never allows to slip into mere moral didacticism,(92) Godwin does point a moral; however, he also explores the human condition, and the matter of human motivation that so fascinated him in the pages of Political Justice. What Tyrrell, Falkland and Caleb all do is to allow some "ruling passion" to dominate their actions without submitting such passions to the guidance of

reason; hence the error of their behaviour and its consequences (inhuman oppression by Tyrrel, murder by Falkland, and self-indulgence by Caleb) cannot be perceived.

It is this warning that Godwin puts into the words of Clare who says of Falkland:

you have an impetuosity and an impatience of imagined dishonour...
(CW, P 34)

It is appropriate that Clare, representative of the voice of reason (but a reason accompanied by sympathy and human feeling) "the person who could most effectually have moderated the animosities of the contending parties"(CW, pp 36-7), should die early in the novel. The result of Falkland's crime and his attempt to conceal it is insincerity: separating his actions from the guiding force of reason, and therefore from perception of truth. The immediately changed character of Falkland bears this out; he knows he acts in **error** , yet not until his final confrontation with Caleb will he admit to this. Hence, only vice and suffering can ensue.

What "honour" is to Falkland, curiosity is to Caleb. There can be little doubt that Godwin is critical of Caleb at times, and he constantly parallels Caleb and Falkland as the two pursue their ungoverned obsessions. Although we do have sympathy with Caleb at times, and can feel a strong sympathy with Falkland (though we know him to be guilty), it is in these very conflicts that the triumph of the novel lies.(93) Out of these conflicts arise those impressive portrayals of human feeling, sympathy and suffering which, above all, mark a distinct advance on Political Justice. For though Godwin's humanitarian concern is a constant theme of his theoretical work, inevitably it becomes diluted in the

schematic argument of such a work; but, in Caleb Williams, the oppression of both a humanitarian concern and of human feeling is convincing and impressive. For example, the love between Falkland and Emily (Volume I, chapters VI and X) produces language such as:

she flew into his arms with the rapidity of lightening. She embraced and clung to him, with an impulse that did not wait to consult the dictates of her understanding. Her emotions were indescribable. In a few short moments she had lived an age in love. (CW, p 44)

Falkland's sufferings are portrayed with equal power:

Misery was at that time inscribed in legible characters upon his countenance. But now he appeared like nothing that had ever been visible in human shape. His visage was haggard, emaciated and fleshless. His complexion was a dun and tarnished red, the colour uniform through every region of the face.....His eyes were red, quick, wandering, full of suspicion and rage.(CW, p 280)

This physical description evokes the emotions both of Falkland and the observing Caleb. And in the scenes of Caleb's imprisonment, Godwin's obvious protest against the penal code is expressed through the sheer misery of the protagonist:

Cruel, inexorable policy of human affairs, that condemns a man to torture like this; that sanctions it and knows not what is done under its sanction; that is too supine and unfeeling to enquire into these petty details; that calls this the ordeal of innocence and the protector of freedom! A thousand times I could have dashed my brains against the walls of my dungeon; a thousand times I longed for death, and wished with inexpressible ardour for an end to what I suffered;...(CW, p 184)

Perhaps the most significant example of the role that Godwin gives to feeling in this novel is in Caleb's perception of the truth of Falkland's guilt, which comes **not** from the cold deduction of reason alone, but also from a strong intuitive sympathy felt for the suffering yet genuinely honourable Hawkins, (evoked so powerfully in the letter from Hawkins (CW, pp 114-5)); in response to this letter Caleb informs us:

I read this letter with considerable attention, and it occasioned me many reflections. To my way of thinking it contained a very interesting picture of a blunt, downright, honest mind. It is a melancholy consideration, said I to myself; but such is man! This is a fellow, to have taken fortune's buffets and rewards with an incorruptible mind. And yet see where it all ends!(CW, pp 115-6)

Godwin is no mere presenter of a rationalistic didactic self-righteousness; the pursuit of truth, he suggests, is often painful. Falkland's insincere stand on honour is, we surely agree, the "miserable project of imposture" that Caleb calls it(CW, p 326), just as Caleb's several deceits through his disguises are ultimately discovered and lead him only to further suffering while he fails to face Falkland and himself with the truth. Both of the protagonists, in their different ways, find their lives of error and insincerity increasingly intolerable.

All of the incidents in the novel, of course, take place against the background of Godwin's social and moral stance in Political Justice. Godwin portrays Falkland's murder of Tyrrel in necessitarian terms as a response by Falkland to the external circumstances which ensured his adulation of the principle of honour. Falkland admits to Caleb that he did murder Tyrrel:

All are but links in one chain. A blow! A murder! My next business was to defend myself, to tell so well digested a lie as that all mankind should believe it true.

He further admits his **error** at this stage:

This it is to be a gentleman! a man of honour! I was the fool of fame. My virtue, my honesty, my everlasting peace of mind, were cheap sacrifices to be made at the shrine of this divinity.(CW, p 135)

Yet he refuses to follow the guidance of what his understanding has made so clear to him. Godwin's criticisms of the law and its injustices that support despotism and its oppression are reinforced by demonstrating how the procedures of the law allow, for instance, circumstantial evidence to override and obscure truth or,

when Caleb tries to put his case to the magistrates, he finds himself blocked by technicalities:

And this at last was the justice of mankind! A man under certain circumstances cannot be heard in the detection of a crime, because he has not been a participator in it.(CW, p 277)

It is the law that is portrayed as hostile to the individual and to society as Godwin shows by portraying in the band of robbers and their situation a microcosm of the ills of society. Raymond, the leader, tells Caleb:

Those very laws, which by a perception of their iniquity drove me to what I am, preclude my return. (CW, P 227)

Yet it is of this band that Caleb says:

I found among them benevolence and kindness, they were strongly susceptible of strong emotions.(CW, P 218)

As in Political Justice, the role of the individual in society is one that is constantly focused on in the novel, and these scenes dealing with the robbers allow Godwin to present his view of the balance between the liberties of the individual and the restrictions society can rightfully impose to create social harmony. Yet, just as Caleb abhors the tyrannies of Tyrrel and Falkland, he does not ultimately approve of the robbers:

But though I did not cease to love them as individuals, my eyes were perfectly open to their mistakes. I saw that in this profession were exerted uncommon energy, ingenuity and fortitude, and I could not help recollecting how admirably beneficial such qualities might be in the great theatre of affairs; while, in their present direction, they were thrown away upon purposes diametrically at war with the first interests of human society.(CW, p 226)

But, of course, as the words quoted by Raymond above make clear, this is impossible.

In the care of the robbers, Caleb finds himself yet again isolated from society,

a position that has been an increasingly powerful theme throughout the novel, and one paralleled by the isolation of Falkland. As early as chapter one of the novel, Godwin introduces this theme of isolation in a very early description of Falkland:

His mode of living was in the utmost degree recluse and solitary.... He avoided the busy haunts of men; nor did he seem desirous to compensate for this privation by the confidence of his friendship.(CW, p 6)

Falkland's decline is traced through a path of increasing solitariness until Caleb faces the figure described earlier. Caleb himself, in his wanderings and imprisonment becomes increasingly isolated:

I was shut up a deserted, solitary wretch in the midst of my species.
(CW, p 255)

This is a situation Godwin reinforces by giving the views of others:

the public was warned to be upon their watch against a person of an uncouth and extraordinary appearance, and who lived in a recluse and solitary manner.(CW, p 269)

Above all, the lengthy passages given to Caleb's solitary deliberations in prison (Vol. II, chapters XII to XIV) reflect Godwin's disapproval of such a relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives. Just before the final scene of the novel, after his separation from Laura Denison, Caleb states:

Fool that I was, to imagine that there was any room for me in the abodes of friendship and tranquillity! It was now first that I felt, with the most intolerable acuteness, how completely I was cut off from the whole human species.(CW, p 303)

In these increasingly intolerable circumstances, haunted by a burgeoning sense of their own error and guilt, the two protagonists eventually find release (though not happiness) in the revelation of truth. It is here that the perfectionist stance of Godwin is reinforced; for the truth here derives not from a perception of the consequences (though, admittedly, the consequences of error have now been

perceived more consciously by both), but from the motivations of the protagonists in relation to their perceptions of themselves and each other. Just as Caleb's perception of the truth of Falkland's guilt was the result of both rational perception and intuitive feeling, so Caleb becomes aware of the loss of that feeling in himself:

Sympathy, the magnetic virtue, the hidden essence of our life, was extinct. Nor was this the sum of my misery. This food, so essential to an intelligent existence, seemed perpetually renewing before me in its fairest colours, only the more effectually to elude my grasp, and to mock my hunger.(CW, p 308)

But when he faces Falkland who now has "the appearance of a corpse"(CW, P318), it is that feeling of sympathy that causes him to recognise his error:

the hateful mistake into which I fell...(CW, p 323)

Godwin underlines how the perception of error is necessary to reveal truth underlines, after Falkland's confession, in Caleb's reflection:

He would have thanked me for my kindness. But, atrocious, execrable wretch that I have been! I wantonly inflicted on him an anguish a thousand times worse than death.(CW, p 325)

Similarly, it is the confrontation with truth and the final perception of error that causes Falkland to confess:

Williams, said he, you have conquered! I see too late the greatness and elevation of your mind. I confess that it is to my fault and not yours. that it is to the excess of jealousy that was ever burning in my bosom, that I owe my ruin.(CW, p 324)

From his acquaintance with this novel, Wordsworth drew much inspiration, as will be evidenced in Adventures on Salisbury Plain, and later, in the bolder experiment of The Borderers.

Adventures on Salisbury Plain.

The pursuit and final triumph of truth through the perception of error, the protest against oppression and social deprivation, the resultant suffering; above all, the exploration of feelings and motivations that are the humane and human dimensions of these: all of this, Caleb Williams contains. And all of it caught the imagination of Wordsworth when he came to his major revision of Salisbury Plain. As early as 1927, there was some recognition of this, (94) but despite the more substantial critical comment there has been since, (95) more needs to be said. In particular, it must be recognised how Adventures on Salisbury Plain is indebted not only to Political Justice but to the lesson Godwin had given in Caleb Williams of how his ideas might be embodied within a fiction of considerable dramatic and psychological power; a development Wordsworth was eventually to overtake in Lyrical Ballads successfully (96), but only after the experience of writing The Borderers failed in the manner in which it did.

Adventures on Salisbury Plain is more complex in its themes and shows shifts of emphasis as well as of interest in Wordsworth's intentions compared with the earlier poem. The increased narrative and dramatic power of the second poem is obvious at once, not least because the didactic generalisations of the original have gone. One thing Wordsworth has learnt from his reading of Caleb Williams is that even deeply held convictions are best expressed within the narrative and dramatic framework of the poem. However, he does still provide an introduction to his theme, and a very pointed one: for the traveller, the sailor, is introduced giving kindly assistance to another wanderer who has been a soldier. Wordsworth's intention here is two-fold. First of all, he wishes to point to the lingering

natural benevolence of the sailor (that essential element of Godwinian philosophy that he will remove in his next experiment, The Borderers), in order to stress the view that it has been his subjection to military discipline which has led to the murder he has committed. Wordsworth also links these individuals in their position as solitaires, outcasts from society, because of their military roles: the sailor has also been "Death's minister"(ASP,10,83), a clear parallel to the "Soldier's wrongs"(ASP,3,21).

However, Wordsworth quickly moves on, unlike the laboured introduction of the earlier poem. Yet we note at once that even with the new economy of narrative technique and with the deletion of much of the "superstitious" incident, Wordsworth is anxious to expand on the sense of solitariness and desolation of the sailor with his additions and revisions, e.g.

That inn he long had pass'd and wearily
Measured his lonesome way; the distant spire
That fix'd at every turn his backward eye
Was lost, though still he turn'd, in the blank sky.
By thirst and hunger press'd he gaz'd around
And scarce could any trace of man descry,
Save dreary corn-fields stretch'd as without bound;...(ASP,6,47-54)

where the sense of the sailor's distress in his exclusion from society is obvious. It is here that we have the first hint that Wordsworth, continuing to draw from Godwin, is now influenced less by Political Justice than by Caleb Williams. For what is being expressed throughout this poem much more emphatically than its predecessor is the sense that an individual isolated from society (for whatever reason, either through the effects of a military career or through guilt - and in Political Justice and in Caleb Williams, interestingly, we have reference to both) is in an unhappy situation. This is the view that underpins Political Justice, and

which Godwin so convincingly portrays and dramatises throughout Caleb Williams (97)

The improvement in Wordsworth's ability to handle his subject within the narrative and yet not lose the essential moral point can be seen to considerable effect in the addition, in this poem, of the sailor's involvement in war:

For years the work of carnage did not cease,
And Death's worst aspect duly he survey'd
Death's minister:...(ASP,10,82-4)

This is economic and effective; it makes its point, Godwin's point, then passes on to explain the inevitable outcome, as Wordsworth draws on Godwin's necessitarian link between military discipline and what it will produce:

The man that is merely a soldier, must always be uncommonly depraved. War in this case inevitably degenerates, from the necessary precautions of a personal defence, into a trade, by which a man sells his skill in murder...(PJ,'93,II,535)

It is also interesting to note that Wordsworth, just before the narration of the murder itself, adds to the sailor's sufferings his being deprived of his payment for service. I say "deprived" and not "defrauded" as other critics do. It is in a later revision that Wordsworth presents the sailor as the victim of fraud:

By fraud he lost what fairly he had earned(98)

In Adventures on Salisbury Plain we have only:

He urged his claim; the slaves of Office spurned
The unfriended claimant;...(ASP,11,91-2)

The original version, with its use of the phrase, "the slaves of Office" suggests oppression of the poor by the rich, or rather by the administrators of the rich; reflecting Wordsworth's Godwinian views on the dependants of ministers.(99)

The narration of the murder itself is of some interest. Firstly, its motivation

reflects Godwin's views on the effects of oppression and consequent poverty:

A numerous class of mankind are held down in a state of abject penury,
and are continually prompted by disappointment and distress to commit
violence upon their more fortunate neighbours.(PJ,'93,I,9)

The actual killing itself is accomplished in three lines:

He met a traveller, robb'd him, shed his blood;
And when the miserable work was done
He fled, a vagrant since, the murderer's fate to shun.(ASP,11,97-9)

Comparison with the earlier more detailed version of the poem and with the later description of the brutal beating of the child in this poem might make one somewhat surprised at the brevity of this. However, in Caleb Williams, Godwin relates Falkland's murder of Tyrrel in a very similar brief manner, as we have seen:

All are but links of one chain. A blow! A murder! My next business was
to defend myself, to tell so well-digested a lie, as that all mankind should
believe it true. Never was a task so harrowing or intolerable.(CW, p 135)

The parallels are striking. What both Godwin and Wordsworth stress in their narratives are the causes and motivations for the murder and then the effects upon the individuals.(100) Yet, there is more than this; for both Falkland and the sailor "live" a lie till they are eventually faced with their "error" and submit to truth.

All links in a chain! Might this not indeed adequately summarise stanzas 9-11 of this poem? Wordsworth is not slavishly following Godwin; he is **selectively** using the ideas of Godwin which are of more value to him (his interests in the effects of war in this poem are subordinated to his new psychological interests), and particular incidents and details from the novel. As we shall see, Wordsworth has drawn from the psychological power of the novel's presentation of the solitary outcast from society for **both** of his characters (just as Godwin has done, for Caleb, the "innocent" is just as hunted and outcast as Falkland, the guilty party).

Wordsworth is not merely selecting a few Godwinian highlights of morality and creating another aesthetic "hotchpotch" as he did in Salisbury Plain. He is learning from Godwin's re-creation of his political, moral and philosophical ideas in an artistic form about the fusion of narrative form, didactic intent and psychological depth.

And it is this last point that strikes us particularly about Adventures on Salisbury Plain. We see it particularly in the fears of the sailor, and it is worth turning to some examples. A particularly interesting one comes in stanzas 12-15 where we find the incident of the gibbet(101) which Wordsworth claims is based on an incident from his own experience. Whilst I have my reservations about this, the real interest lies in stanza 15, where, after the somewhat "Gothic" qualities of his initial reaction to the gibbet, we have this:

As doth befall to them whom frenzy fires,
His soul, which in such anguish had been toss'd,
Sank into deepest calm; for now retires
Fear; a terrific dream in darkness lost
The dire phantasm which his sense had cross'd.
His mind was still as a deep evening stream;
Nor if accosted now, in thought engross'd,
Moody, or inly-troubled, would he seem
To traveller who might talk of any casual theme.(ASP,15,127-35)

It is this exploration of the nature of fear and guilt that is new to the poem; this has true psychological depth, and in his interest in this, in his description of the variations of the sailor's moods, we see Wordsworth drawing upon Godwin. Compare Caleb when, in one of the many incidents in which we see such fluctuations of mood portrayed, he says

To an ordinary eye I might seem destitute and miserable, but in reality I wanted for nothing. My fare was coarse; but I was in health. My dungeon was noisome; but I felt no inconvenience..... I had no power of withdrawing my person from a disgusting society in the most chearful and

valuable part of the day; but I soon brought to perfection the art of withdrawing my thoughts...(102)

There are other examples of this controlled study of psychological movement - one of the qualities of Caleb Williams that gives the novel its power.(103)

Another interesting result of this growing psychological interest in Wordsworth's poem is the way in which the nature imagery blends more successfully with the shifting moods than in the patterns of natural imagery so obtrusive in Salisbury Plain. Stanzas 19 and 20 show this well. Stanza 20 is an amalgam of stanzas 12 and 13 of Salisbury Plain, and shows Wordsworth's new-found narrative economy and dramatic power:

No swinging sign creak'd from its cottage elm
To bid his weary limbs new force assume;
'Twas dark and void as ocean's watery realm
Roaring with storms beneath night's starless gloom;
No gipsy cower'd o'er fire of furze or broom;
Nor labourer watch'd his red kiln glaring bright,
Nor taper glimmer'd dim from sick man's room;
Along the heath no line of mournful light
From lamp of lonely toll-gate stream'd athwart the night.(ASP,20,172-80)

Again, it should be noted that this fusing of natural imagery and mood is found to great effect in Caleb Williams:

The morning, which had been bleak and drizzly, was succeeded by a day of heavy and incessant rain; and the gloomy state of the air and surrounding objects, together with the extreme nearness of my prison, and a total want of food, caused me to pass the hours in no very agreeable sensations. This inclemency of the weather however, which generated a feeling of stillness and solitude, encouraged me by degrees to change my retreat...
(CW, p 208)

Turning to the vagrant's tale, we see that Wordsworth has again drawn from Godwin's novel to make changes and additions to his poem in order to create the new structure he was trying to achieve and also point an additional moral issue

he had derived from Godwin's book.

The first change occurs when the vagrant tells of her father's being subjected to oppression. Wordsworth, as we have already seen, has decided to take a less overtly polemical approach in this revised poem; he is also subordinating the details of the results of war to the premises from which these derive. In writing the new version of the poem, he deletes from the oppression of the vagrant's father any mention of war. Hence, line 295 from the original Salisbury Plain,

For war the nations to the field defied

is deleted, and through the effect of the fact of war juxtaposed to the children starving, Wordsworth stresses Godwin's view of the effects of war on non-combatants. The "sad distress"(ASP,39,348) that "reduced the children's meal" in the new version is a little unsatisfactory, but Wordsworth has achieved his aim: the effect of oppression by way of war is held off till the next stanza. Wordsworth has done this so that he can make his statement about civil oppression and war being parallel evils through structural juxtaposition rather than the overt didacticism of the original version. To this end, he has also introduced one or two very revealing revisions in the description of the start of the oppression of the father. We are now told of a "mansion"(ASP,34,300) which appeared near the vagrant's father's cottage, and the owner's avarice; we remember Godwin's view on this: as with oppression, avarice must be countered by a more equitable distribution of property. This leads to the vagrant's father trying to stand against the landowner's greed ("his greedy wish gainsay"(ASP,34,304)) and even the landowner's attempt to buy him out ("he had refused the proffered gold" (ASP,35,307)). It is as a result of this defiance of his landlord that the father suffers the oppression and the gradual persecution which break him. This is very

different from Salisbury Plain where, characteristically, the oppression was mentioned as "Oppression" with little explanation.(104) If we wish to see where Wordsworth got the details of his enhanced plot, we need only turn to the incident of the persecution and oppression of Hawkins by Tyrell.(105) Already, coincidentally, Wordsworth has, from his earlier poem, a wife and three children (SP,33,291) and the matter of the abuse of water rights (parallels can be found in Godwin's novel); Wordsworth only has to select and add the "mansion" and one or two other details from this long and complex incident in the novel to enhance his picture of the futility of standing up to oppression by the aristocracy. The result is a convincing and economic narrative of civil oppression; he can then turn to the oppression of war, already introduced in Salisbury Plain.

The second incident which Wordsworth borrows is much more revealing. After the rather unsatisfactory ending to the vagrant's tale in the earlier poem, Wordsworth now adds some further wanderings, at the end of which the vagrant is given help and sanctuary by a band of vagabonds. In all its detail and in its moral stance, it can be seen that this is derived from the incident in Caleb Williams, where Caleb is captured by the vagabonds.(106) Wordsworth's "earth's rude tenants" in their "vagrant ease"(ASP,57,507) reminds us forcibly of Raymond's gang; not only in their kind treatment of the vagrant(107) (Wordsworth is making exactly the same point as Godwin with regard to human benevolence), but also in details such as the fact that Caleb, like the vagrant in Wordsworth's poem, was also injured and wandering. Caleb, as we have seen, speaks of how the vagabonds demonstrated in their profession

....uncommon energy, ingenuity and fortitude... (CW, p 226)
and that

it was one of the rules to commit no depredations but at a considerable distance from the place of their residence,...(CW, p 221)

Wordsworth elaborates admirably: the vagrant joins in the gang's sorties and in the subterfuges of their profession:

"But ill it suited me, in journey dark
O'er moor and mountain, midnight theft to hatch;
To charm the surly house-dog's faithful bark,
Or hang on tiptoe at the lifted latch;
The gloomy lantern, and the dim blue match,
The black disguise, the warning whistle shrill,
And ear still busy on its nightly watch,...(ASP,59,523-9)

This allows Wordsworth the opportunity to reflect on another of Godwin's key themes. Although the vagrant and Caleb have found solace and security, and human companionship, their sense of sincerity is troubled. Caleb states:

My habits of thinking were such as gave me an uncontrollable repugnance to the vocation of my hosts.(CW, p 226)

What Wordsworth has the vagrant say is even more direct:

But, what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth
Is, that I have my inner self abused,
Foregone the home delights of constant truth,
And clear and open soul, so prized in fearless youth.(ASP,61,546-9)

This is rather unconvincing, because, on looking back to Wordsworth's narrative of her youth, there seems insubstantial evidence of a fearless championing of truth;(108) though she admittedly does not sound "the kind of girl" who would do this sort of thing. (Such inconsistency of characterisation by Wordsworth only highlights his determination to draw on this incident from Godwin's novel to give added focus to the role of **truth** in the poem, echoing Godwin's assumptions in both Political Justice and Caleb Williams.) Nevertheless, she has stated her concern over the gang's activities. Wordsworth's determination to draw on Godwin's belief in the inevitable final triumph of truth

leads to the change in stanza 62 from "hope" in Salisbury Plain(SP,44,390) to "fortitude"(ASP,62,552) in this version of the poem, leaving her with "that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay".(ASP,62,558) This is very different from the unsatisfactory ending of the vagrant's tale in Salisbury Plain; yet this is also unsatisfactory. We can see Wordsworth's intention: that the woman's perpetual wanderings, carrying the weight of her having to be untrue to herself is to be compared with the resolution the sailor finds as he faces squarely the truth of his error in living a lie. (Again, this question of the sailor's living a lie shows some parallels with Falkland's "impostures" and Caleb's disguises.) Yet it is not convincing. It is not faithful to the poem's development up till now; indeed, this addition of the vagabond incident from Godwin's novel has produced not a resolution of the unsatisfactory ending of the Salisbury Plain version, but, another unsatisfactory ending.

Which brings us to a rather challenging question. Had Wordsworth seen or heard from Godwin (whom he was visiting in 1795) of the original ending of the manuscript of Caleb Williams? As I shall go on to show, the sailor's experience with the beaten boy and with his wife closely parallels the revelation at the end of Caleb Williams as it was published, with Falkland finding some release from suffering in his admission of guilt. But, in the original ending, the persecution by Falkland of Caleb simply went on. Perhaps this is to stretch the parallels in Wordsworth's poem too far (as well as the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin, though they did meet regularly in 1795). I can see no satisfactory explanation for the problem of this revised ending to the vagrant's tale.(109)

However, with the vagrant's story finished for now, Wordsworth returns to the

sailor; and here, in the closing stages of the poem, we see Wordsworth once again draw from Caleb Williams. Perhaps a further flaw in this poem is the way in which, on returning to the sailor's story, we have to make some effort to remember the sailor's state of mind. Wordsworth is anxious that we should, and in stanzas 66 and 67 we are reminded of the relationship between Caleb and Falkland as the woman's presence and affection merely exacerbates the sailor's fears (rather like the effect of the presence and admiration of Caleb(110)):

And still the more he griev'd, she loved him still the more.(ASP,66,594)

Wordsworth now introduces the incident of the sailor finding the man beating the child, "confident in passion" (ASP,71,633) and uncontrolled by reason. Wordsworth's intention is unmistakable; he dramatises the role of reason in the revealing of error (and how differently from the didactic and proclamatory metaphors of the conclusion to Salisbury Plain):

Nor answer made, but stroked the child, outstretch'd
His face to earth, and as the boy turned round
His batter'd head, a groan the Sailor fetch'd.
The head with streaming blood had dy'd the ground,
Flow'd from the spot where he that deadly wound
Had fix'd on him he murder'd. Through his brain
At once the griding iron passage found;
Deluge of tender thoughts then rush'd amain
Nor could his aged eyes from very tears abstain.(ASP,72,640-8)

And this is not cold unfeeling reason; it is reason accompanied by sympathy for the child's predicament, exactly the combination of reason and sympathy shown in Caleb Williams.

It is with this incident of the beaten child that we see the start of the sailor's determination to rid himself of the burden of his guilt. He sees now the error of his murder in all its brutality, and the effect of the lie he has lived in concealing

the murder. As with Falkland, his life has become increasingly intolerable. In the rather unfortunate stanza 74, where Wordsworth appeals - somewhat out of the blue - to the "bond of nature" (whatever that means, unless it simply refers to a bond of kinship), the sailor apparently comes to terms with truth and with himself. But the whole effect of the revelation of "these homely truths" (ASP,74,665) is sentimental rather than anything else; it is as unsatisfactory as the end of the vagrant's tale, but it is not the end.

Before turning to the end of the poem, it is worth noting (in stanza 84) that Wordsworth reveals the same suspicion of the law and of the unsatisfactory nature of "evidence" as does Godwin in both Political Justice(111) and in the Hawkins indictment and the first trial of Caleb, where circumstantial evidence is accepted instead of truth.

But it is as the sailor is faced with his dying wife that we see the final parallel with Godwin's novel. Faced with someone whom he loves and respects, he has to face the truth and indeed, as he does so, the description of the mental and physical state of Falkland before Caleb at the final revelation of the novel is strongly echoed:

His ears were never silent, sleep forsook
His nerveless eyelids stiffen'd even as lead;...(ASP,88,788-9)

Just as Falkland suddenly bursts out with the truth, affirming in this dramatic fashion Godwin's belief in the ultimate triumph of truth, so the sailor, on the death of his wife, realises he must confess his guilt and reveal the truth. And it is at this point that the moral stances of Godwin and Wordsworth coalesce. Caleb regrets at once the "mistake" of bringing Falkland before the law:

I now see that mistake in all its enormity. I am sure that, if I had opened my heart to Mr. Falkland, if I had told to him privately the tale that I am telling, he would not have resisted my reasonable demand.(CW, p 323)

Wordsworth expresses exactly the same view as, inevitably, the sailor finds his way into the hands of the law:

"Though we deplore it much as any can,
The law," they cried, "must weigh him in her scale; . . ."(ASP,90,89-90)

And Wordsworth underlines his point in his address to the punishment of the law, so evocative of Godwin's own sentiments on this subject(112):

Blest be for once the stroke which ends, tho' late,
The pang which from thy halls of terror came,
Thou who of Justice bear'st the violated name!(ASP,91,817-9)

What we have seen in this second version of the Salisbury Plain poems is Wordsworth continuing to draw upon Godwin, but there is a considerable shift of emphasis. The political focus is much diminished; it is in the moral and psychological areas of Godwin's works that Wordsworth seeks a philosophic stance upon which to build his poetry. And it should be recognised how derivative Wordsworth is here; those closing stanzas with their strong condemnation of the legal process and its violation of "justice", the earlier necessitarian link between military training and its moral and isolating effects; above all the central Godwinian tenet of the power of truth and the role of reason in perceiving error and revealing truth. This reason is not the abstract concept of the earlier Salisbury Plain, but a rational faculty accompanied and enhanced by feelings such as sympathy, reflecting Godwin's own advance in Caleb Williams.

It is this new interest in motivation and the psychological dimension of his characters which points to the real contribution that Godwin makes to

Wordsworth's development at this stage; and such a psychological interest, linked to the strong moral stance that characterises Godwin's two published works, form the basis of his emerging humanitarian concern, so evident in the second poem particularly.

Equally important, we have seen Wordsworth attempt to assimilate those derivative ideas into his poetry, rather than trying to impose them upon it. This is much more the case with the second poem, where he has tried to avoid the overtly polemical (hence, partly, his diminished interest in the political arena and in the more abstract dimensions of Godwin's rational system). What we see in Adventures on Salisbury Plain is evidence of a more studied and assimilated interest in Godwin's ideas, as Wordsworth sifts and selects from them, turning his attention through, for example, an interest in Godwin's necessitarian view to his essential interest in the individual, and the relationship of that individual to the society in which he lives. The vision of society and the individual in it that emerges from these poems is, in some ways, a more gloomy one than Godwin's (though it should be noted that the natural benevolence of the sailor has survived his brutalisation, and hence Wordsworth's portrayal is not totally negative). Hence we perhaps have here already the seeds of doubt that were to be tested later in The Borderers as Wordsworth further questioned the ideas he seems so content to have espoused in these poems, unwilling to accept the ultimate vision of Godwin's perfectibilian construct.

Yet, unquestionably, these poems evidence a different view of Wordsworth's emerging human concern from that presented in The Prelude. The "love of mankind", though glimpsed in Salisbury Plain, has to fight for breath under the

dead weight of a borrowed and ill-digested moral stance which the poetry struggles to contain. There is little spontaneity; even less evidence of a humanitarianism nurtured by nature. Even in Adventures on Salisbury Plain, though there is clear evidence of the writing that will characterise the 1798 Lyrical Ballads, the derivative nature of much of the morality and philosophic basis that drives the poem scarcely supports the claims of The Prelude. There is a power, a considerable power in the second poem (enough to lead to the decision by Wordsworth to publish The Female Vagrant in Lyrical Ballads); and part of that power does lie in the emerging humanitarianism of the poem. But the birth of that humanitarianism seems to have been an even more painful process than Wordsworth wishes, in The Prelude, to acknowledge.

It is important to recognise just how derivative Wordsworth has been; Godwin's ideas and now his literary approach have been adopted by Wordsworth. Yet, in his next major work, The Borderers, Wordsworth sets out to challenge and test Godwin's ideas again, aware now of the revisions that were made in the second edition of Political Justice in 1796. It is the poet's continued drawing upon Godwin as a literary source, once again through Caleb Williams, in order to challenge Godwin's ideology, that, ironically, leads to the failure of The

CHAPTER FOUR : POLITICAL JUSTICE, 1796 AND THE BORDERERS

Part I: Godwin's Revisions to the Second Edition of Political Justice

Thus I fared
Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar;.....
.....I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair, (The Prelude, 1805, X, 888-900)(1)

The much-quoted lines above from The Prelude of 1805, re-inforced in the published 1850 text by the addition of the "crisis of that strong disease" (1850, XI, 306) have been generally accepted as referring to Wordsworth's final rejection of Godwin's ideas, (2) particularly through the process of writing The Borderers. Wordsworth's problem play has not gone without attention. (3)

However, any meaningful understanding of the relationship between The Borderers and Godwin's ideas, the role that played in Wordsworth's development, and Wordsworth's treatment of this in The Prelude can only come from a full recognition of the developments in Godwin's thinking, signalled in Caleb Williams (discussed in the previous chapter), and as these then appear in his revisions in the second edition of Political Justice. For, as will be seen, whilst the impact of Caleb Williams was still considerable when Wordsworth came to write The Borderers (to the extent that he again drew upon the novel in the plot and themes of his play), it is in response to Godwin's revisions to Political Justice, doubtless reinforced by his meetings and discussion with Godwin during the period when the philosopher was revising both of his works, (4) that Wordsworth initiates his experiment in writing The Borderers.

In examining the revisions to Political Justice, I wish to comment on four key areas: the stylistic effect of Godwin's rewriting; the adoption of a more philosophic tone replacing the reformist zeal of the first edition; the apparently enhanced role of reason emerging in the second edition; and the presentation of a moral **psychology** to reinforce Godwin's moral philosophy.

De Quincey's "palinode" and Wordsworth's "barbarous writing": the impact of Godwin's revisions.

All modern commentators on Godwin find themselves in disagreement with De Quincey's comment on the second edition of Political Justice as being "a travesty of the first..... all but a palinode." (5) There is, in fact, general agreement with Godwin's own view that the main principles of his work were not affected.

In many ways, this is true; but it is worth returning to De Quincey's statement, especially, to the sentences preceding the one so often quoted:

And yet, in **that** [Godwin] carried one single shock into the bosom of English society, fearful but momentary, like that from the electric blow of the gymnotus; or, perhaps, the intensity of the brief panic which, fifty years ago, he impressed on the public mind, may be more adequately expressed by the case of a ship in the middle ocean suddenly scraping with her keel a ragged rock, hanging for one moment as if impaled upon the teeth of the dreadful 'sierra.....In the quarto (that is, the original) edition of his Political Justice, Mr. Godwin advanced against thrones and dominations, powers, and principalities, with the air of some Titan slinger or monomachist from Thebes and Troy, saying - "Come hither, ye wretches, that I may give your flesh to the fowls of the air". But in the second or **octavo** edition - and under what motive has never been explained - he recoiled, absolutely, from the sound himself had made: everybody else was appalled by the fury of the challenge, and, through the strangest of accidents, Mr. Godwin also was appalled.

De Quincey, although appearing to express a sense of betrayal at Godwin's distortion of the principles of his book, is actually responding to another quality

in the first edition which, he feels, is missing in the second. As any examination of the two editions shows, the principles remain much the same, and the Books containing Godwin's criticisms of monarchy etc. (to which De Quincey has made specific reference) remain practically unaltered from their original form. So what is the target of De Quincey's impassioned criticism? It is his rather flamboyant prose which betrays his real concern: the loss, in the second edition, of the energy and force, especially of the first four Books (no matter how ill-structured at times), of the first edition. As suggested early in this argument, (5) the first edition is, in a sense, more "crude", more immediately forceful, more overtly reformist in tone than the revised edition. For De Quincey, the literary reader and critic, such tonal and stylistic changes would be immediately obvious. His judgement, seen in its correct **literary** context, offers a useful perspective on the revisions and their impact.

It is just such a perspective that must be borne in mind when looking also at the much-quoted and equally misrepresented comment by Wordsworth (6); who, in 1796, probably losing much of his initial reformist ardour, writes:

I have received from Montagu, Godwin's second edition. I expect to find the work much improved. Such a piece of barbarous writing I have not seen. I cannot say that I have been encouraged in this hope by the **persusal of the second preface, which is all that I have yet looked into.** [My emphasis.] It contains scarce one sentence decently written. I am surprised to find such gross faults in a writer who has had so much practice in composition. (EY, 170-1)

Wordsworth's comment, as stated earlier, refers specifically to the **Preface** to the second edition of Political Justice. It is worth considering how fair Wordsworth's comment is. (7)

Any reading of the Preface (8) to the second edition vindicates Wordsworth's

preliminary response. Its style is exceptionally tortuous, the manner of address obsequious, even 'umble; and the reader feels distinctly uncomfortable as he plods through the piece. Quotation even from the first paragraph reveals the problem:

The reception of the following work has been such as to exceed what the author dared to promise himself. Its principles and reasonings have obtained the attention of the public to a considerable extent. This circumstance he has construed as imposing upon him the duty of a severe and assiduous revisal. Every author figures to himself, while writing, a numerous and liberal attention to his lucubrations: if he did not believe that he had something to offer that was worthy of public notice, it is impossible that he should write with any degree of animation. But the most ardent imagination can scarcely be expected to come in competition with sense. In the present instance there are many things that now appear to the author upon a review not to have been meditated with a sufficiently profound reflection, and to have been too hastily obtruded upon the reader. These things have been pruned away with a liberal hand. The wish dearest to his heart is, that there should be nothing in the book unworthy of the cause it was intended to serve. But though he professes to have done much, much yet remains to be done. After repeated revisals, the jealous eye of a man habituated to the detection of errors, still discovers things that might be better. (PJ,'96,I,xiii-xiv)(9)

Very little of the Preface to the second edition escapes this tone, and the final sentence of the second paragraph gives another example of what was, no doubt, the target of Wordsworth's critical comment:

He has in several instances detected error; and, so far is he from feeling mortified at the discovery that he hopes yet, by such activity and impartiality as he shall be able to exert, to arrive at many truths, of which he has scarcely at present the slightest presentiment. (PJ,'96,I,xv)

In this example, the diction may have escaped relatively unscathed; yet the syntax positively groans!

Perhaps Wordsworth's comment shows no great critical perspicacity since the flaws are so glaring. Yet, in his comments, Wordsworth expresses surprise; he had **expected** better. It has already been shown that Wordsworth had read the first edition, including its very different Preface, with its assertive rhythms,

its relatively simple style, its unadorned and unself-conscious diction:

Few works of literature are held to be in greater estimation, than those which treat in a methodical and elementary way of the principles of science. But the human mind in every enlightened age is progressive; and the best elementary treatises after a certain time are reduced in value by the operation of subsequent discoveries. Hence it has always been desired by candid enquirers, that new works of this kind should from time to time be superseded, and that other productions including the larger views that have since offered themselves, should be substituted in their place.

It would be strange if something of this kind were not desirable in politics, after the great change that has been produced in men's minds upon this subject, and the light that has been thrown upon it by the recent discussions of America and France. A sense of the value of such a work, if properly executed, was the motive which gave birth to these volumes. Of their execution the reader must judge.(PJ,'93,I,v-vi)

The difference is marked, and this is reflected in Wordsworth's comment on the Preface to the second edition. However, is Wordsworth's single brief remark useful as a guide to his likely reaction to the second edition as a whole? It is dangerous to try to read too much into so little; yet it is relevant.

The differences between the two Prefaces points to a quality that soon emerges in any reading of the second edition itself (a quality that should also be considered in response to De Quincey's criticisms). What is immediately obvious in comparing the two editions is another effect of the revisions given scant attention by any critic on Godwin so far: the matter of the style and consequent tone of the revised Political Justice. This reflects Godwin's growing sense of confidence, both in his own abilities, and in the power of reason as he presents it. Godwin does not make any substantially greater claims for reason in the second edition; however, the stylistic and tonal effects of the revisions give exactly that impression, on anything but the most careful reading.(10)

The result is indubitably unattractive. The mixture of bold reformist assertiveness and (sometimes tentative) testing of ideas, so obvious in the first edition, especially in the first four Books, is much diminished.

The first signs of this new confidence can be seen even in the Preface to the 1793 edition as it was rewritten for the second edition with many acknowledged revisions, a few of considerable import. Most important, in the Preface to the 1793 edition, Godwin writes, of his preparations for undertaking Political Justice:

Long before he [Godwin] thought of the present work, he had familiarised to his mind the arguments it contains on justice, gratitude, rights of man, promises, oaths and the omnipotence of truth. (PJ, '93, I, viii)

However, in the revised version of this Preface the final phrase of this sentence is changed to "omnipotence of **opinion**" (my emphasis). (11) This is a significant change, and reflects Godwin's increasing scepticism in his epistemology as he retreats from his earlier Platonic view in the first edition. Godwin recognises now that we

cannot penetrate into the essences of things....cannot discover the cause of things, or ascertain that in the antecedent which connects it with the consequent, and discern nothing but their contiguity. (PJ, '96, I, 95)

Whilst Godwin's belief in the role of reason in the perception and ultimate triumph of truth remains, reason is now presented operating in an empirical world, where the senses are our agents of perception, a world where we have "opinion contending with opinion" and hence "judgement with judgement" (PJ, '93, I, 72).

As the figure of Mortimer in The Borderers suggests, it is a shift in Godwin's views (partly developed out of his experience of writing Caleb Williams), of which Wordsworth became only too aware.

Most of the changes, however, are stylistic. Yet the effect is marked. For instance, the final tentative sentence of the original second paragraph,

Of their execution, the reader must judge. . . .

is deleted, and is replaced by those irritating "apologias" already quoted above. There is also a conscious heightening of the diction. Again, using the paragraphs already referred to, '93's "great change" becomes, in '96, "concussion"; '93's "that has been produced in men's minds" becomes in '96 "that the minds of men have suffered". Godwin's new confidence is seen in '93's "Authors who have formed the design of superseding the works of their predecessors" becoming in 1796: "Authors who have formed the design of supplying the defects of their predecessors..." The syntactic effect of Godwin's new-found confidence (responsible for the assumed humility and agonised sentence structures of the paragraphs quoted above), can also be seen in the revision to the original '93 Preface.(12)

One cannot help but feel that the Godwin whom so many found unattractive in personal contact is beginning to creep into the revisions of his work; important when considering Wordsworth's personal contact with Godwin during the period of revision. Secondly, these revisions, especially of the Books I to IV in the second edition, affect the presentation of his belief in the power of reason. For, whilst I would not accept the idea of the "palinode", the effect of the revisions has been materially to alter the character of the work. What De Quincey was pointing to, and what modern critics of Godwin are ignoring - perhaps because they are too intent on his **ideas** in the two editions (and in defending Godwin against De Quincey's charge) - is that the **impact** of the first and second editions

1 (especially the first four Books) is very different. The first edition, for all its crudities, presents itself as the assertive opinions and beliefs of a sincere reformer; the second edition is much more in the vein of a philosophical enquiry.

I have little doubt that this is a change that Wordsworth noticed; one to which he responded; one against which he ultimately reacted. It is only through an understanding of the nature and the impact of the revisions of Political Justice that the very complex and confusing position he adopts in The Borderers can be understood.

Reformist Zeal to Philosophic Reflection.

The most noticeable effect of Godwin's revisions is a distinct "toning down".

(13) This might seem to conflict with earlier comments regarding Godwin's more confident tone; however, this is not so. What is lost from the first edition, especially the early Books, is the assertiveness, the sense of personal (if, perhaps, not fully considered) commitment. It is replaced by a more assured confidence in the philosophical and moral stance of the writer. This can quickly be illustrated from Chapter II of Book I at the end of the chapter. The first edition reads:

This account of the history and state of man is not a declamation, but an appeal to facts. He that considers it cannot possibly regard disquisition as a trifle, and government as a neutral and unimportant concern. I by no means call upon the reader implicitly to admit that these evils are capable of remedy, and that wars, executions and despotism can be extirpated out of the world. But I call upon him to consider whether they may be remedied. I would have him feel that civil policy is a topic upon which the severest investigation may laudably be employed.

If government be a subject, which, like mathematics, natural philosophy and morals, admits of argument and demonstration, then we may reasonably hope that men shall some time or other agree respecting it. If it comprehend everything that is most important and interesting to man, it is probable that, when the theory is greatly advanced, the practice will not be wholly neglected. Men may one day feel that they are partakers

of a common nature, and that true freedom and perfect equity, like food and air, are pregnant with benefit to every constitution. If there be the faintest hope that this shall be the final result, then certainly no subject can inspire to a sound mind such generous enthusiasm, such enlightened ardour and such invincible perseverance.

The probability of this improvement will be sufficiently established, if we consider, FIRST, that the moral characters of man are the results of their perceptions: and, SECONDLY, that of all of the modes of operating on mind government is the most considerable. In addition to these arguments it will be found, THIRDLY, that the good and ill effects of political institution are not less conspicuous in detail than in principle; and, FOURTHLY, that perfectibility is one of the most unequivocal characteristics of the human species, so that the political, as well as the intellectual state of man, may be presumed to be in a course of progressive improvement. (PJ, '93, I, 10-11)

However, by the second edition, the closing paragraph of Chapter 2 reflects the changed character and tone of Godwin's early Books in 1796:

Certainly, every man who takes a dispassionate survey of this picture will feel himself inclined to pause respecting the necessity of the havoc which is thus made of his species, and to question whether the existing mode for protecting mankind against the caprices of each other are the best that can be devised. He will be at a loss which of the two to pronounce most worthy of regret, the misery that is inflicted, or the depravity by which it is produced. If this be the unalterable allotment of our nature, the eminence of our rational faculties must be considered as rather an abortion than a substantial benefit; and we shall not fail to lament that, while in some respects we are elevated above the brutes, we are in so many more important ones destined to remain their inferiors. (PJ, '96, I, 14)

Both editions contain Godwin's reference to Locke's view of despotism as "vile and miserable" and "more to be deprecated than anarchy itself". (14) However, the paragraphs which follow this statement in the first edition are more lengthy and more positive in tone; indeed the final one of that edition, sub-titled Enumeration of Argument (quoted above), has a committed assertiveness and sounds like a catalogue of Godwin's "social cures". Contrast the opening sentence to the 1796 final paragraph, with its stress on a "dispassionate survey", which prefaces a paragraph which is more negative in tone and indeed in argument. Examination of the re-ordering of the chapters of the early Books, and of the

more careful and logical attempts by Godwin to arrive at his ideas on reform in this second edition show that his revision is "editorial" in intent; from such a viewpoint, these final paragraphs of the '93 edition of this chapter might have seemed somewhat dogmatic and naive. Nevertheless, the effect of the '96 revision is undoubtedly to tone down the reformist zeal of the earlier edition.

Herein lies, I suspect, the reason why De Quincey's criticisms have received so little support; and, to a great extent, justly so. In fact, as already stated, his acute sense of a changed tone in Political Justice is obvious to any reader approaching the second edition after reading the first. Examples abound, but it would be better to limit discussion to only a few in order to demonstrate this toning down of the reformist idealism of the first edition. At the same time, two other consequences of the revisions can be seen: an impression of a more philosophic approach to the arguments concerning reform and improvement, and an attempt to explain more fully the role of reason in the perfectibilian view of man and society.

Apart from the extension of '93, Book I, Chapter III into '96, Book I, Chapter IV and the addition of '96, Book I, Chapter V (with which it will be more appropriate to deal later on(15)), it is worth noting once again, the rather equivocal effect of Godwin's editorial decision to bring the chapter entitled The Spirit of Political Institutions forward in 1796 to follow immediately upon the previous Chapter II, The History of Political Society. The cohesion of Godwin's argument is improved, as he strives in these two chapters (concerned with political abuses) to remove any acceptance of government as playing a role in human improvement. Yet, in '96, Chapter III, there is a detachment in the language of the concluding sentences, (intentionally in light of his revised conclusion to what

is now the previous chapter with its insistence on a "dispassionate survey")

generalising, in a self-conscious rhetoric and rather tortuous syntax:

By the operation of these causes the insolence of wealth has been in some degree moderated. Meantime, it cannot be pretended that even among ourselves the inequality is not so strained, as to give birth to very unfortunate consequences. If, in the enormous degree in which it prevails in some parts of the world, it wholly debilitate and emasculate the human race, we shall feel some reason to believe that, even in the milder state in which we are accustomed to behold it, it is still pregnant with the most mischievous effects. (PJ,'96,I,24)

Contrast this to the sense of humanitarian outrage and defiance in 1793:

In England at the present day there are few poor men who do not console themselves, by the freedom of their animadversions upon their superiors. The new-fangled gentleman is by no means secure against having his tranquillity disturbed by their surly and pointed sarcasms. This propensity might easily be encouraged, and made conducive to the most salutary purposes. Every man might, as was the case in certain countries, upon record, be inspired with the consciousness of citizenship, and be made to feel himself an active and efficient member of the great whole. The poor man would then perceive, that, if eclipsed, he could not be trampled upon; and he would no longer be stung with the furies of envy, resentment and despair. (PJ,'93,I,42)

Another similarly equivocal example can be seen in '96, I, Chapter VII

(originally '93, I, Chapter VIII). The most substantial revision in this short chapter

is the deletion of this passage:

The question may in reality be reduced to an enquiry, whether the human understanding can be made the recipient of truth, whether it be possible for an effort so strenuous to exist as to make men aware of their true interests. For let this be granted, and the consequence is inevitable. It has already sufficiently appeared, that whatever is politically right or politically wrong, must be in all cases of trivial consequence to the welfare of mankind. Monarchy for example will by all men be acknowledged to be attended with many disadvantages. It acts upon insufficient and partial information, it generates intrigue, corruption, adulation and servility. If it could be proved that, it produced no advantages in equal proportion, and that its abolition would not lead to mischief, anarchy and disorder, is there a nation upon the face of the earth to whom these propositions were rendered papable, that would endure to submit to it? Is there a nation upon the face of the earth, that would submit to the impositions of its administration, the wars it occasions, and the lavish revenues by which it is maintained, if they knew it merely to be an excrescence and

a disease in the order of society? (PJ, '93, I, 74-5)

Deletion of the above might be seen as editorially sound since the anti-monarchical diatribe does disturb the argument of this chapter; yet the deletion of this passage, the language of which amounts virtually to incitement, is interesting. Again, the effect is to lose yet another passage which is actively reformist; for reading it in the context of the '93 Book I, it does not seem the somewhat self-indulgent interpolation it might have been if it had been left in the '96 edition.

These revisions, materially affecting the overall tone of Political Justice, can be seen to create that sense of a more **philosophical** approach in Godwin's work that I have mentioned, especially on reading the second Book of the revised edition. The first chapter was completely re-written, and the reason for this becomes fairly clear if we take the trouble to read carefully the sentence with which Godwin has opened the second chapter of that Book:

From what has been said it appears, that the subject of our present enquiry is strictly speaking a department of the science of morals.

(PJ, '96, I, 126)

In fact, this sentence follows on much more meaningfully from the more methodical '96 Chapter I of Book II than from the very sketchy equivalent in '93.(16) Godwin was, no doubt, aware of this. In the '96 chapter, an attempt to adopt a more reasoned utilitarian stance is clear; and this, in turn, is linked to the earlier '96 additional Book I, Chapter V on voluntary and involuntary actions, where a utilitarian premise underpins much of Godwin's thinking.(17) Not only in what is said, but in how the argument is presented, we see a conscious attempt at a more philosophical approach to the question of improvement and

reform. Accompanying it, we also have an echo of that assumed self-conscious confidence of tone already noted in the Preface to the second edition. It is this tone - almost dogmatic in places - which replaces the "bravado" of 1793.

The Role of Reason.

The impression of an increased emphasis on the role of reason is partly associated with the revisions to Book I (Chapters IV and V) which must be examined separately (see below pp 183ff); however, it is not difficult to point to other instances where this effect of the revisions can be seen. It is worth making the point that in the first edition, the word "reason" appears very rarely in the first four Books of Political Justice; although the rational process is often referred to and assumed throughout. In Chapter VI of the '96 edition, Godwin's main revisions are limited to a deletion of several paragraphs from 1793 in a series under the heading, "Arguments in favour of positive institution" in which he explores several possible reasons for substituting some form of institutionalised superintendence of opinion for the free exercise of private judgement, and proceeds to reject each of them. He also re-arranges some of the paragraphs and adds some new ones. The effect is again more cohesive, but, more important, the effect is also to vindicate and underwrite his central belief in the right of private judgement, (18) in which, despite the earlier introduction of the notion of imperfectly voluntary actions in the extension of his ideas on voluntary and involuntary actions, the role of reason in **directing** motivation towards benevolent action (as opposed now to perception of some assumed, and unexplained notion of "truth"), remains paramount. In such a process, there is no role for any form of positive institution, and Godwin confidently dispenses with arguments he had

at least tested in 1793.

Another brief example, in Chapter V of Book III of '96, is Godwin's small but significant change in referring to "Reason" of '93 as "Immutable reason" in '96. Despite the apparent retreat in the rest of the revision, it can be seen, by studying it in its context, that the **effect** is again to give an increased sense of reason's power.(19)

A more substantial illustration of this general effect is provided by the revisions to Book IV, Chapter II. This chapter, Of Revolutions, points the diminishing "reformist" tone of Political Justice and stresses the increasingly philosophical approach, including the enhanced sense of the role of reason. The revisions here are complex(20): the effect, with regard to what became '96, Chapter II, is clearly an extension of the arguments against revolution. For instance, Godwin deletes the sentences from '93:

He that desires a revolution for its own sake is to be regarded as a madman.
He that desires it from a thorough conviction of its usefulness and necessity has a claim upon us for candour and respect.(PJ,93,I,200)

Standing as they did, without any immediate qualification (though Godwin did go on to qualify the statement in Section II), they sound, to say the least, ambiguous if not inflammatory. Godwin was clearly not happy to leave them in his revised chapter. The brief objections Godwin makes against revolutions in the first edition are substantially revised and extended in 1796, stressing the horrors of revolution (Godwin's arguments against revolution in 1793 are actually rather weak). More positively, violent revolution is rejected due to Godwin's increased emphasis on perfectibility. The role of reason is now quite clearly Godwin's principal premise in this extended argument against revolution, e.g.:

Thirdly, it is a mistake to suppose that the system of trusting to reason alone is calculated to place fundamental reform at an immeasurable distance.(96,I,280-1)

These revisions underline just how equivocal Godwin was in the first edition of Political Justice over revolution and violent reform (as I have argued earlier, see volume I pp 13-14 & 86ff). The numerous and substantive revisions in '96, taking a much stronger line against violent revolution as a means of reform (more confidently underlining the role of reason in the process of reform) suggest that, in revising his work, Godwin realised that his earlier stance was ambiguous, if not ambivalent.

Once again, Godwin's style and thought reflect a growing confidence and a more ordered argument as he reinforces his central belief in private judgement as the key to social reform, with the role of reason seemingly enhanced as it guides the senses in judgement upon the various opinion that it is the role of the senses to perceive. The effects of these revisions could not pass unnoticed by any interested reader.

The revision effected by changing '93, Book IV, Chapter II, Section III to '96, Chapter III (though both carry the same title, Of Political Associations, and deal with same issue), is a rather confusing one, though possibly largely explained by Godwin removing the arguments in relation to revolution (which he has now dealt with in '96, Chapter II). The principal effect of this change is again a re-emphasis of private judgment (guided by reason) as opposed to arguments in favour of some corporate opinion, where, again, confidence in reason underpins the revised arguments.

Yet, in a sense, perhaps the most interesting part of this lengthy and complex revision is the deletion from '96 of the '93 section entitled Of the Species of Reform to be Desired. It is as if Godwin is retreating from his stance in 1793 as an active reformist, and does not wish to speculate on what kind of society he would wish to see.(21) Perhaps his reason for this can be seen to be justified when we look at some of his arguments in the following deleted passage:

To recapitulate the principal object of this chapter, I would once again repeat, that violence may suit the plan of any political partisan, rather than of him that pleads the cause of simple justice. There is even a sense in which the reform aimed at by the true politician may be affirmed to be less a gradual than an entire one, without contradicting the former position. The complete reformation that is wanted, is not instant but future reformation. It can in reality scarcely be considered as of the nature of action. It consists in an universal illumination. Men feel their situation, and the restraints, that shackled them before, vanish like mere deception. When the true crisis shall come, not a sword will need to be drawn, not a finger to be lifted up. The adversaries will be too few and too feeble to dare to make a stand against the universal sense of mankind.

Nor do these ideas imply, as at first sight they might seem to imply, that the revolution is at an immeasurable distance. It is of the nature of human affairs that great changes should appear to be sudden, and great discoveries to be made unexpectedly, and as it were by accident. In forming the mind of a young person, in endeavouring to give a new bent to that of a person of maturer years, I shall for a long time seem to have produced little effect, and the fruits will show themselves when I least expected them. The kingdom of truth comes not with ostentation. The seeds of virtue may appear to perish before they germinate.

To recur once more to the example of France, the works of her great political writers seemed for a long time to produce little prospect of any practical effect. Helvetius, one of the latest, in a work published after his death in 1771, laments in pathetic strains the hopeless condition of his country. "In the history of every people," says he, "there are moments, in which, uncertain of the side they shall choose, and balanced between political good and evil, they feel a desire to be instructed; in which the soil, so to express myself is, in some manner prepared, and may easily be impregnated with the dew of truth. At such a moment the publication of a valuable book may give birth to the most auspicious reforms: but, when that moment is no more, the nation, become insensible to the best motives, is by the nature of its government plunged deeper and deeper in ignorance and stupidity. The soil of intellect is then hard and impenetrable; the rains may fall, may spread their moisture upon the surface,

but the prospect of fertility is gone. Such is the condition of France. Her people are become the contempt of Europe. No salutary crisis shall ever restore them to liberty*."

But in spite of these melancholy predictions, the work of renovation was in continual progress. The American revolution gave the finishing stroke, and only six years elapsed between the completion of American liberty and the commencement of the French Revolution. Will a term longer than this be necessary, before France, the most refined and considerable nation in the world, will lead other nations to imitate and improve upon her plan? Let the true friend of man be incessant in the propagation of truth, and vigilant to counteract all the causes that might disturb the regularity of her progress, and he will have every reason to hope an early and a favourable event.(PJ,'93,I,222-6)

The deletion of the reference to the French Revolution reflects Godwin's growing disenchantment with events in France. Also, in the first two paragraphs, the language reflects the unsubstantiated assumptions of some of his idealism. Godwin no doubt recognised this, and decided that it had no place in this second edition with its more reflective and structured arguments. The reformist once again gave way to the philosophical moralist.

1796, Book I, Chapters IV and V: the development of a moral psychology.

The revisions in these two chapters deserve considerable attention. The place to begin is with Godwin's footnotes in Book I Chapter IV, and Book IV, Chapter VII.(22) There is a conflict here, especially in the two pieces of advice to readers to pass over these chapters and the notes in the later chapters which refer back explicitly to the earlier ones. So much of Godwin's approach and emphasis in the second edition is dependent upon '96, Book I, Chapters IV and V, that it is difficult to see how one can approach, with any level of sympathy, his arguments on gradual reform based on the role of reason without having read these chapters. Also, (as Godwin admits in his note to Book I, Chapter IV in '96), there would

seem to be a weakness in the foundations upon which he built his arguments in the later Book IV in his necessitarian approach to improvement in 1793. Perhaps there was a case for his advice to readers to pass over these early chapters in 1793 when the book still derived much of its power from its reformist zeal and when Godwin had not worked out the psychology of his moral philosophy. But this is not the case with the revised edition.

The revision of '93, Book I, Chapter III, which produced '96, Book IV, is more than a mere extension of the original chapter; it also involves the reinterpretation by Godwin of some of what was in '93, I, Chapter IV (Three Causes of Moral Improvement Considered), and his decision to delete that chapter. There are no fundamental changes of principle; but the consequent shifts of emphasis have a considerable effect on the early Books of Political Justice as a whole. The change in style is immediately obvious. Instead of the rather abrupt and forceful assertion of '93,

We bring into the world with us no innate principles: consequently we are neither virtuous nor vicious as we come into existence.(PJ,'93,I,12)

we find, in '96, a more cautious and considered approach:

I shall attempt to prove two things: first, that the actions and dispositions of mankind are the offspring of circumstances and events, and not of any original determination that they bring into the world

First, the actions and dispositions of men are not the offspring of any original bias that they bring into the world in favour of one sentiment or character rather than another, but flow entirely from the operation of circumstances and events acting upon a faculty of receiving sensible impressions.

There are three modes in which the human mind has been conceived to be modified, independently of the circumstances which occur to us, and the sensations excited: first, innate principles; secondly, instincts; thirdly, the original differences of our structure together with the impressions we receive in the womb. Let us examine each of these in

order.(PJ,'96,27-8)

The tone of the second edition suggests a more reflective and objective stance. This effect (together with both of the notes appended to the opening) demonstrates the change of emphasis and tone when compared with '93; the reformist zeal gives way to a philosophical disquisition upon matters of morality and psychology.

Godwin is attempting, in this second edition, to prepare the ground much earlier and more thoroughly for his empirical and necessitarian stance. The link with the later chapters in Book IV (most of which remain almost unaltered in the second edition) is clear enough. Godwin's more general intentions are best seen in a revision whereby he utilises an idea slipped in towards the end of '93, Chapter IV (a chapter he was deleting) in a rather negative manner:

All vice is nothing more than errors and mistakes reduced into practice, and adopted as the principle of our conduct. But error is perpetually hastening to its own detection. Vicious conduct is soon discovered to involve injurious consequences. Injustice, therefore, by its own nature, is little fitted for a durable existence.(PJ,'93,I,31)

In '96, this is much more confidently asserted:

If we entertain false views and be involved in pernicious mistakes, this disadvantage is not the offspring of an irresistible destiny. We have been ignorant, we have been hasty, or we have been misled. Remove the cause of this ignorance or this miscalculation, and the effects will cease. Show me in the clearest and most ambiguous manner that a certain mode of proceeding is most reasonable in itself or most conducive to my interest, and I shall infallibly pursue that mode, as long as the views you suggested to me continue present to my mind. The conduct of human beings in every situation is governed, by the judgements they make and the sensations that are communicated to them.(PJ,'96,I,46)

A few pages earlier, Godwin has said:

Speak the language of truth and reason to your child and be under no apprehension as to the result.(PJ,'96,I,44)

It is statements like these which point the real intention and effect of the revisions of this chapter. In '93, Chapter III, entitled The Moral Characters of Men Originate in their Perceptions had dealt only with a rejection of the "innate ideas" approach to morality, refuting this stance in favour of an empirical approach. In 1796, Godwin extends his arguments on this matter in a more systematised manner, at the same time consciously laying more substantial foundations for an empirical necessitarian morality and psychology. In deleting Chapter IV of the original edition (entitled Three Principal Causes of Moral Improvement Considered), he removes some of the more idealistic-sounding and rather weak arguments early on in the book, and also re-appraises some of those ideas. Education in the '93 chapter received rather scant and over-simplified treatment in terms both of its advantages and dangers, and is dismissed in that first edition with the remark that it is "though in one view an engine of unlimited power,.... exceedingly incompetent to the great business of reforming mankind." (PJ, '93, I, 46) By 1796, Godwin realises the importance of the empirical necessitarian stance he had described in the later Book IV in '93. So, now he informs us:

Children are a sort of raw material put into our hands, a ductile and yielding substance, which, if we do not ultimately mould to our wishes, it is because we throw away the power committed to us, by the folly with which we are accustomed to exert it.

He continues:

The success of an attempt to mislead can never be complete. We continually communicate in spite of ourselves the materials of just reasoning; reason is the genuine exercise, and truth the native element of an intellectual nature; it is no wonder therefore, that, with a crude and abortive plan to govern his efforts, the preceptor is perpetually baffled, and the pupil, who has been thus stored with systematic delusions, and half-discovered, clandestine truths, should come out anything rather than that which his instructor intended him. (PJ, '96, I, 49)

This is a more considered view of education - one which stresses the role of impressions received and the role of reason in recognising truth. All of this leads to the process of reform Godwin now proposes in his revisions: reform effected by way of the application of reason in the individual, from which will come social reform. Godwin now requires one further step to ensure such a process: the description of voluntary and involuntary actions which will come in the new Chapter V that is to be added to complement Chapter IV. However, before turning to this added chapter, it is important to note one other effect of Godwin's revisions here. As well as the change to a more considered philosophic approach in these early chapters of Political Justice, and a concentration upon the nature of perception and motivation (moral and psychological) Godwin has sown much earlier in this edition the seeds of a criticism that can be levelled against him: an assumption that perception of what is beneficial to man inevitably leads to the choice of that action; an assumption which is surely questionable, despite Godwin's lengthy expansion of his ideas on voluntary actions (including the recognition now of what he terms "imperfectly voluntary actions") in the added Chapter V.(23)

I say "expansion" because the idea of voluntary action is present in the '93 edition in a very sketchy form (in '93, Book IV, Chapter V, Of Free Will and Necessity) and there is also some further treatment of the idea in Chapter VII, Of the Mechanism of the Human Mind. However, it would appear that Godwin, in working on his second edition, recognised the significance of the idea of voluntary action in its relation to his belief in the power and role of reason in the process of human perfectibility. As a result, he expanded his ideas and placed them

earlier in his revised work.

Once again we find, not a change in principles, but a shift of emphasis of considerable significance. For, after being "held up" by the expanded chapter on the importance of "external circumstances", the reader is drawn into a further and detailed examination of the nature of human perception and motivation.

The intention of this additional chapter is clearly indicated by Godwin: to extend his empirical stance to include a process of motivation that ensures perfectibility. It is necessary only to direct attention to the first three paragraphs of the chapter, which demonstrate how crucial this chapter is to Godwin's thought.(24) Within this chapter can be found the key to Godwin's altered emphasis in his approach to reform; in some ways, the *raison d'être* of this chapter is as the premise to '96, Book I, Chapter VII (essentially the same as '93, Book I, Chapter VI), Human Inventions Susceptible of Perpetual Improvement. For in this chapter, Godwin tries to prove, on "external grounds", that the idea of perfectibility is already shown to exist in such matters as the development of language. What the addition of Chapter V of the second edition shows is Godwin's attempt to explore and justify the **motivations and psychological processes** behind such an idea of perfectibility; and also the way in which these make the process of perfectibility inevitable. In doing so, Godwin again shifts the emphasis of his work from "outside" to "inside" man, falling back on his empirical necessitarian stance and upon an apparent assumption of a natural benevolence in mankind.

Almost immediately after he gives his definition of voluntary actions, we find Godwin stating:

But, if every voluntary action be performed for the sake of its consequences, then in every voluntary action there is comparison and judgment. Every such action proceeds upon the apprehended truth of some proposition, The mind decides "this is good" or "desirable"; and immediately upon that decision, if accompanied with a persuasion that we are competent to accomplish this good or desirable thing, the limbs proceed to their office. The mind decides "this is better than something else"; either wine and cordials are before me, and I choose the wine rather than the cordials; or the wine is only presented or thought of, and I decide that to take the wine is better than to abstain from it. Thus it appears that in every voluntary action there is preference or choice, which indeed are synonymous terms."(PJ,'96,I,58-9)

This somewhat mechanistic approach might appear at odds with Godwin's claim that, although drawing heavily upon the ideas of Hartley, he tries to superimpose upon it the dimension of "thought" and thus reduce the "automatism" of Hartley's system.(25) Nevertheless, the role of "mind" here is, in Godwin's view, fully justified in terms of the empirical stance he has laid down in the previous chapter as well as the necessitarian view of human motivation he developed in Book IV (Chapters Vff. of '93 edition, Chapters VIIff. of '96) in the first edition. Godwin seems unaware that, in his arguments concerning choice based upon the consequences for others, his attempt to show a disinterested benevolence leaves him open to the view that he has assumed rather than established the existence of natural benevolence. For him, the role of reason adequately explains the inevitable choice for good and on this premise he builds his further revisions of the book.

So it is that, in further exploring the motivation behind this, Godwin explicitly states, a few paragraphs further on, that his attention must now turn to his "phenomena of the human mind".(PJ,'96,I.46) Thus, in his discussion of the phenomena of "volition" and "foresight" he arrives whither he clearly intends to arrive, at a final vindication of voluntary action, and then adds:

In the mean time, it is obvious to remark that the perfection of the human character consists in approaching as nearly as possible to the perfectly voluntary state.(PJ,'96,I,69)(26)

What Godwin needs now is some means of regulating all actions so that they can become voluntary. It is through reason that he sees the possibility of this:

Having thus explained the nature of human actions, involuntary, imperfectly voluntary and voluntary, let consider how far this explanation affects the doctrine of the present chapter..... All the most important occasions of our lives are capable of being subjected at pleasure to a decision, as nearly as possible, perfectly voluntary. Still it remains true that, when the understanding clearly perceives rectitude, propriety and eligibility to belong to a certain conduct, and so long as it has that perception, that conduct will be infallibly adopted. A perception of truth will inevitably be produced by a clear evidence brought home to the understanding, and the constancy of the perception will be proportioned to the apprehended value of the thing perceived. Reason therefore and conviction still appear to be the proper instrument, and the sufficient instrument for regulating the actions of mankind.(PJ,'96,I,70-71)

However, Godwin at this stage also sees another problem such as has been suggested by Monro,(27) and others, who claim that Godwin is confounding seeing something as desirable with desiring it. For Godwin returns to one of his earliest points in this chapter: the idea of the powers of reason and sensation being in perpetual conflict. Through extensive argument, such as showing that sexual pleasure relies as much on the intellectual dimension as the sensual, Godwin rejects the notion of such a conflict and asserts instead that our

sensual pleasures, commonly so called would be universally despised had we not the art to combine them with the pleasures of intellect and cultivation.(PJ,'96,I,77)

and that

We are no longer at liberty to consider man as divided between two independent principles, or to imagine that his inclinations are in any case inaccessible through the medium of his reason. We find the thinking principle within us to be uniform and simple; in consequence of which, we are entitled to conclude that it is in every respect the proper subject of education and persuasion, and is susceptible of unlimited improvement.
(PJ,'96,I,80-81)

So, in reconciling reason and passion, Godwin appears, to his own satisfaction at least, to have justified his view stated a few pages further on, in his discussion of the nature of "passion", that

nothing is necessary, but to show us that a thing is truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to excite in us a passion for its attainment.

(PJ,'96,I,82)(28)

Godwin goes on to enunciate his famous five propositions:

Sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error: Sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated: Truth is omnipotent: The vices and moral weaknesses of man are not invincible: Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement. (PJ,'96,I,86-87)

The whole purpose of the revisions and additions in Chapters IV and V of the second edition has been to provide the **psychological** basis for these propositions. In turn, they now form the moral foundations for Godwin's view of reform as he turns his attention increasingly towards the individual; for only from moral improvement of the individuals who comprise society can true social reform come.

The result in the first Book of Political Justice is a considerable shift of emphasis in the second edition - towards a **psychological** premise for Godwin's moral and reformist views. The effect on the first four Books is equally considerable; for example, in Book IV Chapter II, Of Revolutions, (29) arguments are substantially enhanced as a result of additions from the new Book I Chapter V:

If such are the genuine features of revolution, it will be fortunate if it can be made appear that revolution is wholly unnecessary, and the conviction of the understanding a means fully adequate to the demolishing political abuse. But this point has already been established in a former part of our enquiry.* It is common to affirm "that men may sufficiently know the error of their conduct, and yet be in no degree inclined to forsake it". This assertion however is no otherwise rendered plausible, than by the

vague manner in which we are accustomed to understand the term, knowledge. The voluntary actions of men originate in their opinions.* Whatever we believe to have the strongest inducements in its behalf, that we infallibly choose and pursue. It is impossible that we should choose anything as evil. It is impossible that a man should perpetrate a crime in the moment that he sees it in all its enormity. In every example of this sort, there is a struggle between knowledge on the one side, and error or habit on the other. While the knowledge continues in all its vigour, the ill action cannot be perpetrated. In proportion as the knowledge escapes from the mind, and is no longer recollected, the error or habit may prevail. But it is reasonable to suppose that the permanence, as well as vigour, of our perceptions is capable of being increased to an indefinite extent. Knowledge in this sense, understanding by it a clear and undoubting apprehension, such as no delusion can resist, is a thing totally different from what is ordinarily called by that name, from a sentiment seldom recollected, and, when it is recollected, scarcely felt or understood. * Book I, Chap. V.(PJ,'96,I,277-8)

It is important, finally, to consider how the revisions in Book I affected Godwin's chapters in Book IV where he discusses the doctrine of necessity.(30) Because of the process of writing much of the later part of the first edition while earlier manuscripts were already with the publisher, Godwin found himself in some difficulties. Therefore, these chapters, in some ways, present the arguments on which the earlier chapters are based in that they examine and establish (in Godwin's view at least) the underlying necessitarian stance adopted in Book I. The result in 1793 is that one comes across the "proof" underpinning the idea of perfectibility very late on. Also, it is just possible to accept Godwin's advice to pass over these chapters (in a way that I have now indicated it is **not** possible to do in the second edition); but to do that is to change the effect of reading Political Justice. For reading the '93 edition and accepting Godwin's advice to pass over these chapters undoubtedly gives the impression of a reformist rather than a philosophical work.

There are few revisions to these later chapters in 1796. Scrutiny of them shows

that the first three of this group, which deal with Godwin's psychology or, in his own phrase, the "mechanism of the human mind", reveal very little change. And yet, though most of this is simply a matter of "tidying up" by either making clear the links between these chapters and Book I, Chapter V of the revised edition, or deleting references to voluntary and involuntary actions which have been overtaken by the expansion of these ideas in the earlier chapter, a key change can be seen in the introductory paragraph to the chapter Of Free Will and Necessity. For, whereas Godwin simply stated in 1793 that it would not

however be useless to pause in this place, in order to consider those general principles of the human mind, which are most intimately connected with the topics of political reasoning. (PJ,'93,I,284)

in 1796 his aim is stated much more clearly:

It remains to turn our attention to the other branch of the subject proposed to be investigated in the present book; the mode in which, from the structure of the human mind, opinion is found to operate in modifying the conduct of individuals. (PJ,'96,I,364)

This change sums up the effect of the two groups of chapters in the respective editions, and points once again (despite Godwin's rather unwise retention in '96 of the note to the above quotation still inviting readers "indisposed to abstruse speculations" to pass over these chapters) the importance of these chapters in Book IV, since it is largely from this necessitarian stance and the psychology Godwin has now set in place to underpin it that he will base his process of reform. Thus, I would contend that it is only in the full context of the revised Political Justice that Book IV, Chapters VII to XI take on their full role and prominence; and this undoubtedly significantly alters the impact of this second edition in comparison with the first.

For any reader of Godwin's second edition of Political Justice, the effect of the

revisions is marked; as I have said, to read the second edition is a different experience from reading the first. The obvious changes in tone, the more philosophic milieu would seem, in fact, justify to some degree De Quincey's much-criticised comments, without undermining the general critical view that Godwin did not fundamentally alter the principles of his argument.(31)

As a nascent "man of letters" (like De Quincey), Wordsworth would, no doubt, have been sensitive to these changes, as the brief recorded reaction to the Preface to the second edition suggests. As we shall see, the increasingly philosophic stance, Godwin's efforts to create a psychology for his view of moral improvement, and the impression of the increasing confidence in reason in the revised work became a focus for Wordsworth as he approached his next major work : The Borderers.

Part 2: The Borderers.

In approaching The Borderers, it is important to be aware of the developing context of this argument. Godwin's Caleb Williams has been seen not just as a fictionalising of the first edition of Political Justice, but as an extension, and, to some extent, a testing of those ideas, particularly in the key areas of the relationship between reason and feeling, and the perception of truth through the vagaries of opinion. It is partly following upon this experience and what he learned from it that Godwin developed and consolidated his ideas in the major revisions to the second edition of Political Justice (the revisions to the third edition of 1798 were minor). Only in this context, aware of Wordsworth's consciousness of these developments in Godwin's thought as he read the philosopher's works (and, doubtless, discussed his ideas in the early stages of their acquaintance), can we understand both the conscious literary experiment⁽³²⁾ and Wordsworth's failure in The Borderers. For the purpose of this chapter is not to see The Borderers as a "final rejection" of rationalistic enquiry as represented in the figure of Godwin (its most famous contemporary exponent); it is, rather, to offer a view of the play which recognises that Wordsworth's attempt in it to challenge Godwin's fundamental belief in private judgement as the premise to his perfectibilian vision is rendered invalid as a criticism (never mind rejection) of "Godwinism" due to Wordsworth's conscious removal of benevolence from the character and motivation of the protagonist, Rivers, and his separation of reason and feeling. This, along with the dramatic failures in the structure and conflicts of the play, leaves Wordsworth, like Mortimer, isolated and undecided: an essential prelude to the poetic statement and vision of the 1798 Lyrical Ballads and,

furthermore, to the resolution of that inconclusiveness that came only with the process of re-invention in The Prelude of 1805.

In order to examine The Borderers adequately, therefore, it will be necessary to investigate four key areas. Once again, Wordsworth's own statements on the play and his intentions in writing it must be questioned: relevant to this will be the date of the play's composition. It will then be important to examine the role of Caleb Williams as a principal source. Finally, it is necessary to examine Wordsworth's central moral intention and literary achievement as a response to the revised second edition of Political Justice. Through this final stage of the argument of this chapter, the emerging literary crisis that becomes the legacy of Wordsworth's experiment will emerge.

It is also important early on to note that it is not the intention to claim here that Godwin's ideas or that the second edition of Political Justice and Caleb Williams are the **only** sources for The Borderers. Clearly, Shakespeare's Othello, Lear and (to a lesser extent) Macbeth are sources, as, indeed is Wordsworth's own Fragment of a Gothic Tale; and such sources, where appropriate, are acknowledged (just as Schiller's The Robbers is considered as an important source). The importance of Caleb Williams as a source has certainly not been adequately recognised;(33) neither has the second edition of Political Justice and the impact of its revisions been adequately acknowledged as the statement of Godwin's ideas to which Wordsworth was responding in The Borderers.

Commentary on the play abounds(34) offering contradictory views regarding the central concerns of the play, and how good (or, more often, how bad) it really is.

That the play is neither consistently good drama nor poetry is clear; but to condemn it as a complete failure is unfair. Even an initial reading shows some passages of great power, and the creation of Rivers deserves more recognition as an achievement than as some shadow of Iago;(35) whatever Rivers is or represents, ultimately, he is not Iago.(36)

Of considerable relevance is the version of the play to be considered; for the purposes of an examination of the Godwin-Wordsworth relationship and the role of this in Wordsworth's development, the relevant text is the earliest possible complete version of the play.(37) Although the differences in the text completed in 1797 and that which was to result from Wordsworth's revisions in 1841-42 are not particularly extensive, they are significant; especially when considering the overall pattern of minor amendments in addition to the more substantive changes in Act I,i, (affecting III,iv), II,ii, IV,ii, and the most important changes in the final scene of the play.(38) The pattern of Wordsworth's changes can be seen to relate to three key issues: his wish, in the revised text to remedy some of the weaknesses of psychology and motivation in his early version of the play (reflecting also what he **claims** to have intended in his Preface to the play); a tendency to "tone down" some of the more overt Godwinian themes in the play and the language in which these are sometimes presented; and, especially in the revision of the conclusion of the play, a change from Caleb Williams as his source (which, by the time he had written the play, he probably recognised as over-restrictive, though there are other reasons for this change in, for example, the introduction of the idea of expiation).

Wordsworth's commentary on *The Borderers*: (i) the 1842 and Fenwick

Notes

Wordsworth's principal comments on the play are to be found in his notes,(39) and, more significantly, following its discovery,(40) the Preface to the Borderers. (41)

To take the notes first, the most significant comments by Wordsworth concern "sin and crime" and the play being yet another reaction to his dismay over the reign of terror which emerged out of the French Revolution,(42) the latter idea being repeated in the Fenwick note. (43) Whilst not doubting that Wordsworth's reaction to the French Revolution played some role in the composition of this play, this scarcely explains the ingenious and impressive creation of Rivers. As to the tendency of "sin and crime" being "apt to start from their opposite qualities", this is a gross over-simplification of the exceedingly complex (if not always successful) portrayal of motivation and circumstance in the play. This is again suggestive of Wordsworth's anxiety to obscure some of the very real and complex struggles in the development of his thought and his poetic philosophy and vision, especially where these have involved the theoretical principles of a figure such as Godwin. Perhaps the statement which comes nearest to a true reflection of the depths of this drama is his reference to the Preface, (44) which, I feel, is a more just but still inadequate comment upon the play itself. But what is clear from any reading of the notes is, again, Wordsworth's lack of any reference to Godwin; no critic today can seriously doubt the existence of a "Godwinian element" in the play; yet, as with The Prelude, Wordsworth, in his reflective comments on the play, studiously refuses to acknowledge this.

The other important point which is made at length in the Fenwick note, one which has received inadequate attention from commentators, is Wordsworth's assertion that he had **not** written the play for the stage, **but to be read**.(45). Scrutiny of the text vindicates this statement, which is an important clue to the nature of the "experiment" Wordsworth was attempting in writing this play. Such a view of the play as a conscious "experiment" puts in doubt Wordsworth's claim in The Prelude that in his attempts

"to probe
The living body of society
Even to the heart." (1805,X,874-76)

he

"pushed without remorse
[His] speculations forward, . . ." (1805,X,876-7)

It is not adequate to see this as a summary expression of remorse for his period of rationalistic enquiry and its effects upon his developing poetic consciousness.

(ii) The Preface to the Borderers.

The Preface to the Borderers, is undoubtedly, a more problematic document. Accurate dating seems impossible(46) and one would have to agree with the view that it was written after the play since, many of the arguments derive from the play itself. Yet, at times, one wonders how Wordsworth could write this Preface in response to the completed play.

The Preface is not a true reflection of the dramatic structure of the play; for though Rivers is the key and dominant character, he is not the central figure of the play. That role belongs to Mortimer. The Preface almost totally ignores the part played

by Mortimer and certainly gives no attention to the equally substantial roles of Herbert and Matilda. Given the original intention of the Preface, as one of a series of essays on the principal characters of the play,(47) this is understandable; however, as a result, the Preface is not a valid guide to the experience of the play as a whole.

However, I would contend that it does act as a guide to Wordsworth's intentions, to his particular interest in the play; at the same time, pointing to some of the weaknesses of the play. For instance, despite the description of Rivers at the beginning of the Preface as having "master passions" of "pride and love of distinction"(48) (further amplified a few lines further on in the Preface(49)), the play itself fails to establish any such sense of "pride and love of distinction". At times Rivers (in a manner reminiscent of Iago) indicates his jealousy of Mortimer, and there are, of course, his speeches in Act IV where he describes how he came to despise and see the falseness of pride and popularity, but these outbursts are few, and this aspect of his character is not consistently sustained. However, the description in the Preface and Rivers' temporary withdrawal into solitude and subsequent return with malevolent intentions, point to a principal source of Wordsworth's initial ideas on his characters and plot: Caleb Williams and the character of Falkland with his "ungoverned passion" of "honour". Moreover, this is a source which can be demonstrated more persuasively than some of Wordsworth's other claims. For example, Wordsworth's arguments on the innate attractiveness of "vice"(29-41) are difficult to follow and the sources of his ideas suggest some confusion on his part.(50).

What is most puzzling, however, is the premise from which Wordsworth begins. If The Borderers and the Preface are intended as a rejection of Godwin's central beliefs, then given Godwin's belief in benevolence and its role in the process of motivation, evident throughout the second edition of Political Justice, (and present in the first edition, though admittedly less clearly explicated), to show reason working without benevolent motivation, is scarcely to present a valid criticism of Godwin.(51) It is in fact in statements such as "He presses truth and falsehood into the same service" that Wordsworth occasionally touches upon the central theme of his play and its relationship to Godwin's belief in the power of reason in the perception of truth and rejection of error. This, as I intend to show, is at the heart of the experience of the play.

Yet Wordsworth soon veers away from this central issue of the play and turns to the rather speculative attempt to explain the motivation of the character of Rivers. Unlike some critics(52), I can find little(53) in the bulk of this argument except a rather obscure and tedious exposition of a very tenuous idea.(54) Where Moorman, particularly, has gone wrong is in trying to trace the source of these ideas back to some autobiographical incident; this is surely wrong for, by this stage in the Preface Wordsworth is drawing his psychological theory, if one might use that term, from the play, from the behaviour of Rivers. One effect is to further highlight Wordsworth's difficulty in coping with the areas of psychological and moral motivation (those areas explored in Caleb Williams and given much greater attention in the revised Political Justice). Although Wordsworth, by the time he wrote the Preface, would not have wished to reveal

Godwin's works as a source for his play, it is possible to glimpse allusions to Godwin's necessitarianism(55) and his belief in the role of reason in the perception of truth and exposure of error:

Such a mind cannot but discover some truths, but he is unable to profit by them,....
presses truth and falsehood into the same service. (70-72)

Wordsworth's Preface openly challenges the claims of Godwin for truth's ability to overcome the sophistry of error in the claims that Rivers has "a sophism for every crime."(line 60)

Dating of the Play.

Dating of composition is not the problem it once was. Though I am unwilling to accept the arguments MacGillvray(56) offers as a result of his dating of the play,(57) I think it does have to be accepted that the play was written between the autumn of 1796 and the spring of 1797. This is significant for three reasons. First, as the letter to Wrangham of 21st March, 1796 shows, Wordsworth had time to read at least some of the second edition of Political Justice. Secondly, composition went on for several months; not surprising in itself, but important to remember in light of inconsistencies evidenced in the earliest complete edition of the play. Finally, it should be remembered that The Borderers is Wordsworth's next significant composition after his extensive revisions to create Adventures on Salisbury Plain, the latter having been completed at the end of 1795, and having drawn upon Caleb Williams (most significantly, in how it reflects the psychological depth of Godwin's novel and also, of course, in the use of the "robbers" incident with Godwin's very ambivalent treatment of Caleb's moral

response to this group)

It is also important to remember at this point that, after publication of his novel, Godwin spent much of 1795 revising Caleb Williams as well as preparing the second edition of Political Justice. Godwin's autobiographical notes for 1795 open with the following statement:

This and the following year were employed in revising my two works of Political Justice and Caleb Williams..

and he goes on to speak of his work on Political Justice and his "great earnestness of diligence to reconsider its doctrines." (58). 1795 was also the year in which Wordsworth had his earliest, most frequent, and probably most influential personal contact with Godwin (see Appendix I to Chapter Three). Wordsworth therefore had every opportunity to make himself familiar with both texts.

Caleb Williams as a Principal Source of The Borderers.

Having established Wordsworth's interest in Godwin's novel and the reflection in Adventures on Salisbury Plain of psychological (as well as moral) pre-occupations, a continuing interest by Wordsworth in Godwin's work might not be unexpected. Yet critical opinion has seen little more than either rejection or unquestioning repetition of Godwin's ideas in The Borderers. (59) But the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin is more complex, as are the links between the play and Godwin's novel. It is necessary to examine the links between the two texts both in terms of Wordsworth's drawings upon the plot and structure of Caleb Williams; and also his interest in the novel as a development from the first edition of Political Justice. The link between these two works deserves some closer examination than it has been given to date. (60) Only in this

context can we progress to examine The Borderers as a response to the revised Political Justice of 1796.

As already suggested, the Preface opens with a description which, in many ways, parallels Falkland, the man of "honour", of talent, of great intellectual ability, who suffers a public humiliation (at the hands of Tyrrel) and who commits a crime and retreats into solitude. Like Rivers, Falkland later decides to return to society, and to "reason" his way into disguising his guilt with a determination to visit the effects of his crime upon Caleb in a way that involves him in a sophistry of untruths. The links between the characters of Falkland and Rivers are strong enough to draw attention to Caleb Williams as a principal source for The Borderers; (certainly, I would contend, more so than Schiller's The Robbers(61)).

As with Adventures on Salisbury Plain, Wordsworth's drawing on Caleb Williams involves more than either mere verbal echo or incidents of plot. As we have already seen in Wordsworth's reaction to Godwin's works, what he often attempts to adopt is Godwin's **approach**: for example, his manner of thought and argument as in Llandaff, or his presentation of reformist ideals or human psychology and morality as in the Salisbury Plain revisions up to 1795. So it is, that in examining Caleb Williams and The Borderers, five areas require exploration: namely, the character of Falkland and "honour"; the presentation of motivation, where not only Falkland but aspects of Tyrrel and even Caleb become relevant (because Godwin spreads his presentation of the human psyche across these three characters); the setting of the play, particularly the use of the band of thieves once again; the use of "reason" to justify a crime (to the cost of another character) and, finally, what I intend to show as truly **central** to The Borderers,

the question of truth and error.

(a) The Character of Falkland.

The Preface reminds us of Falkland in Wordsworth's description of Rivers' need for "reasoned" malevolent action.(49-59) At the same time, Wordsworth's comment that "the mild effusions of thought, the milk of human reason are unknown to him" not only reminds us of this young man's lack of "any solid principles of benevolence" (as asserted in the first sentence of the Preface), but also of Caleb's statement whilst he is held by the robbers:

I found among them benevolence and kindness; they were strongly susceptible of emotions of generosity. . .(CW, 218)

as well as his later cry of despair, as a result of his isolation through the malevolence of Falkland:

Sympathy, the magnetic virtue, the hidden essence of our life, was extinct. This food, so essential to an intelligent existence seemed perpetually renewing before me in its fairest colours, only the more effectually to elude my grasp, and to mock my hunger. (CW, 308)

Some passages from Godwin's novel seem to presage Wordsworth's conception of The Borderers and the character of Rivers as described in the Preface to a quite extraordinary degree; for example, Clare's warning to Falkland:

I am acquainted with your weaknesses as well as your strength. You have an impetuosity and an impatience of imagined dishonour, that, if once set wrong, may make you as eminently mischievous, as you will otherwise be useful. Think seriously of exterminating this error!(CW, 34)

A similar notion is presented in the play, as well as the Preface, first of all in Mortimer's early speech:

I do more,
I honour him.(I,i,11-12)(62)

This is reminiscent of the novel since much of Godwin's presentation of Falkland's "honour" and his popularity comes through Caleb's expression of his feelings for Falkland in rather similar terms.(63) Yet, after this, there is little in the play to substantiate what Wordsworth claims in the Preface regarding the motivation of Rivers, until the opening of Act IV where Rivers reveals the background to his motives and present actions. True, we have statements of considerable generosity by Rivers, for example, in his speech regarding Mortimer's band:

This band of ours
Which you've collected for the noblest ends, . . . (I,i,32-3)

However, evident to anyone reading the Preface and the play is the gap that exists between Wordsworth's **claims** in the Preface and the dramatic presentation of what we might call the "prehistory" (64) of Rivers' immediate motivation. Wordsworth has failed in this aspect of River's characterisation, so that, when we eventually do come to Act IV and hear of the trick which resulted in the adoption by Rivers of his moral stance, we are scarcely convinced.(65) To someone who has read Caleb Williams, the lapse is all the more glaring; and one that has serious implications for the play as a whole. Whatever Wordsworth thinks regarding his presentation of a figure with "master passions" of "pride and love of distinction" (as stated in the Preface), in the play itself, he has failed to realise this adequately. The reason for this is partly Wordsworth's difficulty in coming to terms with matters of dramatic characterisation; but also his inability to cope, in any sustained manner, with the presentation of human motivation. The possibilities of the novel form with its lengthy passages of reflective prose and the relationship this creates with the reader are not available to the dramatist; so

in drawing so heavily upon Godwin's novel, Wordsworth has created a difficulty for himself.

(b)The Presentation of Motivation in the Play

The portrayal of Falkland, Tyrrel and Caleb is achieved principally through what each **thinks**; what they **do** generally simply points many of Godwin's didactic themes or forwards the plot. Hence the accusation that can be levelled at the novel that, despite its triumphs of characterisation, it does, at times, suffer from over-didacticism and a rather creaking plot. A reading of The Borderers shows, to some extent, a similar pattern. The **motivations** of Rivers and the responses of Mortimer tower over, for example, the exchanges between Mortimer and Idonea, and Herbert and Matilda,(66) and even over much of the action of the play. This reflects Wordsworth's interest in human motivation with particular regard to moral issues.

In places, Rivers' motivation and his careful contriving of what is to become Mortimer's downfall is reminiscent of Godwin's carefully developed account of the rivalry between Falkland and Tyrrel and the motivations of the latter, for example:

But, though he could not openly resent this rebellion against his authority, he brooded over it in the recesses of a malignant mind; and it was evident enough that he was accumulating materials for a bitter account, to which he trusted his adversary one day should be brought.
(CW, 23)

In the same vein, another of several possible examples, are the words of Tyrrel:

The scoundrel knows his pitiful advantages, and insults me upon them without ceasing. He is my rival and my persecutor.(CW, 54)

Though Wordsworth's intentions are different as far as details of theme and plot

are concerned, it is such reminders of the **manner** of Godwin's presentation of motivation that we see in Wordsworth's attempts:

They chose him for their chief! - I had a gnawing
More of contempt than hatred!- Shame on me,
'Twas a dull spark - a most unnatural [?fire].
- It died the moment the air breathed upon it.(II,i,1-4)

Here we can see both the strength and the weakness of what Wordsworth is doing. We can see that Rivers is not Falkland; nor is he Iago.(67) Rivers goes beyond Iago in his detachment, his self-conscious awareness of his motives. Similarly, we see in the passage quoted above how Rivers is a bold and exciting development of Falkland in his recognition of the paltry nature of his jealousy and his sense of anger at his earlier loss of status.(68) It is here that the implications of Wordsworth's failure to realise fully what was earlier referred to as the "prehistory" of Rivers' immediate motives emerge; for the pride and "sickly food of popular applause" (V, ii, 150-1) that he now despises seems scarcely realised in the play, and hence detracts from the dramatic impact of Rivers' rejection of such motives. (Even the 1842 revision, adding

False shame discarded, spurious Fame despised,
Twin sisters both of Ignorance,... (IV,1834-5)

does not help, since the weakness is in the early portrayal of Rivers' character and motivation.)

Though the reason for this lies principally in Wordsworth's inadequate dramatic powers, it is possible to identify an emerging pattern. Wordsworth, in the play as first conceived, draws upon Caleb Williams, but fails to sustain the psychological strength of that source; at the same time, he tries again to develop the idea beyond Godwin's conception. Falkland's loss of benevolent intention and

sincerity is carefully **developed** by Godwin; Rivers' is simply **assumed** at the start of the play with a rather inadequate explanation towards the end. In this way, Wordsworth draws upon, and then tries to develop from Godwin's novel, but becomes entrapped by the restrictions of his original source.

(c) The Setting of the Play.

In the Fenwick note, Wordsworth states:

As to the scene and period of action, little more was required for my purpose than the absence of established law and government; so that the agents might be at liberty to act on their own impulses - nevertheless, I do remember that, having a wish to colour the manners in some degree from local history more than my knowledge enabled me to do, I read Redpath's 'History of the Borders', but found there nothing to my purpose.(69)

The play is set around the time of the "Dictum of Kenilworth" (October 31st, 1266) - as opposed to Wordsworth's more general setting of "the reign of Henry III"; but this fact, deduced from the reference to Herbert's restored lands,(70) is scarcely relevant. Wordsworth's lack of a realised setting is important;(71) for it shows that his interest in political reform(72) has been subordinated to a focus on the **motivation of the individual** (paralleling Godwin's developing interest in both his novel and the revisions to Political Justice) within a social context. But that social context is very scantily realised. Despite what Wordsworth says in the Fenwick note about the need for an "absence of established law and government", the play would scarcely have suffered without this particular setting.

The reason is clear: the only "colour" Wordsworth is really interested in is not historical, social or local, but moral; and his source for the band of robbers has again been Caleb Williams. For Godwin's band of thieves also lived in a moral "limbo":

He listened to my story with eagerness, and commented on the several parts as I related them. He said that this was only one fresh instance of the tyranny and perfidiousness exercised by the powerful members of the community against those who were less privileged than themselves. Nothing could be more clear than their readiness to sacrifice the human species at large to their meanest interest or wildest caprice. Who that saw the situation in its true light would wait till their oppressors thought fit to decree their destruction, and not take arms in their defence while it was yet in their power? Which was more meritorious, the unresisting and dastardly submission of a slave, or the enterprise and gallantry of the man who dared to assert his claims? Since by the partial administration of our laws innocence, when power was armed against it, had nothing better to hope for than guilt, what man of true courage would fail to set these laws at defiance, and, if he must suffer by their injustice, at least take care that he had first shown his contempt of their yoke? For himself he should certainly never have embraced his present calling, had he not been stimulated to it by these cogent and irresistible reasons; and he hoped, as experience had so forcibly brought a conviction of this sort to my mind, that he should for the future have the happiness to associate me to his pursuits.- It will presently be seen with what event these hopes were attended.(CW, 220)

As in the case of Adventures on Salisbury Plain, it is the potential moral ambiguity in a group of people doing what is, by conventional moral criteria, "wrong", but in a situation which changes the moral perspective on their actions which intrigued Wordsworth in Godwin's novel. Ultimately, of course, Caleb does reject what the robbers are doing, but only after much heart-searching. This reminds us of Wordsworth's use of this moral ambiguity in the complex relationship between what the borderers are doing, their avowed intentions (particularly Mortimer's), and Herbert's criticisms:

My child, forgetful of the name of Herbert
Had given her love to a base freebooter
Who here, upon the borders of the Tweed,
Doth prey alike on two distracted countries,
Traitor to both.(I,ii,174-8)

There is the added complication that the strongest praise of the borderers' moral stance comes from Rivers, whose falsehood is already clear:

 this band of ours,

Which you've collected for the noblest ends,
Here on the savage confines of the Tweed
To guard the innocent, - he calls us outlaws, . . . (I,i,32-5)

One cannot help but admire what Wordsworth is doing here as he pushes the moral ambiguity even further through these levels of deceit. Yet, ultimately, the setting of the band is not successful because it soon ceases to be relevant; and though it is sustained to some degree, it is inconsistent as a backcloth to Rivers' motivation.

Why? Because Wordsworth's attention is being turned increasingly upon the individual and his motivation, as reflected in the Preface.⁽⁷³⁾ Though it is possible to trace some similarities between the borderers and Rivers, and the thieves in Caleb Williams and the expelled Gines, it is clear that once again Wordsworth turns away from his original source, as far as the setting of the play is concerned.⁽⁷⁴⁾

Wordsworth, however, has now turned his attention to the more central themes of Caleb Williams, the exploration and presentation of human motivation, which, as shown (in Part 1 of this chapter), is the principal focus of Godwin's revisions in Political Justice. It is important, at this point, that the developmental relationship between the first edition of Political Justice, Caleb Williams and the revised Political Justice of 1796 be stressed. For Wordsworth has been aware of the manner in which Caleb Williams tested some of the particularly idealistic assumptions of the first edition of Political Justice; a process to which he has responded positively by his decision to attempt the experiment of The Borderers. But, in his play, what he sets out to test, above all, is how Godwin, despite the experience of writing a novel in which he plainly tested his earlier theorisings

such as the omnipotence of truth, can, in the more soundly empirical context of the second edition of Political Justice, retain his belief in the power of truth and the role of reason in the perception of truth. In view of this, further study of the play must therefore be in the context of both of Godwin's works.

(d) Reason "versus" Sophistry.

Perhaps the most effective way of pointing the relationship between Wordsworth's play and Godwin's second edition of Political Justice is by focussing upon another quotation from the added Chapter V to Book I, where Godwin posits the first of his well-known "five propositions":

Sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error; . . .

and then continues:

The first of these propositions is so evident that it needs only be stated in order to be universally admitted. Is there anyone who can imagine that, when sound argument and sophistry are fairly brought into comparison, the victory can be doubtful? Sophistry may assume a plausible appearance, and contrive to a certain extent to bewilder the understanding. But it is one of the prerogatives of truth, to follow it in its mazes and strip of it disguise. (my emphasis)

The relationship here to the earlier Caleb Williams could not be clearer. Godwin goes on:

Nor does any difficulty from this consideration interfere with the establishment of the present proposition. We suppose truth not merely to be exhibited, but adequately communicated; that is, in other words, distinctly apprehended by the person to whom it is addressed. In this case the victory is too sure to admit of being controverted by the most inveterate scepticism. (PJ, '96, I, 87-8)

The relevance to The Borderers is surely equally obvious; for the play can be seen as an experiment in which Wordsworth tests Godwin's belief in "truth" and the role of reason in perception of truth, in particular, the relationship between truth's

ultimate power over "sophistry", and the assumption of truth being "adequately communicated" (which Godwin has explained as meaning "distinctly apprehended"). It is the confident assumption that still lies behind Godwin's concession regarding the apprehension of truth that Wordsworth intends to question. For, in the more sustained empirical context of Political Justice 1796, and following upon the experience of Caleb Williams, the ability of truth to be "distinctly apprehended" in the face of opinion (often conflicting opinion, as Godwin's novel demonstrated so effectively) is an assumption that Wordsworth considers worth challenging. Caleb's experience in the novel, in fact, does not reflect the rather naive assertion of the power of truth as quoted above from the second edition of Political Justice; and it was exactly this that Wordsworth had recognised. What he wished to do in The Borderers, therefore, was not simply to draw attention to the weakness of such a theoretical moral and philosophical stance, but to **put it to the test** in his play.(75)

It is essential, to be aware of Wordsworth's conscious intent in the play; his drawing upon Godwin is neither peripheral nor incidental, it is central. This can be shown in many ways, but perhaps the most glaring example is to be found in Rivers' statement in Act III:

Now, if I were a moralist
I should make wonderous revolutions here.
It were a quaint experiment to shew
The beauty of truth.....(III,v,143-6)(76)

Though this speech has some tenuous link to the immediate context, it stands out (almost clumsily) to such an extent that Wordsworth's reference in the Preface to Rivers becoming a "speculator in morals" is clearly an insufficient explanation. More relevant is my point already made from the Fenwick note that Wordsworth

intended the play to be read rather than acted. For the challenge of the lines above belongs only tenuously to Rivers' character: it is Wordsworth's challenge to his readers. A challenge to sift the text of his play at their leisure, as only a reader can do, in order to understand the fundamental structure of his play, which points the focus of Wordsworth's central concern.

(e) Truth and Error

That structure is related to the principal theme: of truth and error, and the difficulty of perception of truth through received opinion.(77). The importance of this theme in Wordsworth's play is overtly stated in Rivers' famous early lines in the play, the enigmatic reply to Mortimer's question:

Mort.	The wild rose, and the poppy, and the night-shade- Which is your favourite, Rivers?
Rivers	That which, while it is Strong to destroy, is also strong to heal.(I,i,17-19)

This may be partly a reference to Rivers' own experiences, but the ambiguity and balancing of contraries(78) here is only the first of many throughout the play which point the theme of truth and error and the role of reason in perceiving both. It is Godwin's assertions as to the power of truth and his unquestioning belief that it will always, through reason, triumph (expressed so often particularly in the second edition of Political Justice), that Wordsworth is testing. In doing so, he draws heavily upon Godwin's own test of his ideas in Caleb Williams in order to challenge Godwin's confident assumptions in the second edition of Political Justice. His play focuses upon the conflict between truth and error, and the difficulty of distinguishing the two in the absence of unambiguous evidence and faced with conflicting opinions.(79) The dramatic structure of the play

therefore hinges on the central issue of truth and error (it is worth noting that the word "truth" occurs remarkably frequently, and the word "error" is also used on several significant occasions(80)).

A view of the structure of this drama might be presented thus:

Rivers (whose initial motivation originates in his "betrayal" and "deception" -i.e.error, which he failed to perceive)	Mortimer	Herbert and Matilda
Mortimer	Herbert	Matilda
Herbert	Lacy	Mortimer/Rivers(81)

This pattern explains the principal action of the play and conflicts of the drama. The character "in the middle", so to speak, seeks to perceive the truth, and is faced by conflicting opinions, supported by evidence. Mortimer seeks the truth about the relationship between Herbert and Matilda and has to judge between what he has known and thinks he still knows, on the one hand, and, on the other, the evidence of Rivers (cunningly presented), which offers an alternative opinion and erroneous picture. Herbert (whose physical blindness is also symbolic) is distressed over Matilda's attachment to Mortimer whom he perceives to be a Freebooter, and at whose hands he is to experience even greater suffering; yet it is Matilda who presents the alternative view. The matter of Lacy is perhaps a minor one, but is nevertheless important in the way it reinforces the pattern identified here, as Lacy must judge between what he has believed earlier concerning Herbert, and Mortimer's account (the real source, being, of course, Rivers' deception). Here, indeed, we have "opinion contending with opinion, and judgement with judgement".(PJ,'96,I,72)

What gives the Lacy incident greater importance is the fact that Lacy makes the one suggestion that Rivers sees as a real threat to his plans:

To the camp
He shall be led, and there, the country round
All gathered to the spot, in open day
He shall be sacrificed. (II,iii,425-8)

Lacy's suggested "revenge" is rather too impetuous, but it causes Mortimer to take up the idea of bringing Herbert back to the camp to face some sort of inquiry (though not a legal trial):

He shall be brought
Before the camp, and would that good and just
Of every age might there be present.-There
His crimes shall be proclaimed-and for the rest,
It shall be done as wisdom shall decide- (II,iii,430-4)(82)

Significantly, this idea closes the action of the second Act, and in the opening of the third we immediately see it taken up again in Rivers' lengthy speech. (III,ii,1-32) This is a very confusing speech; the first few lines show the link with Lacy's and Mortimer's idea when Rivers says of the intention to carry Herbert back to the camp:

This last device must end my work-(III,ii,4)(83)

Rivers is afraid of such a meeting. Why? The answer lies in Political Justice and also Godwin's novel.

What Rivers fears most is that the band, when they witness a confrontation between Herbert and Mortimer, will uncover the truth.(84) But how? We have to go back to Godwin and also to that long speech by Rivers on matters of "passion" and "proof". In Caleb Williams, Caleb eventually perceives the truth concerning the innocence of Hawkins from a combination of feeling and factual evidence, through his suspicions regarding Falkland's behaviour after the

murder of Tyrrel and, more important, through his strong feelings of doubt regarding such a character as Hawkins being capable of committing murder -such doubts having been raised by Caleb's reading of Hawkins' letter.(CW,115) Then, there is Falkland's own confession which Caleb recognises as the truth. (CW,119-120) It is an interaction of feeling and reason rather than the earlier use of reason alone in the pursuit of Caleb which produces his admission of guilt. This, of course, accords with Godwin's view of the relationship between reason and feeling in the second edition of Political Justice:

We are no longer at liberty to consider man as divided between two independent principles, or to imagine that his inclinations are in any case inaccessible through the medium of his reason;(PJ,'96,I,80)(85)

With regard to his first division of the idea of "passion", Godwin says:

In the first sense it has sufficiently appeared that none of our sensations, or, which is the same thing, none of our ideas, are unaccompanied with a consciousness of pleasure or pain; consequently all our volitions are attended with complacence or aversion. In this sense without all doubt passion cannot be eradicated; but in this sense also passion is so far from being incompatible with reason, that it is inseparable from it. Virtue, sincerity, justice, and all those principles which are begotten and cherished in us by a due exercise of reason, will never be very strenuously espoused, till they are ardently loved; that is, till their value is clearly perceived and adequately understood. In this sense nothing is necessary, but to show that a thing is truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to excite in us a passion for its attainment.(PJ,96,I,82)

Yet Wordsworth has Rivers construe reason and passion as antithetical(86):

-Methinks

It were a pleasant pastime to construct
A scale and table of belief - as thus -
Two columns, one for passion, one for proof;
Each rises as the other falls...(III,ii,5-8) (87)

We see here Wordsworth's interest in consciously exploring moral issues presented in the very thin guise of Rivers as a speculator on moral matters. However, despite this separation of reason and feeling, Wordsworth does two things. He does not allow the confrontation Mortimer has suggested (and which

Rivers fears) to take place; therefore, he does not test Godwin's confidence in the perception of truth in the way that Godwin had done in Caleb Williams. Secondly, such a division invalidates much of Wordsworth's challenge to Godwin's ideas. (Perhaps Wordsworth had foreseen this, and hence did not proceed with Mortimer's suggestion, for it would have been dramatically unsound to try to replicate Godwin's presentation of the revelation of truth.) Hence, Wordsworth's literary crisis begins to emerge.

The Borderers: Wordsworth's challenge to the revisions of Political Justice

It is now appropriate to consider the nature of Wordsworth's experiment, and his challenge to the revised Political Justice of 1796. A challenge as significant in its literary implications as in its moral and philosophic assumptions. In considering this, I intend to examine, first, the nature of Wordsworth's moral and philosophic challenge as it focuses on the central theme of perception of truth and rejection of error. It will at once be necessary to examine also the dramatic failures and consequent distortion of that challenge, particularly the imbalance between the portrayal of truth and error resulting from these failures. As a result, the traditionally held view of an emergent "moral crisis" must itself be challenged by the possibility of a literary crisis being the real consequence of Wordsworth's experiment. The sheer power of the presentation of Rivers must be further examined; and the validity of its potential as a challenge to Godwin's confidence in the role of reason reconsidered in the context of those dramatic failures. So also, the effect upon the intended dramatic conflict of the separation of reason and feeling must be re-considered. Only in light of all of this can the isolation of Mortimer and the inconclusiveness of the ending of the play in its original form

be interpreted.

To see The Borderers as either a rejection of or advocating Godwin's ideas in Political Justice (without either specifying the edition of Political Justice concerned or recognising the role of Caleb Williams) is oversimplistic and wrong. The play, consciously experimental, often prone to weakness, is also courageous and critical to Wordsworth's development.(88) The Borderers is an attempt by Wordsworth to examine the ideas of Godwin and work out their implications, both morally, and in terms of his own relation to them. The use of Godwin's novel as a source(89) has been a conscious decision because Wordsworth is interested in exploring Godwin's ideas by taking them further, as Godwin himself did with his novel, consolidating this in the second edition of Political Justice.

Wordsworth's Moral Challenge

The nature of Wordsworth's moral challenge can best be seen in Wordsworth's description of the character of Rivers:

a young man of great intellectual powers, yet without any solid principles of genuine benevolence.(Preface, 1-2)

This Rivers is most certainly seen to be in the play. Yet such an idea runs totally contrary to Godwin's ideas, as expressed in the second edition of Political Justice.

Godwin states quite clearly:

Morality is nothing else but a calculation of consequences, and an adoption of that mode of conduct which, upon the most comprehensive view, appears to be attended with a balance of general pleasure and happiness.(PJ,'96,I,344)

This linking of morality and utilitarian benevolence permeates the revised Political Justice; there could be no question of Wordsworth not noticing this. One

of the many lengthy discussions of benevolence occurs in the chapter and appendices on the subject of "sincerity", which were subject to revisions and which underline the central role of sincerity in Godwin's ideas. For, in a sense, reason is not the foundation of Godwin's perfectibilian and moral stance: rather **sincerity**, the process of **acting** on the basis of truth perceived, is what will bring benefit and improvement to mankind. Though the quality of argument on the subject of sincerity is often weak, and even assumptive, it is central to Godwin's moral and perfectibilian vision:

Above all, Rivers lacks sincerity. Consider this passage from Godwin's revised chapter on sincerity:

The value of sincerity will be still further illustrated by a brief consideration of the nature of insincerity. Its features are neither like virtue, nor compatible with virtue. The sensations it obliges us to undergo are of the most odious nature. Its direct business is to cut off all commerce between the heart and the tongue. We must be upon our guard, or our cheeks will be covered with a conscious blush, the awkwardness of our gestures will betray us, and our lips will falter with their unwonted task. Such is the issue of the first attempt, not merely of the liar, but of him who practises concealment, or whose object is to put the change upon the person with whom he happens to converse. We are not, as at first, detected by the person from whom we intended to hold what we knew; but we fear detection. We feel uncertainty and confusion; Is it thus a man ought to feel? At last perhaps we become consummate in hypocrisy, and feel the same confidence and alacrity in duplicity that we before felt in entire frankness. Which, to an ordinary eye, would appear the man of virtue; he who, by the depth of his hypocrisy, contrived to keep his secret wholly unsuspected, or he who was precipitate enough to be thus misled, and to believe that his neighbour made use of words for the purpose of being understood? (PJ, '96, I, 338-9)

This reminds us in many ways of Rivers, above all, of his confidence in his "duplicity". Rivers has indeed "cut off all commerce between the heart and the tongue"; and, as pointed out, he feared the "unexpected occurrence" (of Lacy's and Mortimer's suggestion that Herbert be brought to the camp) that would "fail to

maintain the delusion" Rivers had "imposed". Mortimer of course believed that Rivers "made use of words for the purpose of being understood". But because of Rivers' sophistry and deceit, what was **not** communicated (as Godwin assumes it will be) was "truth".(90)

Wordsworth has gone to almost clumsy lengths to inform the reader of Rivers' deception; it is essential to Wordsworth that the reader is constantly aware of how the beliefs and "truths" of Mortimer, Herbert, Lacy, Matilda and the beggar woman are constantly being undermined by the untruths of Rivers' machinations.(91) What we are in fact witnessing is Wordsworth's reaction to statements by Godwin such as that quoted earlier, in which Godwin claims that, as far as sophistry is concerned, "it is one of the prerogatives of truth to... strip it of disguise". Wordsworth's intention in his play is to test this idea and demonstrate that, in this case at least, sophistry **does** overcome truth. Wordsworth is putting to the test Godwin's confidence in the role of reason, by consciously attempting to create a conflict between Rivers, who possesses neither the characteristics of benevolence nor of sincerity, but clearly does have a powerful rational perception, and Mortimer, portrayed and recognised by other characters in the play as possessing the characteristics of benevolence and sincerity - a sincerity, of course, based upon the benevolent application of reason. Wordsworth was more than aware, that, according to Godwin, reason and benevolence, accompanied by sincerity, should triumph.

The Failures of the Dramatic Challenge.

From the start, this experiment seems doomed to failure. As in the case of Rivers'

pride and love of distinction, and also the setting of the play, Wordsworth's dramatic abilities are simply not up to the task of creating a character of benevolence and sincerity who is equal to his opponent (a fact he clearly recognised, as can be seen in his revisions to the play).(92) Though there are moving and credible moments in Mortimer's mental turmoil, part of the reason lies with Godwin, who has carefully argued the nature and role of reason (on which Wordsworth can draw), but whose trust in a natural benevolence in man is based on unargued assumption. Even the arguments in favour of sincerity seem shallow, and would not offer to Wordsworth such a rich source as Chapters IV and V of Book I on motivation and the role of reason therein.

Hence, his attention is drawn to those chapters, to the much expanded empirical and necessitarian stance.(93) Mortimer is confronted with external circumstances and with opinions that are conflicting; additionally, many of the circumstances are the inventions of Rivers. So, truth and error are constantly played off against each other in the play, and Wordsworth points a potentially serious challenge to the empirical basis of Godwin's perfectibilian view; for, if truth cannot perceive such inventions, and we are so subject to circumstances, then we are at the mercy of such manipulation. But, mainly through Wordsworth's dramatic failings, error dominates throughout most of the play, ironically as a result of the care he has lavished upon Rivers' machinations and speeches. As a result, Wordsworth appears simply to have "loaded the dice" against Godwin's faith in truth from the start of the play. This militates against a realised dramatic conflict, and therefore the literary flaws undermine the potential of the moral challenge. Wordsworth's use of "truth" and "error" is too obvious to miss:

Rivers	Nay, Mortimer, I prithee be not hasty, For sometimes, in despite of my conviction, He tempted me to think the story true; 'Tis plain he loves the girl, and what he said That savoured of aversion to thy name Appeared the genuine colour of his soul, Anxiety lest any harm should reach her After his death.
Mort.	I have been much deceived.
Rivers	But sure, he loves the girl; and never love Could find delight to nurse itself so strangely, And thus to plague her with inventions! Death! There must be truth in this-
Mort.	False! False as hell- Truth in the story! Had the thing been true He must have felt it then, known what it was, And thus to prey upon her heart had been A tenfold cruelty-... (I,i,198-213)

The levels of irony here are impressive, and the truth does seem difficult to "...follow...in its mazes".(94) Little wonder that Mortimer's closing lines in Act I are:

The firm foundation of my life appears
To sink from under me. This business, Rivers,
Will be my ruin.- (I,iii,181-3)

These closing lines of Act I are unconvincing. Mortimer's "benevolence" (the "firm foundation" of his life, witnessed by others,(95) and which is threatened by Rivers), has been as scantily presented as Rivers' early motivation. More important, we know what is to happen; necessity ordains it. And that is what Wordsworth wishes to demonstrate. Despite the parallelling of the problem of the perception of truth by Mortimer through the symbolically blind Herbert who responds to Matilda's assertion of Mortimer's sincerity with his view of Mortimer as a "Freebooter", this does not bring dramatic strength to Mortimer's dilemma. Again, Wordsworth is less convincing than Godwin, who, despite his own necessitarian stance in his novel, did sustain the sense of suspense and dramatic

conflict, and hence moral dilemma. The reason for this is not only the lack of dramatic stature of Mortimer (in Caleb Williams all three principal characters are fully realised in terms of their own beliefs); with Wordsworth, the necessitarian stance lacks the complement of convincing psychological portrayal; there is no dramatic conflict.(96)

With such an inauspicious first act, Wordsworth adopts Godwin's own empirical and necessitarian stance, and challenges Godwin's moral beliefs with the ill-portrayed Mortimer pitted against a figure of intellect and insincerity of Iago-like stature, who says to Mortimer (with reference to Herbert's alleged misdeeds):

He dreads the presence of a virtuous man
Like you, he knows your eye would search his heart,
Your justice stamp upon his evil deeds
The punishment they merit.-(I,i,238-41)(97)

and who also, in dealing with anything, claims they must "sift the matter artfully"(I,ii,266)(98) rather than approach it in a manner of open sincerity. So the play begins.

But, for the reasons already indicated, the play is, dramatically, over. That is not really where the interest lies: it is in the moral and philosophical discussions which comprise such a large proportion of this play that Wordsworth's true interest can be seen to lie.

Dramatically, there is little to commend the development of Wordsworth's challenge to Godwin's belief in the triumph of truth through reason throughout the remaining acts of the play. Not least amongst the reasons for this are the tedium of the plot at times and the unconvincing nature of the exchanges between Herbert and Matilda and, later, Herbert and Mortimer. Herbert is so poorly

realised that one wonders what he could ever have done to assert the truth in order that Mortimer might have a chance of perceiving it. Matilda is, on the whole, merely ineffectual, and the obscurity of the plot over the incident of the letter scarcely helps. It is to Rivers that the real stuff of the play is given. He dominates even when the matter of his speech concerns some other character:

.....Self-stationed here,
Upon these savage confines we have seen you
Stand like an isthmus 'twixt two stormy seas
That checked their fury at your bidding-
'Mid the deep holds of Solway's mossy waste
Your single virtue has transformed a band
Of fierce barbarians into ministers
Of beauty and of order. (II,I,60-67)

The "stormy seas" here go beyond the immediate context of Rivers' reference to the role of Mortimer's band: the ambivalence of intention and meaning in River's speeches is familiar enough for us to recognise that this refers also to Mortimer's dilemma, standing between the opposing forces of truth and error, as he attempts, in the face of conflicting opinions, to perceive the truth.

The Significance of Rivers

Before looking at the final implications of the play and, for Wordsworth, of Mortimer's failure, it is necessary to give some attention to the already much-discussed Rivers. In light of what has already been shown regarding the inconsistencies of the play, it now becomes clear why Wordsworth wrote his Preface to the play: in the play itself, all that Wordsworth has intended to show regarding Rivers has not been realised. The Preface reflects the fact that Wordsworth's interest in the play, as drama, is not considerable. Rivers is very much a vehicle

for Wordsworth's true interest in the play: his discussion of philosophical, moral and psychological matters, and at times, this is almost clumsily overt:(99)

Benevolence that has not heart to use
The wholesome ministry of pain and evil
Is powerless and contemptible : as yet
Your virtues, the spontaneous growth of instinct,
From vigorous souls can claim but little praise. (II,i,72-6)

These lines from the same speech in which Rivers refers to the "stormy seas" are juxtaposed against the earlier lines, again in that speech, where Rivers had already referred to Mortimer's "single virtue" having transformed the band (see above). The conscious balancing of ideas, already pointed out as reflecting the dilemma between choice of error and truth, is shown here as Wordsworth uses Rivers to manipulate Godwin's ideas. In the Fenelon incident, or in other incidents where voluntary action is required, Godwin has shown distrust of mere sentimental feeling unguided by reason; however, at no point has he suggested explicitly that "pain", or especially "evil" are part of benevolent intent or motivation. This is Rivers' suggestion, not Godwin's; and what Wordsworth is doing in this rather puzzling exchange (for the whole context of this speech and Mortimer's reactions are necessary to a full understanding of it), is experimenting with Godwin's ideas and trying to ask the question: if reason is allowed to dominate, can it justify actions which, on any normal basis, would be regarded as evil?

In Mortimer's response to Rivers' challenge here,(100) we see how reason apparently **can** justify such an action; how voluntary action, taken as a result of foresight, can lead **not** to the furtherance of perfectibility or good, but indeed to evil. However, once again, even though "benevolence" here (of which Rivers supposedly has none) is in danger of being used by reason to the perversion of itself, this, as Godwin would have pointed out, derives from the **insincerity** of

Rivers. For all of Rivers' reasoning is based upon false evidence which he himself has in fact created for Mortimer's benefit. Once again we see that Wordsworth's real questioning of Godwin's moral and philosophical stance lies not in Rivers, but in Mortimer, whose sincerity fails to triumph over the sophistry of Rivers.

Yet Rivers continues to present the most effective philosophical and moral **discussions** in the play (as opposed to dramatic presentation of the theme). Wordsworth continues to use Godwin's ideas to explore the moral stance of Political Justice. We have already seen how Rivers reacted to Lacy's suggestion that Herbert be brought back to be questioned by the gang; Rivers saw that as a threat, yet he, himself, had suggested earlier on:

Twelve neighbours,
Plain honest men, might set us right. Their verdict
Would fortify your spirit-end this weakness- (II,iii,188-90)

Rivers shows no fear of the traditional legal system, and the link with Godwin and Caleb Williams (specifically Falkland's "trial" and then that of Caleb) is clear enough.

So, we come now to Rivers' statement of his beliefs:

To day you have thrown off a tyranny
That lives but by the torpid acquiescence
Of our emasculated souls, the tyranny
Of moralists and saints and lawgivers.
You have obeyed the only law that wisdom
Can ever recognize; the immediate law:
Flashed from the light of circumstances
Upon an independent intellect. (III,v,26-33)

That this is Godwinian in basis cannot be doubted:(101) the rejection of the moral authority of positive institutions is clear, but there is a dangerous logic now, for

the word "circumstances" has been chosen carefully; not only does it remind us of how Rivers created his deceptions, it also reminds us of Godwin's two important chapter titles and the themes of those chapters in the second edition:

Book I, Chapter 4 - The Characters of Men Originate in their External Circumstances (my emphasis)

Book I, Chapter 5 - The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions.

Godwin's confidence in this empirical view is being questioned by Wordsworth here, as is his consequent belief in the power of truth, its ability to be communicated, and the role of reason in perceiving truth. It is important to see what Wordsworth is doing here. To return first of all to that earlier scene in Act II, where Rivers begins to reveal his intentions and motivations towards Mortimer, in the speech beginning, "They chose him for their chief"(102), Rivers also states:

-These fools of feeling are mere birds of winter (II,i,5)

Having established briefly here his contempt for the feelings that Mortimer is indeed subsequently shown to have (e.g. his feelings for Matilda and, of course, over his killing of Herbert), Rivers concludes this same speech with the words:

and a **flash** (my emphasis)
Of truth enough to dazzle and to blind,
And he is mine for ever. (II,i,10-12)

Here is the "perverted reason" mentioned in the Preface.(l.149)

A few lines further on, as Rivers praises

No law but what each man makes for himself.
Here justice has indeed a field of triumph! (II,i,53-4)

the web of Wordsworth's criticism can be traced. Yet ultimately it **cannot** be seen as a criticism of Godwin's stance, despite what Wordsworth tried to claim in The

Prelude (1805,X,805ff); for Wordsworth's plot and the premise of his criticism is based upon a separation of reason and feeling (and withdrawal of benevolent intent) that Godwin would not have accepted.

It is useful to refer here to the Summary of Principles of the third (1798) edition of Political Justice (where revisions are minor and which draws upon the 1796 edition for its text):

The voluntary actions of men are under the direction of their feelings. Reason is not an independent principle, and has no tendency to excite us to action; in a practical view, it is merely a comparison and balancing of different feelings.

Yet, despite this, that impression of the enhanced role of reason in the revised Political Justice suggests why Wordsworth uses separation of reason and feeling to criticise Godwin. Here also is a clue to why, in quoting the lines,

the light of circumstances, flashed
Upon an independent intellect.

in The Prelude, Wordsworth does so in the context of a separation of feelings and intellect (see conclusion to this chapter). Yet it is not simply a response to the role given to reason by Godwin in the revised Political Justice.

What is being questioned is Godwin's assumptions regarding sincerity. Wordsworth has again pointed to a flaw in Godwin's thinking; by demonstrating that truth and sincerity are **not necessarily** the objects of reason. Reason, in Godwin's second edition, deals in terms of the empirical: opinion. This is an explanation for that strange but significant alteration in the Preface to the first edition of Political Justice as it was printed in the second edition, where he changed his belief in "the omnipotence of truth" to "the omnipotence of opinion". In writing the second edition, Godwin has tended to shy away from an earlier

tendency to a Platonic view of truth to an empirical one; Wordsworth, we know, read and reacted unfavourably to that Preface, and has not been oblivious to this change or its import. Opinion, like circumstances, can only be perceived, and is open to inventions and manipulation such as Rivers initiates. Wordsworth therefore wishes to test whether private judgement can ultimately be depended upon alone, given that it must rely upon perception of circumstances and opinion. For Wordsworth's experiment suggests that it is naive to **assume** apprehension of truth through reason in the face of such sophistry.

Yet why do reason and sincerity (supposedly present in Mortimer - who is not merely the representative of feelings) fail to see through the sophistries of untruth and insincerity? At least, until it is too late. The answer lies firstly in the sheer power of the creation of Rivers who, dramatically, is not only more than a match for Mortimer, but also for the combination of Matilda and Herbert who represent an alternative force of truth. Wordsworth has, perhaps unconsciously, cheated here: for whereas we do see genuine conflict in the battle between reason and feeling in Mortimer (in fact, some of the speeches mirroring his moral agony are quite moving), the representation of feeling(103) is presented through Herbert and Matilda. In this drama, Wordsworth has made an assumption to which Godwin could not accede: a separation of reason and feeling: Rivers "versus" Matilda/Herbert - with only the relatively inadequately portrayed Mortimer having the potentiality for both. This not only invalidates his moral challenge to Godwin, it further weakens the dramatic presentation of the play.

Herbert is very poorly presented in this play, and some of his exchanges with Mortimer show that it is little wonder that Rivers' dramatic power should

overcome such a pitiful expression of feeling (indeed, the play would surely have come in for even greater criticism, had truth triumphed). It is significant that, in the scenes involving Herbert and Mortimer, (104) Wordsworth most obviously draws upon Shakespeare: for example, the chamber scene from Macbeth, and Edgar and Gloucester on the way to Dover. (105)

As the play, in its final two Acts, draws towards its conclusion, two things are very noticeable. After Rivers' confessions, the play loses most of such power as it had. The long narration of Herbert's plight by Matilda, Eleanor and Eldred is almost tedious at times; if this is meant to be "compassion", then it could scarcely stand up against Rivers' "reason". Even Mortimer's breast - beating becomes trying.

Literary Crisis: the Emergent Solitary.

The failure to offer some meaningful resolution to the 1797 version of the play points the significance of The Borderers in Wordsworth's development. And it is to Caleb Williams that we must again turn to understand this. For a theme which Wordsworth chooses to introduce initially almost exactly half way through the play is now brought to a rather ambivalent fruition, as Wordsworth explores the idea of "solitude".

In the third act, during the scene where Mortimer seeks to betray Herbert, he says, in a particularly moving speech:

I do believe he weeps - I could weep too -
There is a vein of her voice that runs through his.
Even such a man my fancy bodied forth
From the first moment that I loved the maid

And he was still a brother in my love-
These tears-I did not think that aught was left in me
Of what I have been.- Yes, I thank thee, heaven:
One happy thought has passed across my mind.-
It may not be - I am cut off from man,
No more shall I be man, no more shall I
Have human feelings! (III,iii,62-72)

What Mortimer echoes here is Godwin's view of "solitude": a position of being "cut off" from one's fellow man, which Godwin sees as being an unhappy and unacceptable position and not conducive to good(106) since virtue involves benevolence towards one's fellow man. Caleb felt this, pursued by Falkland; Falkland and Rivers, having felt it, have returned from such solitude but with a philosophy of insincerity and lack of benevolence which produces suffering. As we have seen, in both of the early Salisbury Plain poems, Wordsworth has taken the same view of isolation and solitariness as he does at this stage in the play.

However, in Caleb Williams, Godwin briefly presents an alternative view of isolation and solitude, as Caleb, in his imprisonment, despite his general distress over his isolation, reflects on solitude:

But, if the intercourse of our fellow men has its pleasures, solitude on the other hand is not without its advantages. In solitude we can pursue our own thoughts undisturbed; and I was able to call up at will the most pleasing avocations. (CW,201)

As Wordsworth develops his theme of solitude towards the end of the play with its ultimately ambivalent inconclusiveness, it is interesting to reflect the parallel with Godwin's novel in the passage quoted above.

For, as the suspicions of the band and the moral dilemma of Mortimer grow, there is this exchange between Rivers and Mortimer:

Mort.

I had fears
Which now I feel are vain - but 'tis my wish

Rivers

Rivers:

Rivers

232

And dies in solitude- all things but man,
All die in solitude- an awful lesson:
There is much wisdom in it- (V,iii,30-38)

There are no clear conclusions. For if we examine the ending to the early version of the play, as opposed to the revised version,(107) we see how Wordsworth's choice of Caleb Williams as a source has proved unsuitable to his theme. For just as Caleb shows no pleasure at his final exposure of the truth, so also with Mortimer; but Godwin did not allow Caleb to injure anyone except perhaps himself as a result of his search for truth. Wordsworth, in his attempts to experiment with and go beyond Godwin has done just that, by introducing an element which Godwin could not have contemplated in Political Justice: evil- someone gaining pleasure through malevolence (rather than benevolence) towards others.

Wordsworth's ending is pessimistic; and Mortimer's words,

I will go forth a wanderer on the earth, . . . (V,iii,265)

with their suggestions of isolation from man, point the inconclusive "ending" to his play.

It is as if Wordsworth, in returning to Caleb Williams to complete the play, has become entrapped by his principal source (from which he attempted to extricate himself in the 1842 revision with the unjustified idea of "expiation") With the theme of solitude, there is an inconclusiveness and an ambivalence; for though those closing lines echo the kind of solitude that Godwin, followed by Wordsworth, had criticised, there is a sense that only in such solitude has Mortimer turned away from Rivers. What we find, in embryo, is a distinction between harmful solitude,(108) the solitude in which Rivers used his "perverted

reason" to snap the links that bound him to the rest of humankind, and a different kind of solitude that may have a real value.

It is in its inconclusiveness, as well as its experimental nature that the strengths, weaknesses and significance for Wordsworth of this play lie. To see it simply as a rejection of the rationalistic stance of Godwin is to distort the boldness of its original intent as much as the inconclusiveness of its ending. The significance of The Borderers lies, ultimately, not in the work itself, but in its place in Wordsworth's development. Ultimately, this can only be perceived from the perspective of the Lyrical Ballads of 1798 and 1800 and The Prelude of 1805. However, following this detailed examination of The Borderers, it is important to place it in its context.

To return momentarily to the Salisbury Plain poems, what is evident is a clear development from the first overtly didactic and fragmentary Salisbury Plain to the narrative and (inconsistent) psychological power of Adventures on Salisbury Plain; a development which derives in part from Wordsworth's drawing not simply on Godwin's ideas, but on his narrative and psychological presentation of these in Caleb Williams. In his conception of The Borderers, Wordsworth has tried to go further: his intention here has been not simply to use Godwin as a source, but to use fiction as a medium to test the fundamental moral and philosophic ideas in which he had been interested, as Godwin himself had done with Caleb Williams.

His experiment was not, therefore, a "personal" one, in the sense of portraying or trying to come to terms with his own belief in or rejection of Godwin's ideas; I suspect that by this stage in his development, Wordsworth's scepticism over

many of Godwin's central tenets was growing, as the challenge to the roles of truth and reason in The Borderers demonstrates. However, these ideas, particularly in Adventures on Salisbury Plain, produced a stimulus and even a direction for some powerful poetry from a committed philosophico-moral standpoint: and had fed Wordsworth's developing poetic vision with a strong humanitarian concern.

The role of Caleb Williams is now seen to be crucial. For Wordsworth drew upon Godwin's novel originally as an illustration and development of the ideas of Political Justice 1793. With the publication of the revised edition of Political Justice, however, the testing and development of those ideas by Godwin in his novel seemed contradicted by the effect of the revisions and the assumptions to which Godwin continued to hold. This, undoubtedly, affected Wordsworth's view of the novel itself: it now became an example of how literary form can challenge the pronouncements of theoretical principles. This was a challenge Wordsworth decided to take up. However, what Godwin was able to translate so powerfully into a psychologically convincing prose narrative, Wordsworth has been incapable of **sustaining** in terms of drama or of poetry. Where Godwin could develop and sustain a number of characters convincingly, Wordsworth cannot: the sheer power of Rivers' presentation renders true dramatic conflict impossible. Yet, despite his drawing upon other sources, Wordsworth clung to Caleb Williams as his seminal source.

The Borderers is, then, an attempt at a dramatic, moral, philosophical and psychological "gestalt" which Wordsworth simply could not handle; his revisions of 1842, as well as his 1798 comment on the play (109) testify to that. It was a lesson that Wordsworth had to learn before the vision of the Lyrical

Ballads could become possible.

However, rather than attempting at this stage to make any final judgement upon the significance of The Borderers in Wordsworth's development,(110) (for this will only emerge fully from the later perspective of both the Lyrical Ballads and The Prelude of 1805), it is important here to reinforce the closing image of the play: of Mortimer, solitary, undecided, seeking the solitude of relection. It is an image that reminds us strongly of his loss of that "firm foundation" of which he was so apprehensive under the influence of Rivers. Wordsworth should not be seen in the same light with regard to the moral stance of Godwin; but the closing image of the 1797 version of The Borderers, with its isolation and indecision, is a most fitting metaphor for Wordsworth's poetic consciousness (111) at the conclusion of composition of the play. In the patterns of poetry we will see in the Lyrical Ballads of 1798, through the statement of Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned to the assertion of Tintern Abbey and the 1800 Lyrical Ballads we will see the legacy of The Borderers as Wordsworth responds to the crisis of 1797, to which, in The Prelude of 1805, he will have to return to resolve, through re-invention, this critical period in his development.

CHAPTER FIVE : LYRICAL BALLADS - RE-INVENTION OF SELF.

Part I: Re-invention as Process - Lyrical Ballads of 1798.

In his article on The Borderers, William Jewett(1) writes:

The play is built around a plot in which selves are not just examined, but constructed and manipulated, as in all the more familiar forms of autobiography...

He then goes on to speak of the

self-mirroring [which] was shortly to serve as the germ for some of Wordsworth's best reflective poetry. (p 400)

Jewett's point is important to the perception of Wordsworth emerging undecided, and lacking poetic direction following the experience of The Borderers, and approaching the task of what was eventually to become Lyrical Ballads of 1798 and then 1800. In the very uneven spectrum of poems that constitute the Lyrical Ballads of 1798, we see a developing view, by Wordsworth, of himself, which emerges and eventually asserts itself with some confidence in Tintern Abbey, and, more assuredly, in Lyrical Ballads of 1800. The purpose of this chapter is to trace that development with particular regard to the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin's ideas as it develops over that period.

In doing this, the perspective brought by another recent critic becomes highly relevant. In his book, Wordsworth's Historical Imagination, David

Simpson(2) refers to

formulations that remain recognisably specific to one writer but at the same time draw heavily upon semantic residues that are verifiably objective.

The potential for ambiguities and ambivalences that results from this, and also the way in which such "semantic residues" affect the interrelation of subjective

and objective responses to a poem seems to me essential in responding to Wordsworth's development during the period of Lyrical Ballads (and The Prelude, which I shall revisit in the final chapter). The "semantic residues" with which I shall deal, are those left behind after Godwin's reading of Wordsworth, residues of which Wordsworth may or may not have been aware. To quote Simpson again:

What makes a poet's voice most convincingly individual may in fact be the degree to which it is exemplary of these common semantic resonances. Given the likelihood of these resonances sounding in the unconscious as well as the conscious ear, we cannot be guided in our interpretations by a poet's declared intentions, but neither can we ignore them entirely. (p 6)

Bearing this in mind, it will be apposite at this stage to consider further the earlier evidence (discussed in Part 2 of Chapter Two and Three) of a conscious decision by Wordsworth to "re-invent" the development of his poetic sensibility, at the same time, distorting the role that Godwin played in that development.

It is therefore intended here to consider the 1798 Lyrical Ballads, examining, as well as the recognisably "Godwinian" poems, those seen as showing evidence of a rejection⁽³⁾ of Godwinian beliefs (Simpson's perspective is particularly important here), and also of that crystallisation of experience to which I referred, in my discussion of Adventures on Salisbury Plain. Also, as Wordsworth's explicit rejection of the role of any theoretical or "bookish" learning in favour of the nurture of experience and Nature emerges in the later poems of Lyrical Ballads of 1798, the motivation behind such poems will be re-examined. It is essential to complement this examination with two further dimensions: first, before progressing to examination of the 1800 Lyrical Ballads, some brief attention should be given to the fragment, Essay on Morals⁽⁴⁾ and Wordsworth's

overt rejection there of theoretical works such as Godwin's Political Justice. Secondly, it is necessary to examine the view that Wordsworth, in Lyrical Ballads, rejected the rationalism of Godwin for the "wise passiveness"(5) that some critics claim derives from Hartley's associationism; in my view, an erroneous view,(6) and one as fraught with contradictions as the Godwin/Wordsworth issue. Finally, consideration will be given to the 1800 Lyrical Ballads and to the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.

The purpose of this is to show that, though it is possible to find evidence of a rejection of the kind of theoretical work that Political Justice represented, this does not entail an explicit rejection of Godwin's ideas. What increasingly becomes important, however, is the implications of this shift in Wordsworth's thinking, and in the emergence of his new poetic sensibility as evidenced in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads and finally asserted in Lyrical Ballads of 1800; not least the questions this raises for Wordsworth himself as that poetic stance becomes the premise for the re-exploration and reconstruction of self that provides the focus for The Prelude emergent from 1798.

It is to the very divided work of Lyrical Ballads of 1798 that we must turn first of all; divided and confusing, for whilst we are confronted with apparently obvious "anti-Godwinian" pieces such as Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned, so also we find The Female Vagrant and The Convict, which derive in large measure from Wordsworth's drawing upon Godwin.

Some account must be taken of the balance of content of Lyrical Ballads of 1798 and of the order of their presentation; but we must be very cautious. Words-

worth's dislike of the labour of publication is a factor, and it is impossible to discover to what extent he had a say in the order of presentation. Whilst there is some evidence of consultation between Wordsworth, Coleridge and Cottle on matters of typography,(7) which would suggest a conscientious attitude to the presentation of the poems in the volume, there is evidence also that Wordsworth's attitude to this first edition of Lyrical Ballads was motivated more by money than anything else.(8) Additionally, there is apparent confusion in Wordsworth's case over the printing and publishing of the poems;(9) William's and Dorothy's letters contemporary with the period of publication offer no guidance, and even Wordsworth's Fenwick notes are of no help in this matter of intention in the order of presentation.

It is from internal evidence that we have to arrive at conclusions regarding the presentation and the intention of the poems; and here, the picture is of a rather piecemeal approach. The title itself, Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems suggests this, as does the fact that some of the last poems to be written, particularly Expostulation and Reply, The Tables Turned, and, of course, Tintern Abbey (the very last written) all appear towards the end of the collection. However, to add to the confusion, we have the appearance, at the end, of Old Man Travelling (which, despite dispute over exact dating, seems to ante-date many of the other poems in the volume); and, of course, The Convict which, in its manuscript form, certainly pre-dates the "mainstream" of the Lyrical Ballads, reflecting an earlier stage in Wordsworth's response to Godwin. This view of a divided arrangement seems further vindicated by the last paragraph of the Advertisement, especially the last sentence,(10) for it is clear that two of the

poems related to Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned, namely Lines written in early Spring and Lines written at a small distance from my house (later called and more commonly known as To my Sister) do not "follow" as the words of the Advertisement suggest.

It would appear safe to assume that as the relationship between the 1798 Advertisement and the 1800 Preface (and, of course, the 1802 addendum) suggests strongly that any holistic conception that Wordsworth developed of Lyrical Ballads was consequent upon the process of writing the poems. It seems dangerous, therefore, to impose any overall theme in this 1798 collection such as rejection of Godwinism. Any view of what the 1798 Lyrical Ballads reveals regarding the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin's ideas must emerge from a careful study of individual poems.

The Godwinian Poems

The most obvious texts with which to begin are those acknowledged to be the two most "pro-Godwinian" poems, The Female Vagrant and The Convict, and to ask why they are in this collection.

There is no need to repeat my earlier arguments concerning what is here presented as The Female Vagrant; Chapter Three, Part 2 has shown the conscious and detailed changes whereby Wordsworth drew upon Godwin's ideas and Caleb Williams particularly, giving the revised Adventures on Salisbury Plain its greater psychological power. Did Wordsworth include the poem for any stronger reason than to have yet another poem for printing in Lyrical Ballads? There is evidence to show that Wordsworth was interested in having his poem

published, particularly in two references to the poem in his letters; the first, interestingly enough, in the Spring of 1798 when the Lyrical Ballads volume was being projected. Wordsworth wrote to Cottle:

I say nothing of the Salisbury Plain 'till I see you, I am determined to finish it, and equally so that You shall publish I have lately been busy about another plan which I do not wish to mention till I see you;..(EY,218)

Wordsworth's possible intention to publish Adventures on Salisbury Plain in Lyrical Ballads is suggested by his statement in February 1799, after publication of the first edition:

I took courage to devote two days (O Wonder) to the Salisbury Plain. I am resolved to discard Robert Walford and invent a new story for the woman. The poem is finished all but her tale..(EY,256)

Clearly, he was not content with what he had published, though he was never to make the changes suggested in his comment. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the very powerful Female Vagrant included in the first edition of Lyrical Ballads, has a substantial debt to Godwin in terms of psychological power as well as social and humanitarian concern.

The Convict, in a sense, has as much of a textual history behind it as The Female Vagrant. First published in the Morning Post on December 14th, 1797, the fact that it was printed over the name "Mortimer" has led to the belief that

Wordsworth affixed it to this poem because he also was or had been a "Mortimer" in his self-deception and absorption in false doctrines.(11)

But the fact that Coleridge sent it in, and also sent in two other poems to the Morning Post over the name "Mortimer"(12) surely puts Mrs. Moorman's speculation (shared by other critics) in perspective. Even the dropping of this particular "Godwinian" poem from the 1800 Lyrical Ballads has little to do with Wordsworth's rejection of Godwin. It is simply because it is a poor poem; in my

view, quite the poorest in the 1798 collection, making the possibility that it had become a family joke(13) quite credible.

Perhaps the number of revisions to The Convict testifies to Wordsworth's dissatisfaction with this poem. That it does draw upon Godwin is not challenged, but it should be stressed that, especially in its earliest form, it shows that same unhappy relationship between Godwinian-inspired outrage and poetic form already evidenced in the earliest draft of Salisbury Plain. This supports De Selincourt's suggested dating of around 1793;(14) rather than Reed's later dating of 1796.(15) Examination of the revisions to this poem present an interesting picture,(16) and one which, though it makes Wordsworth's decision to include this very uneven poem in the 1798 edition all the more puzzling, does suggest a conscious decision to do so. Most of the Godwinian background to this poem is too well known to require repetition here. However, critical commentary has shown some lack of care here; for though the poem does draw upon Godwin's arguments against punishment, it is not correct to say that Godwin favours "transportation". In fact, Godwin condemns this as much as he condemns "simple banishment", and advocates, instead, "colonisation".(17) What is interesting here is why Wordsworth insisted in placing this poem in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads. Was it merely as a companion-piece to Coleridge's The Dungeon ? Unlikely, since Coleridge's poem survives in the 1800 collection. The revisions perhaps offer an explanation.

All three versions of the opening of Wordsworth's poem are weak, both in terms of descriptive power and the jarring shift of focus from the natural setting to the convict himself. Yet Wordsworth persisted: because the convict, a figure who

derives not only from the Salisbury Plain poems but also continues to some extent in the Fragment of a Gothic Tale and as Herbert in the dungeon in The Borderers, originates both in Godwin's intellectual arguments against punishment, and also in his psychologically convincing portrait of the inward agonies resulting from punishment in Caleb Williams.⁽¹⁸⁾ For it is interesting that Wordsworth, in his revision of the poem prior to its inclusion in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads moves quickly from the description of the external appearance of the convict, to his psychological suffering;⁽¹⁹⁾ this reflects the whole train of Godwin's chapters on punishment where the prisoner's state of mind in relation to his motives, reaction to punishment, possible remorse etc. is the central theme. Anyone who has read the powerful chapters describing Caleb's first imprisonment could not fail to recognise the source of Wordsworth's attempts to portray the psychological suffering of the prisoner.⁽²⁰⁾ This pattern of revisions suggests a first draft of the poem around 1793, as De Selincourt suggests, where the manuscript version of the poem shows Godwin's ideas from Political Justice as the dominant source, fitting ill with the form and style Wordsworth has adopted. By 1798, Wordsworth's move to the psychological emphasis - drawing upon Caleb Williams yet again and from the experience of Adventures on Salisbury Plain - scarcely suggests a rejection or even diminution of his interest in Godwin, but rather a further example of the pattern of response to Godwin shown earlier in this thesis: the move from exposition of ideas, often in an overtly didactic and ill-assimilated way to portrayal of these same ideas in a more psychologically convincing manner. Hence the decision, in the version finally included in Lyrical Ballads, to delete all three of the manuscript's final stanzas and finish on Godwin's positive note, more in accord with the concentration on motivation earlier in the

poem. There is a sense of conscious intent behind this "Godwinian" piece.

As poetry, it fails; and Wordsworth's recognition of this by 1800 causes him to delete the poem; yet his determination to include it in 1798, along with The Female Vagrant, evidences a belief in this kind of socially and psychologically motivated verse of protest and suffering in Wordsworth's developing canon.

The final poem to be dealt with (briefly) in this group is Coleridge's The Dungeon, from his tragedy, Osorio. It has been suggested that the influence of Wordsworth can be seen in this poem to a greater or lesser extent. There would appear from the text to be a strong case for such a view, and I would here simply wish to add two points to support it. The link between The Dungeon and The Convict is clear enough: the outcry against punishment and the attempt at some presentation of the psychological effect upon the prisoner. Once again, reading of the relevant chapters of Caleb Williams points a possible source for this; yet this is a very unlikely source for Coleridge, who, despite his earlier association with Godwin, apparently did not appreciate Godwin's novel.(21) Wordsworth, as we have seen, did, and drew upon it heavily.

The "anti-Godwinian" poems

It is apposite now to turn to those poems where Wordsworth appears to reject some specific aspect of Godwin's ideas (though, as we shall see, and as has been recognised by most critics, such purported rejection is often accompanied by acceptance of some other area of Godwin's teaching). The poems in question are: Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree, Simon Lee, Anecdote for Fathers and The Last of the Flock.

Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree, despite the source quoted by Wordsworth,(22) clearly points to The Borderers. The dating of the poem (approximately Spring to Summer of 1797) shows it was written either very soon after or possibly even contemporaneously with Wordsworth finishing the play. Whilst the link with Godwin is clear,(23) response to the poem inevitably depends upon reaction to Wordsworth's play and particularly Rivers, whose character has been seen as a source for the central figure of the poem:

In youth, by genius nurs'd,
And big with lofty views, he to the world
Went forth, pure in his heart, against the taint
Of dissolute tongues, 'gainst jealousy, and hate,
And scorn, against all enemies prepared,
All but neglect: and so, his spirit damped
At once, with rash disdain he turned away,
And with the food of pride sustained his soul
In solitude. (13-21)

However, although much of this can be traced to Rivers,(24) there are considerable differences between Rivers and the central figure of the poem; for Rivers did not really suffer from "neglect", and the nature of his complaints and his own self-criticisms are different.(25) In fact, the true origins of this figure lie again in the source of characterisation of The Borderers: Caleb Williams. In the lines quoted above, we find again, the "psychological amalgam" of Falkland and Tyrell (though, indeed, Falkland is probably the principal source) which inspired the motivation of Rivers. Both Falkland and Tyrell showed pride, and reacted badly to neglect (in the case of Falkland, neglect in the sense that he felt unable to live up to the ideal of "honour" which had so fired him and brought him attention); and Falkland's solitude is of the kind that we saw merit Wordsworth's disapproval in earlier works. Such solitude,

A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here

An emblem of his own unfruitful life: . . . (28-9)

would no more have warranted the approval of Godwin than of Wordsworth; once again, Wordsworth has borrowed Godwin's ideas and psychological approach to present his own views. Caleb Williams, as a source, emerges also in the lines:

Nor that time,
Would he forget those beings, to whose minds,
Warm from the labours of benevolence,
The world, and man himself, appeared a scene
Of kindred loveliness: then would he sigh
With mournful joy, to think that others felt
What he must never feel: . . . (34-40)

This is not Rivers - not even a "harmless edition of Rivers"(26) - but it does reflect the sufferings of Falkland (who, of course, suffers through seeing others act whilst he can no longer do so); and, of course, it is scarcely necessary to give detailed argument regarding Godwin's belief in "benevolence". Perhaps in the lines,(27)

Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know, that pride,
How e'er disguised in its own majesty
Is littleness; . . . (46-8)

we see Wordsworth rephrase Rivers' own self-criticisms (without the rest of his philosophy of destruction); but again the character of Falkland lies behind this. More interesting still (though perhaps one should be wary of overstating the case) is that in speaking of the "faculties" which his character "has never used", he singles out "thought": that important element in Godwin's "mechanism of the human mind" which not only differentiates his system from Hartley's,(28) but is a critical element in Godwin's system of moral motivation and decision. And the exhortation to be

Instructed that true knowledge leads to love, . . . (1.56)

echoes Godwin's assertion in the second edition of Political Justice, that only a true understanding of anything can lead to genuine love and the wish to attain it:

Virtue, sincerity, justice and all those principles which are begotten and cherished in us by a due exercise of reason will never be very strenuously espoused until they are ardently loved; that is, till their value is perceived and adequately understood. In this sense, nothing is necessary but to show us that a thing is truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to excite in us a passion for its attainment. (PJ,'96,I,82)

An understanding of the real context of this poem and Wordsworth's borrowings(29) points its importance: its pivotal role as Wordsworth begins to see the significance of his experiment in writing The Borderers both reflectively and prospectively. That there is rejection of Rivers' intellectual philosophy is obvious; equally clear is an emerging sense of an alternative that the closing of the play and Mortimer's self-imposed solitude never defined. The closing lines of this poem turn inward in a context of man as part of, as evidence of, Nature's paradigm. Yet the positive assertion that "true knowledge leads to love" is as much an acceptance of Godwin's presentation of benevolent motivation as the rest of the poem represents Wordsworth's rejection of a belief in the ultimate power of reason (already well demonstrated in The Borderers). The poem looks backwards, yet forwards at the same time, and in the increasing selection from and critical reaction to Godwin, Wordsworth's emerging vision can be perceived.

Simon Lee has attracted attention, again instigated by Legouis,(30) as another anti-Godwinian poem. This poem, one of several written in that prolific Spring of 1798, is highly representative of the "ballads" of this volume. The accepted reading of it up till now, as a rejection of Godwin's views on "gratitude",(31) has no doubt arisen at least in part for the reason that Godwin's brief and **explicit**

comments on gratitude occur in the celebrated "Fenelon" chapter, an easy target for cursory readers of Godwin. But this is a blatant misreading of this poem and of Godwin's views.

The pro-Godwinian stance of this poem is obvious from early on in the poem. More clearly even than in Goody Blake and Harry Gill, we have a view of the demeaning nature of labour for bare subsistence, a view which permeates Political Justice(32) and later works.(33) When we are told of how Simon is "forced to work" and read the stanza,

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,
Not twenty paces from the door,
A scrap of land they have, but they
Are poorest of the poor.
This scrap of land he from the heath
Enclosed when he was stronger;
But what avails the land to them,
Which they can till no longer? (57-64)

this is evocative of Godwin's outburst against poverty in his various passages regarding property in Political Justice, for example:

What a contrast does this scene present to the present state of society, where the peasant and the labourer work till their understandings are benumbed with toil, their sinews contracted and made callous by being for ever on the stretch, and their bodies invaded with infirmities, and surrendered to an untimely grave? What is the fruit they obtain from this disproportioned and unceasing toil? In the evening, they return to a family, famished with hunger, exposed half naked to the inclemencies of the sky, hardly sheltered,..(PJ,'96,II,454)

Godwin's comments above, in the context of inequality in distribution of property and its effects(34) in terms of physical misery as well as its effects upon intellectual development are underlined by the disparity between Simon's early life and his present enforced toil. What we see here is evidence of a residual effect of that crystallisation of ideas that Wordsworth derived from his

reading of Godwin's work.

It is therefore with some surprise that one finds the accepted reading of the final incidents of the poem to be interpreted as a reaction against Godwin's ideas on "gratitude". The truth is that, first of all, what Wordsworth is really describing at the end of the poem relates not so much to "gratitude" as to "benevolence".(35) For Godwin's famous criticism of "gratitude" defines its own terms, and is a perfectly reasonable statement in that context. Moreover, the quotation that Legouis chooses from Godwin (and, incidentally, from the first edition(36)), shows what Godwin had in mind by this view of gratitude. This is very obviously not what Wordsworth means in the incident he describes at the end of his poem. On the other hand, what could be a better description of the emotions Wordsworth presents than the following passage from Godwin:

The man who vigilantly conforms his affections to the standard of impartial justice, who loses the view of personal regards in the greater objects that engross his attention, who, from motives of benevolence, sits loose to life and all its pleasures, and is ready without a sigh to sacrifice them to the public good, has an uncommonly exquisite source of happiness. When he looks back, he applauds the state of his own affections; and, when he looks out of himself, his sensations are refined in proportion to the comprehensiveness of his sentiments. He is filled with harmony within; and the state of his thoughts is uncommonly favourable to what we may venture to style the sublime emotions of tranquillity. It is not to be supposed that an experience of the pleasures of benevolence, should not tend to confirm in us a benevolent propensity. (PJ, '96, I, 430-1)

In terms of Godwin's views of "virtue" and "duty", his notion of gratitude is perfectly consistent, as is this view of benevolence. It is this latter concept which reflects the true experience of this poem. For we do not see or experience Simon Lee's emotions directly, we experience them through the poet-narrator; the feelings of the old man are "filtered" through the poet who is experiencing some

of the rewarding emotions of benevolence. It is in Godwin's attitudes to "virtue" and "duty" that he develops, at great length, what "gratitude" really is, beyond the more limited view of fawning gratitude that he so strongly criticised. And we should not forget Godwin's remark to Hazlitt:

I had the honour, in the talk of one evening, to convert Wordsworth from the doctrine of self-love to that of benevolence - ask him. (37)

So, why does Wordsworth use the term "gratitude"? Partly, no doubt, because it is the term which would probably spring most easily to mind. Or perhaps we are still misreading Wordsworth. The tone of the poem changes dramatically in the last four lines; but perhaps not simply to the obvious overt didacticism, but also to an ironic tone. For though Wordsworth's final two lines may simply mean that he has often received no thanks for favours done, this seems an eminently trite and selfish note on which to finish. Is it not possible that he is consciously drawing attention to the difference between the kind of "gratitude" criticised by Godwin, and the response to genuine benevolence? Frankly, I find the closing lines of the poem puzzling in light of the experience of the rest of the poem - on any reading. However, they seem even more discordant in relation to the main body of the poem if the more self-interested interpretation is to be accepted,

Finally, though it does belong to two years later, the poet's comment on Simon Lee in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, where he speaks of

placing my Reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them...

is obscure and potentially ambivalent. Yet I suggest it accords more with my interpretation of the poem (given a careful reading of Godwin) than has been the more accepted view. (38)

It would seem more logical to deal next with Last of the Flock since this poem and Simon Lee are related in terms of what they reveal about Wordsworth and Godwin. The accepted view of this poem is that it is a rejection of Godwin's view that property is the cause of vice,(39) yet, once again, such an oversimplification of Godwin leads to misreading of Wordsworth's intentions in this poem. The view that Wordsworth is here showing that pride of property is an emotion worthy of encouragement has, no doubt, gained weight from Wordsworth's letter to Fox,(EY, 312-5)(40) in which he exhorted that politician to read The Brothers and Michael (in the 1800 edition) in the hope that it would encourage Fox to defend

small independent **proprietors** of land here called statesmen, men of respectable education who labour daily on their own little properties.
(EY, 314)

Wordsworth's further comment to Fox,

You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the Poor. The two poems which I have mentioned were written to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply.(EY, 314-5)

even in 1801, shows Wordsworth at little variance with Godwin on this point. His picture, earlier in the letter, of "the encreasing disproportion between the price of labour and that of the necessities of life"(EY, 313) and also of his "two neighbours"(EY, 314) are reminiscent of Simon Lee and the picture of poverty drawn around him, and also of Godwin's statements of the effects of poverty already mentioned above.

So, careful reading of the letter to Fox letter shows how Wordsworth's sense of "property" is associated with property derived from personal industry rather than accumulated wealth; this is also the case with Last of the Flock. This is not

at variance with Godwin's stance, for he did not see property in itself as the root cause of vice, rather, it was the social evil of disproportionate distribution of property to the rich, and especially as exacerbated by the inequities between property associated with personal industry as opposed to inherited and accumulated property and wealth against which he spoke out. Godwin devotes a whole Book of his work to this; to sum up his arguments as being simply **against** property is to oversimplify greatly. Clark's summary of Godwin's complex views admirably sums up the position:

He also presents a system of property based on utility. The ideal is, he argues, voluntary distribution based on the needs of all. The best alternative to this is distribution according to labour, or the producer's retention of the full product of his work. The established system, he says, entails great injustices based primarily on the existence of vast inequalities. (41)

Godwin has no real objection to men having the fruits of their own industry, but he wishes to temper that with a sense of "duty" towards others, hence his views regarding "the second degree of property" (namely, the fruits of personal industry) and the inevitable clash between his individualism and his utilitarianism. But on the question of poverty, Godwin is again adamant in condemning this, a viewpoint clearly in accord with this poem.

Before turning to that, there is another difficulty with this poem. Basically, the narrative of the poem is weak, as is the attempt at psychological motivation: the third stanza relating the young man's early carefree life, and then introducing the acquisition of his "property" (his sheep) lacks a sense of psychological credibility; equally, we find it hard to understand how, or why, or even to what degree he found himself in the position:

Ten children, Sir! had I to feed,

Hard labour in a time of need! (41-2)

With even the shallowest response, one must have some sympathy with the "parish" if they received as much information as we have. It is as if Wordsworth's didactic intent regarding his attitude to the poor law is undermining the psychological and motivational validity of his poem here.

However, when we come to the effects of the growing poverty of the central figure of the poem, Godwin's views loom large. Godwin does not have much to say in Political Justice regarding the poor laws in England, but what he does have to say is relevant here:

In England the poors' rates amount to the sum of two millions sterling per annum. It has been calculated that one person in seven of the inhabitants of this country derives at some period in his life assistance from this fund. If to this we add the persons who, from pride, a spirit of independence, or want of a legal settlement, though in equal distress, receive no such assistance, the proportion will be considerably increased.(PJ,'96,I,16-17)

Though it would be difficult to categorise the father in the poem under any of Godwin's last three particular headings (again, because of the lack of narrative and motivational detail in the poem), he clearly could come under the general heading of those in distress, yet not receiving assistance.

More important, the above reference by Godwin to the poor laws occurs in the context of an argument by Godwin on the evils of poverty and how a

perpetual struggle with the evils of poverty, if frequently ineffectual, must necessarily render many of the sufferers desperate.(PJ,'96,I,17)

This comes on the same page as the reference to the poor laws, and leads to the argument that the rigours of poverty often lead to crime, an idea on which Godwin elaborates in the later book on Property:(42)

the fruitful source of crimes consists in this circumstance, one man's possessing in abundance that of which another man is destitute. We must change the nature of the mind, before we can prevent it from being powerfully influenced by this circumstance, when brought strongly home to its perceptions by the nature of its situation.(PJ,'96,II,456)

Could not a passage such as this be behind the following lines:

To wicked deeds I was inclined,
And wicked fancies crossed my mind,
And every man I chanc'd to see,
I thought he knew some ill of me.(71-4)

And are not the lines which close stanza 4 -

And now I care not if we die
And perish all of poverty.(39-40)

reminiscent of Godwin's descriptions of the despair of poverty, and, despite Godwin's supposed underplaying of the "domestic affections", his awareness of the sufferings of those in poverty trying to support a family?(43) Once again, that crystallising of his ideas through contact with Godwin and his thought is present in the poem as a residual but significant factor.

Ultimately, I find this rather stark poem unsatisfactory as Wordsworth appears to struggle in his attempts to portray the conflict between the shepherd's feelings for his children and the brutalising effects(44) of growing poverty upon those feelings. There is here a quintessential moral dilemma, not just regarding what Wordsworth is portraying but in his actual portrayal, his writing such a poem. The drawings upon Godwin's particular views on the Poor Law and the issue of poverty may, by this stage in Wordsworth's development, rely on memory of reading Godwin's works or of conversations with him as opposed to a continuing active involvement with his ideas, yet they still contribute **centrally** to Wordsworth's intention in this poem. Contrary to any view of a conscious contradiction

of Godwin's ideas on property, Wordsworth is here, consciously or unconsciously, (45) drawing upon the ideas of Godwin which in themselves may represent no more at this time than a particular crystallisation of a range of views on the effects of poverty that were current at the time, and to which Wordsworth would probably have been exposed. Yet, even as he tentatively develops his "new" poetic voice, of which Last of the Flock is an example, the role that the ideas of a thinker such as Godwin has in motivating that poetry is evident. Wordsworth later may have been anxious to deny that and invent some other more acceptable motivation, but the evidence here shows that such "re-invention" of his early development cannot totally obscure or in any way preclude such a residual "influence" as we see here by Godwin.

In Anecdote for Fathers, we have Wordsworth's own subtitle to contend with: "shewing how the art of lying might be taught"; once again, the anti-Godwinists have sallied forth. (46) It is impossible to find anywhere in Political Justice a passage where Godwin explicitly states that lying is in opposition to the nature of humankind or especially children. What **can** be found is the following statement which occurs in one of Godwin's passages on "education":

Speak the language of truth and reason to your child, and be under no apprehension for the result. (PJ, '96, I, 44)

This is very different from saying that lying is unnatural to children.

Before turning to the texts of Wordsworth and Godwin, to examine Godwin's possible influence in this poem, it might be useful to turn to other evidence, from the letters of the Wordsworths. Those who wish to see an "anti-Godwin" stance in this poem can easily turn to Wordsworth's well-known comment regarding

the child who is the subject of this poem: Basil Montagu (junior). The fact that the child's father was an acknowledged devotee of Godwin to a rather extreme degree (especially if it is assumed that Wordsworth's immediate enthusiasm for Godwin began to wane around 1796), and also Wordsworth's closing remark about young Basil's lying,(47) have led to the accepted interpretation of Wordsworth's rejection of Godwin's view. However, closer scrutiny of the letters referring to young Basil also reveals another interesting picture. The gap in time between Wordsworth's comment about young Basil's lying and the date of this poem is surely one reason for doubting a direct link between the two. Moreover, in two letters, one of March 1797(48) and the other of June/July 1798, (49) we find evidence of Dorothy Wordsworth's strong interest in the education of young Basil.

In the first letter, we are told by Dorothy that in their upbringing of Basil,

We have no punishments except such as appear to be, as far as we can determine, the immediate consequence that is to grow out of the offence.

Godwin's long discussion on punishment does not occur in the context of children, but what is common to both Godwin and Dorothy is a rejection of the retributive idea of punishment, and a concern for the consequences of the wrongful act as the principal reason for any act of punishment. (PJ,'96,Book VII,Chapter I).

In the later letter, we find more of Dorothy's comments regarding Basil's "education". Although her words manifest a clear belief in the power of nature and the positive effects of the "solitude" at Racedown,(50) there is again a conscious sense of the idea of "nurture" of the child, all in a context of the rejection of formal

patterns of education and favouring freedom and example as educative forces:

Much of [Basil's] good temper must be owing to our regularity of temper, and the consequent equable treatment which he receives from us. If he had been more with other children whose minds were **upon the same level with his own** I think he could scarcely have been without selfishness.
(EY,221)

The question must arise: is this all from Dorothy herself (which is possible), or has such conscious consideration of "education" had some inspiration? And could that conceivably have been Godwin? We know that Wordsworth himself expressed a mild interest in Godwin's publication in 1798 of Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and also that Dorothy took the trouble to note in her Journal on 14th April, 1798 that the Wordsworths had received a copy of the book. Not only was Wordsworth acquainted with Political Justice, but, in 1797, Godwin had published The Enquirer, sub-titled Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature. External evidence indicates that Wordsworth had a series of meetings (in June 1796) with Godwin at the time that the latter was preparing to write his Essays, later to be entitled The Enquirer, (57) and that during those visits Wordsworth was accompanied by Montagu, at the time that young Basil was staying with the Wordsworths at Racedown. A perusal of even the titles of the essays in The Enquirer shows the possible attraction to either Dorothy or William, e.g.: Essay I, Of Awakening the Mind; Essay III, Of the Sources of Genius; Essay V, Of an Early Taste for Reading. Moreover, in the ideas expressed in these essays, we find developments from the extensive statements Godwin had already made regarding education in Political Justice. (52) Godwin's stress upon the malleability of the human mind and the consequent responsibility upon their teachers is everywhere:

The more inexperienced and immature is the mind of the infant,

the greater is its pliability.(Enq, p 4)

Godwin places great stress on the relationship between "teacher" and "pupil", to the extent of criticism of Rousseau, where Godwin lashes out against what he considers the greatest crime against the child, deception:(53)

His [Rousseau's] whole system of education is a series of tricks, a puppet-show exhibition of which the master holds the wires, and the scholar is never to suspect in what manner they are moved.(Enq, p 106)

This enhances his arguments in Political Justice against a system of national education(54) and his discussion in that work of the education of the young:(55)

The miscarriages of education do not proceed from the boundedness of its powers, but from the mistakes with which it is accompanied. We often inspire disgust, where we mean to infuse desire.(PJ,'96,I,45)

This important discussion comes from the extended chapter in the second edition, The Characters of Men Originate in External Circumstances, to which we have already seen Wordsworth's attention attracted.

The above is essential to the consideration of any "Godwinian background" in the education of young Basil Montagu and to an understanding of this poem in which he appears, as opposed to the isolated and inaccurate reference to Godwin by critics of Wordsworth. (As an added parallel, note that Godwin, like Dorothy, has mixed feelings over the "solitary" upbringing of children: whilst private education does promote "sympathy" in children, there are the wider opportunities and self-confidence that public education can promote.(56)) As I have suggested, such a context constitutes a residual "influence" on Wordsworth's thinking in this poem, of which evidence can be shown.

The fact that Wordsworth deleted the subtitle of Anecdote in 1845 and put in its

place a quotation from Eusebius, translated from the Greek of Porphyry,

the Delphian oracle's rebuke to those who tried to extort an answer by force(57)

can in no way disguise, but rather highlights, the real intention of this poem and the origin of its thought. For despite the "homely" ballad form and style, and the anecdotal Fenwick note attached to it, the poem indeed follows closely the tenets of Godwin. The poet, talking to the boy, breaks all the Godwinian rules regarding the relationship between teacher and pupil in his manner of seeking the truth. It reminds us of Godwin's exhortations in The Enquirer, for example, in Essay XII, that young persons must always be shown the value of their sincerity; or the theme of Essay XIII, to bring children up with tolerance and respect. It also reminds us of Godwin's first definition of education, the "education of accident" (PJ,'96,I,46) or also, the second definition, "education of design" where Godwin tells us that

children are not inclined to consider him entirely as their friend whom they detect in an attempt to impose on them.(PJ,'96,I,48)

It is this thought which gives the direction and moral force to Wordsworth's poem; here, if ever, we have a harmonious blend of Godwin and Wordsworth. The dramatic effect, the incidental description, the patience and reticence of the boy, the garrulous coercion by the poet, all help us to understand why the boy "lies"; hence we respond sympathetically to the moral stance of this poem. Godwin would certainly have approved of such an attitude.

Without wishing to make any extravagant claims that this is an intentionally "pro-Godwinian" poem, or that Wordsworth is consciously advocating views of education imbibed from Godwin, I find it impossible to ignore what is at least a

very close coincidence between Godwin's views (views to which Wordsworth had undoubtedly been exposed) and the ideas essential to this poem. There is no need to reject the Fenwick note; but, despite Wordsworth's later comments, these do not explain the poem adequately. On the other hand, Godwin's influence, seen as part of the context of this poem, provides an essential element in understanding the poet's intention in writing the piece.

Poems of Re-Invention: the emergence of Wordsworth's poetic vision

Having now seen that in some of the most "central" poems of Lyrical Ballads there is not to be found the rejection of Godwinian thinking that has been claimed, it is appropriate to turn to that group of poems introduced in the Advertisement as poems which

arose out of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy.

These, however, Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned relate very closely to two other poems which occur earlier in Lyrical Ballads: Lines written at a small distance from my house and Lines written early in Spring. It is in this group of poems, (along with Old Man Travelling and, of course, Tintern Abbey) that we see the emergence of the Wordsworth recognisable as the poet of the 1800 Lyrical Ballads, of The Prelude and of nature and the imagination. My principal concern is not to claim that by showing a more substantial residual influence of Godwinian thinking in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads than has previously been accepted, this detracts from the view that this group of poems represents the most "seminal" in the development of Wordsworth's major poetic achievement. However, the questions that have already been raised concerning Wordsworth's

apparent determination to obscure and distort the role of Godwin in his developing poetic sensibility and vision can be approached through a careful examination of these four poems in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads (as well as the fragment: Essay on Morals).

To turn, first of all, to the two poems to which Wordsworth, in the Advertisement, directs our attention, both Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned have their origin well enough documented by Hazlitt's record of the visit to Wordsworth and even the conversation which inspired or possibly "provoked" the two poems. In his record of this meeting, Hazlitt concentrates more upon Coleridge than upon Wordsworth, and, perhaps inevitably, we find evidence that during the visit, there was considerable discussion of matters political and philosophical: the names of Mackintosh, Godwin, Paley, Berkeley, Paine, and Wollstonecraft are recorded as subjects of conversation between Hazlitt and Coleridge, but the famous conversation with Wordsworth provides only a general description:

I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth.....in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear or intelligible.(58)

Was the subject of this conversation, at least in part, Godwin? It could have been: Hazlitt's comments regarding Coleridge's remarks about Godwin show that Hazlitt held Godwin in some esteem at the time (borne out, of course, in the much later portrait of Godwin in Spirit of the Age). But a "metaphysical" argument? Can Godwin's arguments or the aspects of his writings which interested Wordsworth really be described as "metaphysical"? This does shed some doubt. But there is another important clue given by Hazlitt on one or two other

occasions in his references to Wordsworth at this time, namely, Wordsworth's dislike of criticism and the charge of not being original in his ideas:

I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing on his boat on Grasmere Lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his Poems on the Naming of Places from the local inscriptions of the same kind in Paul and Virginia. He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference, in defence of his originality. And the slightest variation would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever he added or omitted would inevitably be worth all that anyone else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment.(59)

This is fairly consistent with Hazlitt's later views on Wordsworth,(60) but it is interesting to see how early in his relationship Hazlitt wants to record this impression of the poet.

In the context of the above, The Tables Turned is by far the more important poem, Expostulation and Reply acting as a form of preamble to it. There are two main points to be made regarding the first poem; the first concerns Wordsworth's reference to "books":

Where are your books? that light bequeathed
To beings else forlorn and blind!(5-6)

By this, Wordsworth refers not just to literature, but to all knowledge gained from the study of "academic" works. His rather ambivalent attitude on the matter of learning and reading needs no elaboration here.(61) It can be summed up, on the one hand, in his Cambridge experience, and, on the other, in the constant complaints about lack of adequate reading material which we find scattered in his various writings. There is the added difficulty of his developing attitude to literature and its "teaching" powers, as is seen later in, for example, Preface to the Lyrical Ballads and Essay on Epitaphs. Hence my use of the alternative term "provoked", above, in what might have precipitated the writing of these two

poems. The background as described by Hazlitt, as well as this outburst against books, has all the signs of a sudden reaction to that argument he had with Hazlitt. What is important is that it is the first explicit adoption of such a view by Wordsworth as a "philosophy" for his poetry. And, to some extent, on such a slender foundation, much is to be built.

The second point concerns that "wise passiveness", and the suggestion that this might be drawn from Hartley.(62) I would strongly dispute this on several grounds. Although, in Hartley, we can find sections devoted to the various sensations, and also to the pleasures of nature, these descriptions are tied up in Hartley's complicated and exceptionally tedious speculative physiology, of which not a trace can be found in this poem. Perhaps Hartley's section on "the Pleasures arising from the Beauty of the Natural World" is not so open to this charge, but its ideas are complex, and go far beyond Wordsworth's limited statement about that "wise passiveness". As to that last phrase, I can, in Hartley, find no equivalent; true, it is implicit in much of Hartley's associationism, but we can also find evidence of it in Godwin, for example:

In volition, if the doctrine of necessity be true, the mind is altogether passive. . . .(PJ,'96,I,404)

and, on the next page,

It is at present generally admitted by all accurate reasoners upon the nature of the human mind, that its whole internal history may be traced to one single principle, association.(PJ,'96,I,405-6)

Similar comments can be found throughout Political Justice. There is no doubt that Wordsworth is drawing on associationism here, but it is in a fairly simple manner, and could easily come from Godwin, Coleridge or even his memories of his Cambridge days.(63)

Essentially, the final comment on this poem must be that it shows the first clear emergence of an explicit change of attitude and perspective in Wordsworth, out of which will develop the philosophical perspectives of Tintern Abbey and The Prelude. Yet, as I have said, I feel it acts as a preamble to the more important The Tables Turned.

This poem is more complex. There are signs of thought and consideration here; yet also signs of haste. The rejection of "bookish learning", first hinted at in the previous poem, is stressed (though not elaborated upon here); the alternative is made explicit:

Let Nature be your Teacher.(l. 16)

We are told that Nature is the source of "wisdom" and "truth" (virtues that would be upheld and proclaimed by many thinkers of the time); but it is, of course, in the **manner** of moral teaching and growth that we find the originality of Wordsworth's statement:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man
Of moral evils and of good
Than all the sages can.(21-4)

We will not find this in Godwin. Nor will we find it in Hartley, even in the sections dealing with the pleasures arising from the beauties of nature, for the "factitious, associated Nature of these Pleasures" lead, suggests Hartley, not to "wisdom" and "truth", but to "the Power, Knowledge, and Goodness of the Author of Nature" and only, anyhow, in those who have "already formed high ideas" of that Author.(64) Similarly, in his passages on the moral sense, we will not find this link with nature.

Yet, before finishing with this poem, it is necessary to consider the two earlier poems which are related, both written in the Spring of 1798.

Lines written at a small distance from my house, the earliest piece, contains the exhortation:

And bring no book, for this one day
We'll give to idleness.(15-16)

This origin of the idea developed in the poems I have just examined is then followed by the lines:

- It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than fifty years of reason; (24-6)

Here, in nascent form, lies the origin of the "impulse from a vernal wood", and this early version is presented, significantly, in terms of the "hostility" between reason and feeling of which Godwin was popularly accused, a division Wordsworth presents in The Borderers and repeats later in the 1805 Prelude, but which Godwin explicitly rejected in the second edition of Political Justice. It would be wrong to read too much into this simple and rather pleasing poem; it does, in a sense, reject Godwin's whole approach, but why it does so is, at this stage, not clear; the clue to that lies in the other poem, written about two months later. For, in Lines Written Early in Spring, we do have an important step in Wordsworth's thinking, as both a development of the previous poem, and also the birth of an idea crucial to much of the greatest poetry Wordsworth will write; an idea I have already challenged. Wordsworth, in the second stanza of the poem writes:

To her fair works did nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.(5-8)

As with the previous poem, he uses the ballad form to re-inforce his theme by repeating it at the end of the poem:

Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?(23-4)

Here now is the clear suggestion that, unless Wordsworth means us to read the phrase "human soul" to mean "his soul already bound up with human concerns", which seems very unlikely, then he is stating that it was nature which first awakened this humanitarian concern in him. Wordsworth does not actually make this totally explicit (and we will, later, have to take account of future elaborations of this in Tintern Abbey).

Although I have given some preliminary consideration to the question of the development of Wordsworth's human concern as portrayed in The Prelude (see Chapter Three, Part 1), it was possible at that point only to raise questions about the veracity of Wordsworth's account of the awakening of his humanitarian spirit by comparing his claims in The Prelude with the evidence emerging from the final lines of Descriptive Sketches, Llandaff, and especially the Salisbury Plain poems. In this poem, these works are as nought, as apparently, is Beaupuy at this stage. What we are witnessing in this group of poems composed towards the end of the period of preparation for publication of Lyrical Ballads is the moment of Wordsworth's reaction against a poetry inspired by theoretical philosophies as he turns to what was to become his poetic creed, sensibility and vision (emerging strongly in his writing and 1798 revisions of The Ruined Cottage and soon to be consolidated in Tintern Abbey and then The Prelude). But Wordsworth does not explain this here. He merely announces his theme here, and then re-asserts it initially in The Tables Turned, to which poem I now return.

In that later poem, we can see the determination to introduce into this theme of nature as **the** moral teacher, a clearer statement of the corollary (soon to be attempted also in prose form, in the fragment, Essay on Morals):

Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things;
- We murder to dissect.(27-8)

Here lies the reason for the change in Lines Left upon a Yew-Tree seat where the original phrase describing the recluse as "by genius nursed" is changed, in 1800, to "by science nursed". Wordsworth's determination to revoke his earlier interest in matters scientific and intellectual (which, in some ways, in Cambridge at that time, amounted to the same thing) is clear.(65) The rejection of science is repeated in the final stanza of The Tables Turned in this 1798 version.

Whence this outburst? It is difficult to find a reason, especially in two poems written in some haste before rushing to the publisher. There is no doubting Wordsworth's sincerity of feeling at the time they were written, and, once again, the evidence of shift in focus of his poetry from protest against suffering to acceptance in the context of a growing vision of nature in The Ruined Cottage shows the development of his poetic direction. Nor do I doubt that these poems might have resulted from a crystallisation of Wordsworth's ideas between March 1798 (the date of Lines written at a distance and approximately the end of May or beginning of June of that year, possibly assisted by the conversation with Hazlitt). Yet, in considering these poems in the context of what Wordsworth had written up till that time, and the rest of Lyrical Ballads one wonders how **considered** were the themes of these poems. For much of what is said in them, regarding the origins of Wordsworth's humanitarian and moral attitudes is, at

best, only partly true, given that this collection of poems contains pieces such as The Convict and The Female Vagrant that draw so obviously and heavily from the source of inspiration against which he is turning.

There is no doubt that this represents a new vision for Wordsworth, and a key moment in the genesis of Tintern Abbey, and any of Wordsworth's poetry that looks forward. But, in the poetry which **looks back** (and this is, of course, crucial to Wordsworth's essential poetic vision), above all, in The Prelude, (the beginnings of which were to emerge in this year), we must seek to come to terms with this seeming contradiction in Wordsworth's account of his early moral growth.

Little wonder that critics have felt the need to invent a "moral crisis" and a subsequent recovery at Racedown at the hands of Dorothy to explain this conflict, and how it relates to Wordsworth's account of his development in The Prelude. Yet this undermines the achievement of Wordsworth's poetry as conscious artifice; for though it will be the place of the final chapter of this thesis to argue conclusively my alternative view, it seems appropriate at this point to suggest that the very sudden re-appraisal of his poetic vision so clearly and abruptly **declared** in 1798 in these poems (and consolidated particularly in Tintern Abbey) were to pose the reflective Wordsworth with a problem, especially when deciding on the proposed intention of The Prelude, a problem to which the answer of re-inventing himself was to have many attractions.

Yet, clearly, Wordsworth did not feel confident in this new poetry, since, for example, he did not publish Old Cumberland Beggar till 1800, though it was at a very advanced stage in 1798.⁽⁶⁶⁾ In this poem, the legacy of human-

itarianism from Godwin blends with the new emerging philosophy of nature; nature, whence, alone, Wordsworth has claimed, such sympathy for the human condition has developed. (A fact reflected in the very few references to the poverty Wordsworth saw around him that we can find recorded.(67)

I turn finally, to two other poems which require attention here, since they have been particularly singled out as showing evidence of Wordsworth's growing allegiance to the ideas of Hartley.

In the first of these, Goody Blake and Harry Gill, there is no mistaking Wordsworth's debt to Godwin's criticisms of the demeaning nature of poverty. We have the picture of Goody's poverty presented in Godwinian terms. The nature and effect of the struggle for basic subsistence as well as the moral crux of this poem, though seen to reflect simply the growing concern that was being evinced by political economists in the eighteenth century over the effects of both the division of labour, and of poverty in fact reflect Godwinian detail:

Now when the frost was past enduring,
And made her poor old bones to ache,
Could anything be more alluring,
Than an old hedge to Goody Blake?(57-60)

Here is Godwin's view of the injustices of inequitable distribution of property re-vitalised brilliantly by Wordsworth in this agrarian context. Goody is freezing to death and does not have a property essential to her survival; Harry Gill has a surfeit or at least an abundance of that essential property. The reason why we sympathise with Goody Blake's "theft" of the firewood is because her act is "just" in terms of Godwin's view of our being entitled to property only in so far as it is of greater benefit to ourselves than to others, a theme associated with

Godwin's ideas on "virtue", "duty", and "justice", which permeates all of his discussion on property.

The view that this poem shows Wordsworth drawing on Hartley, (68) when tested against a study of Hartley, reveals that there is only one statement in Hartley that could possibly be construed as the origin of the poem:

It is reasonable to think that some (a) ideas may be as vivid as any sensation excited by the direct action of objects. (69)

But this would not add anything to Wordsworth's acknowledged source, Erasmus Darwin's Zoonomia; there is no evidence here of Hartley. The Darwin source is combined with Godwin's stand against poverty: inequity of distribution of property, and the tendency of the law to uphold such inequity. Hence Harry Gill is legally "right" to stop Goody Blake, but has morality and "justice" against him. If there is any psychological depth in this poem, it lies in the portrait of Goody Blake, not Harry Gill. This view accords with my interpretation of Last of the Flock, and a rejection of the more accepted view.

In Tintern Abbey the suggestions of direct Hartleian influence seem groundless.

The lines which would attract such an interpretation are obvious enough:

But oft in lonely rooms, and mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:.. . (26-31)

To attribute this to a reading of Hartley is to take a sledge hammer to crack a nut.

It would assume a reading by Wordsworth of the tedious sections on "vibrations" (or even Priestly's account of them), the section on memory, which, as I have shown in Appendix I to this chapter, (on Hartley), is complex and would dictate

a different pattern to that which Wordsworth presents here. If Wordsworth derives some of this from Hartley (which I doubt), then a reading of Godwin's summary of Hartley, or what Wordsworth might have heard from the various sources already suggested earlier, could equally have supplied what little of Hartley he would require. Above all, the "tranquil restoration" is not to be found in Hartley, and it is this which is of the essence of Wordsworth's experience here, particularly his experience of memory and imagination in that complex and creative interaction to which Hartley's mechanistic construct is totally unsuited.

Similarly, Wordsworth's statement that he is

well pleased to recognise

In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts,...(108-110)

derives from Hartley nothing more than an admission of a sensationalist approach to knowledge: the foundation of Godwin's approach, and of many philosophers from John Locke on. This passage represents Wordsworth's vindication of those tentative ideas in the Expostulation and Reply group of poems, the first statement of his new philosophy.(70)

Once again, that statement contains that belief or posture which study of Wordsworth's early writings contradicts:

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.(88-93)

Perhaps, however, there is an ambiguity here; for Wordsworth does not make

clear whether he is ascribing his humanitarian sympathies to nature, or whether he is merely finding in nature a means of coming to terms with earlier and more urgent feelings regarding the human condition.(71)

To those who seek Hartley's influence, such a view would seem to depend upon Beatty's idea of the "three ages of man". Since I have rejected such a reading of Hartley (see Appendix I to this Chapter), it follows that to Wordsworth and to Wordsworth alone must be ascribed the recognition of these stages of awareness in his consciousness. Similarly, with the lines describing nature's power

for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our chearful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.(126-35)

These are not the result of reading Hartley's sensationalist and physiological writings, but are lines expressive of Wordsworth's sensibility and vision alone; even the mildly associationist basis is Wordsworth's unique interpretation and application of this idea.

I have not, of course, dealt with all of the poems in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads; links could be shown between e.g. the Salisbury Plain poems and Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman. And certainly The Thorn with its harsh natural imagery, its implied criticism of the law (and Wordsworth's strange decision to use, as the name for the woman in this poem, the name of Basil Montagu's mother (72)) shows certain similarities with earlier themes and styles associated with

Godwin.

What emerges from this examination of 1798 Lyrical Ballads in terms of Wordsworth's relationship with Godwin's thinking is, at best, a very erratic picture; perhaps best summed up by the placing, in that edition, of The Convict as the penultimate poem, with, of course, Tintern Abbey as the last poem of the volume. However, the view that this volume represents a rejection of Godwin cannot be sustained, given the poems which derive from an earlier period of his interest in Godwin, and the evidence of a residuum of Godwin's ideas and moral stance in some of the poems essential to Wordsworth's developing poetic vision.

It is more important at this stage, to do two things: first, to recognise the role Godwin plays in Wordsworth's development at this transitional time, and second, the emerging implications of Wordsworth's new-found poetic vision, characterised above all by Tintern Abbey. In terms of what the second point tells us about the first, Tintern Abbey is not significant; yet it is crucial to understanding what I wish to call the **process** of the Lyrical Ballads: the manner in which the poems of this volume dictate to the reader their own terms, upon which they must be judged. (73) Not only to the reader! For though it will emerge more clearly in the 1800 edition, and much more, of course, in the developing Prelude, there is the implication that these poems dictated their own terms to the **poet** also: not least, to the poet's understanding of how the poems "came about", to which the poet must respond sincerely. This is where the historicist approach of recent critics becomes illuminating. Speaking of Tintern Abbey, Marjorie Levinson writes:

Epistemologically situated as the object world, the scene confronts the

writer as a second self - a temporarily displaced double. The enterprise invited by or, more precisely encoded in the psychic projections constituting his sense of place, is an introspective act - a self-confrontation. When we step back a bit, we can see that the process effectively sutures the subject-object wound - in Wordsworth's idiom, heals the breach. Or, Tintern Abbey invents and idealises a procedure whereby the mind's extension (denotation, object representation, quantitative knowledge) is experienced as intension (connotation, valorization, qualitative knowledge). The functional agency is, of course, memory. Under its direction, the return to place is experienced as the passive creation of it..(74)

If, therefore, the poem so "invents", it would appear that Wordsworth, in responding to that "self-confrontation", responded by recognising a need to "re-invent" what led to such a poetic vision. I refer again to Levinson and her reference in her Introduction to David Erdman:

David Erdman, in a private correspondence, observed the skeptical, negative character of scholarship today, and this, ironically among so-called historicist readers. What Erdman - a great and greatly historical scholar - dislikes about this new move is its penchant for reading what he considers "the nothing that is not there". What he fails to appreciate is, first, "the nothing that is" and second, the meaning of this interest in that absence everywhere.(75)

If I am interpreting this correctly, the decision by Wordsworth to write a number of poems which now locate the origins of his poetic vision and moral sensibility in nature and acknowledge other major influences such as the French Revolution but which do **not** acknowledge the role of Godwin represents an interesting case of "the nothing that is".

To return momentarily to The Borderers, and its relationship to Godwin's works, if that play represents Wordsworth's attempt to replicate, to some extent, Godwin's own testing of his ideas in Political Justice 1793 through the experience of Caleb Williams, that is, a "literary" challenge to a work of theoretical principles, then Wordsworth's attempt, as we have seen, failed. For him, literature (or,

perhaps his literature, his poetry) had no place for such a purpose; or so he found out in his experiment in writing The Borderers. What Wordsworth, as a result, is seen to do in Lyrical Ballads, in those critical four poems, and more particularly in Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned, is not simply to reject everything that The Borderers and Godwin represent in terms of his literary experiment and the resulting literary crisis for himself, but to go a stage further than attempting to replicate Godwin's "use" of literature. Wordsworth sees the need, for his poetry, to break entirely from theoretical principles and works; only thereby can he come to terms with his own poetic consciousness and his moral vision as part of that.

The challenge here is to understand what Godwin's role was in Wordsworth's development (since Wordsworth is, from this point on, **not** going to tell us, and our examination of texts and other evidence up to this point has only taken us part of the way), and to understand exactly **why** it was that Godwin, or perhaps what Godwin represented, was to be excluded by Wordsworth in his portrayal of his own poetic development. Only a full perspective on Lyrical Ballads including the 1800 edition and the Preface underpins the view that will finally emerge from a re-appraisal of The Prelude (in the final chapter of this thesis).

Part 2: Re-Invention Asserted - Lyrical Ballads of 1800.

Before proceeding to a brief examination of the Lyrical Ballads of 1800, it is important to contextualise this by reference to two related prose pieces: the fragment Essay on Morals and the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads of 1800. Both of these offer important background to an understanding of the process of development over the period 1798-1800 under discussion.

Essay on Morals

This "fragment of a moral essay"(76) appears to have been written between October and December 1798 at Goslar(77). Despite its brevity, its opening sentences have understandably attracted considerable attention:

I think publications in which we formally & systematically lay down rules for the actions of Men cannot be too long delayed. I shall scarcely express my self too strongly when I say that I consider such books as Mr Godwyn's, Mr. Paley's & those of the whole tribe of authors of that class as impotent [? in or ? to] all their intended good purposes; to which I wish I could add that they were equally impotent to all bad one[s].(1-7)

Despite the apparently explicit denial in this statement of any admiration for Godwin's Political Justice, and although it is supplemented with such statements as, "I have said that these bold and naked reasonings are impotent over our habits,..."(33-4), nevertheless, it is worth taking some further care over Wordsworth's arguments.

The most recent editors of Wordsworth's prose works express themselves surprised at Wordsworth's combining the names of Paley and Godwin in this fragment.(78) Surely no such surprise is necessary, since Paley's influence in the latter half of the century at Cambridge and the fact that he was on the list of

Wordsworth's required reading as an undergraduate (a fact noted in Hazlitt's remark concerning Wordsworth's views on Paley(79)) suggest that, in the context of Wordsworth's argument, Paley might well be another figure to whom to refer. I see no need to go into the role Paley played in Wordsworth's Cambridge days, or the general similarities or differences between the two writers: Schneider has already done this adequately,(80) although his account does reflect his determination to see Paley as another significant radical influence on the young Wordsworth.

Although there is much in common between the two,(81) Godwin would have been aggrieved to be identified not only with Paley's theological stance and his philosophy of self-interest, but also his ideas on punishment, and the role of the law and God in distributing justice. Little can be gained from trying to compare the ideas of these two writers; what Wordsworth is condemning is the kind of theoretical ethical tracts produced by both of them.

Wordsworth is concerned in this fragment with the nature of "habits". Paley's view of habit can be discerned in his early chapter on the subject of "virtue":

there are **habits**, not only of drinking, swearing, and lying, and of some other things, which are commonly acknowledged to be habits, and called so; but of every modification of action, speech and thought. Man is a bundle of habits.(82)

Paley claims that constant exposure to pain could make a habit of virtue in us.

Paley's theologico-philosophical stance holds no attractions for Wordsworth, nor does his belief in self-interest as opposed to benevolence as a criterion for utility.

Yet, interestingly, it is Paley's distrust of "instincts"(p 14) in his chapter entitled The Moral Sense which points one of the flaws in Wordsworth's argument here.

For, after Wordsworth's initial introduction to the notion of "habits", the meaning of this term takes on wider implications, for example, the "blood and vital juices of our minds"(20-21) or "this delicious sensation"(l.44)(83)

What links Wordsworth's criticisms of both Paley and Godwin is the sentence:

All this is the consequence of an undue value set upon that faculty which we call reason.(30-31)

Although this suggests a major rejection of Godwin, it is interesting to note a few inconsistencies. First, as has been noted,(84) Wordsworth's example of the "tale of distress" (l. 13) and all that he draws from it simply replaces one "system" with another: his suggested system of "habits" is as much a rule of action as is Godwin's use of reason (reminding us of Paley's objection to a "system of morality, built upon instincts"(p 15)).

Wordsworth's own "system" relies on the notion of "habits", and is directed by the criterion of benevolence, which is stressed throughout the fragment (for example, lines 16ff, 43ff). Wordsworth's embracing of the utilitarian criterion of benevolence and the idea of "habits", in as far as they can be understood from Wordsworth's inexact language and thought here, derive largely from a sensationist view of learning and a necessitarian approach to human motivation not so very dissimilar to the basis of Godwin's thinking. Where Wordsworth might differ, crucially, from Godwin is in the role Godwin would ascribe to reason in relation to habits.

Godwin's view of habit can be easily summarised. His two discussions of habit can be found in Book I, Chapter V, The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in

their Opinions and Book IV, Chapter X, Of Self-Love and Benevolence, both chapters already seen to have been important in this argument on Godwin and Wordsworth.

Godwin's interest in habit, in the context of his ideas on social change, and the role of the doctrine of perfectibility therein, arises in the discussions over the nature of "voluntary actions". Godwin sees perfectibility as being effected through approaching as near as possible to the perfectly voluntary act. Being realistic (in the second edition of Political Justice) Godwin introduces the idea of the imperfectly voluntary act (for example, his famous "church-going" illustration). What Godwin is doing is building upon the notion of habit which arises out of the belief that all knowledge derives from experience, and patterns of cause and effect leading to expectation of a certain result following from an action; or, as a corollary, certain actions being undertaken for certain reasons. Where habit is allowed to dominate is when **volition** fails to act under the full guidance of reason and may, in fact, rely on a much earlier and now forgotten act of reason and understanding which, at one time, motivated a similar act. The great danger, as Godwin sees it, is in allowing such habits to continue completely unchecked by reason, for it is then that the means can be changed, for example, by the passions, to ends in themselves, without the role of reason to judge upon the end to be desired. In summary, then, habits are seen by Godwin as part of our moral framework; but need to be held under the control of reason if moral progress is to be made.

What I am suggesting is that Wordsworth, though apparently rejecting Godwin, appears yet again, as with The Borderers, to be rejecting Godwin's presumed

supremacy of reason.(85) Without doubt, that is almost the same as rejecting Godwin outright, so central is reason to Godwin's perfectibilian process; but not quite. There is much remaining that Wordsworth learned from Godwin and that we have seen him draw upon, particularly Godwin's social and humanitarian concern as well as the psychological foundation for his moral ethic. Despite Wordsworth's protestations, the fragment of argument here does not nullify all of that.

Two final points should be made. First, Godwin would probably agree with Wordsworth that many habits are too entrenched to be moved easily, even by reason; what Godwin claims is that the idea of perfectability nevertheless requires that reason be seen to have such a central role. Yet, when Wordsworth rejects this essential function of reason in favour of the "delicious sensation" of the "internally" felt "beneficent effect" of our "good actions"(43-4) we are reminded again of Godwin's words in the passage already quoted in the context of the conclusion to Simon Lee:

He is filled with harmony within; and the state of his thoughts is uncommonly favourable to what we may venture to style the sublime emotion of tranquillity. It is not to be supposed that an experience of the pleasures of benevolence should not tend to confirm us in a benevolent propensity.(PJ,'96,I,431)

Finally, in the section of Wordsworth's argument that looks forward to the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, where Wordsworth denigrates such theoretical tracts because they present no image to the mind (l.26), because they "contain no picture of human life; they describe nothing" (l.37), arguments which foreshadow the later arguments in favour of nature as a teacher and moral guide, it is worth remembering Godwin's view expressed in The Enquirer, Essay V, Of

an Early Taste for Reading, where he states:

When I read Thomson, I become Thomson; when I read Milton, I become Milton.(p 33)

Should we not also remember that very early chapter in the 1793 edition of Political Justice (deleted in 1796), which saw literature as one of Three Principal Causes of Moral Improvement Considered?(86). Finally, should we not remember the success of Caleb Williams? For it seems that in this fragmentary outburst, Wordsworth has forgotten all of this, or chosen to forget.

What the above brief discussion suggests is that this fragment offers more evidence of a determination in Wordsworth to reject (and justify his rejection of) theoretical tracts such as Political Justice, than any considered reason for so doing. As such, it raises the questions that Wordsworth, in coming to recount this period in The Prelude, would have to face.

The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads of 1800

In examining the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads of 1800, the intention is two-fold. First, it is intended to challenge the view that Wordsworth's explication of his theory of poetry, especially the matter of the "psychology" of poetry, is specifically Hartleian.(87) Second, an alternative view will be proposed showing that it is to Godwin's adaptation of Hartley's ideas that Wordsworth owes much of the psychological basis of his theory of poetry, thus giving further evidence of that residual influence still to be found in Wordsworth's writings at this time.

That Wordsworth's approach is associationist is not denied; the term "association" appears several times in the text of the Preface, but its use is so

generalised that it is not possible to detect the particular work of Hartley behind these references. Wordsworth's initial statement shows him combining his own interest in the idea of "habit" with the associationist principle:

It is supposed, that by act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association, that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded.(49-53)

This is very much in accord with the argument he started to develop in the Essay on Morals fragment, and which has already been evident in his early assertion of the importance of the "moral relations"(l.28) present in poetry, as well as his insistence that he wished to refrain from the "foolish hope of reasoning (the reader) into an approbation of these particular Poems".(33-4) However, Wordsworth's phrase, "habits of association"(l.150), is used in such a general sense and is so self-explanatory that the reader feels no particular need to turn to Hartley for its meaning.(88) What Wordsworth is using here is not the theory, but simply the language of association, as is the case throughout the Preface.

The next reference to association (l.75), where Wordsworth tells us that he was interested in "tracing.....the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement"(74-6) is not distinctly Hartleian in origin,(89) unless we are to assume that Wordsworth means by these "primary laws" Hartley's complicated theory of vibrations (of which there is no evidence). Nowhere do we find Hartley talking about the association of ideas in excitement; his notion that certain words and sensations can "excite" ideas via association is not the same thing.(90) This is of little use when approaching the characters of Harry Gill or Betty Foy; there is no evidence

of a specifically Hartleian psychology in these characters; conversely, any knowledge of Hartley's theories would add nothing to our appreciation of these characters.

As the above suggests, Wordsworth's use of the term "association"(91) is, at times, so vague as to suggest that his grasp of the idea of association is rather tenuous.

Turning now to Wordsworth's discussion of the language of "low and rustic life" (l.76), and his idea of such a language being a more philosophical language, his ideas here are very unclear:

Accordingly, such a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression..(94-9)

As a note to this passage, Owen and Smyser quote Hartley's definition of a "philosophical language", (92) but their selection of quotation amounts to mis-quotation. Not only does Hartley not finish his sentence after "philosophical one", he goes on to further definitions which clearly do not relate to Wordsworth's ideas. Hartley's section is, in fact, entitled: To explain the general Nature of a Philosophical Language, and hint some Methods in which it might be constructed upon the foregoing Principles. The full sentence reads:

If we suppose Mankind possessed of such a Language, as they could at pleasure denote all their Conceptions adequately, i.e. without any Deficiency, Superfluity, or Equivocation; if, moreover, this Language depended upon a few Principles assumed, not arbitrarily, but because they were the shortest and best possible, and grew on from the same principles indefinitely, so as to correspond to every advancement in the Knowledge of Things, this Language might be termed a philosophical one, and would as much exceed any of the present languages, as a

Paradisaical State does the Mixture of Happiness and Misery, which has been our Portion ever since the Fall. (I,315)

Hartley continues:

And it is no improbable Supposition, that the Language given by God to Adam and Eve, before the fall, was of this Kind; and though it might be narrow, answered all their Exigencies perfectly well.

Now there are several Methods, in which it does not seem impossible for Mankind in future Ages to accomplish so great a Design. (327-8)

This, and the abstruse physiological discussion of language which follows is not the origin of Wordsworth's ideas.

Another passage which has been seen as Hartleian in origin is part of Wordsworth's discussion of the language of poetry.(93) Two points should be made here. First, although parallels can be found between the language of this passage and certain passages in Hartley,(94) it is not possible to find direct similarities that could not be explained by a general awareness of sensationalist theory, and earlier theories on the nature and purpose of poetry; second, the illustrations in the second half of Wordsworth's own paragraph explain his meaning very clearly. There is simply no need of a knowledge of Hartley's ideas to understand this passage.

Just as doubt can be shed on the belief in a specific debt to Hartley, evidence of influence by Godwin can be seen in two of the most crucial passages in the 1800 Preface. The passage beginning "I cannot be insensible of the present outcry against...."(101-132) can be linked with the later and more famous passage (387ff) containing the statement regarding "emotion recollected in tranquillity". To expect to find evidence of Godwin here would seem unlikely, but it is more likely than that of Hartley.

When Wordsworth speaks of his "habits of meditation"(l.111) having formed his feelings, again, this is not Hartley. The process of meditation involves, as Wordsworth makes clear further on, the process of "thought" which is, in Godwinian terms, the activity of the realm of "understanding". Despite Owen's and Smyser's note(95), Hartley's book is marked by its lack of attention to the rational faculty (due to the highly mechanistic nature of his scheme), and the term "understanding" which Owen and Smyser quote from Hartley's work is used only in the Introduction. On the other hand, Godwin's two key chapters, Book I, Chapter IV, The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions and Book IV, Chapter IX, Of the Mechanism of the Human Mind describe in great detail a relationship between reason and feeling very similar to Wordsworth's ideas here.(96) In view of the separation of reason and feeling that formed part of the premise of Wordsworth's challenge to Godwin in The Borderers (see Chapter Four, Part 2), and Godwin's own stance regarding reason and feeling resulting from the revisions to the 1796 edition of Political Justice (see Chapter Four, Part 1), this is significant.

In the well-known passage beginning "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings...."(115-132), the latter part of this passage appears, at first sight, to show Wordsworth reverting to his denial of reason and his assertion of the role of habit. However, the importance given to "thought" in this passage, and Wordsworth's description of the process of classification of thought and the development of "habits of mind"(l.126) bears a remarkably close resemblance to Godwin's description of the mechanism of the human mind throughout Book IV, Chapter IX.

What appears to happen at the end of the passage is that either Wordsworth becomes unclear as to the process he is describing, or he is simply determined to assert the mechanism of "habits", and, because of the process of "obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits", (126-7) contradicts the earlier part of his argument (which resembles closely Godwin's ideas on habit and voluntary actions). It is Wordsworth's qualification, "if he be in a healthful state of association"... (1.130) which again strongly suggests Wordsworth's rather weak grasp of the idea of associationism, and which again suggests that Wordsworth's understanding of the process came through a secondary source, most likely Godwin, since Godwin's explanation of the role of thought in the mechanism of the human mind assumes a central role for association in the rather unsatisfactory account he gives of the mind's ability to cope with complex ideas.

What I am suggesting here is not a conscious borrowing from Godwin, but rather further evidence of that residual influence as Wordsworth, in this attempt to build a psychological dimension to his theory of poetry, draws, probably from memory at this stage, upon what was both a summary of some of the principles and processes of sensationalist associationist theory and a psychological construct in itself, Godwin's Political Justice, with which we know he had had, by this time, some considerable familiarity.

The implications of this are significant. Most of us are familiar with the memorable phrases such as "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"(115-6) and "poetry...takes its origins from emotion recollected in tranquillity"(1.388). But we are not so familiar with the fact that, in the first of these statements, Wordsworth heavily qualifies it:

but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought (my emphasis) long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feelings are modified and directed by our thoughts...(116-120)

This view assigns to the "understanding" a role as important as that of feelings. Moreover, this is not simply the "thought" which can be unaccompanied by "consciousness"; it is "reason", actively engaged in its reflective and selective processes.

Similarly, "emotion recollected in tranquillity" uses "reason" as part of the process of recollection. It is interesting to note that here Wordsworth is somewhat vague over this process of recollection, referring, as yet, neither to memory or imagination. For, at this stage, Wordsworth's own appreciation of the psychological process is still at an early stage.

Despite Wordsworth's explicit rejection of Godwin in Essay on Morals, there can be little doubt, on examining the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads of 1800 that a significant residuum of Godwinian influence remains, principally, at this time, in the developing nature of Wordsworth's views on moral and human matters and his attempt to explain these in psychological terms; or, in the words of the period, in terms of the "mechanism of the human mind". That this should come as no real surprise is evidenced by the interest we have already seen Wordsworth take in Godwin's "moral psychology" since the poet's revision of Salisbury Plain. In a sense, that process of crystallisation of ideas, which can be seen continuing throughout the Lyrical Ballads of 1798 (and, as we shall see, even in the 1800 collection to some extent), is further evidenced in the 1800 Preface, and still

one of the principal influences in that process is the thought of William Godwin.

The Lyrical Ballads of 1800

In contrast to the 1798 edition of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth's second edition in 1800 shows considerable editorial concern over the order and presentation of the poems, this being well documented in Wordsworth's own letters.(97) It comes as no surprise to find Wordsworth putting Expostulation and Reply, The Tables Turned and Animal Tranquillity and Decay at the beginning of the first volume; similarly, the concern expressed that The Brothers might open the second volume(98) (though this ultimately was not to be the case), and that Michael was to conclude that volume(99) shows Wordsworth's conscious awareness of his intentions throughout his arranging of the second volume, a fact borne out by his letter to Fox.(100)

In light of this, and of Wordsworth's avowed rejection of Godwin in the Essay on Morals fragment, it might seem unlikely that there would be evidence of Godwinian influence in this collection. However, close examination of the poems and of certain deletions and changes reveal further evidence of some continuing residual influence, but with evidence also of a surface yet conscious reaction against Godwin and what he had come to represent for Wordsworth.

The first point to be made of course is that, with the exception of The Convict, all of the other poems with some Godwinian import have been retained with minimal revision. The only one which really deserves attention here is Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree. Wordsworth's alteration of the phrase "by genius nursed" to "by science nursed" has already been commented upon (see page 268

above), but it is worth quoting and commenting on more of the revisions here:

In youth by science nursed
And led by nature into a wild scene
And lofty hopes, he to the world sent forth,
A favoured being, knowing no desire
Which genius did not hallow, 'gainst the taint
Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate
And scorn, against all enemies prepared,
All but neglect. The world, for so it thought,
Owed him no service: he was like a plant
Fair to the sun, the darling of the winds,
But hung with fruit which no-one, that passed by,
Regarded, and, his spirit damped at once,
With indignation did he turn away, (13-22)

Wordsworth's changes are unfortunate, and the image of the solitary "like a plant

.....Regarded" is particularly clumsy. Why has he introduced these changes which mar the quality of the poem and undermine the stature of the central figure?

If we look at the other changes here, for example, "big with lofty views" (1798, 1.14) changed to "led by nature into a wild scene/And lofty hopes (whatever this means), the deletion of "pure in his heart" and the toning down of

with the food of pride sustained his soul
In solitude... (1978,20-21)

to

his spirit damped at once,
With indignation did he turn away...

there seems little doubt that Wordsworth is trying to reflect in the revised poem his claimed source, and is consciously trying to retreat from the Godwinian origins of the character (Rivers and Falkland). The result is inconsistent. The new lines do perhaps harmonise more obviously with later lines of the text, for example, lines 21-34 in particular (for the original does seem somewhat over-intense in relation to these lines); but the poem loses much of its power.

Evidence of a retreat from Godwinian influence and a reaction against the philosopher is, however, much more obvious in the poems of the second volume. The general reaction against Godwin was well established by 1800,(101) a fact recognised by Godwin in 1801 in his publication of Thoughts Occasioned by Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon. What is strange about Wordsworth's rejection of Godwin is not simply that his rejection of Godwin's ideas accompanied personal acquaintance with Godwin(102) (which is understandable), but that he felt able, despite their acquaintanceship, to write the rather vitriolic remarks about Godwin in his correspondence.(103) It is this same inconsistent pattern (already observed to some extent in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads) that can still be found in the second volume of the 1800 edition.

The rejection by Wordsworth of a rationalist approach to moral growth based on the oretical principles, as seen in Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned, is reinforced by his placing these poems at the beginning of the first volume. Only one other poem in the second volume of the 1800 edition is explicit in the same way as these poems were. A Poet's Epitaph, sent fairly late for inclusion in the volume,(104) attracted mixed criticism from Lamb (for Wordsworth's manipulation of this, see below, pp 302-3) , especially of the "vulgar satire of parsons and lawyers". Written in Goslar and very much one of the group of poems to which Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned belong (later, Poems of Sentiment and Reflection), the satire in the first half of this poem shows not just Wordsworth's continuing inability to cope with that form, but also a lack of real bite in the lines criticising lawyers or other men of government. There is none of the force of the social criticism to be found in Llandaff or Salisbury Plain

- fuelled so directly by Godwin. Here is a poem which, with the exception of the final two stanzas, is as poor as The Convict. Of more particular interest here, however, are the stanzas referring to "The Moralist". This, the most extended of all of the criticisms in the poem, has been accepted (doubtless, on Lamb's authority) as a criticism of "parsons". True, the context created by words such as "Heaven", "God" and "soul" can lend itself to such a reading. However, an alternative view is to take the term "moralist" to mean what Wordsworth, earlier, has often meant by it. There is also the fact that this poem was written between October 1798 and February 1799 (around the same time as the Essay on Morals fragment), and corresponds closely to Wordsworth's ideas in that fragment. In light of this, such lines in the poem as

A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual All in All!(31-2)

unmistakably reflect criticism in the same vein as the Essay on Morals, possibly explicitly directed at Godwin as one of the most prominent proponents of rational (and, as Wordsworth was increasingly coming to see it, "intellectualised") morality.

For Wordsworth's satire is not literally of the moralist as parson failing to relate his "Heavenly task" to more earthly matters (of "this poor sod"(l.26)). Wordsworth's meaning is clearly presented in the later stanzas. The "smooth-rubbed soul"(l.29) is that of intellectual elitism and alienation from matters of everyday life; the term "intellectual" is repeated.(ll. 32 & 34) The word "unprofitable", may even have reference to Godwin's financial problems that were beginning at this time. Finally, it should be remembered that Godwin's earliest profession was as minister to a congregation of dissenters (also that Wordsworth's own

religious proclivities which, after his early contact with dissent, were now beginning to move towards a more "established" religious stance). Bearing this in mind, the religious "guise" in the satire can be explained.

All of which suggests a satire - or, perhaps, lampoon - more vituperative than might at first appear. Moreover, it is a criticism which shows Wordsworth's rejection of Godwin following the growing popular reaction against the philosopher. And, above all, it is a criticism eminently undeserved.

For, as I have shown earlier, whatever Godwin might have been accused of, the idea of an intellectual elitism detached from any real human concern is not a reasonable charge. Granted Godwin's rather "bookish" pattern of life, his considerable courage in publishing Political Justice and Caleb Williams during the reaction against the French Revolution is well recognised. More important, in his publication of Cursory Strictures and behaviour at the time of the 1794 Treason Trials (as I have shown, see Chapter Two, Part 2), he involved himself publicly at a time when Wordsworth, as we have also seen, withdrew from public display of his radical sentiments and responded to fears for his family and his own safety. When, later on, Wordsworth omits to mention Godwin's role, it is important, to remember such inconsistencies, which, I strongly suspect, troubled the reflective Wordsworth just as such discomfiture, in some measure, motivated the composition of this poem. For the form and style of this attack are important, as is the appearance of the poem in the second edition of Lyrical Ballads. It marks a development in the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin; put candidly, one in which the poet was willing to indulge in a level of personal attack (reminiscent of the letter previously referred to(105)). Such

an attitude on Wordsworth's part at this time offers further evidence for a motivation in Wordsworth's later unwillingness to acknowledge a debt to someone towards whom he now directs such criticism. This, despite the fact that, as we have seen, a continuing and cordial acquaintance was maintained between the two.

Before leaving A Poet's Epitaph, it is worth noting briefly that in the following poem entitled A Character in the Antithetical Manner (a very unsatisfactory poem omitted from the 1802 and 1805 versions of Lyrical Ballads), Wordsworth speaks of

rational peace - a philosopher's ease.(l.8)

Wordsworth here appears to denigrate the peace or escape from genuine cares which, he suggests, a "Philosopher" seems to find in his "rational" musings. Though this is probably not directed particularly at Godwin, it is in the same vein of criticism against those thinkers who pursue a rationalistic line, whom Godwin had now come, for Wordsworth, to represent.

The second volume of the 1800 Lyrical Ballads is concerned much more with the poetry that follows and develops from Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned, and the emerging poetic sensibility and vision associated with these. One of the earliest compositions in this is There was a Boy (composed in Germany at the end of 1798, and, of course, seminal in the development of the 1798/99 two-part Prelude). Here we see elaboration of Wordsworth's ideas on the origins of his imaginative and moral growth:

Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice

Of mountain torrents, or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, receiv'd
Into the bosom of the steady lake.(18-25)

This, of course, is the Wordsworth recognisable as the poet who, from such beginnings, eventually composed The Prelude through its various stages of development, adapting the sensationalist view of experience (whether derived from Hartley, or, more likely, via Godwin) to his emerging theory of the imagination. His vision of nature's "nurture", despite an attempt such as this to portray its origins as essentially experiential, has some debt to those theories to which he was increasingly to turn a hostile pen.

Somewhat later in composition, Ruth shows evidence that despite Wordsworth's avowed rejection of the popular view of Godwinian rationalism, in the very originality of his "new" poetry is to be found a residuum of the debt he owes to Godwin; for this poem (like Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman) shows Wordsworth's combination of original view, knowledge derived from the literature of travel, and the morality which found its earliest expression in the Salisbury Plain poems, particularly the vagrant's tale. What is so new here, and so refreshing in this impressive piece, is the moral ambivalence that pervades not only the narrative and the social dimensions of the poem, but also the natural imagery. Once again, the central male figure is a soldier and the tale is one of desertion; even Wordsworth's reference to America,

free
From battle and from jeopardy,...(28-9)

is reminiscent of his earlier closer drawings upon Godwin, as are Ruth's vagrant wanderings and sufferings at the hands of a society ill-equipped to cope with her.

But it is in the moral stance that the originality of this poem lies as Wordsworth begins to describe the youth's return to his roamings, and his consequent desertion of the woman:

Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound
Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse, seem'd allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought
The beauteous forms of nature wrought,
Fair trees and gorgeous flowers;
The breezes their own langor lent;
The stars had feelings, which they sent
Into those favoured bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween
That sometimes there did intervene
Pure hopes of high intent:
For passions linked to forms so fair
And stately, needs must have their share
Of noble sentiment.(121-38)

Here, Wordsworth's view of nature and his moral views conspire to create a moral ambivalence which even the stanza soon following, more reminiscent of Wordsworth's earlier stance, fails to affect:

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impair'd, and he became
The slave of low desires;
A man who without self-controul
Would seek what the degraded soul
Unworthily admires.(145-50)

Wordsworth here seems loath to condemn the youth and turns, instead, to the sufferings of the vagrant. A similarly ambivalent discussion of her plight and the moral responsibility for that is expressed in natural images:

The engines of her grief, the tools
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools,
And airs that gently stir

The vernal leaves, she loved them still,
Nor ever tax'd them with the ill
Which had been done to her. (193-8)

This leaves us with a picture more reminiscent of The Ruined Cottage than of the Salisbury Plain poems. For it is again a transitional poem; and it is in the nature of that transition, as Wordsworth moves from Godwin, that the real interest of this poem lies. What we see here is the legacy of Godwin's thought, as Wordsworth had wrestled with it within the didacticism of the Salisbury Plain poems and also in The Borderers with its claustrophobic motivations, freed to take its place and inform and give a moral and psychological depth to Wordsworth's new experiment in the Lyrical Ballads. Whether Wordsworth was aware of this in his new vision, it is difficult to say; it was, however, by now unlikely that he would or could ever acknowledge it.

In The Old Cumberland Beggar, in the form in which Wordsworth first published it, we have a much more recognisable "formula" in Lyrical Ballads: the patient figure subjected to some form of hardship, patiently accepting his lot. To see much of Godwin in this would be wrong; to say even that Godwin (who, in The Enquirer defined two kinds of beggar, approving only of one(106)), would "approve" of Wordsworth's view would be wrong. Yet, there are strong hints in this poem that Wordsworth is still drawing upon Godwin, and was doing so much more directly in earlier drafts of the poem to be found in the Alfoxden MS. For instance, Wordsworth's outcry against the statesman's treatment of the beggars was, in its Alfoxden form, more reminiscent of Wordsworth's earlier outbursts against the rich which were couched in very similar terms to those of Godwin:

Less useful than the smooth (red) and portly squire
Who with his steady coachmen, steady steeds

All slick and bright with comfortable gloss
Doth in his broad glass'd chariot drive along..(107)

Even the 1800 version seems not far from Godwin's portrayal of the trappings of the despotism of the rich; again, a common enough theme in radical circles, but one which Wordsworth's period of closer study of Godwin had helped to crystallise and focus in his mind.

Such a balance between a residue of Wordsworth's earlier "radical" period, and what his reading of Godwin helped to crystallise can be further considered in his lengthy treatment in the poem of the pleasures associated with acts of benevolence:

Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,
The mild necessity of use compels
To acts of love; and habit does the work
Of reason, yet prepares that after-joy
Which reason cherishes.(98-102)

The mention of "reason" twice here, and also of habit, is reminiscent of Wordsworth's concern with Godwin, whether it be his apparent rejection of reason in favour of "habits" in Essay on Morals, or Godwin's account of the emotions associated with acts of benevolence (to which I have already referred on two previous occasions in this chapter(108)). Perhaps a further underlining of this comes from the earlier deleted lines which followed those quoted above in the Alfoxden MS:

And meditative, in which reason falls
Like a strong radiance of the setting sun
On each minutest feeling of the heart,
Illuminates, and to their view brings forth
In one harmonious prospect, minds like these
In childhood..(109)

This deletion might only be a matter of style (three "reasons" would really be too

much!), but clearly, Wordsworth's interest in the motivation and psychology of acts of benevolence is considerable; and it is from Godwin that he undoubtedly derived this interest in the relation between matters of morality and the mechanism of the mind in making moral decisions. Moreover, the role that Godwin gave to reason in the second edition in particular was that of giving guidance to feelings, and the idea of "Illuminates" in these deleted lines is very reminiscent of this. The link with Godwin is by now very residual, yet that interrelation between morality and psychology, and the **motivation** to human concern, is a point that Wordsworth has undoubtedly reached "via" Godwin, albeit, by a difficult, tortuous and contradictory path. It is assimilated in the quiet confidence of Wordsworth's narrative verse in a poem such as this.

It is appropriate to close with a very brief look at what is more "typical" of the 1800 Lyrical Ballads, what Wordsworth himself saw as most important: the poems Nutting and Michael seem obvious choices. (110) Both poems are well established in the vein of "nature and moral growth" introduced in the earlier poems in 1798.

Wordsworth's account in Nutting,

I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and the intruding sky. . . .(52-3)

is even more consciously developed by the time of writing Michael:

And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man; the heart of man and human life.(27-33)

Whilst questions have earlier been raised concerning Wordsworth's presentation in The Prelude of the origins and development of his human concern (see

Chapter Three, Part 1), there is, of course, no questioning the nature of that concern as it developed beyond Godwin's expression of it, as evidenced here in the 1800 Lyrical Ballads. For the rich detail and pathos of Michael derive from Wordsworth's own treatment of humanity in the context of his growing belief in the power of nature. In a sense, we are now beyond Godwin, and this is crucial to an understanding of why Wordsworth, in The Prelude constructs the argument that he does; for it is to **this** perception of humanitarian concern that he wishes to draw our attention. This inevitably has consequences for the focus that he will choose in his reflection on his development. If, after all, Wordsworth now believes that humanitarian concern is a product simply of experience and nature, then he is under a strong compulsion to offer himself as an example of this process.

To close this brief examination of the poems of 1800, it is appropriate to turn once again to Wordsworth's correspondence, this time for his comments on the response to his poems. Wordsworth's somewhat over-sensitive response to criticism is too well known to require illustration; nevertheless, his letter of February/March 1801 to Sarah Hutchinson (EY, 319-20) in which he sends to Coleridge "the following harmonies of criticism" is revealing. His choice of John Stoddart as a "foil" of misunderstanding against others who offered more favourable criticism of his poems is interesting when it is realised that Stoddart was a close acquaintance of Godwin. (111) Furthermore, Stoddart's comment on A Poet's Epitaph, "the latter part I don't like; it is very ill written", is juxtaposed to Wordsworth's **selection** from Lamb's comment: "the latter part eminently good and your own". What Lamb wrote was:

The Poet's Epitaph is disfigured, to my taste by the vulgar satire upon parsons and lawyers in the beginning, and the coarse epithet of pin point in the sixth stanza. All the rest is eminently good and your own."(112)

As already mentioned, with the exception of the final two stanzas, I agree with Stoddart's view, though his comments on other poems are rather crass. Nevertheless, this strange indirect criticism of one of the followers of Godwin is yet another example of the asides against Godwin to be found throughout these years.

Perhaps more important is Wordsworth's own response to John Taylor in April 1801. Wordsworth states:

You say that mine is the pathos of humanity: these words are a favourable augury for me, for this is the very excellence at which I aimed.(EY, 325)

Indeed, Wordsworth has, by this stage, largely achieved his aim; and the influence of William Godwin, though it has played its part, inevitably fades. By 1800, Wordsworth, already having written what is now referred to as the two-part Prelude of 1798/99, was to develop into the projected five-book poem and then the 1805 Prelude, the principal focus of which was to be the process of development whereby the poet came to the point in time and the sensibility and vision of which Lyrical Ballads is the most significant expression. The concept of the link between his childhood experiences of nature and his developing adult creativity caught Wordsworth's imagination first of all, as the 1799 Prelude shows: this is its principal focus. The poetic sensibility and vision that he would soon want to explain was manifested in two ways. It emerged in the 1798 Lyrical Ballads, especially the later poems of that volume; and also through, for example, There was a Boy and the role these lines were to play in the earliest drafts of The Prelude, that poem "upon my earlier life, on the growth of my own mind"(113)

which had started with his exploring the essential link between his remembrances of childhood amongst nature and his adult poetic vision. When, in 1804, Wordsworth began to develop the 1799 version into the more expanded versions, he had to face the reflective task of recounting and presenting to the reader and to himself the development of his poetic consciousness, and that, in the increasingly essential context of the role of imagination in relation to memory.

To quote once again from Jewett,(114) speaking of *The Borderers*,

readers have not fully registered what is most obvious about this metaphor of self-portraiture: that *The Borderers* is about the failure, even the danger, of painting one's former self. (p 401)

I am not suggesting for one moment that Wordsworth's *Prelude* is a failure; but given the position Wordsworth had arrived at by 1800, there was, in a figure such as Godwin, and in the history of Wordsworth's relationship with the philosopher, a "danger" to be faced. One which his portrayal of that relationship, or rather his obvious lack of such a portrayal (to quote Levinson again, "the nothing that is" there(115) in the poem) looms large in Books X to XII of *The Prelude* of 1805. For the place and role Wordsworth has chosen to give to Godwin, **and also not to give to him**, is as evocative of Wordsworth's concept of memory, the imagination and poetry, as it is of Wordsworth's attitude to Godwin. It was at this point that Wordsworth was faced, explicitly, with the need for "re-invention", and it is to an examination of that process that we must turn to understand fully the complexity of the interrelationship between the poet and William Godwin.

CHAPTER SIX : THE PRELUDE - RE-INVENTION AS RESOLUTION.

The developing argument of this thesis has been that a careful examination of Wordsworth's relationship with Godwin and his ideas is important for two reasons. First, for what it reveals about the poet and the philosopher and their ideas. Second, there is the significance of a developing pattern of questions and apparent contradictions that emerge in comparing Wordsworth's recounting of his poetic development with what can be deduced from a systematic study of that development evidenced through key texts. At this stage in Wordsworth criticism, it would be naive to claim any originality in suggesting that a significant discrepancy exists between what Wordsworth claims and what actually "happened"; his determination to play down certain areas of his experience(1) in order to enhance his experiential and ultimately his visionary and border(2) sensibilities is well recognised. Yet, in considering his relationship to Godwin's ideas, as they emerge over the period 1793-1800 and Wordsworth's response to this as portrayed in The Prelude, the nature of this discrepancy is further elucidated. Once again, this is not simply an issue of making ethical judgements regarding the veracity of Wordsworth's Prelude in relation to his claimed intention; it is more complex, and must take into account what the evidence of The Prelude actually demonstrates, given Wordsworth's claimed intentions.

It is useful here to do two things: first, to summarise very briefly the view of Wordsworth's development that has emerged over the previous four chapters; then, to outline the areas to be explored in this concluding chapter.

What has been shown of the relationship between Wordsworth and Godwin and

his ideas is not any simplistic notion of "discipleship". The earliest period of influence by Godwin has been shown to provide some focus to Wordsworth's radical experience, and to have offered him some possibility of systematising that experience. This is evidenced particularly in Llandaff, in the plans for The Philanthropist, and in the first version of Salisbury Plain. The evidence for this is often fragmented and erratic as Wordsworth draws upon Godwin's ideas, with some indication of an increasingly selective approach to such borrowings, yet with an obvious inability to harmonise such libertarian, social and humanitarian protests with his poetic form: Salisbury Plain offers the most effective evidence of this. With Wordsworth's reading of Caleb Williams comes a recognisable shift in his interest in Godwin's work, from the politico-moral to the psychology of morality, as motivation plays an increasingly central role in the focus of his poetry of protest and of suffering, exemplified in Adventures on Salisbury Plain. Yet, much as Political Justice and Caleb Williams provide Wordsworth with a crystallising of the significance of his own experiences, the nascent signs of a developing literary crisis are already there, even in the powerful Adventures on Salisbury Plain, in the ultimate failure of Godwin's thought and Wordsworth's attempts to borrow from it to coalesce into a poetic vision.

Superimpose upon this a personal acquaintance between the two men, which allows Wordsworth personal access to the ideas of Godwin as he revises Political Justice, and to the philosopher as the person who took a public stand in the years of reaction, and the complexity of the relationship can be glimpsed. It is a complexity which expresses itself above all in the decision by Wordsworth to challenge, in The Borderers, in a conscious literary experiment, the

expression of Godwin's ideas as presented in the heavily revised Political Justice of 1796, whilst still using the earlier Caleb Williams as a seminal source in that challenge; a challenge which, although epistemologically invalid in its distortions of Godwin's premises, actually fails on dramatic, on literary grounds, and leaves Wordsworth undecided and solitary. The Borderers represents for Wordsworth a cul-de-sac from which he only extricated himself by rejecting, or appearing to reject, Godwin.

From this, we have seen, in the Lyrical Ballads of 1798, his sudden "recovery" in poetic terms to produce in The Tables Turned and ultimately Tintern Abbey an alternative poetic sensibility and vision; a strong residual influence from Godwin still permeates Lyrical Ballads, but inevitably fades as Wordsworth asserts his own poetic voice.

There is a danger in such "pat" summaries. Yet it does usefully trace what the evidence demonstrates: a significant relationship between the ideas of Godwin and Wordsworth in the early development of the poet, and a role for Godwin in the recognition by Wordsworth of a need for a significant change of direction. Yet, in The Prelude, not only does virtually none of this appear; it is a significantly different picture which emerges.

Exactly what is the alternative view that Wordsworth presents, and why he does so, can only be discovered through a re-examination of the 1805 Prelude particularly Books X to XII, in light of the evidence of the previous chapters. In such an examination, some of the issues raised previously, particularly in Part 1 of Chapters Two and Three, must now be revisited. Of particular concern will

be: Wordsworth's intention in writing The Prelude and some of the problems he faced in attempting to fulfil that intention, and the sustained evidence of continuing tensions in the poetry, particularly relating to the period 1793-97. It will also be necessary to examine what I refer to as the architectonics of re-invention: particularly the separation of reason and feeling and the "spots of time" once again, and the so-called "moral crisis", as well as Wordsworth's claims regarding imagination "impaired" and "restored".

The Prelude: intention reconsidered.

It is the first of these areas, the question of Wordsworth's intention in writing the poem that must first be reconsidered. Whilst earlier exploration of this subject (Chapter Three, Part 1) considered Wordsworth's initial unease over his intention in the early stages of composition, there is evidence later in The Prelude of the poet's reflecting further upon his purpose. This evidence can be found in Wordsworth's address to Coleridge in Book X:

Thus, O friend
Through times of honour, and through times of shame,
Have I descended, tracing faithfully
The workings of a youthful mind, beneath
The breath of great events - its hopes no less
Than universal, and its boundless love-
A story destined for thy ear,...(1805,X,941-6)

and again, in Book XIII, once again in apostrophe to Coleridge, Wordsworth writes:

this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of the poet's mind
In everything that stood most prominent
Have faithfully been pictured.(1805,XIII,269-73)

On both occasions, Wordsworth has used the word "faithfully"; yet even in his

haste to conclude the final Book of 1805, Wordsworth, on the second occasion, has slipped in the crucial qualification:

In everything that stood most prominent.

In this qualification lies a clue to Wordsworth's intention in writing The Prelude: a realisation, as he comes to conclude this epic work (by far the most ambitious he had attempted up to now (expanded in relative haste to the thirteen books), and retrospectively surveys what had been his intention, in the light of what has in fact emerged.

Just as that qualification strikes a slightly self-conscious note, so, six lines further on, comes yet another example, in Wordsworth's conclusion to The Prelude, of that self-consciousness, that discomfiture, identified earlier. (3) Having claimed that the development of "the Poet's mind" has "faithfully been pictured", Wordsworth almost at once admits:

Yet much hath been omitted,...(1805,XIII,279)

and, first of all, cites:

Of books how much!(l.280)

It is not enough simply to interpret this as a reference to his scant treatment in Book V particularly of literature;(4) for this is the Wordsworth who by now has written and published Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned with, in the case of the latter particularly, his outburst against "books"(5) (as well, of course, as his arguments in the Essay on Morals fragment(6)). It is also the Wordsworth who has, in Book XII, in the long passage on the subject of "love" (1805, XII, 185ff), turned with an unexpected vitriol to decry the role of books, in a passage reminiscent of some of his arguments in the Essay on

Morals(7):

Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other, above all
How books mislead us - looking for their fame
To judgements of the wealthy few, who see
By artificial lights - how they debase
The many for the pleasure of those few,
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions for the sake
Of being understood at once, or else
Through want of better knowledge in the men
Who frame them, flattering thus our self-conceit
With pictures that ambitiously set forth
The differences, the outside marks by which
Society has parted man from man,
Neglectful of the human heart.(1805,XII,205-19)(8)

This passage is as uncontextualised as it is unjustified; such an unwarranted and unqualified summary of the role of "books", whether referring to literature in its widest sense, or, as seems more likely here, moral and philosophical works, Wordsworth would have been hard put to defend. To claim, for instance, that books were only for the "wealthy few" stands little examination in light of the pirated editions, borrowings, serialisations etc. that were a feature of the widening literacy of England. And, as to his claims for the role of books in

how they debase
The many for the pleasure of the few, . . .

the works of, for example, Paine as well as Godwin, and the many works of a wide spectrum of literature which, despite the reactionary developments of the later 1790's and early 1800's, were clearly contributing to a social revolution concerned with the plight of the individual, all refute Wordsworth's astonishingly ill-considered attack. Yet, simply to write this off as some major "slip" by the poet is to suggest an ignorance of literature that Wordsworth certainly did not have. Wordsworth's outburst is intended. The intent behind it becomes obvious as

Wordsworth's determination to focus upon what "stood most prominent", his belief in the experiential, is asserted. If, in writing such poems as The Idiot Boy, Wordsworth can be seen to have taken risk as an inevitable part of the process necessary to the poetic achievement he intended, so, in The Prelude, he is quite prepared to risk such a passage as this in the experiment of portraying the development of his poetic sensibility.

This diatribe against "books", nevertheless, is astonishing not only in the fact that Wordsworth wrote it, and revised it only minimally in the published 1850 edition (by which time the invalid nature of his assertions here would have been only too obvious, suggesting again the very conscious nature of his intent here); but also in the manner of its misrepresentation of a figure such as Godwin, whose concern for the "many" is evident from his early writings and certainly in the first edition of Political Justice.

Two further references to "books" point the increased level of self-consciousness in Wordsworth's awareness of what he is doing. The first is in the next passage of Book XII, where Wordsworth, again proclaiming his determination to write of "the very heart of man" (1805, XII, 240) through his **experience** of "those who live" (l. 241), clumsily qualifies his experiential stance by adding that such observation of life will be

Not unexalted by religious faith
Nor uninformed by books (good books, though few), ... (242-3)

The self-conscious clumsiness of this latter line is emphasised by its forced syntax and the unhappy relationship between the metre and the rhythm. Why has Wordsworth written this? The rest of this passage on what Wordsworth sees as

his literary mission scarcely seems to justify its inclusion; neither do the lines which precede it. Unless Wordsworth simply wishes to acknowledge some debt to literature (which hardly seems adequately acknowledged in this uncomfortable line), there must be some further explanation. What such self-conscious lines as these do is to draw attention to themselves and pose questions. Such is the case also with the other brief reference to books in Book XII. Wordsworth is speaking, significantly, of his sojourn in 1793 on Salisbury Plain, and of

some imperfect verse
Which in that lonesome journey was composed,...(1805,XII,358-9)(9)

He then continues, in some particularly tortuous syntax, to ascribe to Coleridge the opinion that the poem (which, of course, was not completed even in its first version for some time after his journey(10)) showed how Wordsworth had

exercised
Upon the vulgar forms of present things
And actual world of our familiar days,
A higher power-have caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books
Not hitherto reflected.(1805,XII,360-5)(11)

Coleridge, in fact, did not read the earlier Salisbury Plain, but had read to him the revised Adventures on Salisbury Plain.(12) Nevertheless, given the extensive borrowings from Godwin that have been shown in that poem, particularly from Caleb Williams (a novel, as I have already noted, that Coleridge did not appreciate) there is surely not a little irony in Wordsworth's vicarious pleasure here.

Such self-conscious passages as these, raising questions as they do, are an essential clue to how Wordsworth's reflection on and presentation of his relationship with Godwin's ideas exemplify and point some central questions

Wordsworth faced in the task of writing the much-expanded Prelude.

The Prelude: the challenge of re-construction.

It is useful to stand back momentarily from close examination of the text, and to address two issues relevant to Wordsworth's task, as he faced it. If the key questions that motivated his writing of the two-part Prelude of 1798/99 were the repeated interrogatives "Was it for this....?"(13) that expressed Wordsworth's despair and frustration over not being able to come to grips with his plans for The Recluse,(14) other questions faced Wordsworth as, in the early summer and then the winter of 1804, in his work to expand the five-book Prelude, especially from Book X onward, he came to deal with his experiences in France and particularly with the period following his return to England. For, in many ways, the final book of the five-book Prelude, as far as it can be reconstructed,(15) must have presented a more "comfortable" conclusion(16) than was to emerge from his re-workings and expansion. Taking account of the probable datings and order of composition,(17) the ability to locate composition of the very uneasy Book VIII (discussed earlier in chapter Three, Part 1) in October 1804, with the composition of most of Book IX and the early part of Book X in the preceding summer, but with the crucial later stages of Book X written probably in December 1804, there is a distinct sense of Wordsworth's not simply recounting "what happened", but attempting to **reconstruct** what he wishes to present, to a very particular purpose.

Wordsworth's determination to include, in The Prelude, his revolutionary experiences in France and what resulted from there meant that he had to face some

difficult questions. For one thing, why, for someone to whom the countryside and nature meant so much (and was to be given such fundamental significance in his poetic sensibility and vision) did he, on his return from France, stay in London; and what was he to record of this period?(18) What place would he give to the publication and immediate impact of a work such as Political Justice, of which he could scarcely have been ignorant? And what of his own writing of Llandaff (which, as I have shown, shows signs of an early and ill-digested knowledge of Godwin's work)? What Wordsworth chooses to ignore (there is, for example, no mention of his numerous visits with Samuel Nicholson to the very popular meetings of the dissenters at the Old Jewry) in response to such questions is as important as what he decides to include. Wordsworth also faced the question of how he was to deal particularly with the period 1794 to 1797, a period which includes two significant major works in his early creative development: the two Salisbury Plain poems and The Borderers.

In the development of his poetic consciousness, what role was he finally to ascribe to the rational faculty? For, if "reason" had been, ultimately, some chimera, some alternative means of reform and improvement of the human condition to which he turned initially and somewhat desperately (through, amongst others, the ideas of Godwin) after his disillusion with the French Revolution and the reactionary events in England of 1794 and beyond, the role of the rational faculty was nevertheless one from which he could not hide. The Prelude, with its many and often puzzling references to "reason" bears testimony to this.

These were some critical questions facing the poet as he turned to write of those difficult years, with a clear sense of his newly-established vision; and hence of

whither he was going in writing his great poem. But, how to get there, in some retrospective reconstruction which would convince the reader (and perhaps even himself) of a developmental process which would vindicate and establish once and for all the nature of his poetic vision? That was the challenge of The Prelude. What the above questions and their perspective suggest is that it is a conscious mythmaking, and it is in that context that its undoubted achievement as well as its weaknesses should be judged.

However, Wordsworth also faced another problem. Whether we begin from what is now little more than common sense in a psychologically literate society, or whether we wish to adopt the useful perception of the "historicist" viewpoint with its acknowledgement of the full context in which writers create, (19) those residual influences which inevitably must colour any reflection upon or attempt to recount a past "as it actually was", Wordsworth inevitably faced the difficulty that it is simply **not** possible ultimately to return to the original perception. This, of course, is part of the originality of the conception of The Prelude, as significantly original and experimental in its own way (as were the experiments of Lyrical Ballads) in using the poet's own mind as the focus of his poetic inspiration. It is, in a sense, impossible to have "a mind of winter", (20) to re-create the ephebe. Linguistic researches of the past fifty years or so, point to the hurdles Wordsworth faced: his perceptions of 1804/5 must inevitably be part of his manner of perceiving his earlier years; and the role that language is now recognised to play in the process of "meaning", never mind the complexities of mediating that meaning, only added to Wordsworth's challenge as we perceive it today.

Therefore, it is necessary to undertake a careful examination of some crucial

passages of Books X and XI of the 1805 Prelude against a background of the questions raised earlier in Chapters Two and Three regarding Wordsworth's claims in The Prelude in relation to what the available evidence suggests. This will indicate that, in looking particularly at the question of Wordsworth's relationship with William Godwin, the result of Wordsworth's facing the questions outlined above is a similar sense of discomfiture, of self-consciousness, and self-justification in The Prelude; which points to what it is that Wordsworth is actually trying to achieve in the poem, despite his declared intentions.

In Book X, it is possible to point to certain critical passages which evidence these qualities. In terms of the order of the Books in The Prelude (as opposed to order of composition), Book IX comes as a relief, and must indeed have done so to Wordsworth as he recounts his earliest experiences in France. There is a sense in which Book IX is a celebration of the experiential: Wordsworth's learning, not so much from nature in this particular case, but from what he observed: and the people with whom he conversed. The Beaupuy incident sits comfortably and confidently in this Book (to which it was probably later added⁽²¹⁾), as does Wordsworth's somewhat self-conscious jibe at "armchair radicals".⁽²²⁾ But the very long Book X of 1805,⁽²³⁾ opening with the establishment of the republic in France, soon begins to reflect Wordsworth's confusions over the development of the French Revolution.

Book X : The Language of Re-Invention.

Early on, in the growing welter of feelings that Wordsworth conveys, there enters that note of uneasy self-consciousness as the poet, a few lines after asserting that

he would "willingly have taken up/ ...service"(1805,X,134-5) introduces an account of his awareness at the time of the more theoretical ideas of radicalism with the lines:

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
Which are the commonplaces of the schools,
A theme for boys, too trite even to be felt,...(1805,X,158-60)

Why this outburst? This self-conscious admission that he **did** feel and think that "tyrannic power is weak"(l.167) and

That nothing hath a natural right to last
But equity and reason;...(172-3)

It may seem too much to assert that this is a self-conscious "swipe" at Godwin (in view of the use of the word "reason"). At the same time, we are reminded of Wordsworth's outburst in Llandaff against despotism (24) or his statements to Mathews regarding his disapproval of "monarchical and aristocratical government" (EY,123) as well as some of the assumptions lying behind the Salisbury Plain poems which clearly echo his own belief in "equity and reason". Whether or not the lines quoted demonstrate simply an awareness of the popular radical themes of the time, or represent a residual memory of more specific Godwinian applications of these, what can be seen here is Wordsworth's discomfiture over recounting this. But why? After all, he has faced up to some very distressing memories of his residence in France. Yet here, in this section where he simply summarises what few politically aware persons of the time would have been able to deny, some level of interest in the "theoretical" background, the thinking behind such political convictions and developments, this self-deprecating tone draws attention to itself and once more poses questions.

If such overt tonal signals are one manifestation of this self-consciousness in

Wordsworth's poetry, another is the presence in The Prelude of certain views and ideas that function for those areas of Wordsworth's earlier development as fossils betraying an earlier stage of development of which, in a work of such conscious self-reflection, it is difficult to believe Wordsworth could not have been aware. A good example of this occurs where Wordsworth, in describing some of the extremes resulting from the Terror and its subsequent developments, writes of those

who throned
The human understanding paramount
And made of that their god, the hopes of those
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
For a paradise of ages,...(1805,X,317-21)

Whether or not this actually refers to the Girondins or the attempt at religious secularism(25) of 1793, Wordsworth could not fail to have been aware of the connotative implications this carried in relation to his own espousal of Godwin's rationalistic stance in 1795. It is difficult to know if he was consciously aware of the potential ironies of his critical reference to those willing to "barter short-lived pangs/For a paradise of ages" not simply as a derogatory reference to the doctrine of perfectibility (in which, at one time, he had placed much faith), but in relation to the ambivalent views on violent reform found in the first edition of Political Justice(26) and, more important, Wordsworth's own reflection of that in Llandaff.(27) But the energy of the poetry here, with its clear rejection of these stances, suggests Wordsworth's satisfaction at being able, in an effectively disguised manner, to dissociate himself from such a stance. For the reader of Wordsworth's earlier works, such dissociation is, however, not so easily accomplished, and again questions are raised regarding Wordsworth's intention in The Prelude.

As we begin to move into the latter half of Book X, (probably composed in November/December 1804), and as Wordsworth approaches that period which has, historically, been most difficult to enquire into, so the poetry begins more frequently to falter, and the self-consciousness to increase. Having already discussed Wordsworth's astonishingly brief account of the reactionary repressions around the time of the 1794 treason trials,(28) it is appropriate momentarily to revisit the conclusion to this passage:

But this is passion over near ourselves,
Reality too close and too intense,
And mingled up with something, in my mind,
Of scorn and condemnation personal
That would profane the sanctity of verse.(1805,X,640-44)

As previously suggested, this seems inadequate as a response to the repression of liberties that would, one would assume, have truly shocked Wordsworth, a believer in the ideals of the French Revolution and its early libertarian ideals. I cannot believe that his reference to the repressions being

mingled up with something, in my mind,
Of scorn and condemnation personal

refers to Annette Vallon or the problematic question of his possible return to France to see her in September of the previous year;(29) nor that this is some way of avoiding indulgence of mere personal feeling in his poetry.(30) But such an enigmatic self-conscious remark in the context of this brief and unnecessarily obscure reference to a key incident in the history of democratic liberties in England could indeed be explained by Wordsworth's facing and trying to come to terms in his developing poem with the kind of questions I outlined earlier in this chapter. Is it not possible that Wordsworth, reflecting upon this period, sees that the way in which he acted (as opposed to the conduct of Godwin) is

incompatible with the view he is presenting in the poem; and that the lines quoted above represent the nearest thing in the poem to the admission of his re-ordering and re-inventing in this poem?

Wordsworth's discomfort is reinforced by the fact that this passage is immediately followed by a sudden (and initially confusing) return to 1792 and Wordsworth's admission in the context of that year that he had taken

an eager part
In arguments of civil polity...(1805,X,659-660)(31)

He is referring here to the period he spent with Beaupuy, and immediately interjects with the claim,

I had approached, like other youth, the shield
Of human nature from the golden side,
And would have fought even to the death to attest
The quality of the metal which I saw.
What there is best in individual man,...(1805,X,662-6)

before finally referring to his interest in "the management/Of nations-", (685-6) in language which has residual echoes of Godwin:

What there is strong and pure in household love,
Benevolent in small societies,...(668-9)(32)

not thoroughly understood
By reason(673-4)(33)

how their worth depended on their laws,
And on the constitution of the state.(687-8)

As a result, in the following passage, Wordsworth can ascribe to the period of his residence in revolutionary France the time

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchanter to assist the work
Which then was going forwards in her name .(697-700)

This time when the "promise"(l.702) of future improvement is expressed in

terms of

The budding rose above the rose full-blown.(l.705)

is as redolent of Wordsworth's (conscious or unconscious) assimilation of his Godwinian-inspired optimisms, especially his brief commitment to the doctrine of perfectibility, as of his enthusiasms over the French Revolution. What I suggest is that those residual influences which echo through the lines betray the complex emotion here for the "gestalt" that it is. Despite Wordsworth's conscious attempts to obscure the place of Godwin in his own development, the nature of language is such as to defeat such intent; and allows the reader access to what Wordsworth, in his attempt to obscure, actually reveals. Whether it is a case of Wordsworth being aware of his experiences in relation to Godwin (as opposed to his being influenced by Godwin, which he is certainly unwilling to acknowledge explicitly), or the reader being aware of the semantics of the Godwinian context, the poetry itself reveals the true complexity of Wordsworth's emotion and thought here.

It is with such a perception that we have to be prepared to approach lines such as Wordsworth's admission that he was

not uninformed that men
See as it hath been taught them, and that time
Gives rights to error; on the other hand
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of licence as of liberty;...(1805,X,743-7)

For, whilst Wordsworth carefully introduces his account of his developing perceptions here in terms of a particular experiential context,

An active partisan, I thus convoked
From every object pleasant circumstance
To suit my ends.I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still predominant,...(736-9)

the fact is that the perception arrived at in the lines quoted previously was the result of much more than observation and discussion. To arrive at this view, Wordsworth required to go through his reading of Godwin and others, as well as his writing of Llandaff; yet he insists on presenting it in experiential terms alone, seemingly unaware that the language in which he couches it is strongly evocative of the language of the radical writers as well as speakers of the day.

Despite Wordsworth's conscious attempts to disguise the fact, the experience and perceptions attributed here to 1792 are expressed in a language which can be seen by a careful reader to be consciously, even self-consciously "post 1792" in terms of Wordsworth's experience. This betrays and perhaps reveals the inevitable inability of Wordsworth to represent, unalloyed by intervening experiences, his earlier perceptions.

The Architectonics of Re-invention.

As we approach the crux of this dilemma, it is useful to examine the next passage in Book X. Once again, what attracts our attention is the sense of self-consciousness and discomfiture in the poetry, for Wordsworth does not simply give us an account of his involvement with rationalistic theories, but rather, in a highly self-conscious passage, seems not so much to explain as to offer a reason, or even an "excuse" for why it was that he dallied temporarily with rationalistic theories. I say "dallied", for, as the early lines of Book XI, Imagination, How Impaired and Restored as well as the earlier intended final Book of the Five Book Prelude (34) make clear, Wordsworth's intention in recounting this is to present his involvement with rationalistic theory and with Godwin as some temporary, aberrant

interlude:

This history, my friend, hath chiefly told
Of intellectual power from stage to stage
Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,
And of imagination teaching truth
Until that natural graciousness of mind
Gave way to over-pressure of the times
And their disastrous issues.(1805,XI,42-8)

Wordsworth's intention here is not to explore or recount faithfully "what happened"; once again, it is to continue to reconstruct events in order to underpin and offer a plausible explanation for a point of view he now maintains. This is very evident in the self-justifying lines in Book X (where Wordsworth, having recorded the fact of England's declaration of war on France and its effect upon himself), states:

And thus a way was opened for mistakes
And false conclusions of the intellect,
As gross in their degree, and in their kind
Far, far more dangerous.(1805,X,765-8)

Then, in a passage that is difficult to interpret due to the tense (35) in which Wordsworth expresses it, the poet tells us how

Meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
Unto the subtleties of which at least,
I had but lent a careless ear - assured
Of this, that time would soon set all things right,
Prove that the multitude had been oppressed,
And would be so no more.(1805,X,773-9)

Whether or not the reference to those "wild theories" does or does not refer immediately to Godwin is less important than recognising what Wordsworth is doing here. Just as, in the passage immediately following this in The Prelude, (And now, become oppressors in their turn/ Frenchmen...1805,X,791ff), it is difficult to find contemporary evidence for the strength of feeling Wordsworth claims

regarding the threats to "liberty"(1.796) both in in France and in England through the repressions of liberty and the treason trials of 1794, so it is difficult to find evidence of what these "wild theories" were,(36) to which he was now drawn, in the hope that they would offer

- evidence

Safer, of universal application, such
As could not be impeached,...(788-90)

The purpose of this passage, as I have said, is not to explain what happened, but, rather, to create, retrospectively, a motivation for what happened. More important, a motivation which will ultimately be seen as flawed, and so will inevitably cause the reader to sympathise with, and accept, Wordsworth's rapidly approaching, but (as we shall see), inadequately explained rejection of his period of rationalistic allegiance.

Following that brief passage recounting his sustained commitment to libertarian values, Wordsworth presents his account of what must be recognised as the period of his interest in Godwin. The style in which this section is introduced is an important guide to Wordsworth's intentions here, and it is valuable to quote the whole first passage:

This was the time when, all things tending fast
To depravation, the philosophy
That promised to abstract the hopes of man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
For ever in a purer element,
Found ready welcome. Tempting region that
For zeal to enter and refresh herself,
Where passions had the privilege to work,
And never hear the sound of their own names-
But, speaking more in charity, the dream
Was flattering to the young ingenuous mind
Pleased with extremes, and not the least with that
Which makes the human reason's naked self
The object of its fervour. What delight!-

How glorious!- in self-knowledge and self-rule
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 The accidents of nature, time, and place,
 That make up the weak being of the past,
 Build social freedom on its only basis:
 The freedom of the individual mind,
 Which, to the blind restraint of general laws
 Superior, magisterially adopts
 One guide - the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.(1805,X,805-29)

Not here the personal and somewhat tortured narrative of the following passage (where Wordsworth recounts his own espousal of rationalistic beliefs); but rather a contrived objectivity, an assumed freedom from any personal involvement. If the reason for this seems only too obvious, especially in the first half of the passage, with its apparent attempt in a clumsy quasi-ironic tone to represent what Wordsworth **now** sees as the soul-lessness of such a perception, it nevertheless points further the manner in which Wordsworth is determined architectonically to portray rationalism simply as something to be rejected in a process of strategic reconstruction designed to gain the sympathy and support of the reader. That tone indicates that it is not simply Godwin at which he is aiming, but at what, for Wordsworth, Godwin had come to represent: the arrogance and unfeeling nature of rationalism. Even over this we must be careful, for the unfeeling tone, of course, gives way in the middle of this passage to the outburst: "What delight!/How glorious!". Yet even here, the exclamatory phrases lack any real feeling, a sense which the lines following them reinforces. For Wordsworth's disapproval is obvious, and then we reach the end of the passage and read the claim of rationalism to

Build social freedom on its only basis,
 - the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.

(the last two lines, of course, being those of Rivers in The Borderers(37)).

This is an important passage, not so much for what it presents, but in terms of how it presents it; it is a key example of the challenge Wordsworth faced in trying to replicate perceptions of an earlier stage in his development, or trying to reconstruct or re-invent perceptions that will accord with his poetic vision. For Wordsworth came to the writing of such a passage having gone through the experience of writing The Borderers, and this inevitably coloured how, at the time of writing this passage, he perceived the events he recounts. Similarly, the reader, conscious of earlier developments in Wordsworth's life, including his relationship with Godwin's ideas, comes to a reading of this passage aware not simply of the fact of The Borderers, but also of the perceptions that, by 1804, Wordsworth would bring to recounting this episode of nine or ten years earlier. What, above all, strikes such a reader is Wordsworth's claim that such a philosophy

promised to abstract the hopes of man
Out of his feelings.

This distortion of Godwin's ideas, particularly as they appear in the second edition of Political Justice, probably initiated by the impression in the revisions of a greater role being given to reason than careful reading of Godwin's revised arguments warrants,(38) (and which Wordsworth has used as the premise of his challenge to rationalism in The Borderers), is fundamental in Wordsworth's manipulation of his developing account (and justification) of a poetic sensibility, founded on the role of feeling in human perception. Wordsworth may, of course, be assuming knowledge by most readers of the first edition, or its reputation, where, on Godwin's own admission, the role of the passions in motivation was not

given any extended attention, and where it is easier to justify Wordsworth's claim here, although the poet was aware at this time of the revisions in the second edition. What Wordsworth was groping towards in The Borderers and ultimately left incomplete (unable at that stage in his development to arrive at a consequence of his rejection of rationalism), he has established in the Lyrical Ballads, especially by 1800. Now, with the pieces in place, he is able to return to the argument premised by The Borderers. This view is reinforced if we briefly follow Wordsworth's other references in The Prelude to the separation of reason and feeling in Books X and XI.

Earlier in Book X, in a passage already discussed, (39) Wordsworth, in speaking of his interest in the ideas of "civil polity" states that there, though they were

Felt deeply, were not thoroughly understood
By reason. (1805, X, 673-4)

It would be easy to make too much of this, but two points are relevant. First, whilst not wishing to ascribe to the term "reason" particular reference to Godwin's ideas, it is equally impossible, to rule such out; particularly in the context of this passage which, as shown earlier, includes echoes of Godwin. There is an ambivalence here (of which Wordsworth was possibly aware), in that Wordsworth is referring to limited rational comprehension and assimilation of these political ideas, but would certainly be aware in his own mind of the role Godwin had played in this. This is crucial: as with the question of "books", so with "reason" (especially in relation to feeling) Wordsworth, without naming Godwin, is nevertheless using his experience of his relationship with the philosopher's ideas as a developing, sustained, but hidden metaphor for the kind of rationalistic stance he ultimately was to reject. For Wordsworth, whether or not that view of

rationalism faithfully reflects Godwin's ideas was not less important than establishing the process by which he arrived at the ultimate vision of his poetry.

In this sense, Godwin, like "books", is used, as Beaupuy has earlier been used, (40) as a rhetorical device, a literary shorthand to represent some value or pattern of values in Wordsworth's scheme and intention. As with Beaupuy, however, a process of re-ification can be observed, as the rhetorical device that Wordsworth has initiated establishes its own identity and impetus.

In this context, Wordsworth's intention here can be seen. It is to present to us a stage in his development where he saw that mere intuitive response to matters of "civil polity", mere "feeling" was seen by him to be inadequate. At that time, he did indeed envisage and set considerable store by rationalistic enquiry. But the clue to the fact that this is less likely to represent a factual account of what was the case, and is more likely part of the architectonics of re-invention and justification of a position already arrived at, is the way in which, even in this brief reference, Wordsworth so consciously separates "reason" and "feeling".

It is useful at this point to return for a moment to Wordsworth's "false conclusions of the intellect"(1805,X,766) and his reference to

the philosophy
That promised to abstract the hopes of man
Out of his feelings,...

as well as his portrayal of rationalism as a philosophy which

makes the human Reason's naked self
The object of its fervour.

It is now possible to see how Wordsworth has consciously structured the development of his theme and argument against rationalistic thought in such a

way as to vindicate and underpin his belief in his new vision. The conscious allusion to the sterility and moral dangers inherent in Rivers' vision is used both to re-inforce Wordsworth's anti-rationalistic stance, and to provide evidence that he had indeed been aware of the dangerous attractions of a philosophy such as Godwin's.

Yet, as we have seen, Wordsworth's argument against Godwin is flawed, since he rejects a totally rationalistic philosophy on the grounds of its inability to recognise the place of feeling. Yet, in the character of Rivers, he simply assumes such a division; and this is further flawed by the character of Rivers himself, who, though in many ways powerfully presented as the figure of "naked" reason, is motivated initially by feelings of revenge more reminiscent, in some ways, of Iago. As I have shown, Godwin, in the second edition particularly, neither assumed nor accepted any such clear-cut division. Additionally, the portrayal of the role of feelings in The Borderers, in Herbert particularly, and the guiding force of nature (as particularly evidenced in the somewhat over-convenient appearance of the star) is so dramatically weak that it convinces no-one.

Wordsworth's allusion to The Borderers, therefore, brings doubtful support to his argument. There is a significant gulf between Wordsworth's portrayal in The Prelude of the philosophy of "reason's naked self", with its objective, distanced almost derogatory or even condescending tone, and the evidence of Godwin's role in such texts as the Salisbury Plain poems, and the conscious experimenting with Godwin's ideas in The Borderers. It is significant that Wordsworth uses this passage as a brief prelude to the more personalised summary of his own involvement with rationalism.

However, before turning to that section, it is important to follow through a little further Wordsworth's overall intent in his representation of reason and feeling. Book XI, (much of which, particularly in the case of the "spots of time" passage, had been composed earlier for the two part (41) and then the five-book (42) versions of The Prelude), confirms, as does most of the final three Books of 1805, that Wordsworth had a clear view of the point of development, sensibility and vision at which he wished to arrive; and therefore had decided to portray his development as

Of intellectual power from stage to stage
Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,
And of imagination teaching truth
Until that natural graciousness of mind
Gave way to over-pressure of the times
And their disastrous issues.(1805,XI,43-8)

Just how determined he has been to portray this view of his now-established vision as previously his original view, and only temporarily interrupted by his reaction to the French Revolution and aberrations into such areas as Godwin's rationalism, can be seen in the disparity between the very brief account of that period itself (in 1805, less than one hundred lines, though expanded a little by the time of publication in 1850) and the number and nature of the passages that Wordsworth devotes to looking back, again somewhat self-consciously, over this period.

Part of that further reflection on this period is in terms of the division of reason and feeling, as Wordsworth re-establishes the dominance of feeling, guided by nature, that is to be his final imaginative and poetic vision. In a very intense and at times obscure and confusing section (indicative again of Wordsworth's somewhat self-conscious uncertainty over how to re-construct this supposed "crisis"

in his development), Wordsworth tells us

Thus strangely did I war against myself;
A bigot to a new idolatry,
Did like a monk who hath forsworn the world
Zealously labour to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength;...(1805,XI,74-8)

stressing the repression of feeling (nurtured by nature) consequent upon his espousal of a rationalistic stance. Then, in an exceptionally unclear passage (deleted from the 1850 text), as Wordsworth continues in an increasingly self-conscious tone to reflect on this period of rationalistic "aberration", he refers again to feeling and its relationship to nature, as he affects to remember what it was that, in such a time of sterile espousal of rationalistic beliefs, maintained some potentially saving force:

What then remained in such eclipse, what light
To guide or cheer? The laws of things which lie
Beyond the reach of human will or power,
The life of Nature, by the God of love
Inspired - celestial presence ever pure-
These left, the soul of youth must needs be rich
Whatever else be lost; and these were mine,
Not a deaf echo merely of the thought
(Bewildered recollections, solitary),
But living sounds. Yet in despite of this-
This feeling, which howe'er impaired or damped,
Yet having once been born can never die-... (1805,XI,96-107)

In this rather unconvincing passage, and the poetry and rhythms creak under the tortuous syntax as it labours to contain the unconvincing concatenation of ideas. His determination to establish, even in such alleged dark moments, some link between the opening books of The Prelude and this account of his alleged moral crisis, and between the role of nature in his childhood and a continuation and development of that role in the poems that emerged particularly in Lyrical Ballads of 1798 and 1800, is at the expense of the achievement of the

poetry in this passage.

Yet where do we see evidence of such a relationship between Wordsworth's sensibilities and nature evidenced in his writing of this period? If the revisions in Adventures on Salisbury Plain do show a considerable development over the earlier version in the role ascribed to nature, it is not the nurturing nature of the opening and closing of the The Prelude; nor does the harsher imagery that Wordsworth learned, as part of his imaginative development to appreciate and see as nurturing his vision, evidence itself adequately in the early period to which Wordsworth here refers. This also raises another even more interesting question: what evidence is there to support the degree of subservience to "reason" that Wordsworth, in a passage such as the above, is suggesting?

Yet Wordsworth continues, determined to portray his lapse into rationalism as a betrayal of those intuitive and natural feelings which, he now claims, were nascent in him, already developing the humanitarian and moral sense and sensitivities which he has now acknowledged. In the following passage, again deleted from 1850, Wordsworth, to borrow a term of his, trifles (43) with the distinction between two ideas of reason: "the grand/And simple reason"(1805,XI,123-4) and

that humbler power
Which carries on its no inglorious work
By logic and minute analysis-...(1805,X,124-6)

He then goes on to assert the limitation of the rational power which, instead of perceiving truth, allows one merely "to sit in judgement" rather than "to feel" (l.136), a weakness to which he confesses very forcibly by repetition of the idea only thirty lines further on:

Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgement interrupt
My deeper feelings,...(163-5)

Here, flawed though it is, is a reconstruction of events, a construct that will give credence to the themes of The Tables Turned (referred to briefly in Wordsworth's reference to the "maid" a few lines later, (l.198)44) and to Tintern Abbey and the role that poem ascribes to memory and the imagination). Wordsworth records how, after the "degradation" (1805, XI, 242) caused, above all, by his espousal of a rationalistic philosophy, imagination ultimately triumphed:

I had felt
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as I stand now,
A sensitive, and a **creative** soul. (1805, XI, 250-6)

Here, at last, is a place for the re-placed "spots of time" passage, composed four years earlier in the context of the two-part Prelude. For Wordsworth, this passage now spans the significant gap and the period of loss of direction (as he has now described it) between the early nurturing by nature of his imagination and the ultimate expression of that in Tintern Abbey.

It has been Wordsworth's intention, throughout, to arrive at this point, at this presentation of the triumph of feeling, the imagination and nature in relation to his creativity. The lines last quoted above evoke such a tone of triumph; but over what? This is a key question. For if, by 1804, as he turned dissatisfied still with the relatively modest achievement of the five-book Prelude (and still aware of his lack of success in tackling the intended and much-mooted Recluse) to attempt

to write some major piece, some "epic" of the poetic consciousness, then such a task might seem less daunting, less potentially tedious, more attractive and more satisfying egotistically if it were to record some significant achievement. Not simply the development of a poet's mind, as originally intended, but the development of a poet's mind, and its triumph of imagination over..... something! For Wordsworth, his reactions to the French Revolution and, even more, his temptation into the wilderness of Godwinian rationalism provided an ideal "something". In the case of the latter, the fact that, in the five-book Prelude, in the intended concluding book, there was already some brief reference to this(45) gave Wordsworth the idea of how his triumph might be ennobled.

That it was Wordsworth's intention to present some chimera of a "moral crisis" can be seen from the obvious manipulation of the experience of Books X and XI, in the discrepancy between what they claim and what textual evidence shows. However, it is now appropriate to return to Wordsworth's brief initial account of his encounter with Godwinism as he presents it in Book X, and, once again, to his reflections on that in Book XI.

Moral Crisis

In approaching the matter of Wordsworth's alleged moral crisis, the first question must concern what evidence there is to support the existence of such a crisis, at least on the scale Wordsworth suggests. For in his various revisions of the poem, Wordsworth shows evidence both of some discomfort and and considerable dissatisfaction over his presentation of this. He also appears particularly concerned over the weakness of his initial presentation of his

"despair", as a result adding the crucial lines of Book XI that appear in the 1850 text (306-327), beginning with the famous:

This was the crisis of that strong disease,...(1850,XI,306).

It is a most significant revision, and one which should be examined both in terms of what it adds to the experience outlined in the preceding section written for the 1805 text, and the nature of that section itself.

The interpolation of the passage between Wordsworth's

Yielded up moral questions in despair,...(1805,X,900)

and his account, immediately following, of how, as a result he turned to "mathematics" (1805,X,903) (which, of course, in 1850 becomes "abstract science" (1850,XI,328)) ameliorates somewhat the rather inept (and, again, self-consciously uncomfortable) attempt by Wordsworth in 1805 to move so quickly from the depths of his alleged moral crisis to the process of his rehabilitation by Dorothy. In revising the poem, Wordsworth himself saw a weakness here; exactly what that weakness was is well indicated by the nature of the additions in the revision which reinforce two facets of the 1805 account. First, in such lines as

..the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,...(1850,XI,307)

and

Depressed, bewildered thus,...(1850,XI,321)

Wordsworth apparently has seen a need to reinforce the depths of his alleged despair. Second, his identification of the cause of this, his account of

Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most:...(1850,XI,308-9)

and the lines following (up to 320) make much more explicit the purported cause

of his despair. In a sense, the line

Yielded up moral questions in despair,
is significantly clarified and reinforced by the addition of this section; indeed, the detail in which lines 309-320 of 1850 question Godwin's ideas not simply on reason, but on the thought, motivation and the role of reason in perceiving the "right" choice, leaves no doubt that Godwin and his rationalistic moral philosophy is Wordsworth's target here.

The original 1805 lines (850-900) are not as clear on either point, and these have, by 1850, been subject to much detailed revision. Initially, Wordsworth presents his sense of disillusion with the established order effectively enough, with his sense of frustration over whence he might find some "secure" philosophy for the improvement of the human condition, recognising that "A veil had been/Uplifted (1805,X,855-6) and that

a shock had then been given
To old opinions...(1805,X,860-1).

But if we examine the language and images associated with exactly what processes of moral enquiry he was involved in, these lines seem more concerned to convey reflective rejection of what he did, rather than describe the nature and processes of enquiry he followed. Wordsworth, in speaking of the way in which his rationalistic enquiries resulted in sacrificing an organic view of mankind and nature to "scrupulous and microscopic views" (1805,X,845) and his endless probing of "the living body of society"(l.875) and remorseless speculating in his moral enquiries scarcely gives a concrete, never mind a detailed, picture. For a poet who, in remembering and describing those crucial "spots of time", can describe so accurately, making use of specifics as well as evoking the

feelings and thoughts associated with such incidents, who has described London and the events in France with such economy yet concrete realisation, these lines stand out as notable for their generality. Little wonder that Wordsworth interrupts by suggesting that "some dramatic story" will be necessary to make clearer

What then I learned - or think I learned - of truth,
And the errors into which I was betrayed...(1805,X,881-2)(46)

We are left with a mere fifteen lines, approximately, to convey to us Wordsworth's alleged moral and spiritual nadir:

Thus I fared
Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
Calling the mind to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours, now believing,
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of moral obligation - what the rule,
And what the sanction - till, demanding proof,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
Yielded up moral questions in despair,(1805,X,888-900)

Wordsworth's reaction, on coming to review this, was to add the passage to which I have drawn attention.

It is useful to compare the poetry of this passage with two other passages: the first, already examined earlier in this chapter ("This was the time..... independent intellect", see pp 322-3 above); the second is earlier in Book X, where Wordsworth gives us an account of his reactions to the Terror in France (ll. 329-380), and, in recounting his response to these "enormities", (1805,X,374) speaks of the nightmares he suffered:

my dreams were miserable;

Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities (I speak bare truth,
 As if to thee alone in private talk)
 I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
 And tyranny, and implements of death,
 And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
 Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
 Of treachery and desertion in the place
 The holiest that I knew of - my own soul.(1805,X,369-80)

Wordsworth is, of course, describing two very different events: his sense of intellectual and perhaps spiritual frustration in his moral and rationalistic questionings and also the spiritual despair and frustration evidenced by his horror over the atrocities of the Terror. Nevertheless, there is a sense of sincerity, of poignancy and pathos, reinforced by the images, syntax and rhythm that is simply not present in Wordsworth's account of his moral crisis. What we do feel in the moral crisis passage is more reminiscent of the first of the two passages to which I have drawn attention. Wordsworth's attempt there to adopt a somewhat distanced tone (See my earlier discussion of this, pp 322-3 above) is also reflected, to some extent, in the "moral crisis" passage; the diction, even the images used, the complex syntax broken by the punctuation producing a fragmented rhythm, is more reflective of an intellectual frustration than some crisis of feeling or of the spirit. And even if the loosening of the rhythm and softening of the diction in the last four and a half lines does underwrite the intended sense of "despair", the sudden

And for my future studies, as the sole
 Employment of the enquiring faculty,
 Turned towards mathematics, and their clear
 And solid evidence.(1805,X,901-4)

undermines that limited achievement. The consonantal clusters here, reinforcing

the assertive rhythm may be effective in evoking Wordsworth's sense of the "solid evidence" of mathematics, but one can understand why, in revising this section, Wordsworth at least allowed the vowels, rhythms and cadence of

Yielded up moral questions in despair,...

to linger in our consciousness, before proceeding to his additions.

Once again, it is the sheer self-consciousness of the passage describing the moral crisis that is crucial; one can understand and even admire the difficult balance that Wordsworth is trying to achieve: to represent or somehow replicate in poetry a spiritual frustration and then despair arising out of a misguided intellectual quest. But Wordsworth reveals his consciousness of intent; so different from the faithful re-creation of an experience in the lines describing his reactions to the Terror. We do not doubt for a moment that Wordsworth experienced those feelings over the Terror"; the pathos of his soul is conveyed "naturally" by the pathos of the poetry. Not so in the case of the account of his supposed moral crisis; the artifice of the poetry is what is most in evidence.

Wordsworth's revisions show he was not convinced by it; hence he is reduced to simply **telling** us:

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped, . . . (1850, XI, 306-7)

The word "drooped" is clumsy and unconvincing; and the rest of the revision, although economically summarising this crucial aspect of Godwin's thought, fails to rescue Wordsworth's earlier attempt to represent some genuine moral and spiritual "crisis" which impaired his imaginative powers. Yet again the 1850 text points how consciously structured is Wordsworth's intent here. For Wordsworth

is determined that his dalliance with

reason of least use
Where wanted most:...(1850,XI,308-9)

should be seen to have caused his being "Depressed, bewildered..(1850,XI,321), not because of a fundamental mistrust of the rational faculty, but because of its irrelevance as he then applied reason (as he now perceives it) in matters of moral guidance; certainly as exemplified in such doctrines as Godwin's. It is the 1850 text that makes this clear; and again, in this revision, we sense the self-consciousness, even at this late date, with Wordsworth's clumsy qualification that he did not abandon rational enquiry altogether:

with an utter waste
Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,
(Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)...(1850,XI,324-7)

The self-justifying tone of these last unfortunate lines contrasts with the more stark

And for my future studies, as the sole
Employment of the inquiring faculty,...(1805,X,901-2).

Revising his poem in light of the claims he makes in the final Books regarding imagination and his new poetic vision, Wordsworth probably realised that his own rational faculty required to be left more "in tact" at this stage than his 1805 text suggested.

Such a sceptical approach to Wordsworth's "moral crisis", based on the scant evidence from the period of this crisis and the unconvincing account in The Prelude raises the question: if it did not happen, then why does Wordsworth suggest that it did (and re-inforce that suggestion in the published text)? The answer to that question (which will contribute considerably to understanding

the nature of The Prelude) is partly that it fills an essential gap in Wordsworth's attempt to present **how** he arrived at the poetic vision of The Tables Turned and Tintern Abbey. Exactly why he felt he had to do this raises an important question. After all, why not accept what seems to have been the case: that Wordsworth, in responding to the frustrations over that famous conversation with Hazlitt (see p 263 above) did, on the spur of the moment, write Expostulation and Reply and The Tables Turned, and from the perspective and declaration emerging there from, began to build; culminating in Tintern Abbey where, at last, his thought and poetry coalesced into an expression of poetic vision which did indeed draw upon the experiences of his childhood and youth?

Yet Wordsworth does not do this; The Prelude shows, ironically, that Wordsworth himself is

endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of moral obligation-

If I am open to the charge of using Wordsworth's own words a little too conveniently here, it should be remembered that a great theme of this poem is that of Wordsworth's moral humanitarianism; with its exploration of impulse, feeling, and, above all, motivation. Moreover, it was his interest in Godwin, as evidenced particularly in the revisions in Adventures on Salisbury Plain and in The Borderers, that nurtured Wordsworth's interest in motivation. That interest, now expressed in his own concern to portray his motivation in his poetic development can be seen in the way Wordsworth returns to the issue of his period of rationalistic enquiry several times in the remaining Books of The Prelude, having ostensibly dispensed with the role played by reason (and Godwin in particular) and the

consequent damage to his poetic sensibility, and having turned very quickly to the role played by Dorothy in the re-establishment of that sensibility,

For in these early lines of Book XI, Wordsworth, in a series of extended images, returns at some length to this period, despite his statement in the opening lines of Book XI that he must turn from man's unhappiness and guilt and his assertion,

Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.(1805,XI,7-8)

These lines are followed by an apostrophe to nature and her delights that is reminiscent of the imagery and opening lines of Book I of The Prelude, and which seems, at first, to mark a new direction in the poem, looking beyond the experiences of his period of rationalistic enquiry. Yet he soon returns to reflect further on "those distracted times"(1805,XI,31) and his "history/Of intellectual power".

(47) In fact, this return by Wordsworth to when

that natural graciousness of mind
Gave way to over-pressure of the times
And their disastrous issues. . .(1805,XI,46-8)

is interesting from two viewpoints. First, it should be noted that Wordsworth seems determined to revisit this period and to reflect further upon how his imagination was "impaired" by the experience.(48) Yet, the poetry and close of Book X would surely have allowed him to move directly to his period of spiritual and imaginative rehabilitation with Dorothy at Racedown. But, in approaching composition of Book XI (which originally began at line 42(49)), Wordsworth was drawing on some of the material used in the incomplete final Book of the five-book Prelude.(50) This book originally began with the first third of what is now 1805 Book XIII (Ascent of Snowdon plus a version of XIII, 70-165), and concluded with 123-388 of 1805, Book XI, the "spots of time" sequence which

was now the intended conclusion of that version of the poem.(51) Wordsworth therefore decided to draw upon the latter two thirds of the five-book Prelude, Book V, with the obvious view that further portrayal and explanation of the reasons for impairment of the imagination was as crucial to his intention as was the manner of its restoration.

Wordsworth was, of course, holding back his "spots of time" passage to fulfil the key function in the portrayal of the nature and source of his imaginative recovery; Wordsworth knew, at this stage, where he was going. But he was determined by now to give motivation and credibility to what, he realised, was an ultimately intensely "visionary" experience. To carry the sympathy of his readers, in that vision, Wordsworth was aware of the need for a convincing portrayal of the sterility of the experiences which brought about his moral crisis.

Hence, he draws on a lengthy section, some of it previously written, revisiting this period of moral crisis. The very fact of his doing so, as well as the manner in which he does it, draws attention to itself. It is worth looking at these passages in some detail and asking what they bring to the poem, what they add. These reflections on the reasons for imaginative impairment began in the earlier five-book version around the equivalent of 1805, line 123(52) and with only a few "bridging" lines. (53) The passage beginning "This history, my Friend..." (which, as previously indicated, originally was intended to open Book XI) is a considerable expansion; one throughout which Wordsworth, at considerable length, and bearing in mind the lines from Book V leading up to the climactic "spots of time" passage, prepares the ground to justify and make acceptable to us the visionary sensibility he now possesses.

In a momentary outburst of natural imagery, he contrasts the "fragrance..... of the shore,..."(1805,XI,50-1), with all its natural attractions and the equally natural responses of the senses and feelings to such a scene, to his "business..... upon the barren seas,... "(1.55).(54) This, with its plosive alliteration expresses his sense of what he **now** sees as the arid rationalistic perfectibilian view of

The man to come parted as by a gulph
From him who had been? (1805,XI,59-60).

This is a conscious distortion of Godwin's stance, but one which allows him convincingly to continue to characterise reason as divorced from the natural feelings of

Sage, patriot, lover, hero;...(1805,XI,64)

He concludes the passage which challenges reason to respond to the natural sympathies and humanitarianism of poets who respond to the various weaknesses evidenced in mankind, stating:

Then I said
"Go to the poets, they will speak to thee
More perfectly of purer creatures - yet
If reason be nobility in man,
Can aught be more ignoble than the man
Whom they describe, would fasten if they may
Upon our love by sympathies of truth?"(1805,XI,67-73)(55)

If, as seems likely, this is intended to be an ironic jibe, pointing the "weakness" of poets in responding to man as he merely is (as opposed to Godwin's view of man's potential in "the perfectly voluntary state"(56)) then it is a distortion of Godwin (by taking perfectibility out of its context), intended to justify and create sympathy for a poet, such as Wordsworth, who would spurn such intellectual aridity through the writing of such poems as The Idiot Boy, Goody Blake and Harry Gill, Simon Lee, and the other poems which celebrate the spectrum of

human character and frailties.

It is a conscious and accomplished tactic by Wordsworth; however, it is difficult to find evidence supporting this perspective in his earlier writings. On the contrary, as we have seen, Godwin's contribution to Wordsworth's thinking and his developing humanitarianism as evidenced in the Salisbury Plain poems is significant. Yet, having read the passage just examined, we are ready to accept Wordsworth's assertion:

Thus strangely did I war against myself;
A bigot to a new idolatry,
Did like a monk who hath forsworn the world
Zealously labour to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength;...(1805,XI,74-8)

For Wordsworth has provided (has now invented) a motivation; we are ready to accept what he asserts, because the experience he has created to underpin that statement is logically convincing. Hence, we have a further dimension to his developing argument to buttress his view of the division in him between reason and feeling, a division he ascribes to his temporary espousal of rationalistic thought, particularly that of William Godwin.

However, Wordsworth is determined to reinforce this still further. He goes on to a clumsily overt reference to reason's power "to exalt and to refine" (1805, XI,87) and hence "unsoul"(l.81) the "mysteries"(l.84) of the "brotherhood of all the human race"(l.88) (which he revised later), and then an equally overt and clumsy reference to the work

Of poets, pregnant with more absolute truth. . .(l.92)

whom he has failed properly to appreciate, due to his supposed fixation with

reason. (Again these lines are deleted in later revisions.) Then comes a passage interpolated between the one just examined, and a briefer one (121-136), drawn from the draft of the final Book of the five-book Prelude (but, interestingly, deleted in the 1850 published text) which opened the final two thirds of that Book, referring to

reason - not the grand
And simple reason, but that humbler power
Which carries on its no inglorious work
By logic and minute analysis-
Is of all idols that which pleases most
The growing mind.(1805,XI,123-8)

The sheer overtiness, and, (by this stage in the 1805 text) the tedious repetitiveness of the references to reason and its "impairment" of the imagination surely attracts suspicion due to the lengths to which Wordsworth goes over the cause of such impairment. Yet in another passage (96-120) in which, as we have seen, Wordsworth asks

When then remained in such eclipse, what light
To guide or cheer? . . .(1805,XI,96-7)

he answers with a combination of obscurity, unhappy natural imagery and tortuous syntax that fails to convey either the intended sense of nature's values persisting in him or the unsympathetic and unfeeling responses his rationalistic stance brought to his vision of nature. In fact, nature seems to surrender not to "reason" here, as was intended, but to the onslaught of the quality of the poetry. No wonder that, in his revisions, Wordsworth reduced these lines to a more economic summary of his argument.(57)

Wordsworth's revisions, his own unhappiness over 1805 ll. 42-135 (to become, by 1850, ll. 44-92 in drastic revision over several years beginning as early as 1807(58)) provide an important example of how the self-conscious discomfiture

in the poetry draws attention to itself, posing questions concerning Wordsworth's intentions in writing The Prelude. These lines, pointing significantly to the period of his relationship with Godwin, echo the same unease identified in earlier passages associated with that relationship; where again the discomfiture results from his conscious manipulation of "the facts", of the logic and of the architectonics of the poem.

Spots of Time

This view can be further supported by examination of three other passages in the poem: the "spots of time" passage, the first 219 lines of Book XII, and, finally, Wordsworth's account of his journey across Salisbury Plain and his reference in that to the poem, Salisbury Plain. The interrelationship between these reflects strongly the self-conscious pattern that has built up in the poem over the latter half of Book X and over Book XI.

Earlier discussions of the "spots of time" passage⁽⁵⁹⁾ indicate that, following his shift of this passage from Part I of the two-part Prelude, even as late as Spring 1804, Wordsworth intended this to be the **conclusion** of his poem. Despite the fact that such a shift did undermine the original intention of declaring the "spots of time" philosophy and its architectonic implications in order to underpin what was to come in the poem, I would have to agree with Jonathan Wordsworth, on the evidence he provides, that the intended five-book poem would have been the most "formally rounded"⁽⁶⁰⁾ of the versions of The Prelude with such a conclusion. The intended use of this passage as a conclusion, points to Wordsworth's understanding, from the time of the conception of the five-book Prelude,

that the purpose of his great poem was, in a sense, to arrive once again "at the beginning". Similarly, the existence, as early as January 1799 of the following lines,

whence, depressed
By trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
(Especially the imaginative power)
Are nourished, and invisibly repaired. . .(61)

points to Wordsworth's intention at an early stage to take account of the fact that repair of the imagination must have been preceded by some impairment, caused by

trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse,...

the exact nature of this being unclear. But, whatever it was, it does not refer to what the addition in 1805 clearly suggests:

By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight...(1805,XI,260-1).

This considerably alters the sense of "trivial occupations", suggesting that such rationalistic activities are themselves "trivial". With this small but highly significant revision, Wordsworth very effectively adapts his long-intended "conclusion" to encompass briefly the long, repetitive and rather fragmented account of his imaginative impairment. He has provided a "moral crisis" now to give even greater significance and heroic stature to the process whereby his mind can be

nourished and invisibly repaired-...(1805,XI,264)

The "spots of time" passage itself, is, of course an impressive achievement; it makes its point as poetry should, through the experience and perception it expresses, and would have made a fitting conclusion.

Yet he did not leave things here; in his reworkings and expansion, Wordsworth was still left with the Ascent of Snowdon incident (1805, Book XIII, 1-65) which had originally opened the final Book of the five-book Prelude (a recent composition (62)) with which he was obviously determined to do something. Wordsworth adds to the end of the "spots of time" sequence yet another concluding and clumsy apostrophe to Coleridge:

Thou wilt not languish here, O friend, for whom
I travel in these dim uncertain ways -
Thou wilt assist me as a pilgrim gone
In quest of highest truth. Behold me then
Once more in Nature's presence, thus restored,
Or otherwise, and strengthened once again
(With memory left of what had been escaped)
To habits of devoutest sympathy. (1805, XI, 389-96)

With its parenthetical aside concerning his escape from rationalism's alleged dominance, this is a weak passage, and it is little wonder that by 1832 Wordsworth deleted it in favour of an expansion to the closing of the "spots of time" passage.

Imagination Restored

In Book XII, with its reflectively assertive opening celebration of nature's nurturing, it is evident, despite the confidence that the "spots of time" passage brought to the closing of Book XI, that Wordsworth still feels unable to leave behind him totally his moral crisis. For though the purpose of this Book is to return (in a sense) to the theme of Book VIII, Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind, there is, again, a stumbling self-consciousness in the early stages of Wordsworth's account of this. In the passage beginning "Such benefit my soul ..."(1805, XII, 15ff), as Wordsworth speaks of his rehabilitation and his having

been taught to reverence a power
That is the very quality and shape

And image of right reason,...(1805,XII 24-6)

his reference to the power of nature in these terms sets his poetry off in an unnecessarily defensive direction and tone, as the syntax of this long sentence catalogues a virtual litany of what Wordsworth now rejects:

no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits,.....no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect,...(28-31).

Why return to this? Wordsworth's determination to return yet again to this period draws attention to itself. His re-assertion of the role of "feeling", a position arrived at by insisting on the opposition of feeling and reason, provides a fitting and convincing context for a **credible** account of imaginative, spiritual and humanitarian restoration. As Wordsworth continues with this account of his spiritual recovery, the residual echoes of his period associated with Godwin and what, for Wordsworth he now represents, are consciously allowed to echo persistently; whether it be in the tangential reference to "rulers of the world" as

these
Even when the public welfare is their aim
Plans without thought, or bottomed on false thought
And false philosophy;...(1805,XII,73-6)(63)

or the more obvious reference to Wordsworth's

having gained
A more judicious knowledge of what makes
The dignity of individual man -
Of man, no composition of the thought,
Abstraction, shadow, image, but the man
Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
With our own eyes-...(81-7)(64)

Wordsworth presents this as an account of how nature slowly restored his natural feelings and perceptions and re-instated his original natural humanitarian sympathies which his period of rationalistic enquiry had damaged and diverted.

Yet this contradicts the evidence of the Salisbury Plain poems, which, despite their weaknesses, reflect Wordsworth's attempt to present a developing humanitarian response, and bring this strong sympathy to his poetry; a considerable development on the generalities of Descriptive Sketches or even the outrage of Llandaff.

Above all, one wonders if Wordsworth failed to see the irony in his

anxious wish
To ascertain how much of real worth,
And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind,
Did at this day exist in those who lived
By bodily labour, labour far exceeding
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
By composition of society
Ourselves entail.(1805,XII,98-105)

This reflects a humanitarian concern for the effects of unremitting toil on the minds of the poor that is at the heart of Godwin's humanitarian concern, of which Wordsworth was aware and which, through the crystallisation of ideas and experiences that reading Godwin enabled, brings conviction to such lines. As if an awareness of this crosses Wordsworth's mind at the time of composition, the poet defensively asserts:

To frame such estimate
I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
Among the natural abodes of men,...(105-7)

There is a defensiveness here which he repeats further on in this Book as he decries education(1.170) and then, as previously mentioned, "books"(1.207).

Only now in Book XII does Wordsworth feel he can confidently express the poetic sensibility and vision of Lyrical Ballads of 1800, as being

in reverence
To Nature and the power of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.(1805,XII,223-5)

To such "men" from his "rural neighbourhood" (l.222) he dedicates his future "song"(l.231). This confidence resulting not from any voyage of discovery for himself through the experiences he has portrayed, but from Wordsworth's confidence that he will have carried his readers with him through those experiences. It is a considerable achievement, but the strain of it has shown.

Salisbury Plain and The Borderers Revisited.

A few lines further into Book XII, Wordsworth, confident in his presentation of his new vision, returns to an earlier incident: that time when he was "a traveller..../ Upon the plain of Sarum-..."(1805,XII,313-4) and now gives an account of the origins of the Salisbury Plain poems as a conclusion to Book XII. This is a crucial passage again in what it reveals of Wordsworth's intention in The Prelude. Essentially, in this closing section of Book XII (ll. 312 to the end of the Book) Wordsworth either recounts or makes claims regarding three essential matters. First, there is the account of what happened, the visionary experience which he presents as the essential spot of time (if I might use his own term) where his imaginative response to the historical context of the plain, in his vision of the Druids, brought very early to him a sense of his own poetic vocation. Second, there is his reference to the poem we now know as Salisbury Plain and the judgement upon that by Coleridge he mentions; third, the awakening in him then of a perception of the essential "dignity"(l.374) of man. It is worth examining all three of these briefly in relation to what we now know of the Salisbury Plain poems, and I shall rely heavily here on my earlier detailed examination of these

poems.

With regard to his visionary experience of the Druids, his account in The Prelude highlights the contrast not only between Wordsworth's ability to present such an experience in the poetry of 1804 as opposed to that of 1793-4 (which is only to be expected) but, more important, the contrast between how, by 1804, he sees this vision as the essential experience of his wanderings on the plain, as opposed to the rather peripheral and almost embellishing role it plays in the 1793-4 Salisbury Plain, (whilst, of course, it disappears totally from the later Adventures on Salisbury Plain (see my earlier discussion, Chapter Two. Part 2, pp 131-2). As we have seen, at the time that Wordsworth was actually inspired to write the "imperfect verse" (l.358) of which he goes on to speak in The Prelude, the visionary experience referred to was not the central inspiration of that poem. As suggested earlier, that confusing third paragraph in the Advertisement to Guilt and Sorrow (discussed on pp 121/2 of Chapter 2), is an example of Wordsworth re-creating or re-inventing the matter of his inspiration for this poem, if not in whole, at least in terms of its thrust and balance. For the essential inspiration of Salisbury Plain was radical concern, fed by the ideas and, especially towards the close of the poem, the idealisms of William Godwin. However, for Wordsworth who has spent so much time in creating a "moral crisis" largely ascribed to misplaced espousal of rationalistic theories, such a view will not do now at all.

With regard to the second point, Wordsworth's address to Coleridge, is useful to quote here:

Nor is it, friend, unknown to thee; at least -
Thyself delighted - thou for my delight
Hast said, perusing some imperfect verse

Which in that lonesome journey was composed,
That also I must then have exercised
Upon the vulgar forms of present things
And actual world of our familiar days,
A higher power - have caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character by books
Not hitherto reflected. (1805, XII, 356-65)

It is important to acknowledge that Wordsworth has accepted that Salisbury Plain was a flawed poem (though this version was almost certainly **not** the one that Coleridge had read to him - see below); nevertheless, the qualities that he ascribes to it, cleverly presented as those identified by Coleridge, are carefully selected. Wordsworth does not really make any claims for literary merit, but rather for the qualities upon which, at this time (in 1804 and in light of the nature of his experiments in Lyrical Ballads of 1798-1800 and further extrapolated in the 1800 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads) and at this stage in his developing re-invention in The Prelude, he would wish to reinforce. These are a fidelity to his belief in the experiential and the everyday as the route to genuine humanitarian concern, and as the true inspiration of poetry; as opposed to any such perception and inspiration being derived from "books", or otherwise from theoretical perspectives.

In response to this, it is interesting to note two things. First, whether or not Wordsworth is referring to the 1793-4 or 1795 version of the poem, the fact is that the "theoretical" (if one must use such a term) philosophy of Godwin inspires both versions of the poem, though more effectively in the second version, where, as we have seen, what Wordsworth has drawn upon is less the ideas of Political Justice itself than those ideas mediated through Godwin's novel, Caleb Williams. Wordsworth, in The Prelude, in choosing not only to ignore this, but also to make

an overt reference to "books" (given what that term has come to represent) can again be seen clearly to be manipulating "what happened" to an envisaged purpose. Moreover, as the editors of the recent authoritative texts of both the Salisbury Plain poems and The Prelude of 1798/99 have noted,(65) Coleridge, in Biographia Literaria did, a few years later, make comment upon the poem.(66) However, both editors have been rather selective in their quotation of Coleridge's comments. It is important to know whether or not Coleridge's comments refer to the 1793-4 or 1795 version of the poem.

Two pieces of evidence suggest it must, in fact, have been the later Adventures on Salisbury Plain. First, if Coleridge is right in ascribing his first experience of the poem to his "twenty-fourth year", (67) then that must be between 22nd October, 1795 and 20th October, 1796. Revision of Salisbury Plain can be ascribed to the autumn of 1795 (as mentioned in Wordsworth's letter to Wrangham of 20th November, 1795(EY,159)). Since the Wordsworths had moved to Racedown only in the September of that year, and contact with Coleridge over the crucial period was limited to correspondence, (68) then I do not see how Gill can claim it was the first version that Coleridge commented upon. This, I think, is further re-inforced by the nature of Coleridge's comments on the language of the poem:

the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents and situations which, from the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops.(69)

It would be difficult to imagine Coleridge responding to the earlier Salisbury Plain with all its clumsiness and fragmentation in such terms. Yet, although these

comments by Coleridge have been well acknowledged,(70) it is worth examining his comment rather more carefully. Coleridge's comments derive from his awareness that the version of Salisbury Plain that he heard read was a considerable advance on earlier poems by Wordsworth (such as Descriptive Sketches, to which he draws attention as having been guilty of lines notable for their "worthlessness and incongruity"(71)); Coleridge notes that this poem showed "no mark of strained thought or forced diction, no crowd or turbulence of imagery", a view he could scarcely have expressed of the earlier Salisbury Plain.

Second, and more important, Coleridge's praise is partly of the

union of deep feeling with **profound thought**; [my emphasis] the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed.(72)

In large measure the "thought" that pervades the poem is Godwin's, more effectively harmonised, as Coleridge has noted, with the humanitarian concern (that Wordsworth also developed partly as a result of his contact with Godwin and his ideas). In many ways, these words by Coleridge sum up acutely what it was that Wordsworth's relationship with Godwin's ideas brought to his poetic development: a more solid philosophico-moral basis, an emerging expression of humanitarian concern, and a quest for truth, upon which (as Coleridge has pointed out) the particular quality of Wordsworth's imaginative vision was able to build to produce the uniquely "Wordsworthian" perception that is evidenced, in early form, in Adventures on Salisbury Plain.

A final point to be made (whilst recognising that the words Wordsworth ascribes to Coleridge are not those written later in Biographia Literaria) concerns the fact that, although Coleridge experienced only the revised poem, Wordsworth,

in the context of what he says in The Prelude here, leaves the clear suggestion that Coleridge's remarks were related to the the original poem. The extent of Wordsworth's distortion is exposed by the realisation that the vision of the Druids on which he spends so much time in The Prelude, prior to mentioning Coleridge's comments, was deleted from the revised poem.

To deal now with the third matter originally raised, Wordsworth's claim in the closing lines of Book XII regarding the awakening in him of a perception of man's essential dignity. What Wordsworth asserts is that "about this period" (1805, XII, 320) he seemed

to have sight
Of a new world - a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted and made visible
To other eyes, as having for its base
That whence our dignity originates,
That which both gives it being, and maintains
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from within and from without:
The excellence, pure spirit, and best power,
Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees. (1805, XII, 370-9)

Yet this claim, ascribed to the period of his walk across Salisbury Plain and his composition of the first poem, suggests a complex and border vision that is evidenced in neither of the first two versions of the poem purportedly inspired by this experience. Not even the most sympathetic reading of these poems can interpret them in these terms. Of course, Wordsworth is not ascribing explicitly such a vision of the complex interaction of man, the imagination and poetry to the poetry of that time; yet, the implicit assumption behind his record of the walk and resulting visionary experience, juxtaposed to his reference to the poem and the very nature of Coleridge's comments leave the reader in little doubt as to Wordsworth's intention. Wordsworth again wishes us to believe that the

vision of Lyrical Ballads was well established in him early in 1793, prior to his aberrations into rationalistic philosophy. In view of his careful manipulations, he has carefully manipulated, especially in Books X and XI, he feels confident in claiming this now.

Examination of Wordsworth's reference to the Salisbury Plain incident reveals, in microcosm, his intention in writing, and his achievement in The Prelude; an incident is chosen, placed appropriately, is suitably contextualised, and is thus re-interpreted within the envisaged overall purpose of the poem. It is essentially dishonest, but it is impressive.

Before leaving the Salisbury Plain poems, it should however be noted that neither the experience of the poem itself, nor Coleridge's comment on it (suggesting its "union of feeling with profound thought") bears out Wordsworth's repeatedly claimed impairment of his imagination, particularly as a result of his exploration of Godwin's ideas; the psychological power and humanitarian sympathy of Adventures on Salisbury Plain, drawing so strongly upon Godwin, pose a large question mark over Wordsworth's totally negative view, as presented in The Prelude, of his period of rationalistic enquiry. I shall return to this point again.

Some further reflection at this point upon The Borderers is now apposite. What, above all, those self-conscious repetitive passages on Wordsworth's imaginative "impairment" present is an almost totally negative view of the role of rationalistic philosophy in his poetic development. Also presented in the purported "moral crisis" is a view of the poet having had his nascent sensitivity to nature and his

original humanitarianism extinguished by his rationalistic enquiries, reducing him apparently to some kind of creative inertia. The Borderers offers a clue as to why Wordsworth saw his rationalistic period as so negative; it also offers a clue as to why, on coming to reflect upon it for the purpose of dealing with it in The Prelude, he chose to present it in terms of a "crisis" of moral and spiritual dimensions. The Borderers has been seen as a conscious experiment by Wordsworth, a conscious manipulation and exploration of Godwin's ideas; but a flawed one. Flawed, first, in the dramatic sense; Wordsworth's dramatic powers are not up to sustaining never mind resolving the pattern of conflicts between truth and error that he constructed. Flawed also in the inability of the poetry of the play to contain or at times support the ideas with which Wordsworth was experimenting. The result was a play rejected for the stage, written to be read and to be reflected upon; yet which ultimately offered no answers to the disturbing questions that it had indeed raised. Mortimer, as the representative of "feeling", or human concern, is defeated in the play above all, **aesthetically**, by the sheer power of the portrayal of Rivers; the star, representative of nature's protective forces, appears too conveniently; the inconclusiveness of the original ending (as opposed to the imposed "expiation" theme of the revised version), and the ambivalence of the theme of "solitariness" leaves us with an essentially inconclusive experience. It is clear that, at the end of the play, he was unsure: not of whither now to turn, but of the significance for his own literary direction and poetic development experience of the play he had just completed. To this extent only do we have evidence of some "crisis" in Wordsworth's development.

But it is important to put that into perspective. Just as The Borderers is a conscious experiment, so also it is a conscious distortion of Godwin's principles which,

by now, Wordsworth had explored, but not, I suspect, fully grasped. By the time he had completed The Borderers, Wordsworth was confused and was probably tired of wrestling with Godwin's ideas, especially if the result was going to be the very unsatisfactory piece that The Borderers so obviously was. But there is no evidence in the play as such, or indeed in the limited references to it in letters or other external evidence (as we have seen) of a "moral crisis" of the scale suggested by the 1805 Prelude and reinforced in 1850.

The reason for this is related to the nature and purpose of The Prelude as this can now be understood. For Wordsworth, the writing of The Borderers now comes to serve a new (and for the purposes of the emerging 1805 Prelude a very valuable) role. That role is to provide evidence, in part, of the cause of that imaginative "impairment" that is pre-requisite to any restoration; thereby providing both a motivation and a convincingly conscious development of his mind as a poet, as well as giving a more "heroic" scale to the imaginative and vision. If this seems rather fanciful, then it is useful to do two things: to ask, yet again, what evidence the text of The Borderers (a key text central to the period of the so-called moral crisis) shows of the kind of desperation Wordsworth seems determined to ascribe to this crisis? Second, we should consider again the lines taken from the play in their new context in Book X of The Prelude, where Wordsworth suggests the philosophy to which he became espoused was that which recognised the "only basis" of "social freedom" as

The freedom of the individual mind
.....
One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
Upon an independent intellect.

These are the lines of Rivers, of Wordsworth's conscious creation; not of William

Godwin, to whom "duty" and "benevolence" were the essential moral contexts of the exercise of reason, just as "truth" (against which Rivers constantly acted) was the ultimate aim. There is in Wordsworth's distortion here the same element of conscious manipulation as was the case in The Borderers; except that Wordsworth knows exactly where he is going and why he is using these lines.

To see The Borderers in this light, and to see Wordsworth's use of the play in this way is, at once, to recognise both Wordsworth's achievement and its significance. Despite the self-conscious strains in the poetry to which I have drawn attention, The Prelude does paint a convincing picture of a period of "crisis" through which Wordsworth, as a poet, had to emerge if he was ever to re-establish and further develop the sensitivities and vision that would lead to Lyrical Ballads and Tintern Abbey; it is, on the whole, psychologically impressive and plausible and has led to poetry of a significance that has, of course, been recognised and acclaimed. This is undoubtedly Wordsworth's achievement.

Yet the full import and significance of that achievement, as a study such as this of the Wordsworth-Godwin relationship has shown, is that the claimed "moral crisis" exists solely in the poem; it is an achievement, even a triumph of the poem itself. It is not a biographical record of a moral crisis, certainly of the nature and scale that Wordsworth claims. To go further, the poem is not, in fact, a record, but rather a theoretical reconstruction of the development of a poet's mind; it is a more complex and boldly imaginative poem. It is a myth-making, consciously so (and in the best "Romantic" tradition of e.g. Shelley's Queen Mab or Keats' Hyperion, but without the interposed formal myth) built, in part, upon the obscure period of Wordsworth's relative poetic silence, a lacuna in his poetic

development conducive to the kind of imaginative re-interpretation and re-invention that provides the motivation to render plausible the myth that Wordsworth sought to create in explaining (to his readers and perhaps to himself) the development of the established poetic and imaginative vision of Tintern Abbey and Lyrical Ballads. It is, I repeat, a significant achievement.

For the student of Wordsworth and Godwin, therefore, what a study of the relationship between the two men suggests is that, just as Wordsworth re-invented himself and many of the incidents that he saw as "prominent" in his development, so also, he saw it as necessary to re-invent Godwin. Obviously, Wordsworth had complex feelings towards Godwin, probably some respect (his long-standing acquaintance with Godwin persisted well into Godwin's period of decline in popularity when others had deserted him). His ultimate assimilation of, and development by way of, his exploration of Godwin's social and psychological humanitarianism was a process of which Wordsworth must have been aware. Yet this was also the Godwin whom, as we have seen, Wordsworth came to deride on occasions and the Godwin ,who, when Wordsworth had shown a diself-interested caution at the time of the repressions in 1794, had faced publicly, with the accused, the threats of the treason trials.

As it became necessary for Wordsworth to re-invent himself to explain his new poetic vision, so, partly to come to terms with his personal relationship with Godwin, and partly in view of the complex purpose of The Prelude it became necessary also to re-invent Godwin: a narrow cold rational Godwin, a metaphor, a rhetorical device for a habit of mind and a perception that Wordsworth clearly did reject (though a view that totally ignored the public active courage and also

the humanitarian concern of the philosopher). just as it became necessary to use Beaupuy as a rhetorical device to encompass aspects of what Wordsworth had learned from Godwin into a more acceptable experiential framework. From a study of Wordsworth and Godwin such as this, the purpose of a device such as Beaupuy can now be understood more clearly: namely, the way in which Beaupuy allowed Wordsworth to present a source and influence he could more readily acknowledge, one which did provide some credibility (due to Beaupuy's actual recorded links with Wordsworth's period of interest in the French Revolution). Wordsworth would be happy to acknowledge an "influence" from Beaupuy on his radical and social humanitarianism; just as he wished to reject any "theoretical" influences, embodied now in the re-invented narrowly rationalistic Godwin. Such a portrayal of Godwin to represent an alternative sensibility against which Wordsworth can forcibly and very effectively highlight his own vision is, at the very least, extremely convenient to his purpose in The Prelude.

In a sense, what this study has shown is how Wordsworth created and used his idea of memory and imagination partly to deal with what I might term matters uncomfortable to him, but also in a highly creative and positive manner to create the mythology of self that was essential to how his poetic vision emerged as to how it operated.

A consequence, therefore, of this particular study of influence concerns the extent to which it challenges the tradition of, for example, Legouis and Moorman, and, to a great extent, Gill in the most recent biography of Wordsworth, regarding the biographical status of The Prelude.

One consequence of biographical readings of The Prelude is that Wordsworth criticism has not asked properly: how far was Wordsworth influenced or in any significant way affected by Godwin? It may seem naive to suggest this in view of the many comments that have been made since Legouis first suggested the link; yet it is a fundamental question that still, in my view remains to be addressed. From the evidence emerging from this study (which, of course has drawn upon much that has gone before it), it would appear that that "influence" was, whilst not marginal, certainly limited. This thesis has not proved, nor has it set out to prove any "major" influence by Godwin on Wordsworth's thinking or poetic development; the argument has always been concerned with the relationship between the two figures, and it is claimed that that relationship was a significant factor in Wordsworth's development. In examining that, and examining respectively the relevant work of the poet and the philosopher up to the period of the writing of the 1805 Prelude, the question must arise: was it not Wordsworth himself who claimed a greater role for Godwin, ironically, in his claimed rejection of Godwin and all that stood for (and by that, I now mean, of course, the Godwin he had re-invented) than any more objective view of the evidence would ever have suggested? In the most ironic sense, the "King Charles's Head" that Wordsworth criticism has made of the Wordsworth-Godwin issue is the greatest testimony to Wordsworth's achievement in The Prelude.

