

The University of Manitoba

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION  
IN THE  
POETRY OF BLAKE AND WORDSWORTH

by

Debra Slade

A Thesis Submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate Studies in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

Winnipeg, Manitoba

October, 1981

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## INTRODUCTION

The impact of the French Revolution on the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth is more extensive and more integral to an understanding of the development of their poetic theories than has generally been recognized. Both Blake and Wordsworth made references in their poetry to actual historical events, interpreting them in a way that sheds light on their political concerns. While the events of the early part of the French Revolution inspired Blake and Wordsworth with hope and optimism, later events caused them to lose faith in the Revolution's ability to create a better world. This study examines how the French Revolution influenced the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth and how its themes were incorporated into the poets' theories of the imagination.

Blake's poetry differs from Wordsworth's primarily in the way he represents nature as divorced from the creative process. However, a significant similarity characterizing their poetry arises from their responses to the French Revolution. Both men were concerned with the forces in society that oppressed and imprisoned their fellow citizens. In 1789, the French Revolution appeared to both of them as the event which could liberate the oppressed and create a new society based on the principles of justice, liberty and equality. Both men were consequently enveloped in the ecstatic mood of hope and happiness, and in the political movement in England in support of the Revolution. Their poetry contains references to the power of liberty and democracy to

regenerate humanity. To the poets, this regeneration involved not only the replacement of an oppressive form of government with a fairer, more humane variety, but also a vision of a paradise on Earth.

This millennial vision dominated much of the writing of the period. Wordsworth writes, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive."<sup>1</sup> William Hazlitt reiterates this feeling of happiness and describes the period in terms of a new Eden:

A new world was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes, lovely as hope can paint, dawned on the imagination; visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses, and hid the darkness of surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of that ladder which was once set up on the earth, and whose top reached to heaven. Nothing was too mighty for this new-begotten hope; and the path that led to human happiness seemed as plain as the pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress* leading to Paradise.<sup>2</sup>

William Blake responded to the times by modeling his poetry on the political pamphlets of the English dissenters and his visualization on the political cartoons of 1792-1793. Blake, like Hazlitt, saw the heavens as clearly attainable for the revolutionary spirit. One of his illustrations for *The Gates of Paradise* (May, 1793) depicts a young man getting ready to ascend to the heavens on a ladder reaching to a crescent moon. Blake's commentary under the picture is "I want! I want!"<sup>3</sup> This was Blake's response to James Gillray's political cartoon of January 2, 1793, which presented a political pilgrim neck-deep in the mud while trying to reach for "libertas". The ladder in his cartoon comes nowhere near the crescent moon, which is clearly the pilgrim's desire for freedom.<sup>4</sup> Gillray's cartoon showed that not every Englishman believed in the cause of liberty inspired by the French patriots.

Dissenting opinion was quickly silenced by political action--The Royal Proclamation Against Divers Wicked Seditious Writings in May, 1792 --and by popular opinion, when, in 1791, mobs in Birmingham burned or destroyed several large houses belonging to dissenters, starting with Joseph Priestley's. The censorship that followed the Proclamation dampened the spirits of the two poets. It meant that they had to be extremely careful to eliminate any statements from their poetry that might be considered treasonous. Blake could not get his poem *The French Revolution* published and Wordsworth did not publish his prose "Apology for the French Revolution". In both these works the message is one of support for the French patriots written in strong revolutionary language. Censorship may account for Blake's obfuscation in presenting political figures and events. He invents a complex mythological cast that often has counterparts in history. In his earlier poems, *America* and *Europe*, only a handful of such characters are introduced; each one represents a participant in the political events in England and France. While censorship inhibited the poets from expressing their enthusiasm directly, the reign of terror and the rise of Robespierre prompted them to lose heart in the cause.

The hopes and expectations they had for the new age were defeated when they learned that political action was not a panacea for society's problems. What had been the most glorious time for mankind became the most despondent. Blake and Wordsworth observed the paradoxical nature of revolutionary action. On the one hand, revolution is the necessary spark to ignite the millenium, but on the other hand, it necessitates destruction, death, and suffering. As they followed the careers of such revolutionary leaders as Robespierre and La Fayette, they also saw that

a hero and a liberator has the potential, once given power, to become a traitor and a tyrant. Wordsworth describes in his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, how he suffered in a state of despondency following the reign of terror. Blake shows his disappointment when he depicts his figure of energy Orc, the fiery revolutionary, as exhibiting tendencies of becoming Urizen, the tyrant and oppressor. He introduces into his later poems the notion that political revolution is merely a period of history that repeats itself without initiating the true apocalypse.

In order to recover from their despondency, the poets turned from social action to imaginative poetic concerns. Into the infinite possibilities of poetic vision they placed their previous enthusiasm. The revolutionary times had opened their minds to thinking in terms of a new heaven and a new earth. When political action proved not to fulfill their dreams, they had to find a true alternative in order to regenerate their spirits. Both Blake and Wordsworth came to believe in the power of the imagination to liberate humanity. Imagination, according to Wordsworth, turns man's infinite desires into his greatest strength:

Our destiny, our nature, and our home  
Is with infinitude, and only there;  
With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
Effort, and expectation, and desire,  
And something evermore about to be.  
(*Prel.* VI. 538-42)

Blake writes, "Man is All Imagination. God is Man & exists in us & we in him."<sup>5</sup> He discusses how infinity and eternity are attainable through the power of the imagination:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.  
("Auguries", p. 1312, ll. 1-4)

Blake and Wordsworth came to see that the Golden Age is possible for humanity if emphasis is placed on the imagination and not on political action. Wordsworth describes in *The Prelude* how he responded emotionally to the revolution first with joy and then with despondency. As well, he relates how he recovered from his despondency and experienced a new enthusiasm and joy when he embraced the doctrine of the infinite possibilities of the imagination. In order to describe his commitment to the power of the imagination, Wordsworth chose to write a long poem that documents his experience in realizing it. Blake also used a longer form of poetry to depict his view of man's regeneration through the Divine Vision. Both poets wrote poems that can be considered epics. *The Prelude* and *The Four Zoas* relate how man can rise above the limitations of the fixed social world through a liberation of perception. For both poets the French Revolution plays an integral role in demonstrating the futility of political action and in acquainting man with the revolutionary impulse that can be transferred to the creative process. Their depiction of this discovery requires the epic form because of its complex nature and the importance of its goal--the regeneration of humanity. When they began to examine the nature of the creative process they saw it as revolutionary. The creative process moves forward with an energy that sets everything in its path into motion, attacking stasis in order to recreate. This energy (which resembles the revolutionary impulse) drives the process, enabling it to deal with the resistance it encounters. The process continues indefinitely as the recreations become static and are in turn attacked and set into motion. Both Blake and Wordsworth observed how the revolutionary impulse encouraged one to believe in the infinite, to aim as far as the moon. They embraced this belief in the

infinite and were able to sustain it in spite of the failure of the revolution. They did so through their commitment to the imagination which presented the artist with infinite challenges producing infinite results.

While both men followed the events in France with much enthusiasm, Wordsworth became much more involved in the struggle because of his two journeys to France and through his association with the Girondin officer, Michel Beaupuy. Blake, on the other hand, resided in London during the French Revolution working hard to establish himself as an engraver and poet. Blake's interest in the Revolution came through his association with Joseph Johnson, the English publisher, himself a Unitarian and a supporter of the English Dissenting movement. Johnson published Wordsworth, Blake, William Godwin, Joseph Priestley, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joel Barlow and other supporters of the cause of liberty. Johnson held conversational dinners in the early 1790's and Blake, it is believed, attended some of them.<sup>6</sup> It is not known, however, if the other major writers attending these gatherings knew of Blake other than as an occasional engraver for Johnson or as a poet. David Erdman, in his book *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, has virtually ruled out the story included in Alexander Gilchrist's biography of Blake<sup>7</sup> and in many biographies of Paine, that Blake saved Paine's life in September, 1792, by warning him "to flee at once to Paris".<sup>8</sup> Paine, although indicted for seditious writing, intended to leave England anyway to attend the opening of the French Convention. But even without making this heroic gesture, Blake nevertheless fancied himself a revolutionary.

Several biographers note that he had a revolutionary costume, the red cap and a white cockade, which he proudly wore in public up until

the September massacres.<sup>9</sup> In his writings, however, the events of the French Revolution are brought out under a disguise that the modern reader has difficulty penetrating. It is clear that Blake saw himself as a prisoner within a society which would not allow freedom of expression. For this reason he cloaked his strong political messages in myth and allegory. As David Erdman has brilliantly proven, almost every line in Blake can be linked to a historical event. According to Erdman,

Blake thought of himself as a prophetic bard with a harp that could prostrate tyranny and overthrow armies--or, more simply, as an honest man uttering his opinions of public matters. And although he often veiled his opinion or elaborated it into a complex symbolic fabric having little to do with public matters on many of its levels of meaning, it has been possible to trace through nearly all of his work a more or less clearly discernable thread of historical reference.<sup>10</sup>

In this study of the historical implications in Blake's poetry the French Revolution shall be the main concern although the American Revolution is also integral to his thought. The poems that best demonstrate the link between the historical events and the poetic concerns are those composed in the period of the French Revolution: *The French Revolution*, "The Song of Liberty", "Fayette", *America*, *Europe*, and "Night the Ninth" of *The Four Zoas*.

Wordsworth's involvement in the French Revolution was more immediate than Blake's. He was in Paris during the stormy period between the fall of the Bastille and the reign of terror. Wordsworth first visited France after his studies at Cambridge. Only twenty years old, he arrived in France during the celebration of the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. At this time in his life he did not have any defin-

ite ideas on the direction he wanted his life to take. He had not left a particularly brilliant academic career at Cambridge (he was soon to graduate without honours). In short, Wordsworth arrived during the most joyous period in the Revolution with a mind that could not be more open to its possibilities. His first visit to France impressed him so much that, after his return to Cambridge, he made the decision to live in France for a short while in order to learn to speak the language. He left England the second time in November, 1791, and stayed in France for more than a year. During this time he visited Paris, read the political pamphlets of the day, and visited the Jacobin Club and the Legislative Assembly. He witnessed the rise of the Montagnards over the moderate Girondist factions, particularly the Brissotins, and was in France during the September Massacres and the abolition of the monarchy. On a personal level Wordsworth had no affection for either the monarchy or the aristocracy. Just prior to his second journey to France, the lawsuit between the family of John Wordsworth (William's father) and the powerful Lord Lonsdale came to trial. It was alleged by the estate of John Wordsworth that Lord Lonsdale owed John Wordsworth monies for his service when Wordsworth was his employee. The court ruled in favour of the Wordsworth estate, but it was many years before any of the Wordsworth children received their money from Lonsdale.<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth's bitterness about the process involved in recovering his father's money may have accounted for his strong opinions concerning the power and privileges of the aristocracy.

His initial commitment to the cause of the Revolution came about through his acquaintance with the officer Michel Beaupuy while he lived in Blois, France, from March to July, 1792. The twenty-two year old Wordsworth was enraptured by the philosophy of the former aristocratic

officer who had gladly given up his privileges. Beaupuy's influence over Wordsworth is described in Beaupuy's biography *Le Général Michel Beaupuy*:

La pensée de Beaupuy suivait un autre cours. Mais le poète et le patriote devaient arriver à confondre leurs âmes dans une même foi. La passion de Beaupuy emportait peu à peu les dernières résistances du jeune Anglais. La vue d'un de ces châteaux qu'ils rencontraient dans leurs promenades et qui sont l'orgueil du pays blésois, Blois, Chambrod, Memars, Montrichard, Chaumont, Romorantin et tant d'autres ranimait souvent le colloque interrompu. . . . Mais l'imagination de Beaupuy s'enflammait surtout à la pensée des vices et des excès qui s'étaient orgueilleusement étalés dans ces somptueuses demeures. Il communiquait sa colère et son mépris à son jeune compagnon. Il l'amenait à détester le "gouvernement absolu, où la volonté d'un seul était la loi de tous, et l'orgueil stérile de ceux qui, placés entre le souverain et le peuple, donnaient tout à l'un, refusaient tout à l'autre." Parfois, un récit passionné l'aidait à mettre en lumière les iniquités d'un régime dont Wordsworth était trop enclin à ne voir que la poésie.<sup>12</sup>

Beaupuy opened the young Wordsworth's eyes to the injustices of the world and propelled him along the course which even in 1833 would allow him to say that, "although he was known to the world only as a poet, he had given twelve hours thought to the conditions and prospects of society, for one to poetry."<sup>13</sup>

While in Orleans Wordsworth became seriously involved with a French woman, Annette Vallon. He followed her to her home in Blois; their relationship continued until he was forced to leave France because of lack of funds. She had a child by him, Anne Caroline, who was born just prior to Wordsworth's return to England. The war between England and France made it impossible for Wordsworth to return to Annette, although there is speculation that he may have returned to France after the expulsion

of the Girondin factions by the Mountain led by Robespierre. Wordsworth's political interest in France continued, however, for a much longer period. But his enthusiasm for the rightness of the Revolution waned with the September Massacres in 1792, the rule of the Public Safety Committee and, finally, the dictatorship of Napoleon. Expectation and joy turned into disappointment and despondency.

Wordsworth's poems to be considered in this study reflect his own personal experiences with the French Revolution. *Descriptive Sketches* reflects his most fervent revolutionary period. The poem describes how the new age will arrive after Liberty triumphs through revolutionary action. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth looks back on his experiences with the French Revolution and tries to recreate his feelings at that time. He documents his initial impressions of the French Revolution, his active concern with it and his period of despondency because of it. More importantly, this poem shows how he went from a belief in an apocalypse through political revolution to a faith in an apocalypse through the imagination. Finally, in his poem *The Excursion* Wordsworth takes a more philosophical look at the French Revolution, its effect on man and the lesson it holds for society.

Many critics have dealt extensively with the biographical data concerning Blake's and Wordsworth's personal involvement in the political events in France and England. Mary Moorman and Emile Legouis<sup>14</sup> devote many pages to Wordsworth's journeys to France in their biographies of him. Paul D. Sheats' *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798* and Michael H. Friedman's *The Making of a Tory Humanist* discuss Wordsworth's involvement in France through an examination of the biographical information on Wordsworth, and show how his psychological motivations may

illuminate much of his poetry.<sup>15</sup> F.M. Todd's *Politics and the Poet*<sup>16</sup> and Leslie F. Chard's *Dissenting Republican*<sup>17</sup> go further than biography and concern themselves with demonstrating the influences on Wordsworth that contributed to the development of his political ideology. M.H. Abrams, in his article "The Spirit of the Age",<sup>18</sup> and in his book *Natural Supernaturalism*,<sup>19</sup> takes the impact of the French Revolution one step further, showing the Revolution's role in the development of Romantic poetic theory.

Likewise, Blake scholars such as J. Bronowski (*A Man Without a Mask*<sup>20</sup> and *William Blake and the Age of Revolution*<sup>21</sup>) document Blake's political involvement in the Dissenting movement and his revolutionary acquaintances. But David Erdman's book, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*,<sup>22</sup> serves as the ultimate guide to the abundant references to political events and personalities found in his poetry. Erdman demonstrates how most of Blake's poetry has political significance. Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*<sup>23</sup> makes the connection between the revolutionary impulse and the creative process, as does George Quasha's article "Orc as a Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion",<sup>24</sup> which discusses the paradoxical nature of revolution. Quasha also describes the creative process as distinctly "revolutionary", involving a state of stasis and the infusion of energy which upsets the equilibrium thereby destroying the old manner of perception and allowing for imaginative vision.

There are few major works that deal with a direct comparison of Blake's and Wordsworth's poetry in relationship to the impact the French Revolution had on their poems or their poetic theory. Thomas Vogler's *Preludes to Vision*<sup>25</sup> deals with both poets' concern with creating epic poetry. Vogler indirectly attributes this to the French Revolution. As well, a short article by Alan Chaffee, "The Rendezvous of Mind",<sup>26</sup> makes

the comparison between Blake and Wordsworth in regard to their similar concern with tradition and revolution. This article, however, is solely concerned with the theoretical notion of revolution and makes no connection with either poet's political ideology or their feelings concerning the events happening around them.

I am primarily concerned with a comparison of the way in which the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth demonstrates their responses to the political climate. In this regard I have observed how certain themes and images--represented by such physical manifestations as earthquakes and fires that signal Armageddon, or such others as a sunny dawn or a golden day that point to the millennium--reoccur in the poetry of both men and can be linked to their feelings about the French Revolution. As my study deals with a comparison of the poems of both Blake and Wordsworth, it most closely parallels the works of M.H. Abrams who, while concerned with Wordsworth's poetry, does, in both of his works named above, deal with the similarity among all the Romantic poets' responses to the French Revolution. In his article "The Spirit of the Age" Abrams provides a general survey of the political climate that influenced the Romantic poets as well as a comparison of the poems that were inspired by the age. Two of the dominant trends he observes coming out of the period are the poets' later concern with the imagination and their tendency toward the epic style. My study makes no attempt to discuss other Romantic poets such as Coleridge or Shelley, but instead is limited to only Blake and Wordsworth. And while I utilize biographical material I only do so to clarify their poetry. Likewise, historical information and political theory are included in order to provide a general overview of the times that influenced the two poets. The importance of the imagination and

the movement toward the Romantic epic form have been extensively examined by other literary scholars. This study is not about the Romantic imagination or the epic style and does not go into either subject in great detail, but rather it aims at demonstrating how the age of revolution contributed to the development of these important Romantic concerns.

A chronological table has been included in the Appendix to bring into clearer perspective the relationship between the significant events in the poets' lives and the historical events in France and England. Certain events in France, such as the storming of the Bastille, July 14, 1789, the execution of the King, January 21, 1793, and the reign of terror, 1793-1794, are of major importance as they represent crucial stages in the direction the French Revolution takes. In England, two major events greatly disturbed the poets: the Royal Proclamation Against Divers Wicked Seditious Writings, May 21, 1792; and the outbreak of the war between England and France on February 1, 1793. Both men also were affected by the political works of their contemporaries. Major publications of this sort are in the table. Two important publications are Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) and Paine's *The Rights of Man - Part I* (1791). This table, then, is intended to put the biographical details along side the historical events, thereby facilitating a comparison of Blake's and Wordsworth's actions and movements during the years of the French Revolution.

The poetry of Blake and Wordsworth, however, is the basis for the comparison. In the development of their poetics the Revolution played a crucial role as it allowed for an expanded notion of what man was capable of realizing. When the poets learned that political action could not initiate the millennium, they looked for something that would. They

discovered that the ideals that were brought out in the French Revolution were still alive through imaginative, artistic endeavours. Their poetic goal changed from stating a revolutionary position to demonstrating how man's salvation lies with the imagination.

Blake and Wordsworth do not share identical theories concerning the imagination, but both see the creative process as man's most important activity. For Blake, the imagination has the ability to create new worlds that reflect reality better than the concrete world many call real. He believed that man's fall and the creation of the physical world happened simultaneously. For this reason the goal of the artist is to move beyond the world as we know it and operate in a world of vision where no limits are placed on imaginative activity. Hope's ability to conceive a new and better world is one manifestation of imagination, and the fulfillment of such hope is possible through artistic creation, such as the composing of poetry. The physical world can be used by the artist because of its capacity to suggest the spiritual world. Blake believed that the time would come when man would create in the complete absence of the natural world, operating in the world of vision. To Blake, the imagination is the divine power and to equate its activity with anything else, such as nature, is to lose sight of the Divine Vision, and to fall. Herein lies the most essential difference between the way Blake and Wordsworth viewed the imagination.

Wordsworth believed that the natural world was alive and was man's greatest source of inspiration. Man's imagination is assisted by nature and can only create a new and elevated world through the marriage of the natural world and man's mind. Blake would not accept the prominence Wordsworth gave to nature in his explanation of the creative process.

Blake saw Wordsworth as being too controlled by the concrete world and thus unable to function in the world of vision. Blake writes of Wordsworth's discussion of the influence of natural objects on his imagination, "Natural Objects always did and now do weaken deaden and Obliterate Imagination in Me" (Marg., p. 1511). He instructs Wordsworth that, "Imagination is the Divine Vision not of The World nor of Man nor from Man as he is a Natural Man but only as he is a Spiritual Man" (Marg., p. 1513). Wordsworth, however, believed that nature was a positive force that inspired man and influenced his imagination.

Both poets moved away from believing that revolutionary action would improve their world and satisfy their ideals. Man's imagination was his most powerful weapon in transforming the world. When both poets came to this realization their poetry shifted from expressing political sentiments to explaining the creative process and its importance to man. As their task broadened their poetry reflected this change. They moved from shorter verse to a longer format resembling epic. The French Revolution gradually lost most of its earlier significance, but, for both poets, it was the crucial factor in leading them to their concern with the imagination, which in turn contributed to the development of Romantic theory.

## WORDSWORTH

William Wordsworth's involvement in the French Revolution far exceeded that of most of his fellow Englishmen. He became caught up in the Revolution partly through coincidence and partly through his relative youth, which allowed him the open mind to prevent him from clinging to the traditional beliefs of his countrymen. He formed his political philosophy by applying his education at Cambridge, which introduced him to seventeenth century political theorists such as Milton, Sidney, and Harrington,<sup>1</sup> to the events he saw occurring in France. His friend Michel Beaupuy encouraged him to believe that the political repercussions would ultimately bring about an egalitarian society guaranteeing liberty and justice to all citizens. When this proved not to be the case, the newly converted revolutionary experienced disappointment and then despondency. Wordsworth's recovery from his depression involved a shift from a commitment to political action to a faith in the regeneration of society through imaginative poetical endeavours. The three poems to be examined in this study highlight important phases in his response to the French Revolution. In *Descriptive Sketches* one is given a glimpse of the naive revolutionary. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth, from the distance of some years, attempts as accurately as possible to portray how he felt at the time of the Revolution and how he coped with its failure. Finally, in *The Excursion* the more mature Wordsworth attempts to provide a philosophical solution to those disappointed by the French

Revolution. In this work and in the final books of *The Prelude*, one sees how Wordsworth's concerns with nature's ability to soothe man and with the freedom that comes through the power of the imagination were a consequence of the experiences he had in the French Revolution.

Also, Wordsworth's revolutionary prose pamphlet "Apology for the French Revolution" succinctly captures the essence of his political beliefs in the spring of 1793 when the political climate in France was beginning to look ominous. In September, 1792, the prison massacres had occurred. On January 21, 1793, the King was executed, and on February the 1st war broke out between England and France. Wordsworth had left Paris for London in December, 1792, and was living with his brother Richard, devoting himself to staying in touch with the rapidly changing political climate. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, published a reprint of a sermon he had preached previously entitled *The Wisdom of God in having made both Rich and Poor*. Previously a supporter of the French Revolution, the Bishop of Llandaff was outraged by the execution of the King. In an effort to make a public recantation of his past sympathy with the French cause, Watson added an appendix to his publication which severely condemned the French for their actions.

In his appendix Watson sets forth his disagreement with the means the French employed to achieve their desired end, for which he admits he has some sympathy. The means he lists as unwise include the abolishment of the nobility, the confiscation of the Church's property, and the treatment of the King. Most of all he dislikes the fact that the French replaced their system of government with a republic. Of this he says:

Now a republic is a form of government which, of all others, I most dislike--and I dislike it for this reason; because of all forms of government, scarcely excepting the most despotic, I think a republic the most oppressive to the bulk of the people: they are deceived in it with the show of liberty; but they live in it under the most odious of all tyrannies, the tyranny of their equals.<sup>2</sup>

Following his criticism of France, most of the remaining part of Watson's appendix is devoted to celebrating the perfection of the English system of government.

He declares that "the courts of British justice are impartial and incorrupt" and that the privileges that the nobility possess over the poor "are neither injurious to the liberty or property of other men."<sup>3</sup> He refutes any argument on behalf of the misfortunes of the poor. Claiming that they possess a ninth part of the landed rental of the country, he also adds that they are more than adequately maintained by the rich through charities and the support of hospitals, infirmaries and dispensaries. On the other hand, Watson claims that the support of the royal household is a meagre sum comparably: "What a mighty matter is it to complain of, that each individual contributes less than sixpence a year towards the support of the monarchy!"<sup>4</sup> But the majority of Watson's praise for the British system is devoted to the English constitution:

That the constitution of this country is so perfect as neither to require or admit of any improvement, is a proposition to which I never did or ever can assent; but I think it far too excellent to be amended by peasants and mechanics. . . . Peasants and mechanics are as useful to the State as any other order of men; but their utility consists in their discharging well the duties of their respective stations; it ceases when they affect to become legislators; when they intrude themselves into concerns for which their education has not fitted them.<sup>5</sup>

As far as Watson is concerned the English system guaranteed liberty and equality to all. In fact, Watson can find no fault at all with the form of government England possessed, concluding enthusiastically, "look round the globe, and see if you can discover a single nation on all its surface so powerful, so rich, so beneficent, so free and happy as our own."<sup>6</sup>

After Wordsworth read these words he immediately wrote a rebuttal. Only in his twenty-third year, he joined the ranks of Tom Paine, James Mackintosh, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft who opposed in writing the conservative mood of the times. The first significant debate of this type began with a speech made by a prominent Unitarian minister, Dr. Richard Price, in 1789. Price, himself a Dissenter, congratulated the French for their actions, comparing the French Revolution to the English Revolution of 1688.<sup>7</sup> In 1790, Edmund Burke published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. This piece generated a response in all circles of England. More a defense of the aristocracy than an attack on the French Revolution, *Reflections* defends the English constitution, individual property rights, the aristocracy, and the Church's property, and it says of privilege, "some decent regulated pre-eminence, some preference (not exclusive appropriation) given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic."<sup>8</sup> For Burke, the relationship between the state and its citizens is one of contract: "It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection."<sup>9</sup> Written early in the French Revolution, Burke's predictions concerning a ruling regime in France dedicated to terror and destruction proved to be quite accurate, bringing him praise from the general public, the conservative factions in England, and

eventually many early revolutionaries such as Wordsworth and Coleridge.

However, at the time *Reflections* was published, the Dissenters were furious at the attack on the revolution that they believed heralded great change for England as well as France. There were at least thirty-eight answers to the work. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Man* was the first published response. In particular, she emotionally condemns Burke for his attitude towards the poor: "You have shown sir by your silence on these subjects, that your respect for rank has swallowed up the common feeling of humanity; you seem to consider the poor as only the livestock of an estate, the feather of hereditary nobility."<sup>10</sup> Two other responses stand out as the most noteworthy, Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* and James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*. Both, while essentially pleading the case of the revolutionaries in France, had very different audiences. Mackintosh appealed to the more educated and gentlemanly class (the Latin title points to this), while Paine addressed the working man.

Paine's *The Rights of Man* is written in simple language that can be understood by all men. He believed that everyone, regardless of place in society, possesses natural rights and civil rights. The latter rights, according to Paine, grow out of natural rights, or are natural rights exchanged.<sup>11</sup> Paine disagreed with Burke's notion that the Parliament of 1688 had the right to control all future parliaments: "Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases, as the ages and generations which preceded it."<sup>12</sup> Paine describes how Burke, through his concern with established tradition, may be blind to the true state of affairs. Of Burke, he exclaims, "He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird."<sup>13</sup> Paine includes

the complete text of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* in his work and he takes his cue concerning the sacred rights of man from the first three articles beginning: "Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights."<sup>14</sup>

Wordsworth, then, had many strong predecessors when he sat down to write his prose defense of the French Revolution. Scholars, however, do not agree on the significant writers that influenced Wordsworth. According to F.M. Todd, in *Politics and the Poet*,

The *Letter to Llandaff* contains little that is not in Godwin, and even Godwin's extensive borrowings from Paine and others were taken over into the work of his disciple. The *Letter* has indeed every appearance of having being written immediately after a hasty reading of the newly published *Political Justice*, and borrowings are made almost exclusively from the second volume.<sup>15</sup>

Leslie P. Chard, in *Dissenting Republican*, disagrees with Todd's interpretation, citing the arguments that, "if Wordsworth's account in *The Prelude* of his revulsion from the terrorism in France is accepted, the essay must have been written before February, 1793, the month *Political Justice* appeared."<sup>16</sup>

Godwin's philosophy as reflected in *Political Justice* differed from the Dissenters. His goal was to develop a political theory out of his firmly held belief in utilitarianism. While the Dissenters agreed on the importance of education, they would not agree with Godwin's insistence that it, not revolution, was the answer to society's problems. He does not support either the American or the French revolution. The obvious connection between Paine's and Godwin's plans is the common tenet that society has as its first principle the achievement of happi-

ness for the majority of its citizens.

Chard divides the supporters of the changes happening in France into three distinct movements, the parliamentary reformers (which would include men like Fox), the philosophic radicals (Godwin, etc.), and the liberal Dissenters (Paine, etc.).<sup>17</sup> It is clear from the tone and arguments espoused by Wordsworth in his "Apology" that he supports the extremist views of the Dissenters. Emile Legouis notes, "Though in respect of his ideas he is much nearer to Paine than to Mackintosh, Wordsworth nevertheless differs from the former in his sustained sobriety, his tone of almost religious fervour."<sup>18</sup>

Wordsworth explicitly announces his position at the outset of his essay when he declares himself a Republican. In the essay he goes on to defend every action of the French Revolution, including violence and the complete abolition of all forms of monarchy. The only regret one should feel concerning Louis XVI's execution, according to Wordsworth, is that circumstances should have created such an unnatural situation where one man is expected to possess super human talents when in reality he could have no knowledge of the best interest of mankind. That unhealthy state of affairs is what one should lament: "Any other sorrow for the death of Louis is irrational and weak."<sup>19</sup> Violence is necessary for the establishment of a better order: "[the nature of Mankind] 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" ("Apology", p. 6). As well as defending the abolition of the French monarchy, Wordsworth also defends the confiscation of the Church's property. He points to vices and crimes of the clergy and argues for a wider distribution of their funds in time of need: the French Revolution

properly "took from the clergy a large share of their wealth, and applied it to the alleviation of the national misery" ("Apology", p. 7).

Wordsworth links Watson and Burke in their concern for preserving the splendour of the English chivalric tradition. In strong revolutionary language he dismisses Burke as an "infatuated moralist!" and declares: "Slavery is a bitter and a poisonous draught. We have but one consolation under it, that a Nation may dash the cup to the ground when she pleases" ("Apology", p. 8). Wordsworth blames the government for inciting the mobs to burn down Priestley's house. A Republic, to Wordsworth, implies universal representation where representatives are elected only on the basis of their virtue, talents and accomplishments. Watson's remarks concerning the limitations of "peasants and mechanics" particularly upset the poet who had a special fondness for "humble and rustic folk" and who recognized the extraordinary type of special knowledge they possess. Wordsworth cites the example of Pere Gerard: "In the constituent Assembly of France was found a peasant whose sagacity was as distinguished as his integrity, whose blunt honesty overawed and baffled the refinements of hypocritical patriots" ("Apology", p. 12). The poor, he contends, are not adequately attended to and this factor serves to widen the gap between the privileged and the non-privileged. Wordsworth advocates the abolishment of "titles, stars, ribbons, and garters, and other badges of fictitious superiority" ("Apology", p. 17). He questions the notion of conferring upon a man a title he will carry for life when there is no guarantee that his future character will be as noble as that of his past. What Wordsworth finds most reprehensible in England is the sharp contrast between the idle aristocracy preoccupied with enjoying their abundant leisure hours and the poor who pine for bread and must

resort to prostitution.

Wordsworth reserves his full attack on Watson for the Bishop's remarks concerning the perfection of the English constitution and judicial system. To Watson's argument that the King and House of Lords and the House of Commons have no such power to substitute their wills in the place of law, Wordsworth reminds him, "The fact is that the King *and* Lords *and* Commons, by what is termed the omnipotence of Parliament, have constitutionally the right of enacting whatever laws they please, in defiance of the petitions or remonstrances of the nation" ("Apology", p. 20). Wordsworth argues that the English parliamentary and judicial system is far from perfect, in fact, quite corrupt. In obvious reference to his own unhappy experiences tackling the judicial system, he sarcastically adds, in reply to Watson's fondness for the judiciary, "I am happy to find you have passed through life without having your fleece torn from your back in the thorny labyrinth of litigation" ("Apology", p. 20). Human knowledge, according to Wordsworth, can only advance when people begin to re-examine their own society. He argues that to say society is perfect, therefore making any inquiry appear detrimental, is to incite stagnation and death. In conclusion, he thanks Watson for making his position clear so that the friends of liberty will not be betrayed by him in the future.

Wordsworth's "Apology" can be summarized by the following two statements. The first concerns the monarchy: "The office of king is a trial to which human virtue is not equal. Pure and universal representation, by which alone liberty can be secured, cannot, I think, exist, together with monarchy" ("Apology", p. 14). The second shows his republican bias: "a Republic legitimately constructed contains less of an

oppressive principle than any other form of government" ("Apology", p. 9). At this point in Wordsworth's life there can be no question that he was an extremist in his support of the Revolution and all it entailed. Because of the strong revolutionary nature of this essay it is most probable that Wordsworth's publisher Joseph Johnson advised him against publishing his "Apology" to prevent the young poet from becoming a victim of the sedition Proclamation of 1792 that was to silence many writers of the period. It is against this most forthright declaration of Wordsworth's political beliefs that his poetry will be examined.

In the summer of 1790 Wordsworth and his friend Robert Jones undertook a "pedestrian tour" of Europe. This followed Wordsworth's final term at Cambridge and served as his initiation to the political climate in France. Arriving in France on the "Federation Day" of the French Revolution, they could not help but be overwhelmed by the sense of happiness and hope which prevailed throughout the entire country. According to Mary Moorman, "Wordsworth was careful afterwards to record their delight in the delight of France. Like that of most Frenchmen too at that time, it was purely heart-felt joy in hope and liberty, uninstructed by any formulated revolutionary doctrine, unembittered by any political passion."<sup>20</sup> The French trip consisted of a month of walking through the countryside. On a number of occasions they joined crowds of *fedères* returning from the *Fédération* festival. They visited the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, located in a remote mountain sanctuary and, at the time, undisturbed by the Revolution and still inhabited by monks. There they stayed for two days before leaving France for Switzerland and the rest of their journey. There are two poetical accounts of this walking tour: *Descriptive Sketches*, one of his earliest poems, written in

Blois, France in 1792; and the sixth book of *The Prelude*, begun in the spring of 1804. In examining *Descriptive Sketches* one is given a glimpse of the young revolutionary's initial reaction to the activities in France. It is fruitful for this discussion to compare Wordsworth's account of his activities in *Descriptive Sketches* with that of his later revised edition of the poem and with both the early and revised editions of *The Prelude*.

*Descriptive Sketches*, published in 1793, has been criticized for its awkward syntax and literary borrowings, and frequently ignored in a discussion of the poet's development.<sup>21</sup> Essentially, *Descriptive Sketches* contains a record of the many and varied landscapes and places Wordsworth and his friend encountered in their wanderings. Unlike *The Prelude*, which recounts the walk using "we", *Descriptive Sketches* describes the traveller as a melancholy solitary. This factor contributes to the descriptions of nature's darker side being more threatening to the lone traveller. And, also unlike the later poem, *Descriptive Sketches* omits the crossing-of-the-Alps episode that serves as the climax to Wordsworth's trip as related in Book VI of *The Prelude*. Following his description of that disappointing incident, Wordsworth inserts his famous apostrophe to the imagination, indicating his later discovery of that power he had earlier sought in nature. But *Descriptive Sketches* concerns itself with the quest for that power, and instead of discovering the imagination, Wordsworth turns to an apostrophe that elevates man's social triumphs--his fight against oppression and revolution for liberty.

The tone of the poem is one of melancholy, and the images of nature often appear terrifying. In the description of the twilight storm and

the gypsy, nature instills fears instead of love:

--She solitary through the desert drear  
 Spontaneous wanders, hand in hand with Fear.  
 A giant moan along the forest swells  
 Protracted, and the twilight storm foretells,  
 And, ruining from the cliffs their deafening load  
 Tumbles, the wildering Thunder slips abroad;  
 On the high summits Darkness comes and goes,  
 Hiding their fiery clouds, their rocks, and snows.

(D.S. (1793), p. 473, ll. 199-206)

In *Descriptive Sketches* the traveller moves from one scene to the next and appears to be searching for something in his travels that could cure his melancholy: "Me, lur'd by hope her sorrows to remove / A heart, that could not much itself approve" (D.S. (1793), p. 470, ll. 45-46). According to Geoffrey Hartman, "*Descriptive Sketches*, therefore, is not a portrait of nature, or the projection on nature of an idea, but the portrayal of the action of a mind in search (primarily through the eye) of a nature adequate to its idea."<sup>22</sup> The melancholy spirit of the poem may have been a result of Wordsworth's mood of 1792 when he wrote the poem in Blois.<sup>23</sup> At that time, Wordsworth was in the process of reconciling his various emotions concerning the French Revolution, patriotism for his home country and his liaison with Annette Vallon who was, at that time, pregnant. It would be at least ten years before he would recognize and be able to define the object of his search and put into proper perspective the place of the Revolution, nature and the imagination.

Wordsworth's different descriptions of his visit to the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse as seen in his early poem *Descriptive Sketches*, in *The Prelude*, and in his revisions to both those poems document his changing attitude toward the French Revolution. In May of 1792, soldiers

were quartered in the Grande Chartreuse in the first stages of confiscating the Church's property and removing the privileges of the clergy. In October of the same year the monks were expelled from the monastery. But when Wordsworth visited the monastery in August of 1790 the Grande Chartreuse was undisturbed by the Revolution. He would have become aware of its eventual fate when he was lodged in France. *Descriptive Sketches*, written in 1792, speaks of the desecration of the monastery, while the earlier version of *The Prelude* makes no mention of it:

the Monastery Bells  
 Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears;  
 The rapid River lowing without noise,  
 And every Spire we saw among the rocks  
 Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals  
 Touching the heart amid the boisterous Crew  
 With which we were environ'd. Having parted  
 From this glad Rout, the Covent of Chartreuse  
 Received us two days afterwards, and there  
 We rested in an awful Solitude.  
(Prel. VI. 415-25)

This sharply contrasts with the *Descriptive Sketches*' (1793) portrayal of the same setting:

Ev'n now I sigh at hoary Charteuse'  
     doom  
 Weeping beneath his chill of mountain  
     gloom.  
 Where now is fled that Power whose frown  
     severe  
 Tam'd 'sober Reason' till she crouch'd  
     in fear?  
 . . . . .  
 The cloister startles at the gleam of arms,  
 And Blasphemy the shuddering fane  
     alarms;  
 Nod the cloud-piercing pines their  
     troubl'd heads,  
 Spires, rocks, and lawns, a browner night  
     o'erspreads,  
 Strong terror checks the female peasant's  
     sighs,

And start th'astonish'd shades at female  
 eyes.  
 The thundering tube the aged angler hears,  
 And swells the groaning torrent with his  
 tears.

(D.S. (1793), p. 471, ll. 53-67)

In these lines Wordsworth describes his own sorrow at the fate of the monastery. This attitude is somewhat in contrast with the opinions on the confiscation of the Church's property he espoused in his "Apology", which he wrote the following spring. It is clear from the poem that while Wordsworth supported the intentions of the revolutionary aims he, nevertheless, deplored violence directed at innocent people. He saw the attack on the monastery as a blasphemous act and as an indication that the "Power" had fled during the revolutionary times.

Wordsworth's revised version of *Descriptive Sketches* contains essentially the same description. While it is clear that the presence of soldiers at the monastery concerns him, this account does not contain the type of criticism of the act that is to be found in the final revised edition of *The Prelude*. According to Mary Moorman, the latter revisions to *The Prelude* were made "at some unknown date, but probably not earlier than 1808, and perhaps at the suggestion of Coleridge."<sup>24</sup> This version of his visit to the monastery is quite different from the one in *Descriptive Sketches*, and from the one in *The Prelude* (1805) which perhaps contains the most accurate account of what he actually encountered at the monastery. As the two men approach the monastery they observe

Arms flashing and a military glare  
 Of riotous men commissioned to expel  
 The blameless inmates, and belike subvert  
 That frame of social being which so long  
 Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things  
 In silence visible and perpetual calm.  
 (Prel. (1850). VI. 424-29)

Wordsworth now introduces the expulsion of the monks, describing the act as a subversion of the proper order. Nature cries out against this description and urges man to:

--Stay, stay your sacreligious hands!--

. . . . .

Let this one temple last, be this one spot  
Of earth devoted to eternity!

(*Prel.* (1850). VI. 430-35)

Wordsworth describes himself as plagued with conflicting emotions. On the one hand his heart responds by shouting, "Honour to the patriot's zeal! / Glory and hope to newborn Liberty!" (*Prel.* (1850). VI. 441-42) and by wishing the actions of the revolutionaries well. But, on the other hand, he joins with Nature in requesting that the revolutionaries:

. . . spare

These courts of mystery, where a step advanced  
Between the portals of the shadowy rocks  
Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities.

(*Prel.* (1850). VI. 450-53)

The cause of the Revolution had gone too far when it interfered with the places on the earth that were outside of man's political concerns.

While the latest version of *The Prelude* demonstrates the degree to which Wordsworth abandoned his former revolutionary beliefs as he got older and the French Revolution became more distant, the early poem *Descriptive Sketches* clearly was written in support of the Revolution. The traveller is in a Rousseau-like state of nature which allows the political idealist the true glimpse of freedom that will, one hopes, through the successful revolution, be possible in society as well.

Once Man entirely free, alone and wild,  
 Was bless'd as free--for he was Nature's  
 child

.....

Ev'n so, by vestal Nature guarded, here  
 The traces of primaeval Man appear.  
 The native dignity no forms debase,  
 The eye-sublime, and surly lion-grace.  
 The slave of none, of beasts alone the lord,  
 He marches with his flute, his book, and sword.

(D.S. (1793), p. 477, ll. 520-33)

In this state of nature, man has fortunately escaped the fate of those who live in "the vales where Death with Famine scow'rs / And dark Oppression builds her thick-ribb'd tow'ers" (D.S. (1793), p. 481, ll. 794-95).<sup>25</sup> The revolutionary in Wordsworth comes out when he describes the state of society in need of liberation:

Where Machinations her fell soul resigns,  
 Fled panting to the centre of her mines;  
 Where Persecution decks with ghastly smiles  
 Her bed, his mountains mad Ambition piles;  
 Where Discord stalks dilating, every hour,  
 And crouching fearful at the feet of Pow'r.

(D.S. (1793), p. 482, ll. 796-801)

Chard notes,

Throughout both *Descriptive Sketches* and the *Letter* he connects lack of freedom with the misuse of power; and, above all, he refers to freedom and republican government in terms of nature. Wordsworth discovered in his youth the power of nature; but, before that insight could be applied to the individual man, he first had to relate natural power to man's social realm at large.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike his "Apology for the French Revolution", *Descriptive Sketches* does not directly address the institutions in society responsible for man's loss of freedom, but it does allude to the monarchy's oppression of the common man:

As despot courts their blaze of gems  
 display,  
 Ev'n by the secret cottage far away  
 The lily of domestic joy decay.

(D.S. (1793), p. 480, ll. 721-23)

Wordsworth wrote *Descriptive Sketches* when he was attempting to reconcile conflicting emotions he felt concerning the French Revolution. The hope and optimism he possessed in those early years of the Revolution can be found at the end of *Descriptive Sketches* (1793). In this poetic tribute to the power of the battle of Liberty Wordsworth speaks in apocalyptic terms of the new earth that will result:

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;  
 His larum-bell from village-tow'r to tow'r  
 Swing on th' astounded ear its dull undying roar;  
 Yet, yet rejoice, tho' Pride's perverted ire  
 Rouze Hell's own aid, and wrap thy hills in fire.  
 Lo! from th' innocuous flames, a lovely birth!  
 With its own Virtues springs another earth.

(D.S. (1793), p. 481, ll. 774-84)

In the later revision to *Descriptive Sketches* Wordsworth allows the same revolutionary enthusiasm to prevail, but at the conclusion of his statement concerning a new earth he adds a note of sobriety: "All cannot be: the promise is too fair / For creatures doomed to breathe terrestrial air" (D.S. (1849), p. 17, ll. 646-47). Nevertheless, with its concern with liberating man from oppression and returning him to the free state enjoyed by the Swiss country folk and, more importantly, with its prayer at the end for the triumph of the Revolution resulting in the return of the Golden Age, *Descriptive Sketches*, in the version of 1792, is Wordsworth's poetic contribution to the revolutionary writings of the

day. Given that Wordsworth did not alter the poem's theme in his many revisions, it is most probable that he wanted the poem to remain as his youthful tribute to the ideals of the Revolution.

*The Prelude* contains the best evidence of Wordsworth's activities in, and feelings about, the French Revolution. It documents both of his trips to France, and Wordsworth's major biographers agree (as evidenced in their use of *The Prelude* in constructing his biographies),<sup>27</sup> that, except for the exclusion of his affair with Annette Vallon, it adheres closely to the actual events of his life. Wordsworth's purpose in his long poem addressed to Coleridge was to document the growth of his mind, by putting into proper perspective the place of nature, society, and the imagination. And while the first five books describe the influence nature had during his childhood and youth, Books VI, IX and X are concerned with how the poet's travels to France acquainted him with the revolutionary cause. In those later books Wordsworth recalls how the French Revolution was initially regarded by himself, and many others, as the beginning of a new age. In this regard the young Wordsworth would have shared the sentiments of Samuel Romilly, who wrote to a French woman in May, 1792,

My opinion, however, is not in the least altered with respect to your Revolution. Even the conduct of the present Assembly has not been able to shake my conviction that it is the most glorious event, and the happiest for mankind, that has ever taken place since human affairs have been recorded; and though I lament sincerely the miseries which have happened, and which still are to happen, I console myself with thinking that the evils of the revolution are transitory, and all the good of it is permanent.<sup>28</sup>

Wordsworth's hope for the success of the French Revolution lasted up

until the conquests of Napoleon. Though depressed over the actions of the Public Safety Committee, he had an outburst of reborn hope as soon as he heard of the execution of Robespierre:

Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy  
 In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus  
 Made manifest. "Come now ye golden times,"  
 Said I, forth-breathing on those open Sands  
 A Hymn of triumph.

(*Preℓ.* X. 539-43)

Even ten years after observing the events that occurred in France, he remains convinced that "the virtue of one paramount mind / Would have abash'd those impious crests, have quell'd / Outrage and bloody power" (*Preℓ.* X. 179-81). The depression he felt following the horrendous massacres in France required a cure, but once cured, the experiences he had in the Revolution took on broader importance for him as a poet. The revolutionary drive to change the course of society became directed toward producing a revolutionary form of poetic creation. What Wordsworth was seeking for in nature and in man, he found in the imagination. This recognition came during the composition of the incident in which he crossed the Alps.

As previously noted, Wordsworth does not include any mention of crossing the Alps in his early poem *Descriptive Sketches*. One of the explanations for this exclusion could be the fact that in the summer of 1792 Wordsworth was deeply involved in the affairs of society. The theme of extreme disappointment, even arising from his experiences in nature, did not suit his poetic purpose. At the time he wrote *Descriptive Sketches* the power of the Revolution was uppermost in his mind, and the poem is essentially a tribute to it. But by the time Wordsworth was

writing *The Prelude* in 1804, he had had time to reflect on how his own expectations were not fulfilled through the actions of man. In Book VI of *The Prelude* (1805), Wordsworth and his friend are struck by the happiness of the people:

But 'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,  
 France standing on the top of golden hours,  
 And human nature seeming born again.  
 (Prel. VI. 352-54)

Although he and his companion celebrated with the French people, he comments on arriving in France, "But Nature then was sovereign in my heart" (Prel. VI. 346), and on leaving:

I look'd upon these things  
 As from a distance, heard, and saw, and felt,  
 Was touch'd, but with no intimate concern;  
 I seem'd to move among them as a bird  
 Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues  
 Its business, in its proper element;  
 I needed not that joy.  
 (Prel. VI. 694-700)

More concerned with enjoying their scenic vacation than with political affairs, Wordsworth and his friend observed the happiness of the French, but did not embrace it. Their aim was to visit the famous sites of that part of Europe and, in particular, to cross the Swiss Alps. But the experience did not live up to Wordsworth's expectations.

In beginning to relate the event, he says: "Far different dejection once was mine / A deep and genuine sadness then I felt" (Prel. VI. 491-92). As the two young men advance up a mountain on their own they encounter a peasant who informs them that they had already crossed the Alps without knowing it. The mature Wordsworth chooses that first incident of dashed hopes to insert his famous apostrophe to the imagina-

tion:

Imagination! lifting up itself  
 Before the eye and progress of my Song  
 Like an unfather'd vapour; here that Power,  
 In all the might of its endowments, came  
 Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,  
 Halted, without a struggle to break through.  
 (Prel. VI. 525-30)

Since the power of nature was foremost in his mind, the young Wordsworth, who was in search of that power, felt let down and confused when he did not find what he had expected. But as he was to be bitterly disappointed in the French Revolution (the realm of society in which Wordsworth would soon invest his soul), so at this early stage was he let down when nature did not live up to his preconceived notions. The older poet, recovered from both disappointments, sees that neither nature nor political actions of men can ever accomplish what the imagination is capable of conceiving. The recognition of this fact allows for turning what could be the most negative aspect of man's condition into his greatest possession and triumph. This is the discovery Wordsworth makes when he says: "And now recovering, to my Soul I say / I recognize thy glory" (Prel. VI. 531-32). A direct foreshadowing of the disappointment he will feel, this section of *The Prelude* also provides the most precise explanation of what one must know in order to recover:

Our destiny, our nature, and our home  
 Is with infinitude, and only there;  
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,  
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,  
 And something evermore about to be.  
 (Prel. VI. 538-42)

This recognition, arising out of despair, resembles the discovery

the narrator makes in Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality Ode*. In that poem the narrator finds himself depressed because of something he cannot recall. Certain things remind him of something wonderful now beyond his grasp, growing fainter and fainter as he gets older. Eventually, he comes to realize that his memory of a memory or his sense of loss can bring him happiness as this is what ultimately reconfirms his link with eternity. He says that he raises a song of praise

For those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings.

(I.I.O., p. 461, ll. 145-47)

As his depression over the crossing of the Alps can be turned into exaltation through the discovery of the power of the imagination, likewise in *Intimations* his "shadowy recollections . . . Are yet the fountain-light of all our day / Are yet a master-light of all our seeing" (I.I.O., p. 461, ll. 153-56). Wordsworth's discovery as depicted in both of these poems does not depend upon external stimulus. However, following his apostrophe to the imagination in *The Prelude* Wordsworth goes on to describe an apocalyptic experience that is directly connected to the physical world.

When Wordsworth and his friend take another route through a narrow chasm the landscape appears to Wordsworth,

like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity.

(*Prel.* VI. 568-71)

This moment of vision happened biographically and compositionally before the insight that proceeds it in the poem. The difference between the two lines lies in the fact that the apostrophe to the imagination occur-

red during the composition of the incident of disappointment, around 1804. It arises not from immediate external stimulus, but from a memory of a disappointing experience. The young poet's discovery of the "Characters of the great Apocalypse" (*Prel.* VI. 570) is the direct result of his response to the natural world. Wordsworth shows how the natural world was a symbol to him in 1790 of the apocalypse and eternity. In the books on the French Revolution Wordsworth depicts how the slightly older man transferred his hope in the apocalypse to the actions of man through revolution. But the apostrophe to the imagination reflects his final conclusion as a result of his experiences in *The Prelude*, that neither nature nor social action has the power the imagination has in maintaining "hope that can never die" (*Prel.* VI. 540).

The French Revolution was integral in leading him to that conclusion. Books IX and X document his direct association with it. These two books serve as an excellent guide to how the French Revolution appeared to a young English idealist. Few events are left out, and while it is unclear whether Wordsworth actively participated in any of the political events, there is no doubt that he was a keen observer of them. Upon arriving in Paris he says, "I saw the revolutionary Power / Toss like a ship at anchor, rock'd by storms" (*Prel.* IX. 48-49). He attempts to submerge himself in the political controversy around him, but on that first visit to Paris he describes himself sitting in the ruins of the Bastille: "I look'd for something that I could not find / Affecting more emotion than I felt" (*Prel.* IX. 70-71). Instead, he enjoys a painting he sees of the Magdalene of le Brun. As Wordsworth joins in with the company of the French people in halls and saloons, he gradually begins to embrace the cause:

I gradually withdrew  
 Into a noisier world; and thus did soon  
 Become a Patriot, and my heart was all  
 Given to the People, and my love was theirs.  
 (Prel. IX. 123-26)

He went to Orleans which was known for receiving the English who wished to become versed in French.<sup>29</sup> Also, Wordsworth had an introduction to the poet Helen Maria Williams<sup>30</sup> who he had been told was in Orleans. Upon his arrival in Orleans, he was told she had left for Paris and he had missed her only by a few days. It was at Orleans that Wordsworth met Annette Vallon, and less than three months later he followed her to her home in Blois. After the September Massacres and a few months before their baby was born, Wordsworth and Annette returned to Orleans, perhaps because of her then obviously pregnant condition.<sup>31</sup> In *The Prelude* Wordsworth does not mention his affair with Annette Vallon nor does he describe his activity back and forth between Orleans and Blois. His experiences at both places are said to occur in "A City on the Borders of the Loire" (Prel. IX. 39). Wordsworth discusses meeting and living with royalists who "were bent upon undoing what was done" (Prel. IX. 137). In Orleans Wordsworth lodged with supporters of the crown, which is probably how he met Annette Vallon, whose family was also against the French Revolution.<sup>32</sup> In Blois Wordsworth stayed in the same boarding house with a band of officers who also supported the royalist position. It is there that he met the Patriot officer Michel Beaupuy.

Wordsworth mentions in *The Prelude* how Beaupuy was rejected by the other men in his company. This rejection was due to the fact that in the French army, prior to the Revolution, members of the nobility were given certain privileges in respect to the army. Thus, most officers

came from the nobility and, as such, were resentful when the Revolution sought to abandon the class differentiation and suspend all their privileges. Beaupuy's family background was no different from the rest except for the fact that his mother believed very strongly in the rightness of the Revolution and taught her sons to feel the same way even if it worked to their disadvantage. According to Mary Moorman,

Michel, Louis-Gabriel and Pierre-Armand Beaupuy all took part in 1789 in drawing up the cahier of grievances against the royal power which the States-General was to discuss; they steadily resisted the demand for new powers for their own order, the nobility, after the fusion of the three estates, and Michel in particular was singled out at a meeting of the Estates of Périgueux as one who for his patriotic zeal had been rewarded by the praise of 'all good men, of that of his three brothers (philosophers and warriors), and by the joy of his mother, who, like the noble Spartans, mingles the zeal of her country with the virtues of her sex'.<sup>33</sup>

Beaupuy encouraged Wordsworth to care about the fate of the poor and less fortunate and to detest arbitrary power which sought to oppress them. Wordsworth says of him,

Man he lov'd  
As Man; and to the mean and the obscure  
And all the homely in their homely works  
Transferr'd a courtesy which had no air  
Of condescension, but did rather seem  
A passion and a gallantry.

(*Prel.* IX. 313-18)

As they walked, Beaupuy would talk of his hatred of the monarchy and of titles and honours. Wordsworth listened faithfully but admits that when viewing the large monuments of ancient Kings he derived "chivalrous delight" (*Prel.* IX. 502-03). Even so, he still developed a hatred for arbitrary rule "where will of One / Is Law for all" (*Prel.* IX. 504-05).

Wordsworth says that Beaupuy conveys to him the tragic tale of Julia and Vaudracour, the star-crossed lovers, who are victims of the ancien régime's lettre d'cachet.<sup>34</sup> The tale, included at the end of Book IX of *The Prelude* and omitted from the revised edition, tells of the nobleman Vaudracour's love affair with the bourgeois Julia. Both sets of parents connive to end their relationship and the young couple, although wishing for "honourable wedlock" (*Prel.* IX. 60), decide in "some delirious hour" (*Prel.* IX. 167) to "entrust [themselves] / To Nature for a happy end of all" (*Prel.* IX. 603-04). This decision results in Julia's pregnancy (her "secret grief") (*Prel.* IX. 611), and without her consent, her parents hurry her off to a distant town. Vaudracour follows her and plans their life together. His father will have none of it and uses his position to arrange for his son's arrest. After killing a soldier and being in and out of prison, Vaudracour ends up taking care of their child and Julia is put into a convent. Vaudracour retires into the woods with the baby and "after a short time by some mistake / Or indiscretion of the Father" (*Prel.* IX. 907-08) the child dies. From then on Vaudracour remains in the woods a solitary: "His days he wasted, an imbecile mind" (*Prel.* IX. 935).

In terms of expressing a moral for Wordsworth, the student of revolution, Beaupuy's tale effectively demonstrates how the class system causes hardship through its failure to recognize the equality of all individuals. It paints the ancien régime as a time when the privileged nobility were able to thwart the judicial system. But the tale, placed as it is at the end of Book IX, also suggests the events in the affair of Wordsworth and Annette Vallon.<sup>35</sup>

There are many similarities between the two sets of lovers. Words-

worth and Annette, though not of differing classes, were of differing religions--he Protestant, she Roman Catholic. Marrying Annette would have virtually eliminated any chance of Wordsworth attaining religious orders.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps Wordsworth and Annette also felt that by letting nature take its course, they would have had a better chance at convincing their families of the necessity of their marriage. As Julia was whisked away following the announcement of her pregnancy, so Annette returned from Blois to Orleans to have the baby. Like Vaudracour, Wordsworth followed his lover, all the while anticipating that they would marry. Wordsworth and Annette separate because of the outbreak of the war between France and England, never to unite again as lovers. Julia and Vaudracour are forced to separate by their parents and Julia is retired to a convent.

There will always be the suggestion that Wordsworth's tale of Julia and Vaudracour was included to appease Wordsworth's guilt for the omission of his love affair in his autobiographical poem. But any suggestion that the tale reflects his own guilt in leaving Annette cannot be validated through the tale's narrative. The young couple Julia and Vaudracour were punished because of the unfair condition of their society with its *lettre d'cachet* and rigid class system. Their situation clearly is tragic, which might lead one to the assumption that Wordsworth saw his own predicament in the same light. Thus, the tale of Julia and Vaudracour told to him by Beaupuy was meaningful to Wordsworth both because of its likeness to his relationship with Annette and for its political implications. It is through a series of discussions with Beaupuy regarding such issues as the *lettre d'cachet* that



Wordsworth became familiar with the Patriot position.

Chard traces how Beaupuy, through his moderate position, concern for the classics, literary inclinations, and belief in reform, was probably a supporter of the Girondist cause as opposed to the Jacobins dominated by Robespierre. In fact, Chard isolates the Girondist faction to which Beaupuy belonged, declaring him a follower of Brissot.<sup>37</sup> His deduction may be due to the fact that Brissot and his followers supported the declaration of war against Austria. This war would claim Beaupuy's life in October of 1796.<sup>38</sup> Most literary scholars single out the Girondin party as the one Wordsworth supported in the French Revolution.<sup>39</sup> This generalization suggests that literary interpretation tends to be broad in its discussion of historical events. Historian M.J. Sydenham, in his book *The Girondins*, concludes that there was no united party (in the sense that we understand a political party, i.e., having some principles agreed upon by all): "Brissot and his friends should be regarded as a small and loose-knit group or coalition of individualists who rapidly became representative of the resistance of the majority to Robespierre, their personal independence remaining unqualified."<sup>40</sup> At the time Wordsworth was in France, those who could be classified as Girondins consisted of a small number of individual deputies who, in general, supported the attack upon Austria as a means of curing the country's economic ills, who believed that the Revolution was completed, and who spent a great deal of their time opposing the action of the Mountain, dominated by Robespierre and supported by the Commune and the sans-culottes.

Eventually, the power of the Parisian mobs doomed the men who opposed them. Robespierre's success lay in the fact that he was able to harness the sans-culottes and convince them that anyone who opposed his

measures to bring about the "true" Revolution was an enemy of the cause. Thus, the more moderate of the Convention stood little chance when they declared the actions in August and September of 1792 to be deleterious. Sydenham says, "Their failure to deal effectively with the radicals of Paris must yet stand as the most serious failure of these men."<sup>41</sup> As Robespierre gained more power through his extremist positions which made individual opinion increasingly impossible, each of the factions encompassed under the Girondin title eventually was eliminated. The Revolution of June 2, 1793, confirmed their fate, but also initiated the blackest year of the Revolution when terror was the order of the day and justice no longer had any meaning. Sydenham praises those men who died opposing the Jacobins:

Eventually those deputies who died in 1793-1794 died in defence of a vital principle: by challenging the authority of the court which condemned them in the sinister name of the security of the State, they really proclaimed their faith in a Republic which would approve and defend individual freedom of conscience.<sup>42</sup>

What in the summer of 1792 may have appeared as a struggle for supremacy between the Girondins and the Jacobins, was, in fact, a series of attempts by opposing factions (led by strong individuals) to end the chaotic situation in France after the Revolution. Following the Revolution of August 10, Robespierre and his followers began their denunciation of Brissot and others. In fact, Robespierre ordered the arrest of Brissot and his supporters at that time. They were not imprisoned because of Danton's intervention. Had they been, they would have likely perished in the prison massacres (September, 1792). The individuals that have come to be known as the Girondins did not have a shared political ideol-

ogy, but instead voiced their opinions as individuals. The common link between these men was their opposition to Robespierre.

Neither Wordsworth nor Beaupuy actively participated in the power struggle occurring between the major factions in Paris prior to the rule of the Public Safety Committee. What Beaupuy and Wordsworth shared was their love for the poor and oppressed of society. In one of their walks together, Beaupuy points to a poverty stricken girl and tells Wordsworth, "Tis against *that* / Which we are fighting" (*Prel.* IX. 519-20). Beaupuy did not have to convince Wordsworth of the virtues of an egalitarian society. When Wordsworth came to Blois, France, he had already been influenced in this direction. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth discusses how growing up in a poor district made him appreciate the frank simplicity of humble rural life. As well, he described university life at Cambridge as democratic in its emphasis on talent as opposed to inherited wealth or titles. He discusses owing a debt of gratitude,

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, that they were brothers all  
In honour, as in one community.

(*Prel.* IX. 228-32)

During Wordsworth's childhood and youth he had loosely accumulated certain ideals which included a belief in the integrity of rural and humble folk. Man's oppression of his fellow man bothered Wordsworth a great deal. What Beaupuy provided to the poet was an example of how one can commit oneself to fulfilling revolutionary ideals. He inspired Wordsworth through his enthusiasm and his personal commitment to the poor:

Unto the poor  
 Among mankind he was in service bound  
 As by some tie invisible, oaths profess'd  
 To a Religious Order. Man he lov'd  
 As Man.

(*Prel.* IX. 310-14)

Wordsworth and Beaupuy believed that all citizens should be able to participate in the drafting of laws that would affect them. Beaupuy helped Wordsworth to appreciate the value of political action and ideas. His influence can be seen to account for the development of Wordsworth's political commitment as displayed in his poem *Descriptive Sketches* and the "Apology for the French Revolution".

Wordsworth's belief in democratic principles can be seen to affect his poetry in many ways. William Hazlitt's article on Wordsworth in *The Spirit of the Age* discusses how "His muse . . . is a levelling one. It proceeds on a principle of equality, and strives to reduce all things to the same standard."<sup>43</sup> Wordsworth chose in much of his poetry to depict ordinary people pursuing ordinary activities. He elevated their concerns by showing the universal truths revealed in their actions. By doing this he was able to assert his principle belief of the equality of all men. In *Lyrical Ballads* he dispensed with the high poetic style of his earlier poetry and used a voice that spoke simply, more in the manner of normal speech. In his Preface to those poems he discussed his intentions in this regard: "The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men."<sup>44</sup> Hazlitt discusses Wordsworth's revolutionary attitude toward some aspects of

poetic tradition: "The author tramples on the pride of art with greater pride. The Ode and Epode, the Strophe and the Antistrophe, he laughs to scorn."<sup>45</sup> Thus, while Wordsworth abandons his belief in revolutionary action, he continued to demonstrate his egalitarian stance through his poetry.

When Wordsworth returned to Paris in the fall of 1792, as recounted in Book X of *The Prelude*, he carried the ideals that he had come to associate with the Revolution. Like Brissot's supporters, Wordsworth was repelled by the September Massacres of priests and other innocent prisoners. He recognized that the Revolution was not over yet:

'The earthquake is not satisfied at once.'

.....

I seem'd to hear a voice that cried,  
To the whole City, 'Sleep no more.'

.....

But at the best it seem'd a place of fear  
Unfit for the repose of night,  
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

(*Prel.* X. 74-82)

Wordsworth followed the debate in the Convention when Louvet stood up to accuse Robespierre of the September Massacres. Wordsworth does not indicate his feelings about the power struggle in the Convention because he continued to see the Revolution in an idealistic light. At that time he was a true revolutionary who believed that France's fight for liberty would bring happiness to the whole world (*Prel.* X. 108-11, 222-23), that all thinking men would join in France's struggle (*Prel.* X. 121-23), and "That Man was only weak through his mistrust / And

want of hope" (*Prel.* X. 143-44). Wordsworth says that he would have gladly joined the struggle no matter how dangerous (*Prel.* X. 134-35). When he was forced to return home to England because of lack of funds, he lost his chance to contribute actively toward the success of the Revolution.<sup>46</sup>

When England went to war with France, Wordsworth at first remained a revolutionary, celebrating the overthrow of his own countrymen. But separated from France, and unable to be anything but a mere spectator from across the seas, Wordsworth viewed the rise of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror with horror and anguish. It was time when "the crimes of few / Spread into madness of the many" (*Prel.* X. 313-14), when

In the depths  
Of those enormities, even thinking minds  
Forgot at seasons whence they had their being,  
Forgot that such a sound was ever heard  
As Liberty upon the earth.

(*Prel.* X. 346-49)

What had been the happiest time--"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive" (*Prel.* X. 692)--now began to sour into despondency and depression:

It was a lamentable time for man  
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not,  
A woeful time for them whose hopes did still  
Outlast the shock.

(*Prel.* X. 355-58)

Only at the news of Robespierre's execution did he feel renewed with the possibility of a new age: "Come now ye golden times" (*Prel.* X. 541).

The events in France began to settle down for a period of time following the elimination of the Mountain, but with the advent of Napoleon and France's continuing aggression against Britain and other European

countries, Wordsworth finally had to admit that in France's cause all hope had vanished.

If for France I have griev'd  
 Who, in the judgement of no few, hath been  
 A trifler only, in her proudest day,  
 Have been distressed to think of what she once  
 Promised, now is, a far more sober cause  
 Thine eyes must see of sorrow, in a Land  
 Strew'd with the wreck of loftiest years, a Land  
 Glorious indeed, substantially renown'd  
 Of simple virtue once, and manly praise,  
 Now without one memorial hope, not even  
 A hope to be deferr'd; for that would serve  
 To cheer the heart in such entire decay.  
 (Prel. X. 954-65)

Not knowing how to cope with his depression, Wordsworth began to examine carefully the fabric of society. He quickly found that he could not cope with the contraries that plagued him. He turned to mathematics and the study of reason to put his world into proper perspective. But his salvation lay in the encouragement he received from Coleridge and from his sister Dorothy to devote himself to the pursuit of poetic ideals:<sup>47</sup>

Ah! then it was  
 That Thou, most precious Friend about this time  
 First known to me, didst lend a living help  
 To regulate my Soul  
 . . . . .  
 She, in the midst of all, preserv'd me still  
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name  
 My office upon earth, and nowhere else.  
 (Prel. X. 905-07, 918-20)

And it is from nature that Wordsworth receives a consolation that helps him to overcome his grief:

And lastly, Nature's self, by human love  
 Assisted, through the weary labyrinth  
 Conducted me again to open day,

Revived the feelings of my earlier life,  
 Gave me that strength and knowledge  
 full of peace.

(*Prel.* X. 921-25)

Once relieved of his sorrow Wordsworth was able to re-examine the effect the French Revolution had on him and others. *The Excursion* approaches the French Revolution from a more philosophical perspective than *The Prelude*. When Wordsworth wrote *The Excursion* between 1805 and 1814, his political sympathies were with England. In his "Lines on the Expected Invasion", composed in 1803, he condemned France and urged Britons to fight to protect England. As well, Wordsworth began to see the effects the French Revolution had on his contemporaries. In 1799 the poet Coleridge urged Wordsworth to write

a poem in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary philosophies.<sup>48</sup>

Coleridge's words influenced Wordsworth in his plan of *The Recluse*, in which *The Excursion* was to be only one part.

The Solitary's character is modelled on the type of ex-revolutionary Coleridge describes,<sup>49</sup> and his despondency resembles Wordsworth's own experiences after his return to London from France. Books III and IV, "Despondency" and "Despondency Corrected", examine the question of the despair inflicted by man's unreasonable hopes in the success of political action and show man can rise above this despair. What makes *The Excursion* much more philosophical in nature than *The Prelude* is Wordsworth's use of the Wanderer who, because of his experience and wisdom,

can provide the Solitary with a remedy for his depression. The Wanderer's solutions also resemble the lessons Wordsworth discovers in his progress toward recognizing the power of the imagination. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth recalls the way in which he personally was affected and changed by the Revolution, while in *The Excursion* he shows how two different individuals responded to events of the French Revolution.<sup>50</sup>

There are many parallels between the way the Solitary describes the French Revolution's effect on him and the way Wordsworth describes his own experiences in *The Prelude*. The Solitary uses apocalyptic language, stating that with the fall of the Bastille there arose a new world:

From the wreck  
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise . . .  
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld  
Glory--beyond all glory ever seen,  
Confusion infinite of heaven and earth,  
Dazzling the soul. Meanwhile, prophetic harps  
In every grove were ringing, "War shall cease."  
(*Exc.* III. 713-23)

As Wordsworth also found, this promise of a new heaven and a new earth leads the Solitary to experience a period of great joy and happiness:

--My heart rebounded;  
My melancholy voice the chorus joined;  
--"Be joyful all ye nations; in all lands,  
Ye that are capable of joy be glad!"  
(*Exc.* III. 726-29)

The Solitary's personal problems--the death of his family--fade away when he turns to the affairs of society to provide him with a sense of purpose: "Society became my glittering bride / And airy hopes my children" (*Exc.* III. 735-56). In the Preface to *The Excursion* Wordsworth

proclaims his theme, as a marriage between the external world and man's mind (*Exc.* "Preface", 63-68). This union speaks of a balance between man's imagination and the natural world. In the Solitary's case his marriage to Society becomes as disastrous as his earlier marriage to a woman--society disappoints him bitterly, compounding his melancholy. As Wordsworth experienced "utter loss of hope itself / And things to hope for" (*Prel.* XI. 6-7), so the Solitary is led to exclaim, "Liberty, I worshipped thee, and find thee but a Shade!" (*Exc.* III. 776-77). The Solitary's narrative ends Book III; Book IV continues with the Wanderer's solutions.

To the first type of despair experienced by the Solitary--that of mutability--the solution is the belief that a Supreme Being has a divine plan for man. But for the second loss, "the loss of confidence in social man" (*Exc.* IV. 261), one of the solutions is to recognize that both extremes, hope and despair, "are equally disowned / By reason" (*Exc.* IV. 268-69), meaning that what man is capable of realizing can only be found somewhere in the middle. Sound expectations of man's progress can be discovered by reflecting on history that has proven that no one generation is capable of succeeding where others have failed. Wordsworth compares man's attempts to the cycle of nature: "By nature's gradual processes be taught" (*Exc.* IV. 288). The only way that individual man can hope to improve the world in spite of the failure of revolutions that vainly repeat themselves is to erect himself above himself (*Exc.* IV. 330-331). But to the despair he feels because of accepting such a gradual progress, man has his consolation in the soothing quality of nature:

For, the man--  
 Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms  
 Of nature, who with understanding heart  
 Both knows and loves such objects as excite  
 No morbid passions, no disquietude,  
 No vengeance, and no hatred--needs must feel  
 The joy of that pure principle of love  
 So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught  
 Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose  
 But seek for objects of a kindred love  
 In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.

(*Exc.* IV. 1208-17)

The Wanderer emphasizes it is only through such an exercise that one can learn to look positively on the fullest extension of hope:

And further, by contemplating these Forms  
 In the relations which they bear to man,  
 He shall discern, how through the various means  
 Which silently they yield, are multiplied  
 The spiritual presences of absent things.

(*Exc.* IV. 1230-34)

By turning the power of man to hope into the power of man to expand his imagination through the contemplation of the natural world, the Wanderer's solution becomes a central Romantic doctrine. And since this realization came as the result of despair induced by the French Revolution, one can view the political turbulence in France as the spark of the Romantic emphasis on the imagination. In discussing *The Excursion*, Geoffrey Hartman says,

The despondency the Wanderer seeks to correct is less the opposite of hope than its strongest derivative . . . What Wordsworth calls Imagination is, in this perspective, hope recognizing itself as originally or ultimately independent of this world . . . The Wanderer's most powerful argument against visionary despair is also the most Romantic and is directed less against despair than toward the expansion of hope. The desires should be multiplied. The faculties in man should be multiplied.<sup>51</sup>

Both *The Excursion* and *The Prelude* essentially discuss the way man's hope and the defeat of hope in the French Revolution guide him to placing his faith in man's imaginative capabilities. Both emphasize the critical role nature must assume in the realization and in the workings of the mind of man. In both poems, Wordsworth describes the advent of an apocalypse that comes from the function of the imagination as opposed to the false millennium that arises from the mechanisms of social man:

I seem'd about this period to have sight  
 Of a new world, a world, too, that was fit  
 To be transmitted and made visable  
 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 eye that sees.  
 (Prel. XII. 370-79)

In *The Excursion*, the Wanderer pleads for man to rise up, ready to greet the new world transformed through his regenerated perception:

Let us rise  
 From this oblivious sleep, these fretful dreams  
 Of feverish nothingness. Thus disciplined  
 All things shall live in us and we shall live  
 In all things that surround us. This I deem  
 Our tendency, and thus shall every day  
 Enlarge our sphere of pleasure and of power.<sup>52</sup>

In both *The Excursion* and *The Prelude* Wordsworth shows how man's disappointment in the French Revolution can reveal eternal verities. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth learns that "mid all revolutions in the hope / And fears of men" one truth prevails, that

the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
On which he dwells, above this Frame of things . . .  
In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
Of substance and of fabric more divine.

(*Prel.* XIII. 439-45)

This discovery concludes his period of restoration and signals the advent of Wordsworth's concern with the imagination. But Wordsworth's experience in the French Revolution was integral to his realization of the power of the imagination. It introduced him to the revolutionary impulse, inspiring in him an apocalyptic vision of a new and better world. He was able to maintain this vision even after the Revolution's failure to achieve its goals because he had discovered the infinite potential of imaginative vision.

## BLAKE

Blake responded to the two revolutions of his day because he saw in them the necessary conflict between contrary forces that could further man's progress toward redemption. In his "Vision of the Last Judgement", Blake outlines his poetic goal: "The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative; it is an Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients called the Golden Age" (V.L.J., p. 1009, p. 72 Notebook). All of Blake's prophecies concern, in one way or another, man's progress through creation, fall and redemption. The Bible provided Blake with a narrative structure that he utilized for his poetic purpose. In Blake's mythological cosmos, the Universal Man, Albion, falls into division occurs when one of his four-fold parts separates from the rest in order to gain control. When Albion falls, the natural world as we know it is created. For Blake it is the separation of man's abstract reasoning power from his other faculties that has created the world of tyrannous institutions, an oppressive and merciless God, and a mechanical view of the universe. During Blake's life the traditional institutions such as the monarchy, the judiciary, and the State Church were challenged by revolutionaries who saw their destruction as necessary in order to realize their dream of a better society. Because Blake believed these institutions to be tyrannous and oppressive he welcomed the actions of the revolutionaries. In his poems written between 1791 and 1794 revolutionary energy, symbolized by Orc, is depicted as the force that may initi-

ate the millennium. After Blake observes the French Revolution's failure to restore Paradise, he maintains his belief that human progression requires the clash of contrary states, but sees the battle as being between the conservative and radical imagination. Blake's figure of imaginative energy, Los, initiates the apocalypse in *The Four Zoas* by tearing down the mechanical universe. Blake's commitment to a liberation of perception can be observed through an examination of his poems which describe the revolutionary struggle to overthrow tyranny.

Blake's early poem "Gwin, King of Norway" (1783) attacks the monarchy, holding the King responsible for the impoverished state of his citizens. *The French Revolution* (1791) provides a direct commentary on the events in France. In that poem Blake's sympathies are with the revolutionaries who oppose the King and his lords. The actions of the supporters of liberty are shown to initiate the first rumblings of Armageddon, and the poem concludes with signs that a better world will be realized. The poems *America* (1793) and *Europe* (1794) tell of how Orc, the manifestation of energy and the revolutionary impulse, assists in both revolutions. *America* and *The French Revolution* refer to a time when the nobles will take off their robes of oppression and when the slave will run free in the sunlight. *Europe*, however, is concerned with describing the oppressive nature of society and with the ensuing violent struggle. As Blake became less sure of man's ability to redeem the world through political action, his poems concerned with recalling political events become less and less optimistic. In *The French Revolution* the conflict between the revolutionaries and the King is settled in a non-violent manner; the poem ends with the Senate sitting in peace beneath the morning sun. In *America*, the red fires of Orc

push back the pestilence that England aims at America. The poem describes the violent encounter between England and America that was the American war. *Europe* also contains many references to war, destruction and bloodshed. Both *America* and *Europe* end on the brink of Armageddon. But *America* contains a vision of the new world while *Europe* does not. Echoing the lines in Blake's "A Song of Liberty" (1792), devoted entirely to prophesying Orc's ability to regenerate mankind, *America* describes how the dungeon doors will open and the liberated slaves will sing,

The Sun has left his blackness, & has  
found a fresher morning  
And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear &  
cloudness night;  
For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf  
shall cease.

(A., p. 142, ll. 49-51)

When Blake wrote *Europe* he became increasingly suspicious of man's ability to initiate the new world through political action. The reign of terror demonstrated that liberators may become oppressors once given power. Blake showed the paradoxical nature of revolution by suggesting that Orc, his symbol of energy, may become Urizen, his symbol of tradition. As Blake learned that political action could not initiate the millennium, he became completely involved in outlining the proper way to achieve it. To Blake the power of imagination must be recognized above all. Man falls when he turns from the imagination to a belief in the superiority of such things as the Monarchy, institutionalized religion, or the power of nature. To recount how man can regain the world prophesied in "A Song of Liberty", *The Four Zoas* (begun in 1797) presents the history of "The Universal Man", his fall into division and his restora-

tion through the actions of Los, who represents the revolutionary impulse directed toward imaginative vision. Unlike his earlier poems, *The Four Zoas* is long, styled on the epic format, and shows the entire process of regeneration from start to finish. *America's* vision of a liberated world is realized in Night the Ninth of *The Four Zoas* which resembles the Book of Revelation in its presentation of the Armageddon and apocalypse. Blake eventually comes to believe that the new world dreamed of by the supporters of the Revolution would be possible through the power of imaginative vision. Revolutionary energy once directed toward liberating man's perception of the world can ignite the next Golden Age.

Blake reached maturity at the time of the American War. He was most probably aware of the general disapproval the English held for their country's part in the American Revolution. In the English Parliament politicians such as Fox, Burke, Chatham and Wilkes spoke out against the King's arbitrary exercise of power in attempting to suppress the American trade. In June of 1780, Blake participated in a march organized to demand the repeal of a Roman Catholic Relief Act, but which was, in fact, a display of anger against the English position on the American War. The riots that broke out came to be known as the Gordon riots (Lord Gordon supported the repeal, saying that the bills had been initiated "for the diabolical purpose of arming the Papists against the Protestant Colonies in America"<sup>1</sup>). But it has come to be recognized by most historians that the riots were prompted by the public's general dissatisfaction with the war against the American Rebellion.<sup>2</sup> The rioters started their attack on Roman Catholic houses but spread out to attack the homes of ministers, magistrates and judges. Finally, they sacked

the courts, prisons and public buildings; they razed Newgate prison on June 6 and the Bank of England on June 7, 1780. According to Bronowski, "William Blake was among those at the head of the crowd which burned Newgate prison on 6th June, 1780. He seems indeed to have been carried there by chance: and we know of others in the crowd who took no part in the burning, among them the poet George Crabbe."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the spectacle of the burning houses and destroyed prisons influenced his later depiction of the liberation that would come through revolution. David Erdman says that Blake sympathized with the rioters "insofar as 'the mob' believed that freeing their fellows from Newgate was a step toward freeing Albion from an oppressive war."<sup>4</sup>

In an early collection of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, Blake launches an attack on the monarchy's and the aristocracy's exploitation of the poor. In "Gwin, King of Norway" he says,

The Nobles of the land did feed  
Upon the hungry Poor;  
They tear the poor man's lamb and drive  
The needy from their door!

The land is desolate; our wives  
And children cry for bread;  
Arise, and pull the tyrant down;  
Let Gwin Be humbled.

("Gwin", p. 762, ll. 5-12)

As a youth his sympathy lay with the exploited working class; in his poem "Gwin" the king and his armies are destroyed. The American Revolution did not bring about the downfall of King George as Blake had hoped. In *America* Blake describes how Urizen, his mythical counterpart of the English King, weeps in "dismal howlings" (A., p. 150, l. 216) before the American revolutionaries. At the end of *America*, Blake prophesies that monarchical institutions will be destroyed by the French Revolution. The

French abolished their monarchy in 1792, and early in 1793 the King was executed. As Blake conceived of his poems *America* and *Europe*, the French Revolution gained momentum. *America*, while about the American Revolution, was more integrally connected to Blake's enthusiasm about the French Revolution.

Blake's earliest attempt at giving his own defence of the French Revolution came at about the same time that Thomas Paine was writing the first part of his *Rights of Man* in 1790. In that year while Blake was working on his poem *The French Revolution* Burke's *Reflections* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* were published. The following year Blake would be asked by his publisher Johnson to illustrate two works by Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories* and *Elements of Mortality*. Johnson printed both Paine's *Rights of Man* and Blake's *The French Revolution*, but then decided to publish neither of them, possibly because of the increased risk he would be taking if he continued to publish blatantly pro-revolutionary material. But before Johnson would be arrested for selling "seditious material" he would publish other works that contained "dangerous material", including Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 and William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* in 1793. Paine managed to find another publisher, but Blake did not and, thus, halted early in its composition, the poem which according to its title page was to consist of seven books, is extant in only the first book.

In *Rights of Man*, Paine, in his attempt to put the taking of the Bastille into proper perspective (which he claims Burke has purpose-

fully passed over), goes over the events in Versailles (where the National Assembly sat) and Paris leading up to the fall of the Bastille.<sup>5</sup> Blake's poem, *The French Revolution*, while giving a mythical cosmic dimension to the historical events, describes the historical events directly. The poem, according to David Erdman,

has unique importance as the only one of his visions or prophecies in which the historical particulars are clear and explicit, and it must be observed that scholars who neglect even to consider this book among Blake's "prophetic writings" are neglecting the most available key to the historical symbolism of such later books as *Europe* and *The Four Zoas*.<sup>6</sup>

Blake highlights the events in France that occurred between June 19 and July 15, 1789, when Louis withdrew his troops from the capitol. While the declaring of the third estate as the National Assembly and the storming of the Bastille are omitted from the poem, one may surmise that at least in the case of the latter event, Blake was to give a fuller account in the later books. The events that he does include are the meeting of the Commons in the Hall of the Nation, the Nobles' and Clergy's refusal to join the Commons, the exiling of the King's minister, Necker, the King's Council's desire for war and the Commons' desire for peace, and the General of the Nation, La Fayette command of the soldiers. Blake sets these events in Paris, not Versailles, thereby showing the still-intact Bastille looming over the proceedings: "Darkness of old time around them / Utters loud despair, shadowing Paris; her grey towers green, and the Bastille trembles" (*F.R.*, p. 801, ll. 17-18).

One wonders what Blake would have done in the later books to portray the march of the women to Versailles and the King's return to Paris

when he has him already in Paris. And in the case of the King's residence in Paris, Blake chooses to put him in the Louvre as opposed to the Tuilleries. Most of the action in the poem takes place either in the Louvre or in the Commons, thus revealing the struggle for control between the two powers. Two scenes occur outside of these two centres--one in the Bastille and one with the Army. The army and the Bastille are linked when the Duke of Burgundy tells the Abbé de Sieyès that he will withdraw the troops ten miles from Paris only if the Bastille moves ten miles from Paris: "let the Nation's Assembly thence learn / That this army of terrors, that prison of horrors, are the bands of the murmuring kingdom" (*F.R.*, p. 815, ll. 253-54). Blake's republican spirit is never stronger than in this poem. His loyalty is clearly with the National Assembly and he portrays their power and presence as being much more influential than they actually were at such an early stage in the proceedings.

In *The French Revolution* Blake comes out against the monarchy, the clergy and the nobility. Most importantly, Blake's anti-war attitude dominates the poem in the presence of the ghost of King Henry the Fourth who walks in front of the Abbé of Sieyès. Blake was probably familiar with the story of King Henry as cited in Paine's conclusion to his *Rights of Man*:

It is attributable to Henry the Fourth of France, a man of an enlarged and benevolent heart, that he proposed about the year 1610, a plan for abolishing war in Europe. The plan consisted in constituting an European Congress, or as the French Authors style it, a Pacific Republic; by appointing delegates from the several Nations who were to act as a Court of arbitration in any disputes that might arise between nation and nation.<sup>7</sup>

Blake's dislike for war also comes out at the end of the poem when, instead of portraying how La Fayette was appointed as commander-in-chief of the new civic guard by a Paris committee sanctioned by Louis XVI, and how the King ordered the withdrawal of the troops from the capitol, he has La Fayette, who has been commanded by the Assembly (and driven on by Voltaire and Rousseau), disperse the Army leaving Paris without a soldier. At the end of Blake's poem, the Prince has been reduced to a sickly king (now uncapitalized) and the Senate sits in peace. The King and his slimy aids, with their desire for war, have been the cause of the pestilence affecting France. In this sense Blake shows his concurrence with the following statement of Paine:

Monarchical sovereignty, the enemy of mankind, and the source of misery, is abolished; and sovereignty itself is restored to its natural and original place, the Nation. Were this the case throughout Europe, the cause of wars would be taken away.<sup>8</sup>

But while the narrative of the poem adheres closely to historical reality, it is also a prophecy, with its major influence being the Book of Revelation. William F. Halloran pursues the many links between *The French Revolution* and Revelation in his article: "'The French Revolution': Revelation's New Form":

Rather than looking back to chronicle a cycle of history, it brings narrative and dramatic features of the epic to bear upon contemporary events and presents those events as prophetic of a regenerate world. Like Revelation, Blake's *Revolution* is an intensely visual account of the death of an old order and the birth of a new.<sup>9</sup>

But Blake's poem does not depict a violent apocalypse perhaps because of his belief in 1790 that the relatively peaceful interlude that followed

the storming of the Bastille signalled the future. Blake portrays a bloodless fulfillment of the prophecy that, nevertheless, achieves its goal of freeing society from the shackles of court and religion.

Blake models his poem on Revelation with its emphasis on the number seven. In Revelation the actions leading up to the apocalypse happen in seven parts: seven seals are opened; seven trumpets are blown; there is the emptying of the seven bowls of God's wrath by the seven angels with the seven plagues; there are twenty-one events.<sup>10</sup> Blake's poem contains seven scenes moving from the Louvre, to the Bastille, the Commons, the Louvre, the Commons, the Army, and finally back to the Louvre. In Blake's description of the Bastille, it has "seven towers dark and sickly" (*F.R.*, p. 802, l. 25), and seven prisoners. In the tower called Religion the seven diseases of the earth feed on the body of the prisoner. But the most obvious use of the number seven is Blake's original plan that the poem would consist of seven books. By moving through the seven scenes of the poem, one becomes aware of its use of biblical symbols to convey its distinctly political message.

At the beginning of the poem there is a "dread brood over France" (*F.R.*, p. 800, l. 1), and the King of France lies in a mist of the past. He slowly rises from his slumber and recognizes his own fate: ". . . Rise, Necker: the ancient dawn call us . . . From my window I see the old mountains of France, like aged men, fading away" (*F.R.*, p. 801, ll. 7-9). The forces that have brought about man's imprisonment are shown to be conscious of their own doom. Blake begins his poem with the King feeling the tremors of change: the old regime of France is crumbling and must prepare itself for the new order.

In this first scene the King has appeared to accept the inevitabil-

ity of his fall. To emphasize the King's responsibility for the state of France and to give validity to the Revolution, Blake immediately comments upon the forces that subjugate and imprison mankind. The Bastille, which looms over the proceedings, contains seven towers, each den named after and representing an oppressive force such as Religion, Order, and Destiny. The seventh tower is named the tower of God; in it sits a friend of liberty who has been the victim of "a letter of advice to a King" (*F.R.*, p. 803, ll. 51). The shaking and trembling of the dens reveal that the prisoners are close to being freed. And, thus, the storming of the Bastille becomes for Blake, as it has for many others, the central image of liberation, making the new heaven and earth possible.

The Louvre's trembling and dark mist contrast with the Hall of the Nations where the Commons convene "like spirits of fire in the beautiful / Porches of the Sun, to plant beauty in the desert craving abyss, they gleam / On the anxious city" (*F.R.*, p. 803, ll. 54-56). Back in the Louvre the King's nobles appear like archangels folding themselves around him. They wait for his pronouncement. The nobles are described in images of oppression: "Each stern visage lock'd up as with strong bands of iron, each strong limb bound down as with marble / In flames of red wrath burning" (*F.R.*, p. 807, ll. 66-67). The King's message comes not only from himself but also from "the spirits of ancient Kings" (*F.R.*, p. 804, l. 72). When the King finally does speak, he tells the nobles that their positions of power cannot continue:

Our flesh is corrupted, and we wear away.  
We are not numbered among the living. Let  
us hide

In stones, among the roots of trees. The prisoners  
have burst their dens.

(*F.R.*, p. 805, ll. 76-77)

The two forces which then rise up to deter the King from this way of perceiving the situation are the Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris, representing the nobles and the established church respectively. The Duke is portrayed as a war monger; his red robes contain "an odor of war" (*F.R.*, p. 805, l. 84).<sup>11</sup> The Archbishop is described as a snake, rising "In the rushing of scales and hissing of flames and rolling of sulphurous smoke" (*F.R.*, p. 808, l. 127). Both men support taking all steps that will preserve their power. Their main concern is that they will lose their privileged position. The Duke asks, "Shall this marble built heaven become a clay cottage, this earth an oak stool, and these mowers / From the Atlantic mountains, mow down all this great harvest of six thousand years?" (*F.R.*, p. 806, ll. 89-90). The Archbishop talks of how he has been warned by a white robed aged figure that "The priest [will] rot in his surplice by the lawless lover, the holy beside the accursed / The King, frowning in purple, beside the grey plowman, and their worms embrace together" (*F.R.*, p. 809, ll. 149-150).

Here Blake ironically makes a forceful statement on the equality of all men: he shows how mutability is the greatest leveller of all and how men who refuse to recognize the inevitable are deluded. The white figure who announces to the Archbishop that, "the bars of chaos are burst" (*F.R.*, p. 809, l. 141) is the false Old Testament god, Nobodaddy, who later appears in the poem "Fayette". Blake thereby also prophesies that the apocalypse will herald not only a new social order but also a new moral order.

Men's faith will be revitalized with the passing away of the orthodox religion with its adherence to order and laws. The vision speaks "in a low voice, like the voice of a grasshopper" (*F.R.*, p. 808, l. 136). By likening the old moral order to a grasshopper, Blake may be subtly challenging Burke's statement in the *Reflections* when he disposes of the dissenting movement:

Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.<sup>12</sup>

Blake reverses Burke's assertion that the supporters of the Revolution are mere grasshoppers: he describes the "God" of the old moral order as a grasshopper.

As Blake depicts two types of anti-revolutionaries, he also introduces their foils in the revolutionary camps. Two men rise to speak to the King's assembly: a nobleman, Orleans; and a member of the clergy, the Abbé de Sieyès. Both represent the men of the new order. Both men urge a peaceful solution to the problem. The speech of Orleans asks the nobles how they can perceive of such unhappiness when the Revolution will bring so much joy to their people: "And can Nobles be bound when the people are free, or God weep when his children are happy" (*F.R.*, p. 811, l. 186). Orleans argues more strongly for the equality of all men, stating that unless the nobles can ". . . enter into the infinite labyrinth of another's brain / Ere thou measure the circle that he shall run" (*F.R.*, p. 811, ll. 190-91) they should not think themselves as capa-

ble of writing laws or developing theories, but should instead "learn to consider all men as thy equals" (*F.R.*, p. 812, l. 193). The Abbé de Sieyès speaks of a time when the soldiers will embrace the peasants and oppression will cease.

Blake shows the supporters of the Revolution to be prophetic in their ability to envision a new age and pacifistic in their desire for regeneration without bloodshed. The new order represented by Necker, Orleans and the Abbé de Sieyès is shown to be vastly superior to the old. The King, the Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop are concerned only with preserving their own power at any cost. The dark Bastille looms over the proceedings, representing the forces in the world that imprison man. Ironically, the members of the old order see the towers as confirming their strength. Burgundy tells the Abbé de Sieyès that he will only disperse the troops from Paris when the Bastille moves as well. Unconsciously confirming his own doom, Burgundy's words reflect his own commitment to man's right to oppress others. Thus, while *The French Revolution* does not describe the tearing down of the Bastille, and with it the power of such tyrants as the King and Burgundy, the event which heralded the start of the Revolution is in the forefront of the poem. Burgundy's refusal to remove the troops is counteracted by La Fayette's success when he issues the command to the army. Blake's intent with *The French Revolution* is to show how the old order can be gradually beaten down by the enthusiasm and justice of the revolutionaries. The Abbé de Sieyès, Orleans and La Fayette have sacrificed their prestigious power in favour of achieving an egalitarian society. As society shows signs of regenerating, the King and his Council get sicker and sicker:

Pale and cold sat the king in midst of his  
 peers, and his noble heart sunk, and his  
 pulses  
 Suspended their motion, a darkness crept over  
 his eye-lids, and chill cold sweat  
 Sat round his brows faded in faint death, his  
 peers pale like mountains of the dead.  
 (F.R., p. 817, ll. 294-96)

The ending of the poem offers the possibility of total regeneration. The King and his Council do not suffer the same fate as Satan in Revelation who is thrown into the burning lake. While they are reduced to slimy reptiles, there is an upward movement prompted by the unsealing of the archangels' graves and the rise of the enormous dead. Blake's inclusion of a reference to a new world where the dead will be reborn demonstrates that even as early as 1790 he saw the millennium as more than merely freeing the French people from oppression. Blake's apocalypse included a full realization of man's infinite hopes and dreams. As Blake depicted man as reaching the moon because of his quest for the fulfillment of infinite expectations, so he showed the revolutionaries' commitment as being capable of regenerating the dead. It is not clear at the end of the poem whether the King and his Council are included in the regeneration. According to Halloran, "Along with the 'enormous dead', they are figuratively reborn into a new age where suppressors and suppressed will live together in liberty and fraternity."<sup>13</sup> Erdman sees it quite differently, "In the final scene there is still a 'faint heat' in their veins and a revival of 'the cold Louvre' which bodes no good."<sup>14</sup> And if the poem was meant to extend to seven books then it seems unlikely that Blake would show the King experiencing such a rebirth at this stage in the proceedings. Halloran's interpretation of the ending would be supported by those who see the poem as we have it as essentially com-

plete.<sup>15</sup>

Blake's position on the monarchy, the nobility, and the State Church in *The French Revolution* is as revolutionary as Paine's, and, no doubt, Blake was disappointed when he could not get his work published. The poem remains as Blake's most straightforward account of historical events. In later poems Blake creates the symbolic figures Orc and Urizen who do not have direct historical counterparts but who nevertheless embody the opposing forces in the revolutionary struggle. The early censorship of Blake's first major political work may have caused him to move away from the naming of prominent figures in his poetry and toward the use of an elaborate mythical cosmos to express his political beliefs. David Erdman states,

In the privacy of his notebook he continued to write plainly and sympathetically of revolutionary developments in France. In subsequent illuminated prophesies, 'A Song of Liberty', *America*, and *Europe*, he continued to write of revolution sympathetically but not plainly. The final text of *America*, for example, eliminated all direct naming of George III and his Parliament.<sup>16</sup>

In his poem *The French Revolution*, all the characters, except Burghundy, have historical counterparts. But Blake takes some liberties with history in developing his thesis. For example, in the poem the nobleman Orleans seems to represent all that is good in the supporters of the Revolution, but the actual Duke of Orleans, while supporting the Revolution, was, according to M.J. Sydenham in *The French Revolution*,

notable for riotous living and unscrupulous and self-interested opposition to the Court. Sent on a mission to England immediately after the events of October, 1789, he returned to become a member of the Convention, adopting the name Citizen Equality and shocking

even the Montagnards with whom he associated by voting for the death of the king.<sup>17</sup>

The heroic roles of Necker and La Fayette in *The French Revolution* were undercut by their future actions in the Revolution. According to Sydenham:

Necker, once so popular, had forfeited public confidence by his failure to raise revenue or to control the court. La Fayette had power at his disposal, but he refused to accept routine responsibilities. . . . Louis, and still more Marie-Antoinette, regarded him as an unreliable renegade, and the radicals soon made mock of him as a figure of fun.<sup>18</sup>

La Fayette, a supporter of the Revolution and the constitution, did not support the dissolution of the monarchy. And as the Jacobins continued to secure their power, La Fayette was regarded as a would-be Cromwell. On June 29, 1792, he attempted unsuccessfully to lead a march against the Jacobins. The Assembly then voted on August 8 to impeach him; he fled across the frontier where, ironically, he was captured for being a revolutionary. He spent five years in the Austrian equivalent of the Bastille before he was released through the intervention of Napoleon. By 1804, Blake put no faith in the worship of political heroes as gods:

I suppose an American would tell me that Washington did all that was done before he was born, as the French now adore Bonaparte and the English our poor George; so the Americans will consider Washington as their god. . . . In the meantime I have the happiness of seeing the Divine countenance in such men as Cowper and Milton more distinctly than in any prince or hero.<sup>19</sup>

Blake's only direct commentary on the affairs of the French Republic

following the storming of the Bastille is in his notebook poem written around 1793, commonly called "Fayette". In this poem, which in its original form contains many deletions and revisions, Blake re-examines the man whom he had previously painted as one of the heroes of the Revolution. It is important here to note that in 1793 many Englishmen were recoiling in horror at the events in France precipitated by the Jacobins. In fact, La Fayette's support of the monarchy was a position with which many would have agreed. In this poem, never finished and found only in his notebook, Blake shows his strong, continued support of the Revolution.

Blake's notebook poem "Fayette" is his attempt to criticize his former hero. In *The French Revolution* Blake depicts La Fayette in a heroic light. As Blake followed La Fayette's actions he learned that revolutionaries can, through selfish motives, abandon their cause. Thomas Paine also originally regarded La Fayette very highly. In 1792, Paine wrote a dedicatory epistle to La Fayette which he placed at the beginning of the second part of *Rights of Man*. The French translator of that work notes in his preface that the editors did not allow the epistle to be printed because:

The French can no longer endure dedicatory epistles. A man should write privately to those he esteems. When he publishes a book his thoughts should be offered to the public alone. Paine, that uncorrupted friend of freedom, believed too much in the sincerity of La Fayette. So easy is it to deceive men of single-minded purpose! Bred at a distance from Courts, that austere American does not seem any more on his guard against the artful ways and speech of courtiers than some Frenchmen who resemble him.<sup>20</sup>

As the French translator points out, Paine was deceived in believing

that La Fayette would remain loyal to the Revolution. Blake's notebook poem shows his contempt for La Fayette's later behaviour. La Fayette's downfall occurs when he cannot abandon his love for the monarchy.

The poem is important because of its depiction of Marie-Antoinette as a whore spreading pestilence (venereal disease) to those who are seduced to her. Blake uses sexual imagery to express his hatred for the monarchy and to emphasize the disgusting nature of their power. Burke also uses sexual metaphors to describe the French revolutionaries' treatment of their Queen. The roles are reversed in Burke and the Queen becomes the innocent rape victim and the revolutionaries the rapists who strip her of her dignity. "Fayette" also discusses La Fayette's imprisonment in Austria. In Blake's scheme the revolutionary who turns into a traitor is destined to become a slave again.

In "Fayette", Blake says that as soon as La Fayette wept for the fate of the monarchy, he had deserted the cause of liberty:

Fayette Fayette thourt bought and sold  
For well I see thy tears  
Of Pity are exchanged for those  
Of selfish slavish fears.

(F., p. 969, ll. 13-16)

La Fayette's relationship with the monarchy began in October, 1789, when he knelt to kiss the Queen's hand; continued when he witnessed the King signing the Constitution; and ended when he had to guard the King and Queen after their arrest in October, 1792. In the poem these events are alluded to and a liaison between the Queen and La Fayette is suggested:

Fayette behld the Queen to smile  
 And wink her lovely eye  
 And soon he saw the pestilence  
 From street to street to fly.

(F., p. 969, ll. 9-12)

The Queen, Marie-Antoinette, is described as having pestilence on her robe and as being responsible for spreading pestilence through the city. The monarchy's solution to the famine affecting its citizens is that they "shall eat both crust & crumb" (F., p. 971, l. 8), echoing the famous line to the rabble (generally attributed to Marie-Antoinette) "let them eat cake." The Queen in this poem is described as a harlot, a spreader of famine and pestilence and as a tree surrounded by suckers. The latter descriptions resemble that of the King in *The French Revolution* when the nobles fold around him. La Fayette's loyalty to her makes him "exchange his own heart's blood / For the drops of a harlot's eye" (F., p. 970, ll. 24-25) and, in reference to his eventual fate in the Austrian prison, Blake says that he "dost exchange thy pitying tears / For the links of a dungeon floor" (F., p. 970, ll. 28-29).

Familiar with Burke's *Reflections*, Blake plays on his description of the rousing of the Queen from her bed in October, 1789. Burke demonstrates his outrage at what happened to the Queen of France whom he describes by saying, "surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision,"<sup>21</sup> when he describes how ruffians "rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with a hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked."<sup>22</sup> Although history later showed Burke to be mistaken in his account of the event,<sup>23</sup> his metaphor of the royal rape is a fitting one for his purposes. He

sets up the revolutionaries as mindless savages who, through their atheism and brute commonality based on instinct, stripped away the layers of society, removing the traditions of the monarch, the aristocracy and the state church--those old and established customs which to Burke denoted a civilized society.

Burke describes the mob as a possessed bacchanalian orgy, "the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women."<sup>24</sup> Burke's account, like Blake's, contains much sexual imagery. The innocent queen is descended upon while lying naked and the Jacobins pierce her bed with bayonets. In regard to man's moral nature, Burke saw the Revolution in France as a violation in sexual terms as well as in political. In his book *The Rage of Edmund Burke*, Issac Kramnick states,

the bourgeois principle was closely identified in Burke's mind with intrusive masculinity, and the aristocratic principle with violated femininity. . . . The extent to which Burke described the Jacobins in sexual language is striking, and always in terms of aggressive masculine conquerors bent on violating and possessing defenceless passive women.<sup>25</sup>

Blake obviously echoes Burke's "on this orb" when he says, "The Queen of France just touched this Globe / And the Pestilence darted from her robe" (F., p. 971, ll. 20-21). Blake's Queen becomes "the vilest of women", not the innocent rape victim, but the harlot-seducer who forces her selfish will on the vulnerable masses of people. When she seduces La Fayette, he is "bought and sold".

Above the proceedings, the Old Testament God Nobodaddy, who also appeared in *The French Revolution*,

Farted, belchd & coughd  
And Said "I love hanging & drawing  
    & quartering  
Every bit as well as war & slaughtering  
                                (F., p. 971, ll. 10-12)

America to France to Rome. Once the son of fire had been unleashed, he hastens the arrival of the new world: "Spurning the clouds written with curses, [Orc] stamps the stony law to dust, loosing the eternal horses from the dens of night, crying Empire is no more! and now the lion & wolf shall cease" (S.L., p. 99, ll. 19-20). Here Blake celebrates the end of the monarchial empire in America and France.

While the figure Orc is originally introduced in "A Song of Liberty", he assumes a prominent role in the two prophecies *America* and *Europe*. In *America*, Orc has reached the age of maturity. His energy and sexuality emerge as he bursts his chains and copulates with the nameless shadowy female. Orc appears in these two poems as a youth, naked, glowing with a red, ruddy color. Blake's cycle of history, which begins with *America*, prophesies the birth of Orc in the Atlantic Ocean. He rises up to rip apart the chain stretching across the ocean between America and Albion. Orc's rising precipitates the American War and Revolution, and the poem concludes with the end of that war in 1781. The King of England (as did the Queen of France in "Fayette") uses disease as a weapon against his enemies. On the shores of America, revolutionaries--"Washington, Franklin, Paine & Warren, Gates, Hancock & Green" (A., p. 149, l. 4)--stand ready to take on the King of England.

Orc's counterpart is Urizen, or the Prince of Albion, who sits in the clouds with his angels. Just as Orc represents the divine form of Paine and the other young revolutionaries, so Urizen (also seen as the Old Testament god Nobodaddy), the white aged figure in the clouds, represents King George III. Albion, described as "A dragon form clashing his scales at midnight" (A., p. 140, l. 15), trembles at the vision of the "Wonder o'er the Atlantic sea / Intense! naked! a Human fire fierce

glowing . . . his terrible limbs were fire (A., p. 140, ll. 24-26). Orc's first words echo those in "A Song of Liberty". Essentially his song foretells the dawn of a new morning where those oppressed will be liberated:

Let the slave grinding at the mill, run  
out into the field;  
Let him look up into the heavens & laugh  
in the bright air.  
(A., pp. 141-42, ll. 37-51)

These lines also occur at the end of Blake's major prophetic poem *The Four Zoas* (p. 1283, ll. 18-24). Their repetition in his epic poem documenting the return of the Divine Vision emphasizes that his goal for mankind was primarily the liberation of the oppressed through the elimination of tyrannous forces that impede the natural right of every citizen to pursue happiness. In this regard, Blake's aspirations paralleled those of the American revolutionaries.

*America's* description of the apocalypse can be seen to resemble some parts of the *American Declaration of Independence* (July 4, 1776):

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men  
are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator  
with certain unalienable rights; that among these  
are

(Declaration)

(Blake's lines in *America*)

life

The morning comes, the night decays . . .  
The grave is burst . . . The bones of  
death . . . Reviving shake, inspiring move,  
breathing! awakening!

liberty

Let the slave . . . run out into the field;  
Let the unchained soul . . . Rise and look  
out, his chains are loose, his dungeon doors  
are open / And let his wife and children re-  
turn from the oppressors scourge . . .

and the pursuit of  
happiness

Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in  
the bright air; . . . Whose face has never  
seen a smile in thirty weary years; . . .  
They look behind at every step & believe it

is a dream. Singing, "The Sun has left his  
blackness, & has found a fresher morning.

that to secure these  
rights governments are  
instituted among men,  
deriving their just  
powers from the consent  
of the governed; that  
whenever any form of  
gov't becomes destruc-  
tive to these ends, it  
is the right of the  
people to alter or to  
abolish it, and to in-  
stitute new government.<sup>27</sup>

For Empire is no more, and now the Lion &  
Wolf shall cease.

(A., pp. 141-42, ll. 37-51)

The difference between the American revolutionaries' statement of their rights and Blake's depiction of his goal for mankind is one of scope and method. The revolutionary's primary concern is with the removal of oppressive forces and the right of the people to dispose of tyrants. Blake's vision of the new world after the Revolution is much more expansive. The new morning will bring freedom not only to the inhabitants of this world but will also awaken the dead into the light. As demonstrated before, Blake's concept of a regenerated world included the destruction of the mutable world thereby showing the attainment of one of man's seemingly impossible goals. Blake believed that man's salvation lay in his commitment to a limitless vision. Putting one's faith only in the limits of man's political action will not change the basic nature of the world. Blake saw the revolutionary impulse as resembling the creative impulse which could initiate the apocalypse through the liberation of perception.

According to George Quasha, *Orc in America*

is a specific manifestation of a principle of renewal through 'thought-creating fires', the basis for enduring social and political revolution: primal (and primordial) Energy released as *formative power*, the

creative force of the universe alembicated by human vision-in-action, metaphorically the generative action of a dying-reviving god. To be sure, Orc, the active creative principle, must ultimately be 'married' to the principle of poetic prophecy or message, its 'contrary' in a fallen, self-divided world.<sup>28</sup>

The liberation, therefore, need only be a reconciliation between slave and master in the fallen world, but also, because of its creative energy (that is, the liberation of the way of perceiving the universe), may precipitate the harvest occurring at the end of the major prophecies. By viewing Orc as a symbol of creative energy expanding the limits of perception and upsetting poetic tradition, one can more easily incorporate Orc into Blake's fourfold vision (which is more fully developed in *Milton*, *Jerusalem* and *The Four Zoas*).<sup>29</sup> But in order to understand Orc in this context, it is necessary to examine what scholars have labelled as the Orc-cycle, or Orc's potential to become Urizen.<sup>30</sup>

The Orc-cycle was first explained by Northrop Frye in *Fearful Symmetry*.<sup>31</sup> According to Frye, the events following both the American and French Revolutions caused Blake to reject his Orc-figure as a possible apocalyptic agent. Orc must grow old and die, turning into a Urizenic figure bound in tradition and lacking the spontaneous creative energy of youth. As Urizen is the dragon, Orc is the dragonslayer. As Urizen is old and white, Orc is young and ruddy. Frye states, "the dragon must be the hero's predecessor and the hero in his turn must become a dragon. But if the dragon is death, then when the hero dies he is swallowed by or otherwise absorbed into the dragon."<sup>32</sup> In the illuminations to *America*, plates 8 and 10 seem to be the mirror images of each other. Urizen (plate 8), on top of the clouds with his arms outstretched, appears to be sinking into the ocean, while Orc (plate 10) assumes almost the iden-

tical position. But while his arms are also outstretched, he appears to be rising out of the flaming ocean and into the heavens. The similarities suggest that while they have opposing characteristics--red/white, fire/cloud, young/old, freedom/tyrant--each naturally follows from the other. According to Frye,

Orc is completely bound to the cyclic wheel of life. He cannot represent an entry into a new world, but only the power of renewing an exhausted form in the old one. . . . No revolution which falls short of a complete apocalypse and transfiguration of the world into Paradise can give us the eternal youth it symbolizes.<sup>33</sup>

In *America* the Prince of Albion calls Orc "Devourer of thy parent" (A., p. 144, l. 95), thereby showing that he recognizes Orc's potential victory over him. He alerts his thirteen angels (which represent the thirteen governors of the colonies) by sounding his "loud war-trumpets" (A., p. 145, l. 101). His weeping shows his fear. As the Prince and his thirteen angels spread pestilence and disease across the seas to America, the strength of the revolutionaries standing together makes the plague reverse its course. The pestilence returns to infect England:

Across the limbs of Albions Guardian, the  
spotted plague smote Bristols  
And the Leprosy Londons Spirit, sickening all  
their bands:  
The millions sent up a howl of anguish and threw  
off their hammered mail,  
And cast their swords & spears to earth, &  
stood a naked multitude.  
(A., p. 149, ll. 179-82)

Here Blake suggests that England's oppression and tyranny will eventually turn back on itself; it will be devoured by its own disease. The enemies of Orc, the nobles and the ministry, go into hiding as the youth,

now unfettered, glows with lust and desire. The apocalypse, however, does not occur. Blake calls the interim between the American and French Revolutions a twelve year period when angels and weak men govern over the strong, but he says that, "their end should come, when France receiv'd the Demons light" (A., p. 150, ll. 217-18).

While Orc's birth succeeds in pushing England's plague from America, it does not bring about the millennium. David Erdman comments concerning the American Revolution:

We must understand that in Blake's view the Revolutionary War was sad not only because of the bloodshed and possibly some continuing impairment of liberty in America but also because it ended with the tyranny still enthroned in Britain and the rest of Europe; at the end of the Prophecy it is Orc's chains that melt as thrones totter.<sup>34</sup>

Much of what Orc represents can be seen as both positive and negative. With his revolutionary action comes bloodshed and war. Blake's feelings about the contraries within revolutionary action may be seen in his creating the Orc/Urizen cycle. The American and French Revolutions did not fulfill their promised goals. As a result, both events were eventually regarded as fitting into a cycle that repeats throughout time. Orc has the potential for becoming Urizen as the revolutionary has the potential for becoming a tyrant. Blake here reworks his discovery of the futility of placing all one's faith in the actions of an earthbound creation. This was a lesson which everyone living in the 1790's had to face. Men such as Burke, Watson, La Fayette, Robespierre and Napoleon proved to be either traitors to the cause or tyrants when given power.

*Europe* opens, as did *America*, with a situation of slavery. The American Revolution has not brought on the apocalypse, but it has

started the revolt against tradition which may open the gates of Paradise. While Blake intimates Orc's tendency to become Urizen in *America*, he does not show this to have occurred in *Europe*. As David Erdman points out, the cyclical pattern in *America* and *Europe* is enslavement/liberation/reenslavement.<sup>35</sup>

*Europe* essentially describes England's criticism of the French Revolution eventually leading to the war between England and France in 1793. As the effect of the American Revolution reverberates throughout France, England responds aggressively through the labors of William Pitt the younger, whom Blake calls "Rintrah, furious king". The poem alludes to three actions by Pitt demonstrating his desire for war. These are his support of the Dutch Orange Party, his conflict with Spain, and his attempt to take up arms against Russia. Blake says,

The red limb'd Angel siez'd in horror  
and torment:  
The Trump of the last doom: but he could  
not blow the iron tube!  
Thrice he assay'd presumptuous to awake  
the dead to Judgement.  
(*E.*, p. 234, ll. 199-201)

As well, Blake alludes to the Royal Proclamation Against Devious Wicked Seditious Writings passed on May 21, 1792. Urizen reads the Proclamation to the rebellious youth of the city while grey mist hangs around "Churches, Palaces, Towers" (*E.*, p. 232, l. 166). Blake describes how the youth are forced to submit to the laws because they are enslaved by their parents (who represent earthbound Urizenic creatures):

Their parents brought them forth & aged  
ignorance preaches canting.  
On a vast rock, perceiv'd by those senses

that are clos'd from thought:  
Bleak, dark, abrupt, it stands & over-  
shadows London city.

(*E.*, p. 232, ll. 170-72)

*Europe* contains new characters which may have counterparts in history. The female figure, Enitharmon, who delights in the bondage of the people of London--

Every house a den, every man bound; the shadows  
are fill'd  
With spectres, and the windows wove over with  
curses of iron;  
Over the doors Thou shall not: & over the  
chimneys Fear is written--

(*E.*, p. 233, ll. 189-91)

may represent the Queen of England who assumed a larger role during her husband George III's period of insanity in 1788. As an eternal she is Albion's wife, the Queen of the Heavens, whose children form Blake's mythical cast. Her message which she urges Rintrah and Palamabron (possibly Burke) to spread is "that Womans love is Sin" (*E.*, p. 228, l. 94). Here, as in "Fayette", Blake links the anti-Jacobin movement's loyalty to the Queen with harlotry. At the end of the poem Orc appears in the vineyards of France where,

The Lions lash their wrathful tails!  
The Tigers couch upon the prey & such the  
ruddy tide;  
And Enitharmon groans & cries in anguish  
and dismay.

(*E.*, p. 237, ll. 260-62)

The conflict at the end of *Europe* refers to the one between England and France in 1793 and 1794. It is not Pitt who blows the trumpet of war but a spirit named Newton. This is consistent with Blake's vision that

responsibility for the state of Europe lies in the ideology of the creator of the mechanistic universe. The trumpet of doom represents Britain's vote for war against France. Like Wordsworth, Blake was alarmed by this action. The poem concludes with both sides getting ready for battle.

At the end of *Europe*, Orc prepares to enter into another bloodbath. In fact, there is nothing in the poem that suggests the rebirth of a new age that one finds in *America* and "A Song of Liberty". The prophecy in *Europe* appears to be more one of pessimism. As Blake was writing *Europe* the savagery of the September Massacres loomed in front of him. These events prompted Blake to question the nature of revolution. Blake's earlier poem "The Tyger" focuses on the creative principle involved in forging the fearful beast. Aileen Ward sees a direct link between Blake's disillusionment in revolution and his questions in "The Tyger":

The savagery of the massacres--at least as they were reported in England--raised a crucial question: were the forces of revolution simply 'a great beast', a tiger or a lion, or could they be viewed as 'the just man [raging] in the wilds / Where lions roam'? That is, was there some intelligence working in them, humanizing them, forging some purpose through them? The question is essential to the poem if its real subject is understood to be not the tiger but his creator. . . . If no such creative principle is at work, then the wrath of the tiger expresses no ulterior judgement . . . It is this intentionality that Blake is seeking through the insistent questionings of the poem: on the historical level, perhaps some political leadership to 'frame' and direct the fearful energies of revolution; or the metaphysical level, some ultimate intelligibility in history.<sup>36</sup>

In *Europe* Blake shows his pessimism in revolution much more so than in "The Tyger" or *America*. The illustrations of *Europe* contain mostly

images of war, slavery and plague. The pages are filled with insects--flies, caterpillars, spiders, etc.--and serpents. At the beginning of the poem, in the Preludium, the nameless shadowy female asks how many times the revolutionary figure Orc must be born before the Armageddon will occur. This is in reference to the fact that previous outbursts of Orc's energy have proven false alarms. In fact, the only positive event in the poem is the smile: "I [the nameless shadowy female] see *it* smile & roll inward & my voice is past" (*E.*, p. 225, l. 55) at the end of the Preludium. Who smiles here is ambiguous and faintly reminiscent of the smile of the Tyger's creator: "Did he smile his work to see" (*T.*, p. 186, l. 19). The smile in *Europe* could suggest that Orc's rebirth in 1793 to assist France could be the beginning of the Armageddon.

Blake calls the conflict between England and France "the strife of blood" (*E.*, p. 237, l. 265). *Europe*, like *The French Revolution* and *America*, shows Blake's support of the revolutionaries, but does not show their actions as restoring paradise. There is always the suggestion that the apocalypse will occur, but there are also indications that Orc could become Urizen and that war between the opposing forces could be a violent bloodbath and nothing more. Perhaps Blake wanted to wait out the events in France (he wrote *America* and *Europe* in 1793 and 1794, respectively) before pronouncing the beginning of the new world. David Erdman says, "After the renewal of war in 1803 Blake never quite emerged from an ambivalent view of the American and French Revolutions as having been either too warlike or not revolutionary enough."<sup>37</sup> The terror in France, the rise of Napoleon, and the continued slaughter of humanity (without the liberation that was promised) made Blake revert more

intensely back to his mythological vision of the advent of the new age. He then had to face the paradoxical nature of revolution: it provides the necessary spark of creative energy which sets the chain of apocalyptic events into motion; and it also causes destruction and may become a part of the cyclical, mutable universe. Frye says: "The word 'revolution' itself contains a tragic irony: it is itself a part of the revolving of life and death in a circle of pain."<sup>38</sup> One view of revolution invites optimism and the other view a despondent pessimism. And, because the historical events of the 1790's seemed to demand the latter view, the artists of the Romantic period had to find an alternate route to the new heaven and the new earth.

Blake's movement was increasingly inward after 1797 with the beginning of his first major prophecy, *The Four Zoas*, and his development of his theory of the "Divine Vision". At the same time his notion of reality expanded to include both the internal and external world: the past, present and future. Blake turned to the conventions of the epic form of poetry as his task broadened substantially from the documentation of history, that is, making his contribution as a poetic Paine or Wollstonecraft, to instructing mankind on the proper way to develop a visionary imagination.<sup>39</sup>

Blake's *The Four Zoas* is his first major attempt to describe the history of man's fall and the regeneration of the world. When Blake was actively involved in the French Revolution, he saw its potential for initiating the millennium. When this did not happen, Blake transferred the unbounded hopes that he had placed in the Revolution to his belief in the power of the imagination to ignite the apocalypse. The events in *America* and *Europe* do not bring about the millennium. And Orc's

battles appear to fit into a cyclical pattern. In *The Four Zoas*, however, the revolutionary impulse is transferred to the figure Los, who now represents creative energy. As Orc was concerned with liberating the enslaved and destroying the old order, Los in *The Four Zoas* tears down the limits man imposed on his world. Los' creative energy unfetters the traditional notions of perception. The Divine Vision is then restored and the fallen world regenerated. The vision of this new world found in *America* becomes a reality in Night the Ninth of *The Four Zoas*.

In Night the Ninth of *The Four Zoas*, Los reaches up to tear down the heavens and with it the fixities of the Newtonian universe. The apocalypse can occur because there has been a liberation of perception. As the world burns, the fallen creature can arise out of it. Echoing the lines in *America* (A., p. 143, ll. 73-75), Blake describes the rebirth:

How is it we have walkd thro fires & yet  
are not consumed?  
How is it that all things are changed even  
as in ancient times?  
(F.Z., p. 1291, ll. 39-40)

The return of the Golden Age comes through a season of plowing and sowing, rebuilding the world. The liberation of the people that Blake so dearly wanted to come out of the American and French Revolutions finally is possible through the unifying of the four-fold vision which celebrates the power of man's imagination. Blake rejected finally the contribution of any other force such as a Wordsworthian nature, revolutionary action, or institutionalized religion in the realization of the Divine Vision. In the margins of Wordsworth's *Excursion* and *Poems* (1815) Blake com-

mented on Wordsworth's theory of the fitting of the Mind and the External World: "You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted" (Marg., p. 1508) and "One power alone makes a Poet--Imagination The Divine Vision" (Marg., p. 1511).

In Blake's universe, the belief in any power other than the imagination is what makes man descend to the fallen state. Blake believed the creation of the natural world and the fall of man occurred simultaneously. Likewise, the restoration of the Golden Age can only occur through a revolution of perception. Consequently, Orc's role (Los' in the later Prophecies) does not cease to lose its symbolic importance even as the later poems move away from the actions of men in society. George Quasha says: "As an allegory of poetics, Orc embodies the principle of expansion by prosodic and structural unfettering, the opening inward by syntactic, rhythmic, and other formal means directly to energies of creative process."<sup>40</sup>

And as witnessed by Blake's marginalia on the Bishop of Llandaff's attack on Thomas Paine, *Apology for the Bible* (1797), Blake continued, even in 1798, to hold to his republican position which continued to attack the State Religion, the Monarchy and Pitt's government. Throughout the marginalia Blake continues to praise Paine, saying: "Well done Paine!" (Marg., p. 1422) and "It appears to me Now that Tom Paine is a better Christian than the Bishop" (Marg., p. 1424). Blake, like Wordsworth, did not publish his response to Watson. Censorship and the laws against such activity (Joseph Johnson was imprisoned the same year for merely selling a like response to Watson) were probably the reasons, prompting him to comment, "To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life" (Marg., p. 1404). (In fact, Blake

himself did become a victim of the Sedition Laws when in January, 1804, he was tried for cursing England and uplifting Napoleon. He was accused of saying, "damn the King and Country, his subjects and all you Soldiers are sold for Slaves."<sup>41</sup> The jury found him not guilty.) Frye says: "As Blake never abandoned his belief in the potential imminence of an apocalypse, he did not, like Wordsworth or Coleridge, alter the essentially revolutionary pattern of his thinking."<sup>42</sup>

Blake witnessed both of the major revolutions of his day. He believed in the cause of the revolutionaries because he supported their struggle to escape the bondage imposed on them by tradition and such institutions as the Monarchy, the Judiciary and State Religion. To Blake, as to other idealists, the revolutionary route seemed to be the only way of breaking free from the fallen perception of the universe and initiating the millennium. Blake, however, was aware of the paradoxical nature of revolution, that any type of destruction causes pain and suffering. As he watched the events in France unfold, he became aware that the French Revolution was not going to achieve its original goals.

Blake created a mythological world partly because of his fears of prosecution but primarily because he came to realize that man's salvation lay not in revolutionary action but in the power of imaginative vision. Orc as simply revolutionary action (such as violence and war) has the potential for turning into the serpent-like Urizen, creator of the laws, oppressor and preserver of tradition. Orc as Los, representing the creative energy of the imagination, can effect the only true apocalypse and millennium.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of the French Revolution stands in the forefront of much of the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth. Like many of their contemporaries, both men became devoted to the cause of liberty. In two of their earliest works they describe liberty as redeeming the fallen world. Wordsworth speaks of the glorious day when,

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.  
(D.S. (1793), p. 481, ll. 774-77)

Blake also describes liberty's power:

Let Liberty, the charter'd right of Englishmen,  
 Won by our fathers in many a glorious field,  
 Enslave my soldiers; let Liberty  
 Blaze in each countenance, and free the battle.  
(*King Edward the Third*, p. 771, ll. 9-12)

Blake and Wordsworth were initially caught up in the great happiness of the period. The French Revolution came to be regarded as possibly regenerating not only France but all of Europe. Blake's and Wordsworth's early poetry and prose reflect their commitment to the cause, their hatred of oppressive tradition, and their belief in the power of political action to hasten the millennium.

When political action proved incapable of initiating the apocalypse, both men discovered the paradoxical nature of revolution. The discovery,

at first, caused disappointment and unhappiness. Wordsworth suffered despondency. Blake showed his figure of energy, Orc, as being a potential tyrant. Both recovered from their disappointment in the world of man by transferring their hopes and aspirations to the power of imaginative vision. By doing so, they were able to preserve the notion of a revolutionary impulse which becomes a necessary stage in the creative process. Just as the French Revolution aimed at liberating man and founding a new order, the poets discovered that the key to imaginative vision lay in a creative energy that destroyed former notions of perception in order to open the mind to infinite horizons. Upon discovering the power of the imagination both men wrote poems following the epic tradition, showing the way to such a revelation.

What Blake and Wordsworth shared, even for their thirteen year difference in age, was an active involvement in the early part of their careers in the English support of the French Revolution. Between 1790 and 1795, both men were not ashamed to call themselves Republicans. Both followed the writings of the Dissenting movement, particularly the outpouring of revolutionary tracts following Edmund Burke's famous *Reflections* in 1790. Included peripherally in Joseph Johnson's circle, Wordsworth and Blake wanted to contribute their own defence, in poetry or prose, of the Revolution. Evident in Blake's *The French Revolution* and Wordsworth's "Apology for the French Revolution" the political philosophy of both poets was almost extremist, supporting the abolition of the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the state Church and supporting, at least initially, the violent attainment of these ends. Equality, justice and liberty became the ultimate goal for society, and as France seemed intent on making these slogans a reality, so Blake and

Wordsworth celebrated France's offer to assist any nation's people in their fight for freedom.

Because both men had experiences with the underside of the aristocracy (Wordsworth's ongoing struggle with Lord Lonsdale; Blake's forced dependence on his patrons) and the judicial system (Wordsworth's lengthy wait while the courts ruled on the Lonsdale case; Blake's fear that he would be prosecuted for sedition) they had no trouble sympathizing with republican sentiments. As well, both poets held a hearty dislike for members of the established Church such as the Bishop of Llandaff, who, because of their position, felt obliged to support the Tory stand, even if it went contrary to their Christian ideals. Such hypocrisy was magnified by the persecution of the Unitarian Dissenting ministers such as Dr. Richard Price and Joseph Priestly.

But what the two men had most in common ideologically was their concern for achieving an egalitarian society. As already mentioned, Wordsworth's philosophy was influenced by Général Michel Beaupuy who taught him the necessity of first attacking the unequal balance that allowed some people to live in ostentatious wealth while others starved to death. Even as Wordsworth grew older (and more conservative), he retained his concern for men and women who suffered under oppression, the "humble and rustic folk" of society. Wordsworth's goal, as he explained in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, was to democratize the language and themes of poetry. Blake believed the day would come when

the valleys of France shall cry to the  
soldier, throw down thy sword and musket,  
And run and embrace the meek peasant.  
Her nobles shall hear and shall weep, and  
put off  
The red robe of terror, the crown of  
oppression.

(F.R., p. 813, ll. 220-22)

And, as freedom was their main concern, likewise the opposites of freedom--bondage, slavery and oppression--are major themes in the works of both men.

The reign of terror caused them to see the paradoxical nature of revolution and to admit that the event which had inspired so much enthusiasm would not fulfill its goals. In coming to terms with the failure of the Revolution, they learned that social man cannot escape the fact of his fallen nature. Men such as La Fayette, Robespierre and even Napoleon, identified as heroes and saviors in the early stages of their careers, once in possession of power, acted in the same manner as the oppressive monarchies. The sans-culottes of Paris committed horrendous acts against innocent women and children when the wheel turned and they were "freed" and put in control. Gradually Blake begins to reject Orc, his symbol of the Revolution, as a potential second Christ and ignitor of the apocalypse. A cyclical pattern emerges in Blake's poems when Orc's rebirth in the French Revolution does not signal a true millennium. Orc, in the fallen world, may become Urizen. And by depicting this potentiality Blake is saying that youthful passionate revolutionaries may lose their zeal for the cause and repeat the actions of their forefathers, becoming old, sterile traditionalists who in turn must battle with the rebellious youth of the next generation.

Wordsworth's two major poems on the French Revolution deal with the emotional impact it had on himself and others. In *The Prelude* he discusses how his joy in the ideals of the Revolution was turned into despondency when his idealistic hopes for society were dashed. In *The Excursion* Wordsworth takes a philosophical look at the depression caused by the French Revolution and the cure for alleviating it. Wordsworth's

own experiences resemble the experiences of his major characters in *The Excursion*. Wordsworth was at one point like the Solitary who puts all his faith and energy in a revolution that failed, leaving him despondent (this turn of events in Wordsworth's life is given major emphasis in *The Prelude*, documenting the growth of the poet's mind). But the figure with which Wordsworth most clearly can be identified is the Wanderer. As *The Prelude* shows Wordsworth's dashing of hopes, it also discusses his recovery from his depression and his return to joy through the discovery of the power of the imagination. The Wanderer resembles the later Wordsworth who writes *The Prelude* and who puts the word of warning in as a revision to the end of *Descriptive Sketches*.

While Blake is more concerned with depicting the broader historical panorama, Wordsworth concerns himself with the impact of the French Revolution on an individual man, and since that man is himself and a poet, how that encounter in turn assisted him in his creative growth. Blake relies on myth to describe historical events (perhaps originally for his own safety as opposed to his preference), while Wordsworth's approach is more straightforward, relying on memory. But both men experienced a shift from a belief in the millennium resulting from political revolution to a conviction in the doctrine of a revolution of the mind, of an apocalypse through imagination.

Northrop Frye calls revolution "the sign of apocalyptic yearnings, of an impulse to burst loose from this world altogether and get into a better one, a convulsive lunge forward of the imagination."<sup>1</sup> Tom Paine, who was greatly respected by both Blake and Wordsworth, wrote in his *Age of Reason* of his poetic inclinations: "I had some turn, and I believe some talent for poetry, but this I rather repressed than encour-

aged, as leading too much into the field of imagination."<sup>2</sup> Paine's statement is based on his belief that imaginative endeavors are separate from the real world. Blake and Wordsworth saw the imagination as the only way man could realize the true regeneration of society. M.H. Abrams discusses this in his book *Natural Supernaturalism*: "The millennial pattern of thinking, however, persisted, with this difference: the external means was replaced by an internal means for transforming the world."<sup>3</sup> What needed to be unfettered and given liberty was man's perception, and what had to be eliminated were the limits placed on the creative experience. Blake characterized this failure of perception as an impotent Albion figure at the beginning of *The Four Zoas* who lies sleeping, incapable of a unified "Divine Vision". The fall of man then becomes a failure of imaginative perception and the recovery involves embracing a revolutionary approach to the imagination. In *The Four Zoas* Los replaces Orc as the symbol of youth and energy, but while Orc represents revolutionary action as executed in the American and French Revolutions, Los symbolizes the power of the imagination in the fallen world. It is Los who raises his arm and tears down the fixtures of the mechanical and cyclical universe, bringing an apocalypse and the return of the Golden Age.

Wordsworth discovers the power of the imagination when he ascends Mount Snowden. While the event signals his recovery from his despondency over the French Revolution, the experience is also apocalyptic as it liberates his mind to the infinite possibilities in imaginative vision. The scene that opens up before Wordsworth on Mount Snowden has the same intensity as Los' discovery. Both events mark the final stage in their respective poems' depiction of the movement toward true poetic

vision. In both cases the apocalyptic revelation declares imagination's infinite capability. On Mount Snowden, Wordsworth discovers the imagination lodged "in that breach / Through which the homeless voice of waters rose" (*Prel.* XIII. 62-63). He finds "The perfect image of a mighty Mind" (*Prel.* XIII. 69) and *not* the disappointment he felt on the Alps that corresponded to his feelings about the French Revolution. Wordsworth recognizes the power of the imagination both on Mount Snowden and during his composition of the Alps incident. He recovers from his despondency about the French Revolution when he shifts his faith in social man's concerns to imaginative poetic concerns. Nature can then be seen to assist him in coming to this recognition.

Thus, while Wordsworth chooses a natural landscape to symbolize the imagination, Blake utilizes a mythical human figure, Los. But Wordsworth goes further than mere metaphor, making the assertion that nature's role in bringing man to such an apocalypse of perception is essential. Alan Chaffee summarizes it simply: "Wordsworth thus naturalizes the imagination, while Blake humanizes it."<sup>4</sup> Wordsworth sees a marriage or balance between nature and man's mind, while Blake sees no such reciprocity existing. In fact, this is essentially the most important difference between the two poets: Wordsworth sees the creative process as a symbiosis between man's mind and nature, while Blake argues that a dependence upon anything but the imagination causes man's fall, preventing him from ever regaining the Divine Vision. For this reason one could argue that for the most part Wordsworth stays much closer to the concrete world whereas Blake ultimately feels more comfortable in his own mythical world. According to Alan Chaffee, "Both Blake and Wordsworth provide an image of the human mind, but the latter depends chiefly

on metaphor, or mythic thought tuned to the outer world, while the former exploits symbol, or mythic thought turning to man's inner world, in the liaison of mind and world."<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of the basic differences in the way both poets see the attainment of the apocalypse through the imagination, both nevertheless recognize that goal as man's ultimate aspiration, as opposed to the possibilities of political revolution. And because both men started out as revolutionaries and became great poets, one cannot help but make a strong connection between the nature of the revolutionary and creative impulse. In his essay on "The Mythic Origins of the Creative Process", Herbert Weisinger asserts,

The creative process is therefore by its nature profoundly revolutionary, a built-in device which immediately upsets any state of equilibrium it encounters. By its interposition it transforms rest into motion, altering and resisting, until the friction of resistance and effort slows it down into form or formula, a new state of rest whose balance it again upsets, so that now each new mirror in the corridor reflects one subtly altered image after another.<sup>6</sup>

This type of creative energy, which upsets an equilibrium and sets in motion the creative impulses which must deconstruct in order to create and which gain their momentum from a dialectical system of motion/stasis/motion, defies a circular interpretation, instead consisting of "an unfolding from within, a reaching beyond, another unfolding, and another stretch; an evershifting center radiating out to ever-widening circumferences, not circular, but irregular, with deep bays of regression, flat beaches of futility, and sudden promontories of achievement."<sup>7</sup> The mutability of a circular view of the process then is replaced with the image of "an uneven ascending spiral".<sup>8</sup> Given that it can be seen as

breaking out of the circular pattern, there is no reason to put finite boundaries on the process. In his poem, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake states that the war between the contraries is necessary for the restoration of humanity: "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (*M.H.H.*, p. 77, l. 2). In a revolutionary perspective the conflict between Orc and Urizen is positive in that it sets into motion the movement toward the redemption of the social order. Blake saw the clash between the contraries as integral to the creative process. Its progress depends on the collision between the radical and conservative imagination.

Both Blake and Wordsworth discuss the necessity for a type of energy in the creative act. Wordsworth calls it "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (*The Preface*, p. 735). Blake creates the "vig'rous progeny of fires" (*E.*, p. 225, l. 47) Orc who incarnates revolutionary energy. The historical events of the American and French Revolutions can be seen as part of the Orc "cycle" which, because they exist only in the fallen world and never involve an unfettering of perception, are necessarily doomed to failure. But Orc's (and later Los') role as the symbol of imaginative (revolutionary) energy can be read in exactly the opposite way--as the necessary ingredient in the upward movement of imaginative perception. To understand Blake one must at all times see the dialectical vision at work. George Quasha says:

In Blakean metaphoric process the Orc *cycle* is a failed marriage of contraries, a loss of identity due to a double misunderstanding of the creative process, the false assumptions being that marriage means a passive union of opposites rather than active engagement

and that a dialectical system (of thought, language, life) seeks a binding synthesis.<sup>9</sup>

With such a restoration of proper vision comes the redemption of mankind.

In order to address the broader concern--the regeneration of the world through imaginative vision--Blake and Wordsworth turned to the epic form of poetry in their poems *The Four Zoas* and *The Prelude*. In his book *Preludes to Vision*, Thomas Vogler says,

The epic intuitis a golden age and a fall from that age, and on the basis of this intuition for a vision of change, a prophecy of a better future state. The theme, goal, and motive of the poet merge in a vision of spiritual regeneration that will lead to a state of permanent enlightenment.<sup>10</sup>

The spirit of the age that produced the feelings of hope and optimism did so only because the supporters of the French Revolution believed that the event would precipitate the apocalypse. The violence of the Revolution was taken to symbolize the first rumblings of Armageddon. On February 28, 1794, Joseph Priestley preached a sermon entitled *The Present State of Europe Compared with Ancient Prophecies* in which he discussed the events in Europe as following the pattern prophesied in the Book of Revelation. One sees this phenomenon in the continual references to earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, storms, floods, etc., in the poems of Blake and Wordsworth.

Thus, in the early poems of Blake and Wordsworth--"A Song of Liberty", *America*, *Europe*, and *Descriptive Sketches*--the world view is never complete, that is, the events foreshadow the apocalypse with the new world optimistically imagined. The poems do not involve a broader vision of portraying a sequence of historical events moving from pre-

revolutionary times to the Revolution to the new world where all the goals of the Revolution have been met. Blake may have meant to do this in his poem *The French Revolution*, which announced it would consist of seven books. Social man proved incapable of restoring the golden world and, as a result, the poets were left with no apocalyptic ending to match their revolutionary fervour.

As already mentioned, the abandonment of the belief in the French Revolution's success did not necessarily mean an abandonment of their revolutionary impulses and apocalyptic yearnings. Their focus became the creative process, in Wordsworth's case, the growth of the mind, and in Blake's case, the return of the Divine Vision. They took the themes and symbols of the French Revolution and the possible regeneration of society and transferred them to their explanation of the process of the imagination. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth describes himself as a naive youth who becomes a fervent supporter of the Revolution and who is consequently let down when his expectations are not fulfilled. But the focus of *The Prelude* is on how Wordsworth discovered that the imagination can open up new vistas beyond both nature and man's political action. Blake's *The Four Zoas* describes the regeneration of humanity through the power of imaginative vision which removes the limits of perception. As Milton chose the epic form to depict his account of the history of man, so Wordsworth and Blake preferred the epic form for their poetic account of the proper way to the imagination.

They both saw themselves as Milton's successor, both as poets and as political theorists. According to Vogler,

There was for Blake, as for Wordsworth, an identification on a more personal level with Milton. The figure of Milton in *Areopagitica*, a rebel and prophet trying to awaken a hostile and ignorant English nation to a sense of its own best interests and true potential, is close to Blake's image of himself and his mission as the true epic poet.<sup>11</sup>

Wordsworth's plan of *The Recluse* and Blake's major prophecies show how both men were concerned with presenting a broad panorama in the style of *Paradise Lost*. Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Blake's *The Four Zoas*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* remain as Romantic contributions to the epic form, but with a focus that is more internal than external. In Vogler's words, "The epic problem is no longer that of recreating the outward history of man or a nation, but of creating the inward history of man, by moving to levels of generality through the concept of the individual as psyche rather than the individual as action."<sup>12</sup>

But in order for these two poets to conceive of an apocalypse by imagination, which demanded an epic form, they had to have first been introduced to the revolutionary impulse that sparked such an occurrence. Their initiation was the French Revolution, which kindled the flames of the entire Romantic Movement.

## ABBREVIATIONS

1. The following abbreviations are employed for Wordsworth's works:

"Apology"	"Apology for the French Revolution"
<i>D.S.</i>	<i>Descriptive Sketches</i>
<i>Exc.</i>	<i>The Excursion</i>
<i>I.I.O.</i>	"Ode: Intimations of Immortality"
<i>Prel.</i>	<i>The Prelude</i>

2. The following abbreviations are employed for Blake's works:

<i>A.</i>	<i>America</i>
"Auguries"	"Auguries of Innocence"
<i>E.</i>	<i>Europe</i>
<i>F.</i>	"Fayette"
<i>F.Z.</i>	<i>The Four Zoas</i>
"Gwin"	"Gwin, King of Norway"
<i>Marg.</i>	Blake's Marginalia
<i>M.H.H.</i>	<i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i>
<i>S.L.</i>	"A Song of Liberty"
<i>T.</i>	"The Tyger"
<i>V.L.J.</i>	"Vision of the Last Judgement"

## FOOTNOTES

Introduction (pp. 1-15)

<sup>1</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 1805, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), Book X, l. 692. All further references to this work appear in the text in parentheses using the format (*Prel.* X. 692). All quotations of Wordsworth's poetry other than from *The Prelude* 1805 are from William Wordsworth, *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). All further references to his poetry from the above text will appear in the body of the thesis by the abbreviated name of poem, the page number, and the line number in parentheses.

<sup>2</sup> William Hazlitt, "Memoirs of the late Thomas Holcroft," in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 volumes (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1932), III, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> William Blake, *The Illuminated Blake*, Annotated by David Erdman (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> David Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969), pp. 186-87.

<sup>5</sup> William Blake, "Marginalia: Berkeley," in *William Blake's Writings*, ed. G.E. Bentley, Jr., 2 volumes (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 1502, p. 204 Berkeley. All further quotations of Blake's poetry are from the above text and will be indicated by the abbreviated

name of the poem, the page number and the line number in parentheses.

<sup>6</sup> Erdman, *Prophet*, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Gilchrist, *The Life of William Blake* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1928), p. 96-97.

<sup>8</sup> Erdman, *Prophet*, pp. 140-41.

<sup>9</sup> Gilchrist, p. 96, Erdman, *Prophet*, p. 141.

<sup>10</sup> Erdman, *Prophet*, p. viii.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth*, 2 volumes (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965), Volume I, pp. 167-69.

<sup>12</sup> Georges Bussière and Emile Legouis, *Le Général Michel Beaupuy* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière & Cie., 1891), pp. 36-37.  
English Translation (mine):

Beaupuy's thought followed another course. But the poet and the patriot must have arrived at a meeting of the minds in a similar trust. Beaupuy's passion took away, bit by bit, the last resistance of the young Englishman. One's view of those chateaux that they encountered in their walks and which were the vanity of the wounded country, Blois, Chambord . . . and so many of the others, reawakened memories of the interrupted symposium. . . . But Beaupuy's imagination was impassioned above all with the thought of the vices and of the excesses which were proudly displayed in those magnificent residences. He communicated his anger and his scorn to his young companion. He convinced him to detest the "absolute government, where the will of only one was the law of many, and where the sterile pride of those who placed themselves between the king and the people, gave all to one, refusing everything to the many." Sometimes, a passionate story helped him to illuminate the inequalities of a regime in which Wordsworth was too much inclined to see only the poetic.

Legouis' source for this quotation is *The Prelude*, Book IX, ll. 438-555 (in the 1805 edition).

<sup>13</sup> Orville Dewey, *The Old World and the New* (1836), p. 90. Cited in F.M. Todd, *Politics and the Poet* (London: Methuen and Co., 1957), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth* 2 volumes (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965). Emile Legouis, *The Early Life of William Wordsworth* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1897).

<sup>15</sup> Paul D. Sheats, *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). Michael H. Friedman, *The Making of a Tory Humanist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). Sheats' book shows how Wordsworth's poetic thought and technique were connected to the actual events in his life. He sees Wordsworth's emotional crisis because of the French Revolution as a significant phase that propelled him toward "a renewed struggle toward psychological integrity and hope" (p. xvi). Friedman fits the French Revolution's effect on Wordsworth into his thesis concerning Wordsworth's need to find security in human community. According to Friedman,

The French Revolution offered Wordsworth the exciting possibility of a community which would be both stabilizing, in the support he would gain by being one with the enormous community of universal brotherhood, and liberating to the grandiose conception of himself that would be imperiously free to destroy an old social order and to replace it with a new one (p. 295).

While both studies emphasize the importance of the French Revolution to the development of Wordsworth's poetry, Sheats does a more thorough literary analysis of the poetry than Friedman who gets caught up in the notion of Wordsworth's poetry as a psychological projection.

<sup>16</sup> Todd, op. cit. (Footnote 13).

<sup>17</sup> Leslie F. Chard, *Dissenting Republican* (Paris: Mouton, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> M.H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," in *Romanticism Reconsidered*, ed. Northrop Frye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 26-73.

<sup>19</sup> M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Ltd., 1971).

<sup>20</sup> J. Bronowski, *A Man Without A Mask* (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1967).

<sup>21</sup> J. Bronowski, *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965).

<sup>22</sup> Erdman, op. cit. (Footnote 4).

<sup>23</sup> Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

<sup>24</sup> George Quasha, "Orc as a Fiery Paradigm of Poetic Torsion," in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David Erdman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 263-85.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Vogler, *Preludes to Vision* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1971).

<sup>26</sup> Alan J. Chaffee, "The Rendezvous of Mind," in *Wordsworth Circle*, 1972, Volume 3, pp. 196-203.

Wordsworth (pp. 16-55)

<sup>1</sup> For the influence of the seventeenth century English Republicans on Wordsworth's thought see Zera S. Fink, "Wordsworth and the English Republican Tradition," in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philosophy*, XLVII (1948), pp. 107-26, and Leslie F. Chard II, *Dissenting Republican* (Paris: Mouton Press, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, "Strictures of the French Revolution and the British Constitution," in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Rev. Alexander B. Grosart (London: Edward Moxon, Son, and Co., 1876), Volume I, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Llandaff, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Llandaff, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Llandaff, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Llandaff, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Price, "A Discourse on the Love of our Country," in *The Debate on the French Revolution*, ed. Alfred Cobban (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 59.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Everyman's Library, 1967), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Burke, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, ed. E.L. Nicholes (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1960), p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), pp.

<sup>12</sup> Paine, p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> Paine, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> Paine, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Todd, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Chard, p. 120.

<sup>17</sup> Chard, p. 116.

<sup>18</sup> Legouis, p. 232.

<sup>19</sup> William Wordsworth, "Apology for the French Revolution," in Grosart, Volume I, p. 5. All subsequent quotations of this prose work are taken from this edition and will be indicated by the page number.

<sup>20</sup> Moorman, Volume I, p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, "Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches' and the Growth of a Poet's Mind," in *PMLA*, LXXVI, No. 4, Part 2 (Sept., 1961), p. 519.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 107.

<sup>23</sup> In *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 72 and 267, Paul D. Sheats while acknowledging the many critics who have noted the possible way of accounting for his melancholy, argues that the poem "bespeaks the psychological integrity that was absent from *An Evening Walk*. . . . When Wordsworth offers as his motive for the tour a 'heart, that could not much itself approve' he is describing emotions not of 1792 but of 1790: the disappointment that he encountered at Cambridge, and the psychological context of *An Evening Walk*."

<sup>24</sup> Moorman, Volume I, p. 136.

<sup>25</sup> Sheats, p. 70. In his discussion of the impact of the Revolution on *Descriptive Sketches* he sees the event as transforming Wordsworth's perception of the physical world: "It is fair to say, then,

that the Revolution literally transfigured the way Wordsworth saw the 'common range of visible things,' as well as his understanding of 'nature'."

<sup>26</sup> Chard, pp. 86-87.

<sup>27</sup> Moorman, p. ix and Legouis, pp. 10-17. Scholars do not agree on the use of historical and biographical information in literary criticism. A debate on this matter took place in *Critical Quarterly*, 18 and 19. In "The revolutionary youth of Wordsworth and Coleridge," *Critical Quarterly*, 18, No. 3 (1976), pp. 49-67 George Watson discusses the political involvement of Wordsworth and Coleridge at the time of the French Revolution. Using primarily historical and biographical information, Watson concludes that Wordsworth supported both the violence of the revolutionaries and the Terror. He goes on to state that when Wordsworth perceived the error of his thinking he wrote *The Prelude* and other poems in order to expiate his previous actions. Two critics respond to Watson's argument, John Beer, "The 'revolutionary youth' of Wordsworth and Coleridge: another view," *Critical Quarterly*, 19, No. 2 (1977), pp. 79-86, and David Ellis, "Wordsworth's revolutionary youth: how we read *The Prelude*," *Critical Quarterly*, 19, No. 4 (1977), pp. 59-71. Beer's article debates Watson's conclusions by citing his mistaken interpretation of passages in Book X of *The Prelude*. Beer argues (using the context of the poetry) that Wordsworth never accepted the violence of the Terror nor did he completely abandon his revolutionary ideals. Ellis does not debate Watson's conclusions as much as he questions the methods he utilizes in reaching them. Ellis is very skeptical of a critical approach to *The Prelude* that focuses on its historical rather than its literary nature: "there now seems no good cause for not regard-

ing Wordsworth's autobiographical poem as first and foremost a work of literature and only incidentally, in ways the complexity of which it should be the task of the critic to make clear to historians, a document" (p. 67). My study deals with the poetry as literature, not historical document. I see my method of criticism as more closely resembling Beer as opposed to Watson or Ellis. While I feel it is necessary to look first at how Wordsworth's representation of the French Revolution relates to the artistic purpose of the poem, I, nevertheless, see the necessity of also seeing it in a broader perspective which may include both history and biography. However, I see the work done by all the critics and biographers mentioned above as aiding us in evaluating the difference between what Wordsworth intended in *The Prelude* and what we perceive as the meaning of the poem.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Rommilly, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 1-2, in Cobban, p. 354.

<sup>29</sup> Moorman, Volume I, p. 174.

<sup>30</sup> For more information on Wordsworth's relationship with Helen Maria Williams see M. Ray Adams, "Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution," in *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), pp. 87-118, and Todd's Appendix A, pp. 217-29.

<sup>31</sup> Emile Legouis, *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon* (New York: Archon Books, 1967), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> In *The Making of a Tory Humanist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 76, Michael H. Friedman argues that Wordsworth's sexual relations with Annette caused him to become a revolutionary:

Having joined what Blake referred to as the 'Devils party' by permitting himself sexual freedom, it was

understandable for him to justify himself by becoming an active member of that party. He became an earnest supporter of new claims for personal rights and liberties. He attacked traditional social institutions that had limited personal freedom. In this way he unconsciously supplied himself with ideological justification for the liberties he and Annette had taken.

<sup>33</sup> Moorman, Volume I, p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> M.J. Sydenham, *The French Revolution* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1966), p. 58, defines "lettre de cachet" as "orders for the arrest and indefinite imprisonment of particular persons without trial by command of the king. [They] were regarded as one of the greatest abuses of the ancien régime. They were, in fact, most commonly secured by parents for the correction of disobedient young men and women."

<sup>35</sup> Friedman, pp. 80-82. As opposed to seeing the Vaudracour and Julia tale as a projection of Wordsworth's affair with Annette, Friedman links Vaudracour to Wordsworth's "princely estimation of himself" and Annette to Wordsworth's sexual desire for his mother and Dorothy.

<sup>36</sup> Wordsworth wrote in a letter to Mathews concerning religious orders, "It is my present intention to take orders. . . . My Uncle the clergyman will furnish me with a title." May 19, 1792, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, I, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1969).

<sup>37</sup> Chard, p. 100.

<sup>38</sup> In *The Prelude* Wordsworth states that Michel died in the Vendéan Civil War in October, 1793. There are two possible reasons to explain Wordsworth's mistake: either Wordsworth learned Michel was wounded in that earlier conflict and, because his brother Pierre did in fact die there, Wordsworth got the two brothers confused, or Wordsworth knew of

Michel's actual death but wanted to portray him as a man who would have gladly died in a revolutionary cause.

<sup>39</sup> Chard, pp. 102-03, Moorman, p. 172, George McLean Harper, *William Wordsworth: his life, works and influence*, I (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), pp. 152-55, 168, Christopher Wordsworth, ed., *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (London: Moxon, 1851), Jane Worthington, *Wordsworth's Reading of Roman Prose* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1970).

<sup>40</sup> M.J. Sydenham, *The Girondins* (London: The Athlone Press, 1961), p. 208.

<sup>41</sup> Sydenham, *The Girondins*, p. 210.

<sup>42</sup> Sydenham, *The Girondins*, p. 212.

<sup>43</sup> William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 118.

<sup>44</sup> "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, *PW*, p. 734.

<sup>45</sup> Hazlitt, p. 119.

<sup>46</sup> In "Wordsworth as Heartsworth; or, Was Regicide the Prophetic Ground of Those 'Moral Questions'?" in *The Evidence of the Imagination*, eds. Donald H. Reiman, Michael C. Jaye and Betty T. Bennett (New York: New York University Press, 1978), pp. 16 and 37, David Erdman presents new 'evidence' to substantiate Wordsworth's re-entry into France in the fall of 1793. As well as utilizing historical evidence--the rumor of Beaupuy's death at that time, which Wordsworth may have heard and incorporated into *The Prelude*--Erdman also sees an allusion to his return in the Julia and Vaudracour tale: "Vaudracour sneaks back to his love's house for a happy but precarious and hazardous meeting with mother and child, which I take as confirmative evidence for the inference that Wordsworth paid a clandestine visit to France in October 1793, after the

was in motion."

<sup>47</sup> In *Wordsworth and the Human Heart* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 24 John Beer notes how Dorothy may have helped Wordsworth recover from his despondency because of Annette:

Early in 1794 he was reunited with Dorothy with her and with other women in their circle . . . he could enjoy a relationship of affection which at once gave him a sense of security and linked him with his own background. This English version of sensibility was, as we have seen, closely linked with traditional puritan and moral values . . . It was restful where the more passionate relationship with Annette was restless, rooted where that was influx.

<sup>48</sup> *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, I, p. 159.

<sup>49</sup> It has also been suggested that Joseph Fawcett was Wordsworth's model for the Solitary. For a full study on the connection between Joseph Fawcett and Wordsworth's Solitary see M. Ray Adams, *Studies in the Literary Backgrounds of English Radicalism* (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), pp. 190-226.

<sup>50</sup> In *On Wordsworth's 'Prelude'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 257-260 Herbert Lindenberger argues that "in *The Excursion* Wordsworth was no longer able to recapture his attitudes toward the Revolution with the intensity he had achieved in *The Prelude* only a few years before." According to Lindenberger, by the time Wordsworth "got to *The Excursion* he had begun to lose touch with his earlier experience" and for this reason the poem lacks "the peculiarly dramatic quality which characterizes the revolutionary books in *The Prelude*."

<sup>51</sup> Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, pp. 312-13.

<sup>52</sup> This passage was included in one of three different attempts Wordsworth made to close *The Excursion*. The quotation is found in the

notes to *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1959), Volume 5, p. 402, ll. 76-82.

Blake (pp. 56-91)

<sup>1</sup> George Lord Gordon, *Innocence Vindicated*, 1793. Cited in Erdman, *Prophet*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Erdman, *Prophet*, Note 8, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Bronowski, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Erdman, *Prophet*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Paine, pp. 74-78.

<sup>6</sup> Erdman, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup> Paine, pp. 166-67.

<sup>8</sup> Paine, p. 166.

<sup>9</sup> William F. Halloran, "'The French Revolution': Revelation's New Form," in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, eds. D.V. Erdman and J.E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 31-32.

<sup>10</sup> Halloran, p. 32 and his Note 10.

<sup>11</sup> These lines resemble the depiction of the winepress of war in Revelation 14: 17-20.

<sup>12</sup> Burke, p. 82.

<sup>13</sup> Halloran, p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Erdman, p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> In *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), p. 69, Harold Bloom argues that the poem is complete in its extant form: "The poem ends on a token of fulfillment with the revolutionaries, who 'in peace sat beneath the morning's beam'. Blake had nothing to add, and the course of events had little to add to Blake's desired consummation."

<sup>16</sup> Erdman, p. 138.

<sup>17</sup> Sydenham, *The French Revolution*, Note 1, p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> Sydenham, *The French Revolution*, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Letter to Hayley, May 28, 1804, in *William Blake's Writings*, p. 1603.

<sup>20</sup> Preface to *The Rights of Man* - Part 2 in *The Life and Major Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. P.S. Foner (New York: The Citadel Press, 1945), p. 347.

<sup>21</sup> Burke, p. 73.

<sup>22</sup> Burke, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> Issac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), p. 152--His account of Madame de la Tour du Pin's memoirs.

<sup>24</sup> Burke, p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> Kramnick, p. 152.

<sup>26</sup> Paine, pp. 79-80.

<sup>27</sup> While this parallel has been pointed out by many critics, it was first documented by Erdman in *Prophet*, pp. 23-24. The inspiration for the *American Declaration of Independence* has been attributed to Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* which came out on January 10, 1776. The National Assembly of France's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* was in turn influenced by the *American Declaration*. This was drafted on August 16, 1789 and its first two doctrines contain essentially the same message as those of Jefferson and Paine. Paine includes the French constitution as an Appendix to his *Rights of Man* - Part 1.

<sup>28</sup> George Quasha, pp. 266-67.

<sup>29</sup> In "The forging of Orc: Blake and the idea of revolution," *Tri Quarterly*, 23/24 (1972), p. 222, Aileen Ward comments on how Los in *The Four Zoas* symbolizes the human imagination, recreating the world and assuming the revolutionary role formerly held by Orc: "Los merges as

the hero of Blake's long epic and the representative of all men who try to understand why the times have failed them while refusing to give up their vision of a better time."

<sup>30</sup> In particular see Frye, pp. 207-18, and the articles by Mitchell, Erdman, Tolley, Quasha, and Simmons in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*.

<sup>31</sup> Frye, pp. 207-18.

<sup>32</sup> Frye, p. 210.

<sup>33</sup> Frye, p. 218.

<sup>34</sup> David Erdman, "'America': New Expanses," in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> Erdman, "'America': New Expanses," p. 112.

<sup>36</sup> Ward, pp. 220-21.

<sup>37</sup> Erdman, *Prophet*, p. 387.

<sup>38</sup> Frye, p. 218.

<sup>39</sup> In "William Blake and Radical Tradition," in *Weapons of Criticism*, ed. Norman Rudich (Palo Alto: Ramparts Press, 1976), p. 193, Fred Whitehead discusses Blake's poetry in a Marxist context and sees the prophecies as more integrally concerned with "the entire history of European man, delineating the specific forms of psycho-social distortion and achievement to be found in his culture."

<sup>40</sup> Quasha, p. 282.

<sup>41</sup> Bronowski, p. 78.

<sup>42</sup> Frye, p. 217.

Conclusion (pp. 92-103)

<sup>1</sup> Frye, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine, *Age of Reason*, in *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed.

P.C. Moncure (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), Vol. 3, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Abrams, p. 334.

<sup>4</sup> Chaffee, p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> Chaffee, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Weisinger, "The Mythic Origins of the Creative Process,"

in *The Agony and the Triumph: Papers on the Use and Abuse of Myth* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964), pp. 252-53.

<sup>7</sup> Weisinger, pp. 250-52.

<sup>8</sup> Weisinger, pp. 250-52.

<sup>9</sup> Quasha, p. 276.

<sup>10</sup> Vogler, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Vogler, p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Vogler, p. 13.

Appendix A (pp. 129-145)

The sources used in compiling the chronological table are:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| France       | M.J. Sydenham, <i>The French Revolution</i> .   |
| England      | Philip Anthony Brown, <i>The French Revolution in English History</i> (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1956).<br><br>Alfred Cobban, <i>The Debate of the French Revolution</i> .  |
| Wordsworth   | Mary Moorman, <i>William Wordsworth</i> .<br><br>Hunter Davies, <i>William Wordsworth</i> (New York: Atheneum, 1980).   |
| Blake        | Alicia Ostriker, ed., <i>William Blake</i> (London: Penguin Books, 1977).<br><br>David Erdman, <i>Prophet Against Empire</i> .<br><br>G.E. Bentley, Jr., ed., <i>William Blake's Writings</i> .   |
| Other Events | The Queensburg Group, <i>The Book of Key Facts</i> (New York: Paddington Press, 1978).<br><br>E.H. Coleridge, ed., <i>Coleridge: Poetical Works</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).<br><br>Emily W. Sunstein, <i>A Different Face: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft</i> (New York: Harper and Row, 1975). |

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## APPENDIX A

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1788-1799

William Wordsworth  
1770-1850

William Blake  
1757-1827

1788Events in France

- June/July - The revolt of the nobility.
- August - Convocation of the States-General.
- September - The Parliament of Paris rules that the States-General should be formed as in 1614.
- December - The Royal Council approves the doubling of the Third Estate.

Events in England

- Wilberforce champions the Abolitionists.
- As a Centenary of 1688 the Revolution Societies celebrate 1788 as a festival of political liberty.
- November - Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade solicits subscriptions.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 18

- January/June - Wordsworth's 1st year at Cambridge.
- June/October - Returns to Ann Tyson's cottage at Colthouse. Begins to write *An Evening Walk*. Visits Mary Hutchinson and Dorothy at Penrith.
- October - Returns to Cambridge for his 2nd year.
- November - Dorothy visits Cambridge.

1788 (cont'd)

Events in Blake's Life - Age 31

- *All Religions are One* and *There is No Natural Religion* printed.
- Engraves a frontispiece to Fuseli's translation of Lavater's *Aphorisms*. Joseph Johnson publisher.
- Scene from the *Beggar's Opera* plate engraved.
- Lives at 28 Poland St. with his wife Catherine.

Other Events

- Byron born.
- Immanuel Kant publishes *Critique of Practical Reason*.

1789

Events in France

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| February    | - Sieyès' <i>Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État?</i>                       |
| April       | - The Réveillon riots at Paris.                                     |
| May         | - The meeting of the States-General.                                |
| June 17     | - The Third Estate assumes the title of the National Assembly.      |
| June 20     | - The Tennis Court Oath.  |
| June 27     | - The King orders the clergy and the nobility to join the Commons.  |
| July 11     | - The dismissal of Necker.  |
| July 14     | - THE FALL OF THE BASTILLE.   |
| August 16   | - <i>The Declaration of Rights</i> drafted.                         |
| October 5/6 | - The march of the women to Versailles. The King's return to Paris. |
| November 2  | - The nationalization of the property of the Church.                |

Events in England

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
|          | - The temporary recovery of George III from his madness.  |
|          | - Agitations for the repeal of the Test Acts and for the abolition of the slave trade.                              |
| November | - Dr. Richard Price a Unitarian minister addresses the London Revolution Society giving a sermon called <i>Dis-</i> |

1789 (Cont'd)

*course on the Love of our Country.* A motion is passed congratulating the French National Assembly.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 19

- January/June - Wordsworth's 2nd year at Cambridge.
- June - Visits Dorothy at Fornsett. Goes north and explores Swaledale.
- August/  
September - At Whitehaven.
- September - At Hawkshead. Completes *An Evening Walk*.
- October/  
December - Returns to Cambridge.
- December - First visit to London to visit his brother John.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 32

- Publishes *Songs of Innocence* in illuminated printing.
- Engraves *Book of Thel*.
- Engraves Democritus' and Rubens' for *Lavater's Physiognomy*.
- Writes *Tiriel*.
- Blake and his wife attend the first London meeting of Swedenborgian New Church.

Other Events

- Crabb Robinson publishes *The Newspaper*.
- Mrs. Charlotte Smith publishes the 5th edition of her *Elegiac Sonnets*.
- George Washington becomes the first U.S. President.
- Laurent Lavoisier publishes the first modern Chemistry textbook - *Elements of Chemistry*.
- Jeremy Bentham publishes - *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

1790

Events in France

- June - The abolition of the nobility. Jews are given civil liberties.

## 1790 (Cont'd)

- July 12 - The Civil Constitution of the clergy.
- July 14 - The First Fête de la Fédération.
- August 16 - Decree reorganizing the judiciary.

Events in England

- Horne Tooke contests Westminster against the Foxites.
- Edmund Burke publishes *Reflections on the French Revolution*.
- Mary Wollstonecraft publishes *Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 20

- January/June - Wordsworth's final terms at Cambridge. He decides not to study mathematics or sit for the Fellowship examination.
- July - Goes on a 'pedestrian tour' with his friend Robert Jones. They arrive in France on the great 'Federation Day' of the French Revolution. March with the crowds of federes returning home from the Federation Festival.
- August 4 - Arrives at the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse which has not yet been altered.
- August/  
October - Tour continues through Europe - Geneva - Mont Blanc - Chamourin - the Simplon Pass - the Alps - the Lake of Como - the Canton of Uri - Lucerne - Lake of Constance - Grindelwald - Basle - down the Rhine to Cologne - Belgium - Calais.
- October/  
December - Return to Cambridge.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 33

- February - *The French Revolution* was probably written, but not published (the extant text bears the date 1791).
- *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* begun.

Other Events

- Robert Burns publishes *Tam O'Shanter*.
- Immanuel Kant writes *Critique of Judgement*.
- Helen M. Williams publishes *Julia: a Novel*. She leaves for France.

1791

Events in France

- April 2 - Death of Mirabeau.
- June 20 - The flight to Varennes.
- July 14 - Second Fête de la Fédération.
- July 17 - The Massacre on the Champ de Mars.
- September 14 - The King accepts the constitution.
- September 30 - Dissolution of the National Assembly.
- October 1 - Meeting of the Legislative Assembly.
- November 19 - Decree against non-juring priests.
- December 16 - Brissot threatens the King with insurrection.
- December 30 - Robespierre opposes Brissot at the Jacobin Club.

Events in England

- Joseph Johnson begins the publication of Blake's *The French Revolution* and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, but then drops them.
- Joseph Priestley's house is burned by a mob incited by government agents.
- March - *The Rights of Man* - Part 1 by Paine is published.
- April - James Mackintosh's *Vindicae Gallicae* is published.
- May - The Constitutional Society expresses their disapproval with Burke.
- Edmund Burke's *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* - published.
- Joseph Priestley's Letters to the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke - published.
- Bill to abolish the slave trade rejected in the Commons.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 21

- January - He visits Dorothy in Farnborough.
- January 27 - Wordsworth takes his degree of Bachelor of Arts without honours at Cambridge.
- February/May - Moves to London. He listens to the debates in the House of Commons - hears Burke and Pitt speak.
- May/August - Spends time with his friend Robert Jones in Wales - 3 week 'pedestrian tour' of north Wales - Vale of Alwyd - Snowden - Conway - Stream of the Dee.

## 1791 (Cont'd)

- August - Lawsuit of John Wordsworth's estate vs. Lord Lonsdale comes up for trial at Carlisle Assizes.
- September - Returns to Cambridge.
- November - He meets Mrs. Charlotte Smith who gives him a letter of introduction to Miss Helen Maria Williams.
- November 27 - Crosses to Dieppe, France to perfect his knowledge of French.
- November/  
December - Stays in Paris. He reads the major pamphlets, goes to the ruins of the Bastille, sees the painting of Magdalene by LeBrun, visits the Legislative Assembly, visits the Jacobin Club.
- December 6 - He goes to Orleans. He was the only Englishman there. Lafayette recruits at Orleans. Stays with a royalist M. Gellet-Duvivier (who was guillotined 2 years later). Misses Miss Williams who had just left for Paris.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 34

- Blake begins engravings for John Stedman's anti-slavery work - *Narrative of a Five Year Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (published in 1796).
- He begins *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.
- Illustrates Wollstonecraft's two books. *The French Revolution* was printed but not published.

Other Events

- James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* published.
- Marquis de Sade's novel *Justine* published.
- Mozart composes *The Magic Flute*. Dies.

## 1792

Events in France

- April 20 - Declaration of War on Austria.
- May - Soldiers were quartered in the Grande Chartreuse.
- June 20 - First invasion of the Tuileries.
- June 28 - Brissot returns to the Jacobins.
- June 29 - Lafayette attempts to close the Jacobin Club.

## 1792 (Cont'd)

- July 14 - Third Fete de la Federation.
- August 8 - The Assembly exculpates Lafayette.
- August 10 - THE REVOLUTION OF AUGUST 10TH. Suspension of the King, reinstatement of the patriot ministers.
- August 19 - Defection of Lafayette. Prussian army crosses the frontier.
- August 20 - Fall of the Fortress of Lorgwy.
- August 30 - The Assembly attempts to dissolve the Commune.
- September 2 - Fall of the Fortress of Verdun.
- September 2-6 - THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRES.
- September 20 - Battle of Valmy.
- September 21 - First session of the Convention. THE ABOLITION OF THE MONARCHY. The beginning of the Year I.
- October - The monks of the Grande Chartreuse are expelled.
- October 10 - Brissot is expelled from the Jacobin Club.
- October 11 - Formation of the Constitutional Committee.
- October 29 - The Brissotins' second attack upon the power of Paris. Lovet's speech against Robespierre.
- November 5 - Robespierre defends Paris and the Montagnards.
- November 6 - Battle of Jemappes - French conquest of Belgium.
- November 19 - France offers aid to all people striving to recover their liberty.
- December 3 - The Convention decides to try the King.

Events in England

- Paine's publisher Jordan brings out the second part of *The Rights of Man*.
- Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* published. She leaves England for France.
- May 21 - Royal Proclamation against Divers Wicked Seditious Writings.
- London Corresponding Society founded. Whigs found the "Friends of the People".
- Paine leaves for France in the fall.
- November - Society for the Rights of Man formed. The Edinburgh Convention.
- December - Thomas Paine's trial (he is in France).

1792 (Cont'd)

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 22

- January/March - Wordsworth in Orleans. He meets Annette Vallon (25) at the house of Andre Dufour. She and her family were royalists, members of the resistance movement. She becomes pregnant by Wordsworth.
- March/  
September - Wordsworth follows Annette to her home in Blois. There he lodges in a house with some military officers of the Bassigny Regiment. They were waiting to join the emigre forces beyond the Rhine. Wordsworth meets Michel Beaupuy (37), one of the officers. Beaupuy came from an aristocratic family who supported the revolution. He was scorned by his comrades for his opinions. He was the only officer to attend the meetings of the revolutionary club. In July Beaupuy left with his regiment for the Rhine. They did not correspond after this. During this time Wordsworth wrote "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive". Wordsworth writes *Descriptive Sketches*. He is at Blois during the September Massacres.
- September - He returns to Orleans with Annette. The city is under martial law.
- October 29 - Leaves for Paris. Arrives the day Louvet makes his accusations against Robespierre. There he becomes "intimately connected with the Brissotins". He meets James Watt who marched with Thomas Cooper carrying the British flag and a bust of Algernon Sidney in the Paris procession of April 15th. Watt is forced to leave Paris for denouncing the September Massacres. During his six weeks in Paris, Wordsworth read political literature, particularly the Puritan publicists of the seventeenth century - Sidney, Marvel, Harrington, Vanet, Milton and Ludlow.
- December 15 - Wordsworth's daughter Anne-Caroline is baptized.
- December - Wordsworth leaves Paris for London.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 35

- Blake composes *Songs of Experience*.
- Blake writes "A Song of Liberty".

Other Events

- Shelley is born.
- Darwin's *The Economy of Vegetation* is published by Joseph Johnson.
- Holcraft's 7 volume revolutionary novel *Anna St. Ives* published.

1792 (Cont'd)

- Charlotte Smith's *Desmond* published.
- Arthur Young's *Travels in France* published.

1793

Events in France

- January 21 - THE EXECUTION OF LOUIS XVI.
- January 22 - The resignation of Roland.
- February 1 - THE DECLARATION OF WAR UPON GREAT BRITAIN.
- February 25 - Food rioting in Paris.
- March 7 - Declaration of war against Spain.
- March 10 - Creation of the Revolutionary Tribunal.
- March 18 - Battle of Neerwinden.
- March 21 - Creation of local Revolutionary Committees.
- April 5 - Defection of Dumouriez.
- April 16 - Creation of the Committee of Public Safety.
- April 13 - Impeachment of Marat.
- June 2 - REVOLUTION OF JUNE 2ND. The Convention is purged by the Montagnards and the Section of Paris. Brissot is arrested.
- June 24 - The Convention accepts the Constitution of 1793.
- July 13 - Murder of Marat.
- July 27 - Robespierre enters the Committee of Public Safety.
- August 10 - Festival of Unity in honour of the constitution.
- September 5 - Hébertist rising in Paris. Terror "the order of the day".
- September 27 - The Law of Suspects decreed.
- September 22 - Beginning of the Year II.
- October 3 - Impeachment of Brissot and 44 deputies.
- October 5 - Revolutionary Calendar established.
- October 10 - Decree sanctioning revolutionary government for the duration of the war.
- October 16 - Execution of Marie-Antoinette.
- October 17 - Vendéan Civil War. Vendéans defeated. Michel Beaupuy is wounded in the civil war. His brother Pierre dies fighting in it (Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, has Michel

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die in this war).

- October 24-31 - Trial and Execution of the Brissotins.
- November 10 - Festival of Reason in Notre Dame.
- November 21 - Robespierre denounces atheism as aristocratic.
- November 22 - Closure of the Churches in Paris.
- December 4 - The Law of Revolutionary Government. The massacres at Lyones.
- December 30 - The Festival of Victory. Jacques Louis David paints "The Death of Marat".

#### Events in England

- William Godwin's *Political Justice* published.
- Arthur Young's *The Example of France a Warning to Britain* published.
- Bishop of Llandaff publishes an Appendix to a sermon he had preached in Charlotte Street.

#### Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 23

- January - He lives in London with his brother Richard in Staple Inn. He wants to remain in the thick of the political events.
- March - He has a breach with his uncle William because of his affair with Annette Vallon. His uncle withdraws a title for orders.
- April/June - Joseph Johnson publishes Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. He becomes friends with Mr. Nicholson and listens to Joseph Fawcett's sermons in the Old Jewry. His primary concern becomes England's war with France. Wordsworth writes "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Principles" (never published).
- June/September- He takes a tour of the west of England financed by his friend William Calvert. He stays on the Isle of Wight possibly to assist the Girondin leaders who were in trouble. He then goes to Salisbury, Bristol, the Wye Valley and the Vale of Clwyd. While staying with Robert Jones' father he begins to compose his narrative poem *Salisbury Plain*.
- September/  
December - During this time his whereabouts are unknown. It is thought that he may have re-entered France. On October 11 and 15 all the English in Paris were arrested includ-

1793 (Cont'd)

ing Miss William and Paine. Evidence for Wordsworth's re-entry into France is found in a conversation recalled by Carlyle where Wordsworth spoke of attending Gorsas' execution which occurred in Paris on October 7th.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 36

- Blake issues *The Gates of Paradise* and *Our End*, (May).
- *Fayette* written in Blake's notebook.
- *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* finished.
- Blake engraves *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *America*.
- Blake moves to 13 Hercules Building, Lambeth, London.

Other Events

- Coleridge attends a literary society at Exeter where Wordsworth's poems were read aloud.

1794

Events in France

- February 5 - Robespierre speaks on the Principles of Political Morality.
- February 26-  
March 3 - The 'Laws of Ventôse'.
- March 14-24 - Arrest and execution of the Hebertists.
- March 30 - Arrest of Danton.
- April 5 - Execution of the Dantonists.
- April 27 - The Police Law.
- May 7 - Robespierre introduces the worship of the Supreme Being.
- May 18 - Battle of Tourcoing.
- June 1 - British naval victory, the 'Glorious First'.
- June 8 - The Festival of the Supreme Being.
- June 10 - Law of 22nd Prairial.
- June 26 - Battle of Fleurus.
- July 28 - EXECUTION OF ROBESPIERRE.
- July 30-31 - Reorganization of the Committee of Public Safety.
- November 12 - Closure of the Jacobin Club.

1794 (Cont'd)

December 24 - Abolition of the maximum.

#### Events in England

- Priestley flees to America.
- Holcraft, with the leaders of the London Corresponding Society are arrested and tried.
- Priestley publishes *The Present State of Europe Compared with Ancient Prophecies*.
- May - Habeas Corpus is suspended. 13 members of London societies were imprisoned and arrested.
- November - All men were acquitted including Tooke.

#### Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 24

- January/  
February - Visits Keswick.
- February - He meets Dorothy at Halifax.
- April - Dorothy and Wordsworth travel through the Lake District. They spend six weeks together at Windy Brow, Keswick. Dorothy copies out *Salisbury Plain*. Wordsworth begins to revise *An Evening-Walk*.
- May - Cockermouth, Whitehaven where they stay with Mrs. John Wordsworth. Wordsworth dreams of the Arab rider in the desert.
- June - Dorothy and Wordsworth separate. Wordsworth returns to Keswick at Windy Brow.
- June/December - Wordsworth nurses his dying friend Raisley Calvert until his death in January. Wordsworth reads Godwin's *Political Justice*. He thinks about starting a publication called 'The Philanthropist'. In August he spends a month with his relatives at Rampside where he hears of the death of Robespierre. Wordsworth completes *Salisbury Plain*.

#### Events in Blake's Life - Age 37

- Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* issued in a combined volume.
- Blake engraves *Europe* and the *Book of Urizen*.

#### Other Events

- Coleridge's *Fall of Robespierre* published.
- Beaupuy leaves for the Rhine.

## 1794 (Cont'd)

- Mary Wollstonecraft completes *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* while she is witnessing the Revolution in Paris and Havre.

## 1795

Events in France

- April 5 - Peace of Basle with Prussia.
- May 16 - Peace with Holland.
- June 8 - Death of Louis XVII.
- August 22 - Constitution of the Year III.
- October 26 - Dissolution of the Convention. Rule of the Directory.

Events in England

- Bread riots and cries for peace.
- William Godwin's *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices By a Lover of Order* published.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 25

- January 9 - Raisley Calvert dies. Wordsworth visits Dorothy in Newcastle.
- February/  
August - Stays in London with Basil Montagu. There Wordsworth meets Godwin and has nine meetings with him. He becomes friends with John Pinney and Francis Wrangham. He collaborates with Wrangham on a political satire called *Imitation of Juvenal*.
- August - Wordsworth leaves London for Bristol where he stays with the Pinneys.
- September - In Bristol Wordsworth meets Coleridge. Coleridge is there to raise funds to embark on the scheme of 'Pantisocracy' with Southey. He is about to marry Sara Fricker (Southey's sister-in-law). There Wordsworth meets Southey and Joseph Cottle, the publisher. Wordsworth writes the first 54 opening lines of *The Prelude*.
- September/  
December - Wordsworth and Dorothy live together at Racedown with Basil Montagu's young son Basil. Wordsworth begins writing *The Ruined Cottage*.

1795 (Cont'd)

Events in Blake's Life - Age 38

- Blake engraves *The Book of Ahania*, *The Book of Los*, and *The Song of Los*.
- Blake starts to write *Vala* or the *Four Zoas*.

Other Events

- Helen Maria Williams' *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France* published.
- Robert Burns' *Does Hought Gaul Invasion Threa*.
- Francisco Goya's *The Duchess of Alba* finished.
- Keats born.
- Carlyle born.

1796

Events in France

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| May      | - French victory at Lodi.   |
| November | - French victory at Arcola. Napoleon Bonaparte marries Josephine. General Michel Beaupuy dies in the battle of the Elz on the Rhine front fighting against the Austrians. |

Events in England

- Edmund Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace* published.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 26

- Lives with Dorothy at Racedown. He visits London in the summer and sees Godwin. He finishes *The Borderers*, a play.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 39

- Engravings for Young's *Night Thoughts*

Other Events

- John Adams becomes President of the U.S.
- Burns dies.

## 1796 (Cont'd)

- Southey's *Joan of Arc* published.
- Paine's *The Age of Reason* published.

## 1797

Events in France

- January - French victory at Rivoli.
- September - Coup d'etat of 18 Fructidor.
- October - Treaty of Campo-Formio with Austria.

Events in England

- Bishop of Llandaff publishes his *Apology for the Bible*.
- Fox speaks in the House of Commons on his motion for the repeal of the Treason and Sedition Acts.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 27

- Racedown with Dorothy. Wordsworth friends with Coleridge.
- July - They move to Alfoxden. Coleridge and Wordsworth plan *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth finishes *Margaret* (merged into *Excursion - Book 1*). Writes "Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew Tree" and "The Old Cumberland Beggar".

Events in Blake's Life - Age 40

- Blake dates the manuscript of the *Four Zoas*.
- Illustrations and dedicatory poem for Gray's poems.

Other Events

- Coleridge writes *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*.
- Mary Wollstonecraft, now married to Godwin, dies in childbirth giving birth to Mary Shelley.

1798

Events in France

- July - Napoleon's victory at the Battle of the Pyramids.
- August - Nelson destroys the French Fleet at Aboukir Bay.

Events in England

- Joseph Johnson is imprisoned for two years for selling a 'seditious pamphlet' - *Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop Llandaff's Address to the People of Great Britain* by Gilbert Wakefield.
- The Newspaper Act passed.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 28

- January/June - Alfoxden. Wordsworth writes 1300 lines of blank verse 'on Man, Nature and Society'. Several *Lyrical Ballads* written and *Peter Bell*. Hazlitt visits Wordsworth and Coleridge.
- July - 2 short visits to Wales. Wordsworth writes "Tintern Abbey".
- August - London.
- September - *Lyrical Ballads* published.
- September/  
December - Wordsworth, Coleridge and Dorothy take a trip to Germany via Yarmouth, Hamburg and Goslar where only Dorothy and Wordsworth stay for six months.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 41

- Blake annotates the Bishop of Llandaff's *Apology for the Bible* which is an attack on Paine's *The Age of Reason*.

Other Events

- Coleridge's "France: An Ode" published.
- Malthus' *Essay on the Principles of Population* published.
- Coleridge writes "Kubla Khan, Frost at Midnight".

1799

Events in France

- March - War of the Second Coalition.
- November 9-10 - THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF BRUMAIRE. Napoleon ends the Directory and establishes the Consulate with himself as first Consul and virtual dictator of France.

Events in England

- Act passed against Seditious Societies and the Combination Laws.

Events in Wordsworth's Life - Age 29

- April/May - Goslar via Hamburg to Yarmouth. Much of *The Prelude*, Books I and II, "Lucy Gray", and the chief 'Lucy' poems written in Germany.
- October - Walking tour of the Lake Country with Coleridge and his brother John.
- December 20 - Wordsworth settles with Dorothy Wordsworth in Dove Cottage, Grasmere. Books I and II of *The Prelude* were probably finished.

Events in Blake's Life - Age 42 and 43 (1800)

- Flaxman gives Blake an introduction to Hayley. Hayley recommends commissions for Blake. Blake finds a patron Thomas Butts. Blake and his wife move to Hayley's cottage in Felpham, Sussex (1800).
- Exhibits *The Last Supper* at the Royal Academy.

Other Events

- Schiller's *Wallenstein* published.