WORDSWORTH'S POEMS OF 1807

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WORDSWORTH'S POEMS OF 1807

The text of the collection originally
published as

POEMS, IN TWO VOLUMES

together with poems proposed for inclusion
but not retained in the 1807 edition

Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by

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M
MACMILLAN

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INTRODUCTION

I

The most obvious characteristic of *Poems, in Two Volumes* is its variety of subject matter, form and versification. The range of the poetry is impressive but so too is the achievement within each form represented. The two Odes, for instance, exemplify distinct literary traditions, the lyrics vary from formality to familiarity and the sonnets, mostly written in complex Italian forms, include those on patriotic and political themes as well as those on personal and domestic subjects. The sequence of sonnets dedicated to liberty, initiated by Wordsworth's visit to Calais in 1802 to see Annette and Caroline, reconcile historical and private experience and give rise to the sonnets on political events celebrating his confident and unambiguous faith in England. Some of the poems recall the manner of *Lyrical Ballads* in their narrative directness but most demonstrate the exploration of more subtle, more vexed and more internalised areas of experience which demand more complex forms of expression. The transformation of *The Leechgatherer* from lyrical ballad to *Resolution and Independence* illustrates the distance travelled; event and character recollected change the centre of interest towards the process of mind itself in search of synthesis and universality. Moreover, the poet is conscious of the traditions of English poetry within which he works, and particularly the achievements of Spenser and Milton, but he seems to have been unaware of the extent to which he extended and changed the main currents of that tradition. Together with *The Prelude*, the poetry of the collection represents the most achieved accomplishments of Wordsworth's romanticism. Most of the poems were written between 1802 and 1807 when he was at the height of his creative powers and when he wrote so much of the poetry on which his reputation now rests. *Poems, in Two Volumes* contains most of his finest shorter poems and many of his best loved and best known works.

II

In June 1806, Wordsworth in a letter to Walter Scott, announced that he was considering the idea of publishing a collection of his shorter poems; 'I have some thoughts', he said, 'of publishing a little Volume of miscellaneous Poems, to be out next Spring.'^{1*} By September, when he wrote to Josiah Wade declining his invitation to submit some of his poems for publication in the *Mercantile Gazette*, he confirmed his plans for a new volume of poems to be published 'next winter', rather than 'next Spring'.² He had, in fact, been considering 'publishing some smaller poems'³ as early as October 1805. Mainly in March 1804 Dorothy and Mary collected together and made a copy of Wordsworth's unpublished poems for Coleridge to have with him while abroad (he left England for Malta on 8 April) and, at the same time, as Dorothy says, they 'recopied them, entirely for ourselves as we went along'.⁴ This copy formed the basis of the 1807 collection. Between the end of March and the end of May 1806, returning in good time for the birth of his second son Thomas, Wordsworth was in London and it seems likely that during that visit he discussed the publication of his new collection with Longmans his publishers. In November the Wordsworths moved to Coleorton in Leicestershire where Sir George Beaumont had offered them the use of Hall Farm, and on 7 November, Wordsworth wrote 'I think of publishing a Vol: of small pieces in Verse this winter',⁵ and by 10 November he informed Sir George Beaumont 'In a day or two I mean to send a sheet of my intended Volume to the Press; it would give me great pleasure to desire the Printer to send you the sheets as they are struck off if you could have them free of expense.'⁶ At the same time, he wrote to Walter Scott:

I am going to the Press with a Volume which Longman will find easy to convey to you; it will consist entirely of small pieces and I publish with great reluctance, but the day when my long work will be finished seems farther and farther off, and therefore I have resolved to send this Vol: into the world. It would look like affectation if I were to say how indifferent I am to its present reception; but I have a true pleasure in saying to you that I put some value upon it; and hope that it will one day or other be thought well of by the Public.⁷

* Notes for this Introduction will be found at page 148 below.

On 14 November Wordsworth sent the first ms sheet to the printer with a covering note apologising for the delay, 'being engaged in removing hither with my family' and requesting that the proofs be sent to him at Coleorton 'for final revisal'.⁸

Wordsworth's attitude towards his shorter poems was coloured by the 'long and laborious work'⁹ of writing *The Recluse*: by 1806 he had finished only *Home at Grasmere*, the first book of the first part. In August 1806 he told Sir George Beaumont that he had 'returned to the Recluse' but adds 'should Coleridge return, so that I might have some conversation with him upon the subject, I should go on swimmingly'.¹⁰ He was aware that Coleridge disapproved of his dissipating his gifts in writing shorter poems when he should be concentrating his energies on a poem of epic design. Earlier, Coleridge in a letter to Thomas Poole, had voiced his anxiety at Wordsworth's writing so many 'small Poems';

The habit . . . of writing such a multitude of small Poems was in this instance hurtful to him . . . I rejoice therefore with a deep and true Joy, that he has at length yielded to my urgent & repeated – almost unremitting – requests and remonstrances – & will go on with the Recluse exclusively.¹¹

Yet despite Coleridge's confidence, the writing of *The Recluse* was never plain sailing; Wordsworth's failure to complete the poem haunted him into old age. Coleridge's absence abroad removed the 'unremitting requests and remonstrances' but also removed the stimulus of the fellow-poet's ideas and inspiration which Wordsworth felt he needed in order to continue with the poem. Yet the composition of the 'multitude of small Poems' was a source of pleasure and satisfaction to Wordsworth as he delighted in the exercise of his lyric gift. He referred to his 'minor pieces' as the 'little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral Recesses' within the body of a Gothic Church that is *The Recluse* with *The Prelude* as Anti-chapel'.¹² However reluctant he might have been to publish the poems, he had issued no new collection of poetry since the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, and the success of that volume could not be expected to sustain his reputation indefinitely. A number of poems, particularly among the sonnets, had already been published and others circulated widely, especially in letters. His ambivalent attitude in no way

diminished his confidence in his own powers and he looked to posterity to justify his poems. Moreover, his family had outgrown the limited accommodation at Dove Cottage and needed somewhere larger; a second son meant increased responsibility and further expense. Wordsworth at this time had three young children and with Dorothy and Sara Hutchinson, Dove Cottage could no longer be expected to accommodate them all with anything but inconvenience and discomfort. When the Beaumonts offered them the use of Hall Farm at Coleorton during the winter of 1806–7 the problem of accommodating the growing family was resolved, at least for the time being. Moreover, at Coleorton they were not only provided with fuel and provisions but the women were relieved of all domestic chores – the work, including the cooking, being done by the Beaumonts' servants. Dorothy reports that they had 'nothing to do but read, walk and attend to the children'.¹³ Sir George and Lady Beaumont removed to their London house while Coleorton Hall was being built.

Shortly after the move to the Leicestershire farmhouse, Wordsworth's intention to publish a volume of poems is enlarged and becomes *two* volumes. Dorothy, writing to Catherine Clarkson on 24 November 1806, says that 'Wm. is going to publish two smaller volumes and is to have 100 Guineas for 1000 Copies'.¹⁴ What Dorothy means by 'smaller' is not clear; perhaps Wordsworth had already moved from the notion of a 'little volume' to a larger volume. But he confirmed in letters to Thomas Wilkinson¹⁵ and Walter Scott¹⁶ that he intended to enlarge the publication from what he had originally envisaged: he referred to the work being 'extended to two small Vols of 150 pages or so'. It seems possible that the publisher, bearing in mind the success of *Lyrical Ballads* in the revised edition of 1800, encouraged Wordsworth to accept the format of two volumes that had worked so successfully already. Certainly in his instructions to the printer Wordsworth stressed the need to print the two volumes 'uniform with' *Lyrical Ballads*;

General direction for the Printer

These two Volumes are to be presented uniform with the Lyrical Ballads, in a stanza of four lines, four stanzas in a page, the first page

of each [Poem] only printing 2 or 3 stanzas according to the length of the Title – In a Poem the stanzas of which are 5 lines, 3 stanzas in a Page, with like allowance for the beginning – Where the stanzas are 6 lines likewise 3 stanzas in a Page – Where 7 – two & a half stanzas in a Page – where 8 only 2 stanzas in a Page – 9 & 10 two also – In Couplets or Blank Verse 19 lines in each Page. NB. This will imply that the stanzas must never be broken [in] to different Pages, except in one instance where there is 7 lines in a stanza. And I will thank you to be as speedy with the work as possible. You shall be regularly supplied with copy. I shall send a sheet by the next Post. –

Presumably Wordsworth intended one of his sheets to have sufficient material for the printer to set a full printed sheet according to the lay-out he describes. From this early stage, Wordsworth wished to associate these volumes firmly with the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*. He had, in fact, wanted to give the 1800 edition a new title and to call it *Poems in two Volumes*; in the event, however, he consented to the title *Lyrical Ballads with other Poems in two Volumes*.¹⁷ For the 1807 volumes he instructed the printer to print on the title-page, *Poems in two Volumes by William Wordsworth Author of The Lyrical Ballads*.

But the printing did not go as speedily as he had hoped, and Wordsworth did not keep the printer supplied with sheets as regularly as he had promised. In December 1806 Dorothy informed Lady Beaumont that 'We have not yet received a sheet from the printer',¹⁸ and in January Wordsworth complained that there had been 'unexpected delays', the printer had been slow in returning the sheets for correction – 'three are only yet gone through' – and 'it will be full three months before it is out'.¹⁹ At the end of February he was still blaming the printer for delaying the publication; 'My Printer seems to have added one more to the number of the seven sleepers; I have not had a sheet these thirteen days'.²⁰ After the end of February, however, the printing must have progressed much more rapidly, probably at the rate of at least a sheet a week, for certainly some copies were ready by 23 April.

The printer's delay in returning the sheets was not the only reason the printing did not proceed more rapidly or why 'we do not get on faster than at the rate of a sheet a week'.²¹ The orderly arrangement originally proposed by Wordsworth for sending off sheets and receiving back proofs seems to have broken down

fairly quickly. As he supervised the copying of the poems, it is clear from the MS that a certain almost random element entered the process. A number of the poems he revised up to the proof stage and he was still revising on the printer's MS. But he also changed the poems to be included. Moreover, *To the*—— is not in the MS sent to the printer but was published, presumably having been included on the proofs. Some poems that appear in the printer's MS were not printed and must have been deleted from the proofs after having been set up. *Pelion and Ossa*, for example, together with its accompanying note, must have been struck out from two different places in the text of Volume I when already set up in proofs, Wordsworth's notes being grouped at the end of each volume.

Some of the poems seem to have given him particular difficulty. *Ode to Duty*, for instance, was subjected to extensive revisions in the printer's copy and in proofs. The British Library copy from the Ashley Collection²² has cancels bound into Volume I giving variant stanzas for *Ode to Duty*. In the text as printed in Volume I, leaves D11 and D12 are cancelled; the first stanza on p. [70] begins 'Stern Daughter of the voice of God', replacing the stanza beginning 'There are who tread a blameless way'. In Volume II, likewise, B2 is cancelled, the last line on p. 3, 'Or keep his Friends from harm', replacing 'In Honour of that Hero brave!' in *Rob Roy's Grave*. In a number of instances, Wordsworth revised on the printer's copy. *The Tinker* and *On Seeing some Tourists of the Lakes pass by reading* were included in the printer's MS but were not printed during Wordsworth's lifetime. The same is true of the verses *Orchard Pathway* and of the *Advertisement*, both of which were sent to the printer and struck out in the proofs, whereas the Latin quotation on the title-page and the epigraph to the *Ode* are not in the MS. In addition a number of the poems – including *O Nightingale! thou surely art*, *Gipsies*, *A Complaint*, *Though narrow be that Old Man's cares*, *A Prophecy*, *To Thomas Clarkson*, *November 1806*, *Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland*, *To the*——, and *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle* – were written at Coleorton and had not even been composed when Wordsworth planned these volumes or, indeed, when he sent off the first sheet to the printer. The printer's copy indicates a good deal of hesitancy and indecision as to what was to be included. There

are frequent deletions and additions, cut and trimmed pages of various sizes and leaves stitched in by needle and cotton. As the successive lots were prepared for the printer, the original organisation becomes less secure, the ms less tidy and the deletions and revisions more frequent. Some lots were clearly copied out especially for the printer, but others consist of copies made at various times and brought together from various sources.

The division and distribution of the poems within each volume also gave rise to difficulties. Wordsworth classified and grouped the poems under a variety of headings and, although some headings sometimes seem to have no particular significance except as a matter of neatness and convenience, other headings clearly indicate a unifying poetic purpose. The classification, originally headed *Poems composed for amusement, during a Tour, Chiefly on Foot* ('for amusement' was later omitted) includes five poems, *Beggars, To a Sky-Lark, With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky, Alice Fell* and *Resolution and Independence* which seem to have nothing in common except their composition during a, chiefly, walking tour, as recalled by Wordsworth, though they are numbered 1 to 5 within the group. On the other hand, Wordsworth felt the poems printed under the heading *Moods of My Own Mind* to be a significant grouping unified by certain poetic attitudes and procedures which he later explained to Lady Beaumont.²³ Originally, in the printer's copy, this group consisted of eight poems in which Wordsworth first added *O Nightingale! thou surely art* and then three further poems, *I wandered lonely as a Cloud, Who Fancied what a pretty sight,* and *Gipsies*. This involved renumbering the group, now of thirteen poems, thus enlarging and strengthening the group as a whole, neither *Gipsies* nor *O Nightingale! thou surely art* having been written before February 1807 and well after the first sheet had been sent to the printers.

Clearly Wordsworth took pains with classifying the poems under their headings, numbering the poems in each group and giving each division a separate half-title, *Ode* having a half-title of its own and given particular emphasis as the last poem in the collection. Only the first group of poems in Volume I is without a separate heading or half-title. These poems are also

unnumbered, though the poems in Volume II classified under the heading *The Blind Highland Boy; with Other Poems* are also unnumbered within the group. Wordsworth's instructions to the printer concerning the setting of the preliminaries is clear; to set the title-page followed by the *Advertisement* and the Table of Contents,

which the Printer will have the goodness to collect from the Sheets, prefixing to the first division of the Poems, in that Table the general title of "The Orchard Pathway". (Of course where there is no title you will take the first line or half line of the several Poems.) the same to be done with all the other divisions. To the first division of the first Volume you will prefix a separate Title Page thus

The *Orchard Pathway*. (& in the same page the following motto)

ORCHARD PATHWAY, to and fro,
Ever with thee, did I go,
Weaving Verses, a huge store!
These, and many hundreds more,
And, in memory of the same,
This little lot shall bear *Thy name*!

In collecting the titles from the sheets, the printer omitted from the Table of Contents *It is no Spirit who from Heaven hath flown*, which is the last poem, numbered 13, in the division *Moods of My Own Mind*. But the heading *The Orchard Pathway* is also omitted from the Table of Contents together with the half title and the motto. Whereas the omission of *It is no Spirit who from Heaven hath flown* from the Table of Contents is probably accidental, Wordsworth must have deleted all mention of *The Orchard Pathway* in proofs when he also deleted the *Advertisement*, although why he should have done so is not clear. Its deletion leaves the first group of seventeen poems from *To a Daisy* to *Ode to Duty* in Volume I, without a heading and creates an imbalance between the two volumes. As printed, in Volume I the Table of Contents is followed immediately by the first poem, whereas in Volume II the Table of Contents is separated from the first poem by a blank page and the half-title for *Poems written during a Tour in Scotland*. Certainly, as the motto recognises, the heading *The Orchard Pathway* would have been a happy way to have introduced the first group of

poems and the poems as a whole; in addition, its use would have been a graceful way to celebrate the orchard at Dove Cottage where so many of the poems were conceived and written. Its omission is a clear loss.

The deletion of the *Advertisement* is another matter but it is unusual in so far as it leaves the collection without an introduction, which is contrary to Wordsworth's normal practice – although the addition, in the proofs, of the Latin quotation from *Culex* on the title-page compensates to some degree for the loss. (The quotation, which may be translated as 'Hereafter shall our Muse speak to thee in deeper tones, when the seasons yield me their fruits in peace',²⁴ renews expectations concerning *The Recluse*'s eventual completion, but also at the same time tends to belittle the collection's achievement.) In the *Advertisement* he offers the collection of short poems in the 'hope that they afford profitable pleasure to many readers' as they were certainly, he says, 'composed with much pleasure to my own mind'. Nonetheless, he insists that the composition of these poems was undertaken, he says, 'to refresh my mind during the progress of a work of length and labour, in which I have for some time been engaged; and to furnish me with employment when I had no resolution to apply myself to that work, or hope that I should proceed with it successfully'. No doubt with Coleridge actually living at Coleorton when the *Advertisement* was written, Wordsworth must have felt particularly acutely the lack of progress he had made with *The Recluse*. Perhaps, also, Coleridge suggested the Latin quotation that replaced the *Advertisement* although Wordsworth evidently knew Spenser's version of *Culex* well and quotes from the stanza following in his unpublished note to *Pelion and Ossa*. Certainly, by using the quotation he seems to place himself in the line of succession that runs from Virgil²⁵ to Spenser and Milton of those poets who dedicated themselves to the epic ideal, or in Wordsworth's case a long poem 'On Man, on Nature, and on human life'. Also in the *Advertisement*, Wordsworth says that 'several of these Poems have been circulated in manuscript'; and clearly he had grounds to fear that unattributed, corrupt or incomplete versions of these poems would find a wider circulation.

The largest groups of poems in the collection are composed of sonnets, classified under the sub-headings of *Part the First*. –

Miscellaneous Sonnets and *Part the Second*. – *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty*. In addition there are other sonnets in Volume II distributed under different headings. Many of these had already appeared in print and three are translations from Italian that were originally undertaken at Southey's suggestion for Richard Duppá's *The Life and Literary Works of Michel Angelo Buonarroti*, although only one of them, *Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace*, appeared in the 1806 edition of Duppá's work. One other of these translations of Michelangelo's sonnets, beginning 'Rid of a vexing and a heavy load', was deleted from the printer's copy although it is referred to in the note to *Lines, Composed at Grasmere* where the first line is translated as 'Importunate and heavy load!'. It was not printed in Wordsworth's lifetime. Indeed, a number of sonnets were deleted entirely from the printer's copy. Nonetheless, the collection contains 47 sonnets (Prefatory Sonnet and groups of 20 and 26) in Volume I and in Volume II 5 sonnets – not including the four that make up 'I am not One who much or oft delight' (later published with the title *Personal Talk*) and the individual sonnets separated and separately titled – giving a total of 52 or 56 sonnets. Thus numerically almost half the poems in the collection are sonnets. His achievement in this form places him firmly among those few he called 'my great masters, especially Milton'.²⁶ The renewed interest in the sonnet form at this time and its continuing popularity in the nineteenth century owes much to Wordsworth's example. His reputation as a sonneteer is indicated by the fact that Arnold included sixty sonnets in his influential anthology of Wordsworth's poems,²⁷ and Thomas Hutchinson, the first editor of the collection, particularly emphasised them.

Much of the printer's copy is in Sara Hutchinson's clear hand, a good deal is copy that was in existence before the move to Coleorton, but Dorothy and Mary also assisted and, in spite of his reluctance to copy (mainly because of the quality of his handwriting²⁸), Wordsworth also participated in the preparation of copy. There is clear evidence that he supervised the MS carefully, particularly with regard to capitalisation and punctuation. There is only one direct contribution from Coleridge in the MS, a single stanza of *Ode to Duty*. It is not surprising that his sole contribution was to *Ode to Duty* for he

was particularly concerned with the conflict of Love, Inclination and Duty at this time. Having finally separated from his wife, he was living in daily proximity to Sara Hutchinson.

Coleridge's return from Malta was eagerly awaited by the Wordsworths but, although he landed in England on 17 August 1806, he delayed more than two months before going north, and eventually met Sara Hutchinson and the Wordsworths, who were already on their way to Coleorton, at Kendal on Sunday 26 October. Dorothy was alarmed by his appearance: 'never never did I feel such a shock as at first sight of him. . . . His fatness has quite changed him – it is more like the flesh of a person in a dropsy than one in health; his eyes are lost in it.'²⁹ They delayed their journey south to stay with him and parted when Coleridge promised to join them at Coleorton. By 24 November they had learned from Coleridge that he and his wife had '*determined to part absolutely and finally*'³⁰ and he joined them, bringing his son Hartley with him, on Sunday 21 December.

Coleridge's notebooks at this time reflect something of his pain; his love for Sara Hutchinson, even his jealous fear of Wordsworth, intensified the struggle within himself. The references to opium-taking become more frequent in the notebooks from late 1806 onward, although he seems to have made an effort to control his addiction. In January 1807 Dorothy was able to assure Lady Beaumont that 'He does not take such strong stimulants as he did, but I fear he will never be able to leave them off entirely. He drinks ale at night and mid-morning and dinner-time . . .' He had been drinking large quantities of brandy to counteract the effects of the opium.

Everything was done to restore Coleridge to full health; but the extent to which Wordsworth felt that some deep change had overtaken their friendship is reflected in his poem *A Complaint*, which also records Wordsworth's painful sense of loss at what he feels to be Coleridge's coldness towards him. Yet there is little evidence of this in Coleridge's poem *To W. Wordsworth Lines Composed, for the Greater Part on the Night, on which he finished the Recitation of his Poem (in Thirteen Books) Concerning the Growth and History of his own Mind*.³¹ In January at Coleorton, Wordsworth read the completed thirteen-book version of *The Prelude* to Coleridge, whose response was a sincere and an impassioned appreciation of Wordsworth's achievement and his

poetic genius. Wordsworth describes *The Prelude*, the 'poem to Coleridge,' as an 'offering of my love',³² which Coleridge in his poem accepts and reciprocates at least until the point at which he turns Wordsworth's achievement against himself for having achieved, by contrast, so little. In poetry, as in personal life, Wordsworth's success becomes a measure of Coleridge's failure. Yet Coleridge also acknowledges the power of Wordsworth's poetry to revive his own creativity, and he also recognises his own firm place within the Wordsworth household ('That happy Vision of beloved Faces! / All, whom I deepliest love, in one room all!'). Thus, if Coleridge's return acted on Wordsworth as a reproach for not having made more progress with *The Recluse*, Wordsworth's achievements became to Coleridge the indicator of his own frustrations and failings. Coleridge's presence and conversations did not give Wordsworth the impetus for which he had waited, but both the unpublished *Advertisement* and the published Latin epigraph demonstrate that *The Recluse* was still a subject of continuing concern to them both. Not in fact until he wrote *Biographia Literaria* did Coleridge falter in his belief that Wordsworth would finish the poem, and only then did it change from will to could; he was no longer so confident that his persistent encouragement would be rewarded: 'What Mr Wordsworth *will* produce, it is not for me to prophecy: but I could pronounce with the liveliest convictions what he is capable of producing. It is the FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM.'³³ But at Coleorton in 1806–7, Coleridge was too deeply sunk within himself, torturing himself with suspicions, uncertainties, resentments, and what he calls a 'sense of my small worth and other's superiority'.³⁴ His bitter self-abasement was further aggravated by his inability to control his opium addiction and by his obsessive preoccupation with his love for Sara. His difficulties created problems for the household and he did not fully participate in the preparation of the 1807 poems as certainly he could have been expected to have done had he been in good health and in a different state of mind. Coleridge had done so much of the work of seeing the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* through the press that his lack of involvement in 1807 is the more remarkable.

Even at the best of times Coleridge could be a demanding house guest. Southey had some grounds to complain of him, not

only because he was casual with other people's books – he would bescrawl them, even give them away, Southey complained – but 'his habits are . . . murderous of all domestic comfort . . . He besots himself with opium, or with spirits, till his eyes look like a Turk's who is half reduced to idiocy [*sic*] by the practice – he calls up the servants at all hours of the night to prepare food for him – he does in short all things at all times except the proper time – does nothing which he ought to do, and everything which he ought not.'³⁵ Nonetheless, Coleridge determined to make his home with the Wordsworths³⁶ and when, later, they leased Allan Bank 'it was under the idea that Coleridge, with his two Boys would come and live with us, a plan to which we consented, in the hope of being of service to Coleridge . . .'.³⁷ Southey, siding with his sister-in-law, clearly took a more partisan view of this proposal and comments, 'His present scheme is to live with Wordsworth – it is from his idolatry of that family that this has begun – they have always humoured him in all his follies, listened to his complaints of his wife, and when he has complained of his itch, helped him to scratch . . . Wordsworth and his sister who pride themselves upon having no selfishness, are of all human beings whom I have ever known the most intensely selfish . . . he can get Coleridge to talk his own writings over with him, and critise [*sic*] them, and (without amending them) teach him how to do it – to be in fact the very rain and air and sunshine of his intellect, he thinks C is very well employed and this arrangement a very good one.'³⁸ Yet it is difficult to regard the Wordsworths' willingness to welcome Coleridge, together with Hartley and Derwent, into the family as anything but unselfish: a gesture of their deep friendship, particularly if Coleridge was an undomesticated as Southey says. Just how helpful Coleridge was to Wordsworth during his stay is not at all clear, although there is evidence to suggest that he worked over the manuscript of the latter half of Book VI of *The Prelude*; a blank page is filled with annotations and suggestions, many of which Wordsworth later incorporated in the text. Yet Southey's suggestion that Wordsworth exploited Coleridge badly mistakes the nature of the relationship between the two.

The household was certainly busy enough; the children seemed to need a good deal of attention going down with whooping cough/chicken pox soon after their arrival and

nobody seemed particularly well: 'Mary is very well, *she says*, but I cannot think her strong . . . Poor Sara is plagued with the toothache and looks ill. Wm. is tolerable – he does not get rid of the piles. I am the best in health by far . . .'³⁹ Wordsworth was occupied in planning the lay-out of a winter garden for Lady Beaumont and showed himself both knowledgeable and enthusiastic in pursuit of perfection in landscape gardening,⁴⁰ though he composed 'frequently in the grove',⁴¹ which he recalled with affection in his Preface of 1815, and as Dorothy carefully explained to Lady Beaumont, work on the winter garden was not interrupting his poetical labours but on the contrary, after work on the winter garden he returned to composition 'with ten times the pleasure'.⁴² Coleridge continued to be a cause of anxiety and concern; he did not settle to his own work – Wordsworth mentioned his plan to publish 'not *formal* travels, but certain remarks and reflections which suggested themselves to him during his residence abroad'.⁴³ The Wordsworths were forced finally to accept that they at least were powerless to help him; 'we had long experience at Coleorton that it was not in our power to make him happy', Dorothy said later, 'and his irresolute conduct since, has almost confirmed our fears that it will never be otherwise', she concluded.⁴⁴

The publication of the poems had been advertised widely in notices of recent and forthcoming books in February and March 1807. On 1 February, Longmans' *The Athenaeum; a Magazine of Literary and Miscellaneous Information*, announced that 'The Orchard Pathway' a collection of Poems, with other Miscellaneous Poems, by William Wordsworth, Esq., author of the *Lyrical Ballads*, will be published next month'. Clearly the unpublished title of the first division of the poems was mistaken for the title of the collection as a whole. Other periodicals in February and March⁴⁵ referred to the impending publication of *The Orchard Pathway* by William Wordsworth and presumably this was the title given out by the publishers – which suggests some misunderstanding between Wordsworth and Longmans. Curiously, *The Athenaeum* also announced in May that 'Mr Coleridge has sent two volumes of Poems to the press, which will shortly make their appearance', although there is no indication otherwise that Coleridge had considered such publication.⁴⁶

Some copies of *Poems, in Two Volumes* were printed and

ready by 23 April when two copies were dispatched to Walter Scott, then in London working on his edition of John Dryden in the British Museum Library. Eight further copies were delivered to unnamed recipients on 24 April; copies were also sent to Richard Duppa and Mr Cookson [Thomas?] and three copies to Coleridge on Wordsworth's instructions on 5 May.⁴⁷ Publication was announced on 28 April⁴⁸ and a notice appeared in *The Times* on Friday, 8 May;

This day are published, in 2 Vols. foolscap 8vo, elegantly printed on wove paper, and hot pressed, price 11s. in extra boards,
POEMS. By WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, Author of the *Lyrical Ballads* –
Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster row. Of
whom may be had, *Lyrical Ballads*, the Fourth Edition, in two Vols.
foolscap 8vo, price 11s. in extra boards.

In May Longmans Impression Book records the printing of an edition of 1000 copies, for which the author received a hundred guineas. The commercial success of *Lyrical Ballads* encouraged the publisher to print an edition of this size, although it is clear from the notice in *The Times* that not all copies had been sold of the 'Fourth Edition' of *Lyrical Ballads*, a printing of 500 copies in 1805. (And a curious one-volume 'edition' of *Lyrical Ballads* appeared in 1820 which seems to be made up from unsold remainder sheets of the second volume printed in 1800 or 1805.⁴⁹)

In July, Dorothy expressed the hope 'that in the course of a twelve month the present Editions will be sold off, and then there will be two hundred pounds more',⁵⁰ but she was to be disappointed. The sale of *Poems, in Two Volumes* was slow, and 230 copies (nearly a quarter of edition) remained unsold after seven years.⁵¹ With some understandable exaggeration, Wordsworth told Matthew Arnold that 'for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings'.⁵² Reviews and notices of the collection were generally hostile, and undoubtedly these affected both the reputation and the sales of the poems. Even before the reviews began to appear, the public seems to have set itself firmly against Wordsworth's poems. Early in May Richard Sharp, who knew both Wordsworth and Coleridge personally, is reported as expressing 'disapprobation of Wordsworth's poems just

published, saying 'He had carried His system of simplicity too far, and has proceeded to puerility' – to which remark Sir George Beaumont is said to have added, 'He supposed the Blood Hounds would now be upon Wordsworth', which proved to be the case.⁵³

In July Byron, who was still an undergraduate at Cambridge, reviewed the collection in *Monthly Literary Recreations*.⁵⁴ While recognising that the collection had virtues – he particularly admired the 'native elegance, normal and unaffected' of the sonnets – Byron was very critical of the poems grouped under 'Moods of my own Mind' and the 'namby-pamby' character of many of the short lyrics. In August the *Critical Review*⁵⁵ was entirely dismissive, the reviewer lamenting Wordsworth's 'infatuation of self-conceit' and 'our own disappointed hopes'. Francis Jeffrey's notice in the *Edinburgh Review*⁵⁶ in October was the weightiest and probably the most damaging to the collection's reputation. Other reviewers followed but mostly echoed, often in a most dismissive way, that Wordsworth had been betrayed by a false system of poetic simplicity into childishness, banality and affectation. Only the sonnets consistently attracted favourable attention, while the personal lyrics were exposed to contempt and ridicule. The reviews were followed in 1808 by *The Simpliciad*⁵⁷ a satire directed against Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge that parodied unmercilessly many of the 1807 poems.

Dorothy made no bones about referring to 'the odium under which my Brother labours as a poet'.⁵⁸ Wordsworth insisted that he was 'only a Chance-Reader of Reviews',⁵⁹ but there is no hiding his disappointment at the reviewers' reception of *Poems, in Two Volumes*. His self-confidence, however, remained unshaken, or, at least, if shaken, unbruised, and he appealed to posterity and never waived in his belief that his poems would eventually be valued for those qualities of directness, precision and fidelity to personal feeling and individual truth inwardly perceived that were so hidden from contemporary reviewers. He did not fully grasp how original his poetry was, though he did realise the force of Coleridge's contention that 'every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen'.⁶⁰ Sir George Beaumont

seemed to have understood this and is reported as defending Wordsworth staunchly;

He defended Wordsworth's poems against the Edingburgh [*sic*] reviewers & sd. Coleridge had supported that taste of *simplicity* which they condemned, and said that all men who write in a new & superior stile must *create a people capable* of fully relishing their beauties, & that at present, prejudice and an established habit of admiring certain works prevents the works of Wordsworth from being duly appreciated.—⁶¹

Wordsworth had faith in his own vocation and knew his poems would fulfil their destiny eventually. In the meanwhile he derived some reassurance and consolation from the feeling that ordinary people understood and appreciated his poetry as beautiful, natural and true.⁶²

Nonetheless, the criticisms had their effect. 'Overcome your disgust to publishing', Dorothy advised him, 'As for the Outcry against you I would defy it.'⁶³ Yet despite her persuasion and the fact that Coleridge, who had worked over the poem, had arranged a very favourable agreement with Longmans, Wordsworth refused in February 1808 to proceed with the publication of *The White Doe of Rylstone* which remained unpublished for another seven years. Indeed, he published no further poetry until *The Excursion* in 1814. Moreover, when he republished most of the poems in his first collected edition of 1815, he had obviously revised a number of the poems in direct response to the criticisms. According to Matthew Arnold, Wordsworth's reputation 'reached a peak between the years 1830 and 1840',⁶⁴ which means that he had to wait a generation for any widespread understanding and appreciation of his achievements.

III

While the final proofs of *Poems, in Two Volumes* went to Sir George Beaumont, the printer's ms remained with the publisher and was retained by the Longman family until June 1934 when it was auctioned by Sotheby's. The ms passed into the possession of Edward H. W. Meyerstein⁶⁵ who left it, on his death in 1952, to the British Library. The existence of the ms was first made

generally known by the publication of W. Hale White's *A Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr T. Norton Longman* (London, 1897).

Mark L. Reed⁶⁶ gives a more detailed account of the ms, a description of the lots and the order in which they were dispatched. By this means he is able to date the composition of some of the poems not datable by other means.

A study of what is now British Library Add. ms. 47864 was undertaken by W. Hilton Kelliher⁶⁷ of the Department of Manuscripts when it was found necessary to rebind the manuscript. His examination of the ms confirms several layers of revision and an extensive rescension undertaken probably in the Spring of 1806 and represented by a fairly-written manuscript that was dismembered and used as printer's copy. He observed that the manuscript presents one of the most oddly assorted collections of copy ever offered by a poet to his publisher. His study of the manuscript throws a clear light on the growth of Wordsworth's greatest collection of lyric poetry.

The first critical edition of *Poems, in Two Volumes* was published in two volumes in 1897 and edited by Thomas Hutchinson. This edition reproduces the original publication 'page for page and line for line' and, apart from minor *errata*, 'the text of 1807, it is hoped, has been faithfully reproduced in these volumes'.⁶⁸ Hutchinson does, however, on 'certain blank pages' print four additional sonnets. Indeed, this edition tends to emphasise Wordsworth's achievements as a sonneteer. There is an introduction and notes, and notes on the poet's Notes. Hutchinson adds to Volume 1 an *Appendix: Note on the Wordsworthian Sonnet* which analyses Wordsworth's use of the form and shows the way in which he follows Milton in freely adapting the best Italian models. He points out that Wordsworth studied Italian under Agostino Isola while at Cambridge and therefore the work of the Italian sonneteers was available to him, as it was for Milton, in the original language. He concludes his analysis of the fifty-six sonnets published in 1807 by establishing that thirty-four of them have a full-stop and a *volta* after the octave, seven have neither pause nor *volta* between the octave and the sestet, and fifteen have a *volta* half-way through the ninth line, or the eighth line, or at the close of the ninth line. However, Hutchinson perpetuates errors in the 1807 text,

reproducing, for instance, the *erratum* of 1807, 'Page 37, line 7: *instead of* nightful *read* rightful' (in *The Horn of Egremont Castle*), reprinting 'usefulness' for its opposite 'uselessness' in *To the Spade of A Friend* (line 29), and 'though' for 'through' in *To the River Duddon* (line 12); at the same time he corrects, for example, 'el' to read 'isle' in *By their floating Mill* (line 10), and 'are' to read 'art' in *The Affliction of Margaret*—of— (line 2).⁶⁹

In 1913 *Poems, in Two Volumes* was issued in the Oxford Reprint Series, a series that included the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Except for the numbering of lines in the longer poems and the correction of certain obvious printing errors, this 'is a reprint, *verbatim literatim* and page for page, of the Bodleian copy (280. n. 290 and 291)'. There is no editor named for this edition, which is in one volume, and no introduction or notes or other critical apparatus. There would seem to be a connection between this reprint and Helen Darbishire's edition, published the following year, in so far as both editions have similar lists of corrections to the text with the same pagination.⁷⁰ Both are based on the Bodleian copy of *Poems, in Two Volumes*, a late edition which has thirty-six pages of publisher's notices bound in at the end of Volume II which are marked as 'Corrected to March, 1813' and which includes an advertisement for *Poems, in Two Volumes*, but is otherwise unremarkable.

Helen Darbishire's edition in one volume was published in 1914. The text is a reprint of the Bodleian copy of *Poems, in Two Volumes* except for the correction of printing errors and the numbering of lines in the longer poems. There is an introduction and notes, including textual notes, and two Appendixes on the development of the text of the poems after 1807 and on Wordsworth's metres. The appendix on metres not only groups the poems according to their metrical form but also indicates the probable source of the metre in the work of earlier poets, particularly of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the revised edition of 1952 a third Appendix was added which gives an account of early, variant versions of sixteen of the poems composed during the first six months of 1802 and copied into a note-book known as 'Sara Hutchinson's Poets'. Helen Darbishire gives a fuller account of the poems in this note-book in an Appendix to Volume II⁷¹ of *The Poetical Works of William*

Wordsworth, which she revised and published, also in 1952. Helen Darbishire's scholarly edition of *Poems, in Two Volumes* undoubtedly did a great deal to direct attention to the richness and variety of the poems and to the extraordinary achievements of the collection as a whole. At the same time as she illustrates the originality of the poems, she demonstrates their formal and traditional attributes by linking them firmly with the works of earlier lyric poets. Her vigorous enthusiasm for Wordsworth is evident everywhere in her edition and particularly, of course, in her introduction. Both her edition and that of Hutchinson, have been out of print for a number of years.

Wordsworth was well aware of the 'gross blunders of the Press' in the printing of *Poems, in Two Volumes*, most of which he corrected in 1815, and a number of which he pointed out to his correspondents.⁷² As a study of the printer's MS demonstrates, he was very careful with details of punctuation and presentation. The objective, therefore, for this present edition is to establish a text that fulfils, or as near as possible fulfils, Wordsworth's intentions. The notes, which necessarily cover much familiar ground, have been kept brief. (The recent addition to the splendid Cornell edition of Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800–1807*, superbly edited by Jared Curtis, should be consulted by those interested in the full textual history of the poems.) The dating of the poems given by Mark L. Reed⁷³ in his chronology has been largely accepted. The temptation to reinstate the half-title *The Orchard Pathway*, and the accompanying verse, to the first group of poems in Volume I has been resisted. This, together with the *Advertisement* and those poems struck out of the printer's MS, should perhaps remain associated with the collection, and so these elements have been given as a distinct section following the main body of the poems published in 1807. The hope is that, by making the collection available in this way, attention may once more be directed towards Wordsworth's most characteristic and most impressive poems that are so central to his achievement and that were so powerfully influential in the development of nineteenth-century poetry.

I take the opportunity to thank W. Hilton Kelliher for his

generosity; and above all I wish to express my indebtedness to, and admiration for, previous editors, in particular Thomas Hutchinson and Helen Darbishire. I am grateful to the staff of the Library of the University College of North Wales, the British Library and the Bodleian, and to Joyce Williams who undertook the typing.