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Imagination and Growth: Coleridge and Wordsworth in Germany (1798-99)

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Imagination and Growth: Coleridge and Wordsworth in Germany (1798-99)

When Thou dost to that Summer turn thy thoughts,
 And hast before thee all which then we were,
 To thee, in memory of that happiness
 It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend,
 Felt, that the History of a Poet's mind
 Is labour not unworthy of regard (Cornell *Prelude* xiv: 410-15)

Introduction

On 16 September 1798 the packet boat with Dorothy and William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and his Nether Stowey friend John Chester on board sailed from Yarmouth to arrive in Hamburg three days later (Frank 220). Behind Coleridge and Wordsworth lay the year of shared creativity that Wordsworth refers to in the lines quoted above (Owen 270), and that culminated in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, published in Britain on 4 October 1798 (Gill *Oxford DNB*), a mere two weeks after its authors had disembarked in the German Hanseatic city. Before Coleridge and Wordsworth lay a long, fiercely cold winter of separation; the Wordsworths spent it in Goslar, a decaying medieval town in Lower Saxony, whereas Coleridge and Chester first stayed in Ratzeburg and then, in February 1799, moved on to the then thriving university town of Göttingen. While Coleridge was learning German and coming into close contact with German academia, the Wordsworths lived a secluded life in Goslar. Here, Wordsworth sought to compose *The Recluse*, his intended poetical masterpiece which envisaged Coleridge as a contributor of thought (Wu 189; 448), and which may have taken their shared creativity to a new level. Nevertheless, Wordsworth found himself unable to prolong this joint creativity through writing *The Recluse* in the absence of Coleridge, in whose company he had spent “virtually every day” of the preceding year (Wu

189). Instead, Wordsworth began his lasting poetical venture *The Prelude* – and, in that same narrow space and timeframe – composed the majority of the “Lucy Poems” (300; 326; 356). These poems will be referred to in inverted commas, since Wordsworth never grouped them as such; Victorian scholars initiated the grouping that has led to the modern canon (Jones 7).

This paper focuses on how the months in Germany – from September 1798 to late April 1799 in Wordsworth’s case, and to July of the same year in Coleridge’s – influenced the poets’ joint as well as individual creativity. The paper’s central claim is that Wordsworth invented the character of Lucy in order to voice his anxiety about the endangered mutual creativity in Coleridge’s absence, and that the “Lucy Poems,” just as *The Prelude*, address Coleridge. The “Lucy Poems” complement and extend *The Prelude*; they leave Wordsworth with the composition of *The Prelude* as his poetic collaboration with Coleridge comes to an abrupt halt, while the “Lucy Poems” also pick up the reader where *The Prelude* leaves them, namely at the point in Wordsworth’s poeticised autobiography where he is about to meet Coleridge, and where their collaboration is about to begin. In all her luminous imagery, Lucy is the poetic personification, the enlightening “Phantom” of Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s shared creative imagination behind the *Lyrical Ballads* that the poets envisaged to grow into *The Recluse*; she is the “happiness” of “that summer” of 1798 in *The Prelude*’s “Book Fourteenth.”

As the Latin feminine term *lux* means “light,” Lucy is “lucid” in the two meanings that this term, stemming from that very Latin original, carries: “bright and shining” as a spark of the imagination that both poets repeatedly refer to, and as “clear in intellect” as Wordsworth’s “Phantom” that was “nobly plann’d / To warn, to comfort, and command” (OED). She is thinking and feeling personified. Lucy and her poetic environment represent a snapshot of the poets’ intellectual relationship, and more specifically their creative imaginations, inside the newfound, distressing atmosphere between Goslar and Göttingen that directly succeeded the artistic wholeness of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*. Therefore, Coleridge’s famous intuitive

interpretation of the poems when he first received them in early 1799, identifying Lucy as Dorothy, denotes a fundamental misinterpretation of the poems' theme and has repeatedly had a misleading sway on numerous critics, for instance F. W. Bateson and Richard Matlak. However, when Coleridge wrote "Dejection: An Ode" in 1802, he was aware of this misunderstanding and poetically struggled for Lucy's recovery. By 1825, when he wrote "Constancy to an Ideal Object," Coleridge mourned Lucy as Wordsworth had in those "Lucy Poems" that explicitly pronounced her dead.

Unlike *The Prelude*, the "Lucy Poems" became a closed case not long after Wordsworth's return from Germany, while the problem at the heart of the poems' interpretation is their "indeterminacy" (Jones x). The disappearance of Lucy and her light, namely the indeterminacy in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's creative friendship after their return from Germany, also causes a lack of lucidity. The "Lucy Poems" are characterised by indeterminacy, while they also anticipate the shared creative indeterminacy that was to follow Lucy's disappearance; thus, the poems' form echoes their content.

To encounter these indeterminacies, the two poets' individual development from the German sojourn onwards will be dealt with in the first of the two main sections of this paper. Here, the ideas of imagination and creativity quickly move to the foreground, as they become growing concerns in both authors' works while they are repeatedly linked to the German experience: the creative imagination between the poets becomes the determinate element in the wake of the German sojourn. Evaluating this determinacy requires a move from the immediacy of the 1798-99 German scenario into its temporal periphery, namely to depict Coleridge's German experience from his early fascinations, via his encounter with German academia, to his poetic reflections on the German tour in "Dejection" and "Constancy." Incorporated into these poems we find the figure of the "Brocken-spectre," a natural phenomenon initially deluding the human visual sense perception and subsequently showing the mind's autonomous activity in the creative process. Coleridge was directed towards this

phenomenon by the Göttingen natural scientist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, who thereby functioned as a direct link to Kantian philosophy, and through the “Brocken-spectre” offered a vital component in the poet’s theory of the imagination. As a consequence, Coleridge turned away from Hartley and towards the metaphysics of Kant, eventually to become “the first and most brilliant disciple of German idealism in England” (Orsini 219). Thus, the “Brocken-spectre” stands exemplarily for Coleridge’s concept of the imagination and creativity as it was fostered by the German experience. We will see that the poetic representation of this creativity is essentially linked to the notion of the child; moreover, we will find that these ideas in Coleridge’s works are closely related to his notion of Wordsworth’s poetic genius, as well as to both authors’ shared creativity.

Chapters Three and Four of Section One will follow the same trajectory in Wordsworth’s case; from the acuteness of the initial creative vacuum at Goslar they will trace how Wordsworth developed the concept of his individual imagination and creativity in *The Prelude*. Coleridge is the poem’s addressee, yet he is no longer a direct part of the creative process. It will become clear that *The Prelude* is made up of two histories that hinge on the Goslar months when the poem’s composition began. First, there is the poem’s theme, the poetically portrayed history of its author’s mind, Wordsworth’s poeticised autobiography. This might be called the object history, since it is – in the grammatical sense – the passive entity exposed to an active agent, the subject. This active agent is Wordsworth the poet, who continued revising and expanding *The Prelude* well into the last decade of his life (Owen 8-10). The process of artistic revision and expansion is the subject history, as it represents the author’s history of creative modifications to the poem. It is Wordsworth’s biography from 1799 onwards influencing the modifications to *The Prelude*; it is the time span of over forty years in Wordsworth’s post-Goslar life that has him revise and expand *The Prelude* as the poem gradually pushes *The Recluse* out of the centre of Wordsworth’s creative attention.

Through analysing the interplay between these histories, Wordsworth's developing the idea of the growing child as the bearer and cultivator of the creative imagination will become clear; Wordsworth shared with Coleridge the idea of the child being imaginative through the experience of joy in nature. However, this idea came to stand irreconcilably between the poets as Coleridge turned more and more towards a strong innate, *a priori* capacity of the mind, whereas Wordsworth maintained a Hartleian approach to the shaping of mind. I argue that it is primarily this divergence that rendered a future collaboration impossible, preventing Lucy, the child-spirit of the *Lyrical Ballads*, from becoming the envisaged woman-spirit of *The Recluse*. Finally, moving again towards the extended temporal periphery of the German sojourn, we will find in "Book Fourteenth," at first verbatim and subsequently by its imagery, a reference to the "Phantom of delight." This poem has been, despite its common exclusion from the canon of the "Lucy Poems," a borderline case between that group and the "Poems of the Imagination" (Jones 10; 14).

With the step from Section One to Section Two, the determinate elements that have been found in the aftermath of the German sojourn will be reflected on the indeterminacy of the "Lucy Poems" as the immediate product of this sojourn; the focus will shift from the periphery of the poets' creativity in their later lives back to the months in Germany. Having shown the divergent literary courses that Wordsworth and Coleridge took from 1799, and having discerned their concepts of imagination and creativity in relation to their German experiences, we will be in a position to formulate the question with which to approach the "Lucy Poems" as the emergence of the German historical scenario: could Lucy be the personification of the creative quandary – Wordsworth's being in the balance between the creativity shared with Coleridge and the individuality of *The Prelude* – which he was experiencing at Goslar? A close reading of the poems in this light will follow.

Proceeding thus, this paper's methodology follows a historicist approach to literature as it has been adapted to the distinctiveness of its historical matter; Section One will show that the

imagination and creativity are the determinate elements in the larger context of the German tour while this determinacy defines the angle from which to approach the indeterminate “Lucy Poems.” Since each individual historical scenario that we have spotted has already tricked us into a Freudian *parapraxis*, namely our interests deceiving our objectivity (Levinson 19), I argue that by viewing the German scenario in its wider context in Section One, our contemporary scientific means are being applied to build up a wide-ranging knowledge of the subject, before using this knowledge to determine the question we want to ask the historical text. This procedure, I claim, adheres to Jerome McGann’s postulation that “works must be raised up from their narrowly imagined totalities, must be seen as part of that larger context that emerges when they are *specifically* situated, when they are delivered over to their historical and social localities” (88). The “delivering over” of the “Lucy Poems” is the aim of Section Two.

“That critical event – the islanding of history and its works – establishes the possibility of a proper sphere of totalization – one that is horizontally international, and vertically transcultural and transhistorical,” McGann claims (88). As here literary criticism takes into account the influence that the many ramifications of linguistic, economic, and personal histories take on texts, and that these ramifications even transgress conventional historical, temporal, and cultural boundaries, the multitude of factors for an adequate interpretation seems overwhelming. Moreover, the sheer amount of criticism and range of interpretations that the “Lucy Poems” have engendered since their first grouping affirm Mark Jones’s claim of the poems’ “indeterminacy” (x), and thereby seem to render a new historical reading all the more difficult. Nonetheless, we ought to consider “the fact that a mountain looks different when seen from different angles does not mean either that it has no shape, or an infinity of shapes” (qtd. in Prickett *Growth* 1). The perception we get of the object in front of our eyes depends on the angle from which we view this object, but this fractional perception is only a part of the greater truth, namely the mountain in its multitude of characteristic detail.

The same notion applies just as fittingly to the historical method when we assure ourselves that only our questioning enables the historical matter, whether literary or of any other kind, to “speak” to us. Just as every mountain has its unique shape consisting of a multitude of segments, each historical scenario is characterised by its very individual constellation of inimitable detail that all add up to its true shape. A mountain is, like a historical scenario and the texts it spawned, and as we will see in due course, like Kant’s notion of the sublime: impossible to grasp in its vast entirety. A Roman coin that is dug out may tell us about trade activity in a certain region, its percentage of precious metal may grant conclusions about monetary de- or inflation, and the same coin could also give us a *terminus post quem* for another historical object that is found with or on top of it. It is, however, impossible to know the entire truth about such an historical item; decisive for the outcome is the investigative question with which we approach the coin, and this question can only appropriately be based on a hypothesis, which we derive from locating ourselves in the contemporary knowledge that surrounds us. Accessing a mountain from the angle that our knowledge (of its discernible segments) suggests as the most appropriate way of accessing it may lead to the highest point of the mountain, and thereby to the nearest possible perception of the mountain’s true shape; when the historical text is the “mountain-spectre,” impossible to grasp in its entirety, a scholarly question (based on our knowledge of the wider historio-literary subject matter) posed towards a historical scenario’s indeterminate texts may correspondingly grant the fullest view possible of what lies behind the indeterminacy.

Only once we have found this angle, we can begin to reconstruct the historical scenario around the text; only once we have situated ourselves in our own scenario, we can begin to piece together the historical one and draw conclusions about its impact on the text. Therefore I add a “reverse vector” of negotiation to the past’s delusive influence-taking on me (Levinson 50), that is to say a text’s “worklike” function, “critically constructing or reconstructing the given in history and foregrounding the historian’s “transfential” relation

in the dialogue with the past” (Chandler *1819*: xv). Wordsworth blurred the “worklike” function by applying indeterminacy as a stylistic device while he at the same time he installed their indeterminacy as their theme; he reconstructed his personal creative history with Coleridge in the “Lucy Poems” as pending indeterminacy. Accordingly, these poems and those texts relating to them in origin, imagery, and theme may grant the opportunity to unravel the “documentary” function that “refers and informs the historian about some state of affairs in the past” (Chandler *1819*: xv), namely the picture of state of the poet’s intellectual relationship during that winter in Germany. We can thereafter investigate and evaluate the synchronic level of the historical text and its surrounding – as far as our role as agents of our class, sex, profession, and era permits (Levinson 49) – by a “transhistoricism,” as Levinson, McGann, and Chandler propose it.

Progressing in this manner, the determinate historio-literary matter will prove more poeticised than politicised, thus bearing problems for a new historicist reading. While, for instance, the Romantic notion of the child has political implications, Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s adaptation of this notion would have to be viewed in the context of its contemporary production, consumption, and status in a new historicist analysis. These factors, however, play subordinate role in this paper; its main focus will be on how the German tour influenced each the poets’ aesthetics. Thereby, this paper is also aiming to demonstrate how the wider historical scenario can be used in order to adapt its own historicism that mediates between aesthetics and politics by the methodology described above. Aesthetics and politics represent centres of attention that overlap and interlink frequently and to the varying extents that characterises the uniqueness of each historical scenario. When Marjorie Levinson, for instance, defines her political new historicism through investigating Wordsworth’s historicism in “This World is too much with us” and thereby draws her conclusions about the poet’s criticism of his own contemporary political situation, she focuses more on the politics than aesthetics; Wordsworth’s historio-political scenario, as it were, demands a political new

historicism. Similar in methodology, although different as far as the Romantic creative imagination is concerned, this paper's historical scenario of declining mutual creativity defines the leading aesthetic dimension of its historicism; once the creative imagination is discerned as the most significant determinate element linked to the German experience, this finding determines the question with which the indeterminate "Lucy Poems" ought to be addressed. In short, the individuality of the historical scenario determines its historicism. As Shelley's "Phantom may / Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day," this phantom may stand symbolically for the political dimension Chandler explores in *England in 1819* (23). Alternatively, Wordsworth's "Phantom of delight," as we will see in due course, epitomises the poetic creativity that lies at this paper's centre of attention.

I. The Quest for Creativity: The German Tour and Its Repercussions

1. Coleridge: From Hartley, via Blumenbach, to Kant

On 6 November 1794, four years before he travelled to Germany for the first time, the 22-year-old Coleridge wrote to Robert Southey:

'T is past one o'clock in the morning. I sat down at twelve o'clock to read the "Robbers" of Schiller. I had read, chill and trembling, when I came to the part where the Moor fixes a pistol over the robbers who are asleep. I could read no more. My God, Southey, who is this Schiller, this convulser of the heart? . . . I should not like to be able to describe such characters. I tremble like an aspen leaf. (E. H. Coleridge *Letters* 96)

Rosemary Ashton sees in Coleridge's reaction to Schiller's play a concordance with the spirit of the French Revolution, recognising "in exciting that generation . . . a symbol of the struggle for freedom from oppression" (6). Nonetheless, Schiller's plot curbs imminent insurrection

through the noble rebel's surrendering his justified cause in the face of the threatening anarchy that arises from the rebellion (Ashton 7); *The Robbers* encompass "a passionate attack on conventional morality and a plea for understanding and forgiveness" (Kooy 24). Thus, the play's politics will still have appealed to Coleridge when his "earlier radicalism was largely but not wholly submerged in a conservative and nationalist conservatism" in the post-*terreur* years (Fulford 818); Rosemary Ashton finds that "In the case of Schiller, Coleridge undoubtedly went on reading him with pleasure and profit after 1800" (35). Coleridge publishing his "Sonnet to the Author of 'The Robbers'" in 1797 supports the claim of his lasting fascination with Schiller, at a time when the Englishman was about to embark on his most prolific year of shared creativity with Wordsworth:

SCHILLER!* that hour I would have wish'd to die,
 If thro' the shudd'ring midnight I had sent
 From the dark Dungeon of the Tower time-rent
 That fearful voice, a famish'd Father's cry-
 That in no after moment aught less vast
 Might stamp me mortal! A triumphant shout
 Black HORROR scream'd and all her *goblin* rout
 From the more with'ring scene diminish'd past.
 Ah! Bard tremendous in sublimity!
 Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
 Wand'ring at eve with finely frenzied eye
 Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood!
 Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood,
 Then weep aloud in a wild extacy! (Coleridge *Poems* 83-84)

As it is the case in the above quoted letter to Southey, Coleridge's now poeticised admiration is explicitly due to Schiller's artistic achievement, rather than underlying political convictions.

The “Bard tremendous in sublimity” has Coleridge suffer morbid fascinations when “some vast old tempest-swinging wood” recalls the images of the play and thereby make Coleridge the reader “weep aloud in a wild extacy.” The “dark Dungeon of the Tower” at “shudd’ring midnight,” thoughts of death, the “Black HORROR” and the “*goblin* rout,” in Ashton’s terms “all the literary paraphernalia of the Gothic” (7), have been put into operation so skilfully that the images in Coleridge’s mind evoked by *The Robbers* blur with the perceptions of a storm in the woods in real life. The mind deceives itself by recalling the “HORROR” when the imagery of Schiller’s play accidentally matches the imagery perceived by the senses in real life, while the body cannot but react to this illusory stimulus – and “weep aloud in a wild extacy.” Coleridge experiences the “sublime effect” (Kooy 25); the sense perception triggers the images of Schiller’s play in Coleridge’s mind, whereby Coleridge is confronted with his imagination creating an object in his mind which does not resemble the actual object that his senses are exposed to.

The imaginative processes Coleridge is describing in the poem go beyond the theories of Hume’s and Locke’s Empiricism, but also Hartley’s theory of association. Twenty years after the publication of the sonnet, Coleridge claims in the *Biographia* that “Theists of the mechanic school (as Sir I.^a Newton, Locke, &c.) . . . must say from *whom* we *had* our being, and with it life and the powers of life” (I: 278). “Only in the self-consciousness of a spirit is there the required identity of object and of representation; for therein consists the essence of a spirit, that is self-representative,” Coleridge claims in the same section of the *Biographia*. Moreover, conjuring up the imagery of the “Brocken-spectre,” he proposes that “If therefore this be the one only immediate truth, in the certainty of which the reality of our collective knowledge is grounded, it must follow that the spirit in all the objects which it views, views only itself” (I: 278). This shows the significance of the Blumenbach’s influence to Coleridge’s later metaphysics.

While for much of the eighteenth century Empiricist philosophy had stressed the role of the mind as a passive bystander to sense perception, Hartley had put forward a concept encompassing a more active role of the mind in relation to the (nevertheless fundamental) role of the sense perception. Prickett describes this role as “sensations [that] are first received by the senses, but separate from them in function, whose job is to interpret or ruminate on the information so provided” (*Growth* 72). Going into greater detail, Prickett emphasises Hartley’s idea of the “imagination,” which, “if not purely the second of the seven stages leading man by slow degree from the mechanical passivity of the sense to the spiritual heights of Moral Sense, still consists of little more than the capacity to reproduce, by combination and association, unseen images in the ‘mind’s eye’” (*Growth* 72). This notion of the imagination does not go significantly enough beyond the Empiricist’s of the mind representing a *tabula rasa* upon which the senses work, to have satisfied Coleridge’s idea and experience of his own imagination; Hartley temporarily offered Coleridge an opportunity to go beyond Empiricism, but not profoundly challenge it. In admiration, Coleridge had named his firstborn son Hartley in 1796 (Beer), yet Coleridge’s imaginative experience of the tempest created by Schiller and the feelings conveyed through it shows that in the long run, Hartleianism did not go far enough to account for Coleridge’s idea of a vivid imagination. In the sonnet to Schiller, Coleridge’s imagination is stronger than the Hartleian notion of it; “brooding” over the “HORROR” evoked by Schiller, the imagination develops its own dynamic, blending and blurring Schiller’s Gothic imagery with Coleridge’s corresponding sense perception “Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood.” The imagination “interprets” and “ruminates” in the Hartleian sense, yet its potential to deceive itself and thereby force the physique to behave according to a non-existing situation – the plot of *The Robbers* – shows a discrepancy between Hartley’s idea of the imagination and Coleridge’s depiction of it in 1797. This discrepancy is the element of an autonomous vivacity to the imagination, a discrepancy which Coleridge felt, but did not have explained prior to 1798.

When Coleridge moved from Ratzeburg to Göttingen in February 1799, he was about to find in the doctrines of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) a new philosophical concept with which to bridge this discrepancy. Blumenbach's role in Coleridge's development remains generally underrated; Gian Orsini and Raimonda Modiano mention Blumenbach only once, marginally; Rosemary Ashton, in *The German Idea*, and Stephen Prickett where he investigates the significance of the "Brocken-spectre," not at all. Coleridge began his serious study of Kantianism only after his return from Germany (Ashton 29; Fulford 822), but since Blumenbach developed his theories in close collaboration with Kant, Coleridge's attending Blumenbach's lectures and being introduced to him and his family represents a direct link to Kantianism in a generally Kantian atmosphere: "This was the great age of Kantianism in Germany," Orsini notes, while "Coleridge, it is true, took none of the courses offered on Kant, but preferred to take Natural History and Physiology from Professor Blumenbach (his medical interests were not dead), the New Testament from Professor Eichhorn, and the Gothic Language from Professor Tychsen" (46). Coleridge's choice of courses also shows that, in addition to medicine, he followed his linguistic and literary interests at Göttingen – we have already noted his fascinations with Schiller's Gothic imagery. Theodor Wolpers emphasises how closely these interests interlink with religious ones, stating that, in Tychsen's course, Coleridge "acquired a detailed knowledge of the history of German literature – from Otfried's "Evangelienharmonie" and the Minnesingers, via Luther's Bible German, to Opitz, Gellert, and Lessing" (426). Coleridge mentions each of these fields and authors in his *Biographia* (I: 211).

Moreover, the pre-1799 Hartleian influence on Coleridge offers an explanation for the pursuit of natural history in addition to medical and religious interests, as Hartley was a philosopher and physician who "From the mid-1730s . . . had been at work writing on religious, moral, and scientific subjects" (Allen *Oxford DNB*). The *Observations on Man* (1749), "considering [Man] in his corporeal, mental, moral, and religious capacities" was the

result: “The *Observations* is, in one aspect, a seminal attempt to extend Newtonian science to the study of human nature. We should assume, Hartley writes, that the body's component particles are ‘subjected to the same subtle laws’ . . . as are all other material entities. The subtle laws are those Newton hinted at in the ‘Queries’ to his *Opticks*” (Allen *Oxford DNB*). How significantly Blumenbach and Kant expanded the rigidity of Newton’s axioms by a more adaptable teleological concept, and thereby offered Coleridge an explanation for a more vivid role of the imagination than Hartley had, will become clear in the following section.

Knowing that Coleridge occupied himself with Kant and his disciples progressively more after his return from Germany, it is surprising that Coleridge did not take any of the courses on Kant. This indicates that he had not expected to find as much as he eventually found in the doctrines of Kant, to whom he had referred to as “most unintelligible” in a letter to John Thelwall dating 17 December 1797 (qtd. in Orsini 44). The realisation of the insights that Kant’s philosophy may hold for the understanding of creative processes occurred to Coleridge accidentally, by way of meeting with Blumenbach, who was one of the most internationally renowned professors at Göttingen (Krüger 202). Blumenbach was a devotee of the British explorers of his day and their findings in the remotest parts of the world. He tracked James Cook’s discoveries in their very details and incorporated their findings even further into the scientific discourse at Göttingen; the canon of the subjects taught at Göttingen was gradually broadened as academic fields such as “Völkerkunde” (science of peoples) and “Ethnographie” emerged (Krüger 203). Knowledge grew fast through the new discoveries, and with it the aim of categorisation and explanation became a tall order: ‘Rather than a static enumeration and description of forms such as had been characteristic of the natural history tradition of the eighteenth century, the “organic physicists” sought a dynamic explanation for the origins of organic form, their distribution on the surface of the earth, and the conditions under which they are altered’ (Lenoir 1988: 104). Blumenbach, to further expand the doctrines of the “organic physicists” such as Treviranus (Lenoir 1988: 104), now included a component of

teleology, a purpose-led force within the mechanics of nature which Lenoir refers to as “vital materialism.”

Hence, as A. W. Schlegel explicitly excepted Blumenbach when he mockingly remarked that the Göttingen scholarship “had slightly too much of a morgue to it” (Krüger 219), we can pin down how well Schlegel’s remark describes the field where Kant’s and Blumenbach’s work overlap. Orsini hints at Coleridge’s connecting Kantianism with medicine in the remark on the English physician John Brown (46-47). If we call to mind now that Blumenbach’s teaching covered and ramified medicine, biology, and social anthropology, the following section in Orsini’s Coleridge and German Idealism gains significance. Orsini does not mention Blumenbach when he elaborates Coleridge’s attraction to Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, the “inclusion of nature in the system of absolute mind” with Kant and Fichte at its basis (198):

For Kant in . . . *The Metaphysical Foundations of the Science of Nature* (*Metaphysische Anfangsgr[ü]nde der Naturwissenschaft*, 1786) had already provided important concepts towards a new philosophy of nature, rejecting the purely mechanical view based upon Newton’s physics which had dominated the eighteenth century. In this work Kant resolved matter into force, eliminating the static concept of a solid, impenetrable, inert substance, and replaced it with the interaction of two opposite forces, attraction and repulsion. (199)

By the negotiation between “attraction” and “repulsion,” Kant developed a principal dialectics for the natural sciences that, through Blumenbach, had a significant impact on the canon of subjects taught at Göttingen, and thus on the environment in which Coleridge studied in 1799. Blumenbach himself developed his doctrines in close collaboration with Kant; the academic exchange between the two professors was a reciprocal one, since Kant himself relied considerably on Blumenbach’s research and stayed in close professional as well as personal contact with the Göttingen scholar. Since the early 1980s, Timothy Lenoir has explored

thoroughly the role of Immanuel Kant in shaping the “life sciences” at German universities, especially Göttingen. Emphasizing the close contact between Kant and Blumenbach, Lenoir argues that

from the late 1780s to the late 1790s Blumenbach’s ideas on natural history underwent a thorough revision in light of Kant’s analysis of the conceptual foundations required for a construction of a theory of organic form. Kant’s treatment of the question of race in terms of a construct he called the *Stammrasse*, and the specific manner in which he attempted to ground that concept on Blumenbach’s theory of the *Bildungstrieb* – conceived as an organic version of a Newtonian force, a mechanico-teleological drive operating materially within organic bodies to give rise to their determinate structures – led Blumenbach to realize the consequences that his own views, as modified by Kant, might hold for the construction of a theory of natural history. (Lenoir 1980: 77)

“Bildung” in Blumenbach’s use encompasses formation, procreation, and nourishment; the teleological element is the “-trieb,” making the compound word a “formative impulse” (*Judgement* 311). This impulse, it should be noted, is innate. Orsini sees Kant’s “rejecting the purely mechanical views based on Newton’s physics,” but he does not mention the reciprocity between Kant and Blumenbach behind the genesis of this “new philosophy of nature” (199). Lenoir moves towards the foundations of the “vital materialism” of the Göttingen school: “In a footnote to his treatise “Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Prinzipien in der Philosophie“ (1788), Kant praised Blumenbach’s critique of the idea of a *Stufenfolge* of beings set forth in his *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (1779) as well as the theory of generation enunciated in the treatise *Über den Bildungstrieb*“ (78). The idea of *Stufenfolge* expresses a concept of gradual succession in biology, which alongside the notion of the *Bildungstrieb* touches on the problem of “causal-historical” thinking in biology, Lenoir’s “Biocausality” (1988: 105).

This interface of reciprocal scientific inspiration between Kant and Blumenbach was of significance to Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, his third *Critique* of 1790 that “unites the three

Critiques in a system” (Pluhar 19). Part II, § 81 of the *Critique of Judgement* is “On Conjoining Mechanism to the Teleological Principle in Explaining Natural Purposes [Considered] as Natural Products” (308). Here, Kant argues that “the mechanism of nature alone is insufficient to allow us to conceive of how organized beings are possible, but that (at least in view of the character of our cognitive power) we must regard mechanism as originally subordinated to a cause that acts intentionally” (308). The “cause that acts intentionally,” the teleological component in Blumenbach’s theory of epigenesis, Kant praises explicitly in the *Critique of Judgement*:

No one has done more by way of proving this theory of epigenesis than Privy Councilor *Blumenbach*, and by way of establishing correct [*echt*] principles for applying it, which he did by avoiding too rash a use of it. Whenever he explains any of these structures physically he starts from organized matter. For he rightly declares it contrary to reason that crude matter on its own should have structured itself originally in terms of mechanical laws, that life could have sprung from the nature of what is lifeless, and that matter could have molded itself on its own into the force of a self-preserving purposiveness.” (311)

Kant appreciated and acknowledged Blumenbach’s inspiration. “Your works have taught me a great many things,” Kant wrote to Blumenbach in the August of the same year that the third *Critique* was published;” indeed your recent unification of the two principles, namely the physico-mechanical and the teleological – which everyone had otherwise thought to be incompatible – has a very close relation to the ideas that currently occupy me but which require just the sort of factual information that you provide” (qtd. in Lenoir 1980: 78-79). Building on Blumenbach’s “factual information” in the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant emphasises that “we must conjoin to this teleological basis the mechanism of nature – as the instrument, as it were, of a cause that acts intentionally – but with nature and its mechanical laws subordinated to the purpose pursued by that cause” (308), while this natural teleological

impulse within nature cannot be comprehended as it goes beyond “our cognitive power:” “It is beyond our reason’s grasp how this reconciliation of two wholly different kinds of causality is possible The possibility of this reconciliation lies in the supersensible substrate of nature, about which we cannot determine anything affirmatively, except that it is the being in itself of which we know merely the appearance” (308). The “supersensible substrate” transcends the comprehensibility of nature that the “Theists of the mechanic school” had claimed, and that Coleridge criticised in the *Biographia*, while Kant links his claim of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that we can only know the appearance of an object, to the interface of research between him and Blumenbach. These are the exact elements that the account of the “Brocken-spectre” consists of: the human spectator as a creation of nature within nature, while this spectator recognises the creative potential of his imagination as nature deludes his mind.

This becomes noteworthy for Coleridge’s theory of the imagination when we consider that it was Blumenbach who directed Coleridge to the phenomenon we know now as the “Brocken-spectre” (Coburn *Notes* I: 431; Wolpers 427). Moreover, it was Blumenbach’s son who prepared and accompanied Coleridge’s two-week tour of the Brocken and surrounding Hartz mountains in May 1799 (Wolpers 427). Like the final lines of Coleridge’s sonnet to Schiller, the *Fata Morgana* phenomenon in his notebooks (Coburn *Notes* I: 431-32), as well as the “Brocken-spectre” show the dynamic of the imagination through its potential to deceive itself. Coleridge’s notebooks include an ample description of the “Brocken-spectre” as it was initially observed, subsequently purposefully sought, and actually seen again by J. L. Jordan. Since all the details of the “Brocken-spectre” are crucial for the understanding of the significance of Coleridge’s German experience, a scarcely abridged quotation of it will follow. The scene is one of intense brightness, freshness, and the natural phenomenon’s initial indeterminacy eventually yields to a glaring joy as it plays with the human mind’s rumination of the sense perception. Kathleen Coburn translates as follows:

[Jordan] had after Whitsuntide ascended to see the rising sun. The sky had already reddened, and the sun was just breaking forth in full splendour; in the countryside everything was unutterably serene, when suddenly the other Harz mountains lying lower than the Brocken south-west towards the Wormberg etc. began to be shrouded in thick mist. At this moment I was climbing the granite rock, the Devil's Pulpit, when some distance away, towards the Wormberg and the Achtermannshöhe, there appeared the gigantic figure of a man as if on a great pedestal; but scarcely was I aware of it than the mist fell away and dispersed, and I did not see the apparition again. Another time, however, I saw this Brocken-spectre somewhat clearer. It was further down at the head of the Brocken, towards the Heinrichshöhe, when I was waiting for the sun to rise before 4 o'clock in the morning. It was stormy; over the open countryside the sky was almost free of cloud, but over the Harz mountains thick floating mists had already gathered, which were beginning to settle on the Brocken and obscure the view. In this mist, when the sun had risen, I could see my shadow, a gigantic size, for a few seconds moving as I moved, but then I was swiftly enveloped in mist, and the apparition was gone. When the sun reaches a higher position than that where its rays fall directly upon us, it is impossible to observe his phenomenon, because at any higher position of the sun our shadow is cast below us rather than in front of us. Having directed my attention to this natural, or atmospheric, phenomenon some thirty times, whenever I was here, I was finally fortunate enough to enjoy this spectacle to-day. . . . Just after four the sun rose; to the East the air was clear; the sun could there cast its rays unimpeded over the Heinrichshöhe. To the southwest, however, in the direction of the Achtermannshöhe, a sharp west wind was driving up a fine mist, which had not yet collected into thick clouds. . . . And behold! I saw, towards the Achtermannshöhe, at a great distance, a human form of gigantic size, and as a gust of wind threatened to blow my hat off and I hastily seized it, making a movement of my arm towards my hat, I

saw the colossal figure make a movement too. I cannot describe my joy at this discovery; for I had taken so many blessed steps in vain in pursuit of this phantom and never been able to lay hold of it. (*Notes I: 430-31*).

The level rays of the early morning sun project an enlarged human shadow against a bank of mist, while the level sunrays on the mist around the shadow gloss the scene in intense brightness. Being able to grasp the interplay of nature, human sense perception, and the imagination, even if only for a short moment, causes joy. The natural indeterminacy of the enlarged shadow had been deceiving the spectator's imagination, yet once nature grants an explanation of the phenomenon to the spectator, he has become able to take influence on the apparition, to play with nature, to use his joy and create. Yet this joy of creating in sync with nature is fickle and transient, it depends on nature's moods, since they make it possible in the first place: "I at once made another obeisance and the colossus opposite me did the like. Yet again I would have done it, but my colossus was gone. I remained in his position, waiting to see whether it would appear again. It was not long before he was there again on the Achtermannhöhe. I made my bow: he returned it" (*Coburn Notes I: 431*). Facing nature's fickleness, the spectator quickly wants to share his joy before the sun has risen too high and the opportunity to view the "spectacle" again has vanished:

Then I called the innkeeper. We both took up the position I had taken alone, looked towards the Achtermannshöhe, and saw nothing. We remained standing thus. And it was not long before two such colossal figures took shape on the aforesaid mountain; we bowed to each other; they did likewise. Then they disappeared. We maintained our position, kept our eyes fixed in that direction, and before long the two figures were there again. A third man joined us. Movements we made, they imitated, but with this difference that the apparition was now faint and dim, now strong and clear; the latter some seven or eight times. Thus I have now got to the bottom of the whole mystery and give my readers advice (*Coburn Notes I: 431*)

The spectator's ability to create the "Brocken-spectre" depends on the angle of the sunrays, as well as on patches of mist onto which to project this larger-than-life shadow. Whereas on a clear day the human spectator can rely on the sunrays, the mist and the winds that shift them remain entirely a nature's toys. As the human spectator play with nature, a superior nature plays with the spectator; not only the very presence or absence of the phenomenon, but even its strength is determined by nature. Nature gives, moderates, and takes away again.

The Kantian Blumenbach had directed Coleridge to a natural phenomenon which revealed the human imagination's tendency to be deceived by sense perception. Coleridge must have shared the "joy at this discovery" since it implied the imagination's activity as he conveyed it in the "Sonnet to the Author of 'The Robbers.'" In fact, the experience of Schiller as the "Bard tremendous in sublimity" through his invoking a failure of the imagination in the mind resembles a Kantian notion of the sublime with which Coleridge cannot have been familiar at the time he wrote his sonnet to Schiller, but which the account of the "Brocken-spectre" will have suggested to him: Thomas McFarland claims that "it would be fitting to term the [Kantian] sublime a negative symbol, in that it turns the mind back to become aware of the unboundedness within itself" (*Ruin* 30). With the realisation of what is behind the moving shadow on the bank of mist, behind nature's indeterminacy, so to speak, the initial awe gives way to "joy" as the mind recognises its "unboundedness" that had previously deceived it: the sublime is being experienced.

Through directing Coleridge to the "Brocken-spectre," Blumenbach had effectively directed him away from Hartley and towards a Kantian innate vivacity of the mind, and in the long run to the German Idealism that was being initiated at very much the same time at Jena, not far from Göttingen (Prickett *Connection* 173). Despite agreeing on the vivacity of the mind, Wordsworth never took the step towards such an innate capacity, as Chapters Three and Four will show, but explained the mind's vivacity in Hartleian terms in his poetic depiction of his own growth. This discrepancy in the theory of the mind was never compromised or

overcome, and may well have been the reason why *The Recluse* as the great philosophical poem of both Wordsworth and Coleridge failed. Even before their departure for Germany, Wordsworth will have realised that Coleridge had an idea of the mind that did not match his own (as we have already noted Coleridge's reaction to *The Robbers*). Thus, when Coleridge did in fact turn away from Hartley, Wordsworth's and Coleridge's shared creativity was bound to fail, and Lucy was irreversibly lost despite later attempts to regain her.

2. "Joy the luminous cloud:" The "Brocken-spectre" and the Child in Coleridge's Poetry

Whether Coleridge had the experience of the "Brocken-spectre" himself, possibly on the Harz tour with Blumenbach's son, is not certain, yet we find the phenomenon and its imagery repeatedly in Coleridge's poetry as his study of (Post-) Kantianism and was taking off after his return to England. On 4 April 1802, Coleridge wrote "Dejection: An Ode" and published it in *The Morning Post* on 4 October 1802 "as a sort of gift to Wordsworth, whose wedding-day it was" (Wu 507). Coleridge addresses Wordsworth with his poetic name "Edmund" in the first lines of the fourth stanza:

Oh Edmund, we receive but what we give,
 And in our life alone does nature live;
 Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold of higher worth
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed
 To the poor, loveless, ever-anxious crowd –
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the earth! (48-56)

Prickett states that "It is as if the 'glory' and 'fair luminous cloud' were the symbolic 'wedding garment' of the mind's union with nature that occurs in every act of human

perception. It is this union of perceiver and perceived that Coleridge means by the ‘Imagination’” (*Growth* 37). Notably, this notion of the imagination is being expressed by the metaphors of “A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud” that “from the soul itself must issue forth.” “Enveloping the earth” like the clouds driven through the Harz mountains by the wind, Coleridge unites Wordsworth’s soul as the “light” and “glory,” namely the projector, as well as the cloud as the “screen” of the projection. In the same stanza, Coleridge again draws on the same metaphorical “Brocken-spectre” imagery in order to convey his understanding of the imagination:

This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
 This beautiful and beauty-making pow’r
 Joy, virtuous Edmund! Joy that ne’er was given
 Save to the pure and in their purest hour,
 Joy, Edmund, is the spirit and the pow’r
 Which, wedding nature to us, gives in dow’r

A new earth and new heaven (“Dejection” 63-69)

Conveyed by the imagery of the “Brocken-spectre” – “This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist” – “perception and creativity are already inseparably linked in Coleridge’s mind. The creative imagination (later to be differentiated as the ‘Secondary Imagination’) is connected, in *Dejection*, with ‘joy’ in perception” (Prickett *Growth* 37): “Joy the luminous cloud” (“Dejection” 71). Coleridge later defined the “Primary Imagination” – the “beautiful” power – as the “living power and prime Agent of all human Perception;” the “Secondary Imagination” – the “beauty-making pow’r” – became to him “that quality of the mind’s imaginative activity which ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate... it struggles to unify.’”

Imagination is, for Coleridge, the activity by which the mind achieves all outward contact – and is therefore, of course, also the activity by which the mind sees itself. It is thus, by inference, the basis of all self-conscious reflection. The primary

imagination he calls the ‘agent of all human perception’ – which is seen in the human mind as a repetition, or parallel, of the activity of God himself in creation. The Secondary Imagination is unifying and consciously creative (in the artistic sense), and differs ‘only in degree and in the *mode* of its operation’ from the Primary. Coleridge is at pains to be explicit here. He defines both perception *and* artistic organization in terms of God’s original act of Creation: ‘Let there be... and it was so.’” (Prickett *Growth* 71-72)

As in the “Brocken-spectre” the spectator’s mind “sees itself,” the underlying process of “self-conscious reflection” showed to Coleridge a conception of the imagination as being “consciously creative.” This is Coleridge’s stance in 1817, his notion of the imaginative faculty to which his post-Göttingen philosophical study had led him. Most importantly, however, especially with Kant’s and Blumenbach’s collaboration in mind, Coleridge termed this “Secondary Imagination” as “essentially vital;” the product of the dissecting, altering, and reassembling of previous sense perception is a “new organic, vital whole” (Coveney 86). Having repeatedly addressed Wordsworth, Coleridge writes that “Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud” (“Dejection” 71) – and then links Wordsworth’s to his own creative imagination:

. . . . We, we ourselves rejoice!

And thence flows all that charms our ear or sight,

All melodies the echoes of that voice,

All colours a suffusion from that light. (72-75)

A light and a voice appear to charm both poets’ “ear or sight.” That voice is as omnipresent in “all melodies” as all the colours spread out from Newton’s prism are in ray of light that is cast upon it. Clearly, Coleridge sees himself and Wordsworth sharing this experience of the creative imagination being revived.

As both Peter Coveney and Stephen Prickett also cite the above passages of “Dejection” and relate it to Coleridge’s notion of the creative imagination, Prickett takes a step towards Wordsworth, while Coveney links this notion to Coleridge’s image of the child. Coveney asserts that “It was this intuitive, imaginative quality of the soul which Coleridge saw in the child, and which he anxiously wished to preserve: the power of the intuitive soul could only survive if the discontinuity between childhood and maturity were avoided; if indeed the development of self-consciousness were continuous, organic; if there were wholeness” (86). Coveney sees Coleridge’s child as the symbol of the vitality of the creative imagination, yet the critic does not connect this idea to the eighth stanza of “Dejection:”

But hush, there is a pause of deepest silence!

And all that noise of a rushing crowd,

With groans and tremulous shudderings – all is over.

It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud,

A tale of less affright

And tempered with delight,

As Edmund’s self had framed the tender lay –

‘Tis of a little child

Upon a lonesome wild

Not far from home, but she has lost her way,

And now moans low in utter grief and fear,

And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother *hear!* (108-19)

This is the tale of Lucy Gray, composed by Wordsworth in Goslar in the winter of 1798-99 (Wu 510). Coleridge, having described his “shaping spirit of imagination” as suspended, leads the reader through the noises and the horrors of the war against Napoleonic France, towards “A tale of less affright.” In the above lines of “Dejection,” Coleridge sums up Lucy Gray’s fate as Wordsworth “framed” it: a little girl who disappeared without a trace, but whose

legend has her forever “trip along” in “Solitude.” Wordsworth’s character of Lucy Gray disappeared in a nightly snowstorm, and similar to Coleridge’s wind acting as the “mighty poet” in “Dejection” (Wu 510), Lucy, on her “lonesome wild,” sings “a solitary song / That whistles in the wind” in Wordsworth’s poem (63-64). No one can hear the child’s song, not even her parents, and while she lives a joyful life, despite the separation from her parents, she does not grow older. “For Coleridge, in Dejection, joy is itself the harmony, the ‘strong music of the soul’” (Prickett *Growth* 102), yet along with Lucy’s song, all her original playful joy and harmony that characterise her in Wordsworth’s poem are lost. In “Lucy Gray” she “trips along / And never looks behind” to where she lost her parents (61-62), whereas Coleridge’s child “now moans low in utter grief and fear, / And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother *hear!*” Desperately trying to recover a past wholeness, Coleridge’s Lucy Gray is sharing her parents’ distress. Hence, reading Lucy as a symbol of creativity, embodying the “light,” the “glory,” and the “fair luminous cloud” of the “Brocken-spectre,” fits in with Prickett’s claim that “Dejection” is, “in a very real sense, an investigation into the suspension of [Coleridge’s] creative power that, by investigating it, releases it” (110). The crucial difference is, however, that this released creativity encompasses Wordsworth as a mere addressee, but not as its integral vital force within its processes any longer. Coleridge, as we find expressed by the newfound desperation of Lucy Gray, attempts to regain the past creative wholeness in the same way as “his” Lucy distraughtly attempts to return to her parents. He used the phenomenon of the “Brocken-spectre” as a symbol of creativity, and Wordsworth’s Lucy Gray in order to put into words the desperate attempts to regain the lost shared creativity.

With this creativity lost, Wordsworth moves from the invisibility of the creativity’s background to the surface; he becomes a subject of Coleridge’s poetry and its addressee, and vice versa, since *The Prelude* was originally the poem to Coleridge (Wu 300). This process of poetically addressing each other, while being unable to advance their joint project *The*

Recluse, is best illustrated by Coleridge's spontaneous reaction to hearing Wordsworth's *Thirteen-Book Prelude* in the New Year of 1807: the poem "To William 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, January 1807, Coleorton, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch" (Wu 514). In this poem's first line, Wordsworth is to Coleridge the "friend" and "teacher," "God's great gift!" After paying tribute to Wordsworth's poem, Coleridge, who had returned from his two-year stay in Malta in 1806 (Beer), turns to himself and his relation to Wordsworth:

. . . . And thy faithful hopes,
 Thy hopes of me, dear friend, by me unfelt
 Were troublous to me, almost as a voice
 Familiar once and more than musical
 To one cast forth, whose hope had seemed to die,
 A wanderer with a worn-out heart,
 Mid strangers pining with untended wounds! (59-66)

The last two lines may appear to echo Coleridge's impressions from his rather dangerous returning from Malta through the war-stricken European continent in late July and August 1806 (Beer), and hence the "hopes of me . . . by me unfelt" might signify Coleridge's absence from Wordsworth during his stay on the Mediterranean island. However, the following parallel phrasing in two of Coleridge's 1802 poems antedate the "hopes . . . unfelt," thereby offering the alternative reading that Coleridge's "hope had seemed to die" when he had his own adaptation of "Lucy Gray" "scream[] "loud, and hope[] to make her mother *hear*" in the 1802 version of "Dejection." Duncan Wu remarks that Coleridge's wandering "with a worn-out heart, / Mid strangers pining with untended wounds" parallels line 202 in the "Letter to Sara Hutchinson" of 1802 (516). The same can also be said of the wind being personified as the "mighty poet" in "Dejection," who tells us of "the rushing of a host in rout, / With many

groans of men with smarting wounds” (106) immediately before the noise fades away and the wind then tells of the upset “Lucy Gray.” Accordingly, “Thy hopes of me” may very well be Wordsworth’s intended meaning behind the figure of Lucy, namely the shared creative imagination being endangered, while “by me unfelt” would hence fit in as Coleridge’s initial misinterpretation of Lucy as Dorothy when this state of endangerment was acute in early 1799.

Having listened to Wordsworth’s reciting *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* on 7 January 1807, Coleridge is optimistic about a reinstatement of their former creativity, possibly envisaging Wordsworth now in the right creative state to compose *The Recluse*:

Oh friend, too well thou know’st, of what sad years
 The long suppression had benumbed my soul,
 That even as life returns upon the drowned,
 Th’ unusual joy awoke a throng of pains –
 Keen pangs of *love*, awakening, as a babe,
 Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart; (“To William Wordsworth” 67-72)

The imagery here is already familiar, although unusual in its density: “joy awoke a throng of pains” recalls the concept of the creative imagination outlined above, and once more this imagination is represented by the child. It is, however, not a Wordsworthian child who grows gradually through nature’s influence-taking, but a “babe” who, at the time of birth, already has a “Turbulent” innate capacity for “joy” and “*love*,” “with an outcry in the heart.” The oxymora “Th’ unusual joy” and the “throng of pains,” as well as the “Keen pangs” and “*love*” stress the vitality with which Coleridge sees the old creativity being restored. “Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart” also emphasises this vitality, while “as life returns upon the drowned,” echoes the fate of Lucy Gray, whose footprints disappear on a snow-covered bridge, implying that she is likely to have drowned. Moreover, there is the “*love*,” linked to the “joy” and the

“child” alike; this will play an important role as we will encounter it, or rather her, again in “Constancy.”

The strongest and most explicit hint towards restoring the pre-Germany creativity is Coleridge’s “reference to the *annus mirabilis* of 1797-8” (Wu 516):

. . . . Thou too, friend!

Oh injure not the memory of that hour

Of thy communion with my nobler mind

By pity or grief, already felt too long! (“To William Wordsworth” 87-91)

Coleridge poetically recalls the former state of creative wholeness, explicitly shared as the term “communion” insinuates, in order to see in the near future the union of Coleridge’s thought and Wordsworth’s composing skill that, by 1807 for eight years already, had been intended to culminate in *The Recluse* (Wordsworth / Darlington 3). Coleridge strives for the rediscovery of his mind’s “communion” with Wordsworth’s, despite the “pity” at his own condition depicted earlier in the poem, or the “grief” at the loss of creativity, “already felt too long.” During this “communion,” Wordsworth had “conceived his plan for *The Recluse* . . . , when his friendship [with Coleridge] was its fullest and strongest, and from its conception *The Recluse* bears the stamp of Coleridge’s influence” (Wordsworth / Darlington 3). Beth Darlington also notes that “in [Coleridge’s] presence, there were long, thought-provoking conversations,” while “in his absence, Wordsworth begged for instruction to help him find his way” (5-6); *The Prelude* had reaffirmed Coleridge’s belief in Wordsworth’s ability to compose *The Recluse*, but it needed Coleridge’s presence, not only his letters, to push Wordsworth’s progress on the poem. This had already been the case in 1804, when the “sleep[ing]” *Recluse* was “awakened” with Coleridge’s visit to Dove Cottage (Wordsworth / Darlington 5). Wordsworth needed Coleridge’s presence to advance their mutual creativity; in Coleridge’s absence, *The Prelude* became a surrogate *Recluse*, as it had already been the case in Germany.

Eighteen years after the poem “To William Wordsworth,” Coleridge wrote “Constancy to an Ideal Object,” another poem on the creative imagination; here again, Coleridge uses the imagery of vitality linked to love and nature, includes an almost verbatim reference to a “Lucy Poem” as well as the “Brocken-spectre.” Stephen Prickett sees in the following lines primarily the “question of what permanent value the artist’s insight can have amidst change and decay” (*Growth* 24):

Since all, that beat about in Nature’s range,
Or veer or vanish; why should’st thou remain
The only constant in a world of change,
O yearning THOUGHT! that liv’st but in the brain? (1-4)

This last question is rhetorical; its implied answer is a subordination of thought to the laws of nature, her re- and evolving. Moreover, thought does not only find its limitations through the outward imposition of natural transience, but also within itself through the inconceivability of the future: “Call to the HOURS, that in the distance play, / The faery people of the future day“ (5-6). Hence, Prickett calls the poem’s tone “pessimistic – even despairing” (24), yet only until the darkest point. Using the simile-personification of “like strangers” for hope and despair, he negotiates between these two forces that result from the indeterminacy of the awareness of life, but only “meet in the porch of Death:”

Fond THOUGHT! not one of all that shining swarm
Will breathe on *thee* with life-enkindling breath,
Till when, like strangers shelt’ring from a storm
Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death! (“Constancy” 7-10)

The poem’s initial lines are explicitly about thought. Furthermore, Prickett claims that it is mainly about creativity, stating that the later description of the Brocken-spectre “made such a lasting impression on [Coleridge] that he reverted to it as an image of a certain kind of ambiguity at intervals throughout the rest of his life. In particular, we find him associating it

with creativity” (*Growth* 23). In the rest of the chapter, Prickett argues his case through parallels between the moonlight ascent at Snowdon in *The Prelude*, “Kubla Khan,” and a general underlying notion echoing an idea of creativity recalling that of the “Brocken-spectre.” Hence, “Constancy” takes a turn from thought to creativity before Wordsworth is addressed, while one should note that by the poem’s composition of probably between 1825 and 1828 (*Poems* 455), their potential for creative collaboration had come to an end.

Nonetheless, as his contribution to *The Recluse* had proved fruitless, Coleridge integrated his idea of the imagination in “Constancy.” We can discern this synthesis in the poetic absorption of the “Brocken-spectre” in the poem’s final lines:

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
 The woodman winding westward up the glen
 At wintry dawn, where o’er the sheep-track’s maze
 The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist’ning haze,
 Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
 An image with a glory round its head;
 The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
 Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues! (26-32)

Using the imagery of the “Brocken-spectre” establishes an obvious link to Coleridge’s German experience, and it also shows the Romantic connotation of creativity and light in “wintry dawn,” “glist’ning haze,” and “glory.” Characterising Coleridge’s “Ideal” of creativity further, Prickett states that

The symbol of the Brocken-spectre is a reminder that the problem of poetic creation – and in particular, his own creativity – was for Coleridge an existential one. The sudden transformation from the desperately clung-to ‘ideal object’ to the acceptance of the ideal as a self-created spectre has all the characteristics of what a modern theologian (in a different context) has described as a ‘disclosure in depth’. The facts are not

altered, yet the situation is completely changed. The rustic is not the passive spectator, he pursues, and by his own act of pursuit gives life to his ideal (*Growth* 29)

Creativity is Coleridge's ideal, as can also be derived from his admiration of Schiller, and while pursuing this ideal with the utmost consequence, Coleridge "gives life" in writing the poem while at the same time explaining it. Still, the main difference to the original account of the phenomenon is that Coleridge's protagonist, the rustic, remains unaware of his mind's self-deception, and therefore does not experience the unboundedness of his own mind, that is to say, the Kantian sublime. The rustic creates his aim – his *telos*, as it were – as he "makes the shadow, he pursues" on two levels: firstly, on the sensually perceptive level, he is the real-life counterpart of the shadow, lends the figure its shape and motion. Secondly, he "makes the shadow" in his own head, namely creating the knowledge of it in his mind, thereby advancing the notion of this creative process. Nonetheless, the "rustic" does not see what Coleridge and the poem's reader-listener do see; while the rustic pauses in awe and "worships" the stunning apparition, he does not become aware of his mind's activity and is ultimately subordinated to the omniscient audience. Could this be a subtle criticism of Wordsworth's abiding by a Hartleian set of beliefs, thereby obstructing and ultimately preventing the influence of Coleridge's "new" philosophy on *The Recluse*, thereby rendering the project as such unfeasible? Coleridge dictated a more explicit criticism of Wordsworth's inability to compose *The Recluse* in 1832, stating that "Wordsworth had more materials for the great philosophic poet than any man I ever knew or (I think) has existed in this country for a long time – but he was utterly unfitted for the epic or narrative style" (qtd. in Wu 548). Had Wordsworth been pursuing, from Coleridge's point of view, the "Ideal Object" of creativity over the many years when *The Recluse* was not being accomplished, not seeing what lies behind the creative mind? If both questions were to be answered with a yes, then we could explain the "THOUGHT" of "Constancy" not only as the personified addressee of the poem, but as the thought that Coleridge intended to contribute to *The Recluse*, since this philosophical thought,

the “shining swarm,” would not “breathe on [Wordsworth] with life-enkindling breath, / Till when, like strangers shelt’ring from a storm / Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death.” Then the “*living Love*” who “before my eyes there stood” were the idea of *The Recluse*, waiting, “With answering look a ready ear to lend” for Coleridge to give his thought, and for Wordsworth to poeticise it (“Constancy” 14-15). In the same dictation, Coleridge also asserts that the collaboration with Wordsworth was “what in substance I have been all my life doing in my system of philosophy” (qtd. in Wu 548), which supports the idea that “Constancy” indeed criticises Wordsworth, but it was also that “system of philosophy” which discouraged Wordsworth in his unchanged Hartleianism.

Prickett chooses an account of John Stuart Mill who, in his own words “reminiscent of *The Ancient Mariner* . . . was . . . ‘left stranded at the commencement of [his] voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for’” (*Growth* 30). Indeed, Coleridge alludes to the “Ancient Mariner” in “Constancy:”

Without thee were but a becalméd Bark,
Whose Helmsman on an Ocean waste and wide
Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside. (23-25)

The analogy of the absence of creativity to the lull in the “Ancient Mariner” conjures up memories of the 1798 creativity, while at the same time borrows this creativity’s potential to convey the meaning of creativity as such. Remarkably, Wordsworth also used Coleridge’s “Vision of that Ancient Man, / The bright-eyed Mariner” when he recalled how during “That summer under whose indulgent skies / Upon smooth Quantock’s airy ridge we roved” (*Cornell Prelude* xiv: 401-02; 397-98). These lines closely precede this paper’s epigraph, and they also recall the “happiness” of the *annus mirabilis*, while seeing the mariner’s ship “becalméd” inevitably leads to the centre of “Constancy,” admittedly the most ambiguous section. Prickett does not interpret this middle section in his chapter on the “Brocken-spectre,”

yet the centre of “Constancy” fits into the German sojourn, the context of Blumenbach’s influence and the mood of creativity that found its expression in the poem:

Yet still thou haunt'st me; and though well I see,
 She is not thou, and only thou art she,
 Still, still as though some dear *embodied* Good,
 Some *living* Love before my eyes there stood
 With answering look a ready ear to lend,
 I mourn to thee and say--` Ah! loveliest Friend! (11-16)

In this section “Thou” shifts away from the “thought” of the first lines towards the “loveliest Friend,” while “she” appears without previous reference. If the poem frames the situation of 1798-99, then Wordsworth was the “loveliest Friend.” And if, as Prickett argues, creativity is the “ideal object” of the title, could “she” therefore be the personification of the omnipresent creativity, in fact the creativity that once made the mariner’s “Bark” move? If Coleridge is suggesting that “[Creativity] is not [Wordsworth], and only [Wordsworth] [is] [creativity],” then this would match Coleridge seeing Wordsworth as the only person who had the poetic skill to compose *The Recluse*, but who did not do it. The explanation for this failure may thus be Wordsworth’s reluctance to share, or the inability to express Coleridge’s metaphysics, expressed in the image of the rustic not realising the potential of his mind. This failure still “haunt[s]” Coleridge. “She,” creativity, the explicitly “*living Love*” as an “*embodied Good*” – is a thing of the past, and she is mourned just as Wordsworth’s Lucy, who could be described as the “*living Love*” whose critical condition had already haunted Wordsworth in Goslar.

In the remaining lines at the centre of the poem, which act as another *aide memoire* to the German experience, Coleridge uses Wordsworth’s imagery of “Strange fits of passion.” As the latter is another “Lucy Poem,” it parallels Coleridge’s reference to “Lucy Gray” in “Dejection:”

To have a home, an English home, and thee!

Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.

The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon (17-19)

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth repeatedly alludes to Coleridge poems, for instance to “Christabel” and “Frost at midnight.” Applying the same strategy in reverse order, Coleridge will have used “The peacefull’st cot, the moon shall shine upon” in the same metaphorical context of creativity as Wordsworth did in “Strange fits of passion,” when “Towards the roof of Lucy’s cot / The moon descended still” (15-16). Accordingly, the “she” of “Constancy” is the advancement of the creativity that Prickett recognises within the poetic depiction of the “Brocken-spectre,” and at the same time that “this *living* Love” has been lost just like Lucy. Coleridge is aware to whom he is mourning this loss; the friend whose despair he had not seen when Lucy was in the immediate danger of being lost during the months in Germany, and whose imagery Coleridge had used in “Dejection” in order to press for the recovery of the creative imagination. “Constancy” is on the whole about Coleridge’s experience: In “Dejection,” Coleridge had struggled for the regaining of the creativity with Wordsworth; in 1807, he saw this creativity – fickle as nature’s allowing and forbidding the “Brocken-spectre – on the verge of being regained in the poem “To William Wordsworth.” By 1825, in “Constancy,” Coleridge had become aware that this creativity, personified by the character of Lucy, was irrevocably lost.

3. Exit Lucy, Enter the Shepherd-Boy: *The Prelude* and the Child

Addressing Coleridge in “Book Fourteenth,” Wordsworth referred to *The Prelude* as “the History of a Poet’s mind” (Cornell *Prelude* xiv: 414); Meyer Howard Abrams observed that “The whole poem is written as a sustained address to Coleridge,” the “author *in absentia*” (74). Abrams also stresses that “In the verse preceding the [*Recluse*’s] Prospectus in its original place at the end of *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth announces his discovery that he

has been chosen to be a poet-prophet for his age” (21). *Home at Grasmere*, “Part First, Book First of *The Recluse*,” was probably composed between 1800 and 1806 (Wordsworth / Darlington 8-19), the time span that also saw *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* being accomplished. Robert Langbaum calls this interval “Wordsworth’s most creative years” (95), which is to say – for the most part – individually.

As the collaboration with Coleridge becomes memory, Wordsworth, in *Home at Grasmere*, sees himself as having ‘been granted “an internal brightness” that is “shared by none” and “compels him, “divinely taught,” to speak “Of what in man is human or divine”’ (Abrams 21). Wordsworth has acquired a new imaginative “brightness,” an “internal” lucidity which is not only matchless and unprecedented, but which he also no longer shares with anyone. There is, however, Wordsworth’s brightening individual creativity that led to *The Prelude*, and there is the collaboration with Coleridge that, as Darlington noted, became reduced to occasional flickers of creativity in Coleridge’s presence after 1799. From the German sojourn onwards, Wordsworth’s creativity is gradually breaking away from Coleridge’s influence, and in 1814 Coleridge expressed his disappointment at this development, stating that “In the very Pride of confident Hope I looked forward to the *Recluse*, as the *first* and *only* true Phil[osophical] Poem in existence. Of course, I expected the Colors, Music, imaginative Life, and Passion of *Poetry*; but the matter and arrangement of Philosophy” (qtd. in Wordsworth / Darlington 7). That is to say, the philosophy that Coleridge had been developing over the previous fifteen years, and that marked the breaking away from Hartley’s former influence, is expressed at its clearest in the *Biographia* three years later. Helen Darbishire notes a “divergence” between each poet’s idea behind *The Recluse* (Wordsworth / Darbishire V: 368), a divergence that Beth Darlington characterises: “Whereas Coleridge would have expected a philosophical discourse delivered by the poet *in propria persona*, Wordsworth would have inclined toward a narrative or dramatic work” (6). While Coleridge’s “philosophical discourse” was never achieved, Wordsworth indeed accomplished

his “narrative” in *The Prelude*, where he subtly takes the stance of the Hartleian philosophy that Coleridge had come to dismiss. The gradual growth of the human mind under the influence of nature replaces Coleridge’s philosophy inasmuch as *The Prelude* replaces *The Recluse* as Wordsworth’s masterpiece.

The history of Wordsworth’s mind as it led to the state of imaginative mastery in *The Prelude* has its own, unique history of revision and expansion; Wordsworth began composing it in the winter of 1798-99 in Goslar, and finished “The Two-Part Prelude” in the autumn of 1799 (Wu 300). Having settled in Grasmere, Wordsworth returned to the poem in early 1804 “with the aim of turning it into a poem consisting of five Books” (Wu 380). In early March 1804 this concept was abandoned and Wordsworth began working towards *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, which he read out to the family gathering that included Coleridge in January 1807 (Wu 385), and which spawned Coleridge’s poem “To William Wordsworth” cited above.

The final version of *The Prelude* (its first printed edition) was *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, which was published for the first time shortly after Wordsworth’s death in 1850 by Edward Moxon, “Wordsworth’s usual publisher in his later years” (Owen 3). However, as Wordsworth had left behind different manuscripts of the poem in fourteen books (Owen 3), it has since proved complicated to “establish a text such as Wordsworth would have approved for the final version of the poem, and to provide all variant readings in manuscripts of the fourteen-book poem and in the first printed edition” (Owen ix). This first printed edition of 1850 relied on Wordsworth’s latest of the five major manuscripts (Manuscript E), whereas the Norton and the Cornell editors agreed on the authority of the earlier Manuscript D over E (Owen x). Although the date of Manuscript D “is not precisely determinable,” the watermarks on the sheets indicate that “the copying must have begun at the earliest in 1824 and continued in or after 1828” (Owen 6). These years of Wordsworth’s individual poetic creativity match the years when Coleridge wrote and published “Constancy,” when he occupied himself with the theme of creativity while frequently addressing his friend. Naturally, Manuscript E dates

even later than 1828, and although “There seems to be no clear evidence for the date or dates of the revision” of it, much conversational detail listed by Owen suggests that this latest manuscript’s revision dates around 1839 (9). Even though editing scholars agree that Manuscript E is less authoritative, the fact that Wordsworth continued to revise *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* until this late in his life shows the sheer duration of the poem’s history of revision. Thus, *The Prelude* consists of the “History of a Poet’s mind” that, from its first word written in Germany in 1798 to Manuscript E of probably 1839, is subjugated to an extended history of revision by its creator/protagonist. Due to this constellation, the poetically portrayed history (Wordsworth’s coming of age) may be labelled *The Prelude*’s object history, as it (in the manner of the grammatical object) continuously underwent the modifications of an active agent (in the manner of the grammatical subject). This active agent is Wordsworth the poet, and accordingly the history of his action represents *The Prelude*’s subject history.

As argued above, the subject history from the winter of 1798-99 onwards is inextricably linked with attempts at composing *The Recluse*. And yet, “In spite of persistent and anguished effort Wordsworth accomplished, in addition to *The Prelude*, only Book I of Part I (*Home at Grasmere*), Part II (*The Excursion*), and none of Part III; so that, as Helen Darbishire has remarked, all we have of *The Recluse* is ‘a Prelude to the main theme and Excursion from it’” (Abrams 19). The envisaged *grand oeuvre* remains fundamentally incomplete: “it is after all a fragment, albeit a very large one” (Johnston *Recluse* xiii). Helen Darbishire’s wordplay discovers an underlying irony that expands even further the irony of Wordsworth’s situation as a recluse in Goslar: that of his inability to write a poem of that very title. Whether intentional or not, the irony surrounding a fundamental failure is every bit as Wordsworthian as the treatment of the flawed protagonist of *The Prelude*. No less than the Wordsworthian hero stumbles from one blunder to the next and thereby grows, Wordsworth himself, in the winter of 1798-99, faces the failure of not being able to compose *The Recluse* and

subsequently finds his way into writing his true, yet initially unintended masterpiece *The Prelude*.

As *The Prelude* was originally meant to be a mere “tributary,” a “sort of portico to the *Recluse*” (Abrams 73), a shared future creativity with Coleridge is still imagined. Moreover, with the years of revision and *The Prelude*’s transition from the sole “tributary” to the autonomous masterpiece, the role of Coleridge within the poem is subtly altered: since with *The Recluse* their creative friendship failed, *The Prelude* eventually came to look back upon this friendship in very much the same manner as the “Lucy Poems” depict their heroine’s transience. It is subject history working upon object history: as Wordsworth became aware of the failure of *The Recluse* over the years, and increasingly disagreed with Coleridge’s philosophical development, the figure of Coleridge within the poem moves from a future ideal of creativity towards a past one that leads to the individual poet’s mastery.

While Coleridge was learning German and going to the Göttingen lectures in 1799, Wordsworth, in his Goslar exile, expressed his disappointment at not managing to get on with *The Recluse*, “the great millennial epic poem proposed by Coleridge” (Wu 300):

Was it for this
 That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
 To blend his murmurs with my nurse’s song,
 And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
 And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
 That flowed along my dreams? (Wu “Two-Part Prelude” i: 1-6),

Wordsworth is falling back on himself. Even in these first few lines, we can already see the poem’s central theme: nature’s influence, from his birth, on the growing poet. The river is being personified in “blend[ing] his murmurs;” it is a poet like Coleridge’s wind, while the river’s “song” is already having an impact on the infant’s earliest sense perception and, subsequently, dreams. Since Wordsworth wrote the “Lucy Poems” and began *The Prelude* in

Goslar, the months in Germany are characterised by Wordsworth significantly occupying himself with the themes of childhood and growth in his poetry.

Coveney argues that “The child became for Wordsworth the basis of a whole philosophy of human nature” (33). The newfound philanthropic concept of the child being originally innocent represents a break from the “long Christian tradition of original sin,” a philosophical turn which largely owed to and began with Rousseau (Coveney 33), and which was completed with Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s “Romantic child” (Coveney 37). Thus, the Romantic notion of the child may appropriately be termed as an “enlightening spirit;” while we have already noted how Coleridge connected the idea of the child to the joy and vitality of the imagination, which again he linked to the “Brocken-spectre” and its related philosophy of vitality in order to overcome Newton’s rigid physics, Wordsworth developed a similar concept of the child in his poetry. As Newton’s and Locke’s works had “initiated a period of wide intellectual acceptances and assurance,” the “scope of literature became contained within the potentialities of satire, which in itself presupposes an order fundamentally accepted” (Coveney 37-38). Coveney states that “the greatest Augustan literature is satirical” and that “Satire is an emanation from order itself, investigating such factors as ‘bad taste’” (38); hence Wordsworth’s – as well as Coleridge’s – breaking this order through introducing the new idea of the child stands in line with the claim of the Advertisement of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* to act as an experiment in the face of “our own pre-established codes of decision.”

Nonetheless, *The Prelude*’s thematic innovation comes in the traditional guise of the quest romance. Apart from other distinctions less relevant definitions, the *OED* discriminates between the quest as a “Search or pursuit, made in order to find or obtain something” and its similar, yet more specific meaning in the context of the mediaeval quest romance. Frances Ferguson points out for the “Lucy Poems” that the metres of *The Prelude* also recall medieval quest romance (535), and W. J. T. Mitchell asserts that “Wordsworth’s autobiography has a

comic structure, treating all its hero's errors, perplexities, and misfortunes as episodes in a providential pattern that leads to a blessed state of calm mastery and power" (647). In this latter teleological interpretation the "blessed state of mastery and power" resembles the sangrail of the Arthurian legend, the symbol of Christian divinity, transformed by the Wordsworthian interplay of the mind, nature, and the Christian God in *The Prelude*'s subject history (Wordsworth's post-Goslar biography as it influenced his autobiography). Thereby, the medieval quest romance for the biblical allegory of the Last Supper and ultimately the strive for the contact with God has attained a novel representation, or rather a self-representation, in *The Prelude* and its protagonist's growth of mind; the "sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused" in the nature of "Tintern Abbey" integrates the "providential pattern" mentioned above by Mitchell. This pattern is scattered with the "hero's errors, perplexities, and misfortunes," with failures, as it were. At the same time, these failures have the hero succeed, however unconventionally, like the flawed Gawain over the Green Knight, characterising *The Prelude* as a Romantic verse tale of pursuit, a Romantic quest romance of the narrator-hero spawned by the "Romantic mania for the medieval" (McFarland *Ruin* 8).

Accordingly, *The Prelude*'s "History of a Poet's mind" in its function as a "tributary" (Johnston *Recluse* xi) to the intended poetic masterpiece represents a quest for poetic maturity; for the highest state of creativity, as it were. This quest transforms itself from the "tributary" to a means and end in itself: the "dialectical intertwining between *The Recluse* and *The Prelude*, as Wordsworth tries to decide if he can tell a story or if he must *be* his story" (Johnston *Recluse* 27), gradually shifts further towards the latter over the years of *The Prelude*'s revision and with the failure of *The Recluse* becoming more likely. As Wordsworth's collaboration with Coleridge fails, both poets continue to share similar views on childhood:

For Coleridge, then, education should be the cultivation of those ‘moral institutions’; the ‘excitement’ of the child’s ‘germinal powers’; an act of careful excitement and preservation. For him, no less than for Wordsworth, the child was an integral part of his whole philosophy. Only by the preservation of the child’s wonder, joy, and spontaneous imagination could Man’s moral nature develop into Reason and Imagination, the two sovereigns of his mature existence. (Coveney 89)

Coveney backs up his claim by pointing at Coleridge’s lecture on “The New System of Education,” published in November 1813. Here, Coleridge had declared that he felt a “sense of melancholy . . . when viewing an infant” because of the “thought, doubtlessly felt by everyone – if he could begin his career again, if he could recover that innocency once possessed, and connect it with virtue” (qtd. in Coveney 89). Coleridge linked nature with joy in the imagery of the “Brocken-spectre” in “Dejection,” while additionally his “ideas of a child [as] cheerful and playful” show the same triangular interplay as it can be found in Wordsworth’s poetry (Coveney 90): “Nature” works on the “child” through “joy.” Moral betterment is the consequence, since “For Wordsworth, childhood was the ‘seed-time’ of the ‘soul’. He saw the development of the human mind as organic through infancy and youth to maturity. The relationship between the Child and Nature was fundamental to his concept of the growth of the moral personality. The child was in fact an essential part of the ‘wisdom’ he sought to convey” (Coveney 68).

During *The Prelude*’s subject history (the poem’s history of revision and expansion) it can be seen how Wordsworth modifies the joy-causing interaction between the child and nature (represented through the poem’s object history) in order to take a step back from the Coleridgean Pantheism that had once influenced the *Lyrical Ballads*, and, with the exception of the idea of the child’s original innocence, towards more traditional Christian values. The first two-part manuscript of *The Prelude* written in Goslar between October 1798 and February 1799 and concluded in Dove Cottage, Grasmere, in the autumn of 1799, bears a

further significant similarity to the famous “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey.” After races with “rival oars” on Lake Windermere, the young Wordsworth and his childhood friends

. . . rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
 Conquered and conqueror. Thus our selfishness
 Was mellowed down, and thus the pride of strength
 And the vainglory of superior skill
 Were interfused with objects which subdued
 And tempered them, and gradually produced
 A quiet independence of the heart. (Wu “Two-Part Prelude” ii: 66-72)

Pantheism had risen with the works of Spinoza in the seventeenth century, but in the 1798-99 “Two-Part Prelude” we can trace the Coleridgeian Unitarian Pantheism that had influenced their *annus mirabilis* at Alfoxden significantly. The Romanic compound word “interfused” is bound to strike any reader who is familiar with Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (*OED*), but it will more profoundly conjure up the Pantheistic elements in “Tintern Abbey:” thus, it illustrates through its immanent Pantheism Coleridge’s influence at the initial stage of composing *The Prelude*. This stuns as soon as one recognises the omission of the mingled “objects” and their feebler replacement by the passive voice:

. . . Thus the pride of strength,
 And the vain-glory of superior skill,
 Were tempered, thus was gradually produced
 A quiet independence of the heart: (Cornell *Prelude* ii: 69-72)

Wordsworth did not leave out the passage of the “interfused . . . objects” simply in order to avoid the repetition of a neologism that would inevitably be linked to “Tintern Abbey” by many readers; he could easily have found a synonymous replacement to fit into the metre. The deliberate exclusion of the segment effectively creates a greater distance between the reader’s

subject of identification, the Wordsworthian protagonist, and the once intermingling, all-embracing divine power fathomable in “Tintern Abbey” and “The Two-Part Prelude.” Since “By 1817 Wordsworth had passed very much out of Coleridge’s orbit, and the creative side of their friendship was a thing of the past” (Prickett *Growth* 10), the above omission also hints towards an intentional modification of Coleridge’s bygone sway (in the form of Pantheism) on Wordsworth’s thought. 1817, the year of the *Biographia*, will shortly play a significant role in the interpretation of the “Phantom” in “Book Fourteenth.”

Nature, which had previously been interlinked with the vaguely perceptible Pantheist deity of “Something far more deeply interfused,” remains omnipresent throughout *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, yet from 1798 to about 1828 the Pantheistic elements are more and more replaced by images of traditional Christianity. Through deliberately excluding the “interfused . . . objects,” the force tempering “the vain-glory of superior skill,” the whole meaning of the section changes: nature is still there as the setting in which joy is being experienced, and in this setting nature soothes the thwarted juvenile ambition of the boat race competition. Within nature, the society of children embraces and concludes this momentous errand; nature has been deprived of its, comparatively vague, Pantheist deity. This supports the overall development that James Chandler locates, namely that in his later years, “Wordsworth becomes more and more explicit and less and less provisional in his traditionalism” (*Second Nature* 168), that “Wordsworth confronted the moral problems of the early Victorian period with an Anglican orthodoxy (Coveney 81).

The importance of the above quoted passage of *The Prelude* is that it immediately precedes an explicit self-characterisation of the narrator-protagonist in which he accounts for the formation of his personal faculties. Wordsworth draws a causal link on two levels between the aforementioned “quiet independence of the heart” and the following extract through the conjunction “hence” and the use of the colon in *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, which is also incorporated in the quotation above. The “friend,” as throughout the poem, is Coleridge:

And, to my friend who knows me, I may add,

Fearless of blame, that hence, for future days,

Ensued a diffidence and modesty;

And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,

The self-sufficing power of solitude. (Cornell *Prelude* ii: 73-77)

This “solitude” stresses Wordsworth’s individuality, but it also holds a further reference to Milton; *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, just as the Prospectus to *The Recluse*, “recalls Milton’s assertion that he sings with unchanged voice, though ‘with dangers compass round, / And solitude’; this passage Milton used to introduce Raphael’s account of the creation of the world, and as in Wordsworth, it closely precedes his prayer that he ‘fit audience find, though few’” (Abrams 21). Milton claimed “divine inspiration” for his plot, and so does Wordsworth:

He undertakes, that is, to represent what he calls a “creation”; and if he does not explicitly set forth this version of a fall and a loss of Eden (though Coleridge later claimed that this had been his intention), he at least proposes a resurrection from the “sleep / Of death” and the way to the instauration of an earthly paradise – transferred, however, from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference, for this paradise will be “A simple produce of the common day,” and is described by words “Which speak of nothing more than what we are.” (Abrams 23)

Wordsworth’s “Program for Poetry” echoes his “Phantom of delight,” who is “not too bright or good / For human nature’s daily food” (17-18). Moreover, since the Prospectus was a program for the poetry of *The Recluse*, it does not surprise that we find the realisation of this program in the subject history of *The Prelude* as the aforementioned poem failed to be accomplished. While the revision of *The Prelude* continues, we find Wordsworth incorporating what Abrams calls “Natural Supernaturalism” into this poem to Coleridge. Thereby, the program for *The Recluse* gradually becomes the program for *The Prelude* as the latter poem’s subject history continues.

In *The Prelude*, we encounter how Wordsworth put into practice his “emended version of Milton’s argument” (Abrams 23), now in the triangular interplay of himself, nature, and traditional Christianity. The reader finds Wordsworth’s calm solitude in the setting of divine nature, whereas only a few lines before the above cited section of *The Fourteen Book Prelude*, solitude is now used in connection with the Virgin Mary:

And now a third small island, where survived,
 In solitude, the ruins of a shrine
 Once to our Lady dedicate, and served
 Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race,
 So ended, disappointment could be none,
 Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy;
 We rested (Cornell *Prelude* ii: 62-68)

These lines immediately herald the omission of the “interfused . . . objects” and deliver an explicitly Christian element within the natural scenario on the poetical foreground. The boat race of the young Wordsworth and his friends reaches its final climax on the “third small island,” where now the shrine of the Virgin Mary, ruined and thereby emotionally even more evocative, is overtly mentioned. This is not the case in the 1798 “Two-Part Prelude;” here, the boys reach “a third small island where remained / An old stone table and one mouldered cave - / A hermit’s history.” (ii: 61-63). Even though “hermit” implies solitude, not to mention being synonymous to “recluse,” the term solitude is not expressed literally here.

All of this reaffirms the previous hypothesis that the significant omission was not *metri causa*, but rather intended to alter the meaning of this whole section that provides an example of how *The Prelude*’s histories interlink, and which turn Wordsworth gave to the poem over its years of revision. He was aware that through excluding the argued Pantheist facet a spiritual vacuum would ensue, thus he indulged this potential entrapment beforehand. His “diffidence and modesty,” his realising the “self-sufficing power of solitude” are the

unswerving results of the build-up, and since this section escorts the reader towards the narrator's clear statement on his personality, its importance ought not to be underestimated.

In spite of Wordsworth's drifting away from the influence Coleridge had once had on him, the child remained the holder of the imagination for both poets. However, while Coleridge moved away from the Hartleian associationism and towards the idea of a more inherently active, independent mind restructuring sense perception during the creative processes, Wordsworth stuck to the idea of a more rigid, gradual succession of the child's experiences in nature to make her or him creative:

Both *The Prelude* and the earlier *Lines Written above Tintern Abbey* (1798), are an investigation of the method by which, through Nature and the association of its experiences, the 'immortal spirit grows like harmony in music'. [Wordsworth's] investigation returned to childhood, to the 'seed-time' of the 'soul'. He begins his story 'early', in the attempt to 'understand himself'. The reference to Hartley is close and unmistakable. Infancy, a time of absolute sensation, is the first of the Hartleian 'three ages of Man'. (Coveney 74)

Asserting that Wordsworth not exclusively, but considerably followed Hartley's philosophy, Coveney also claims that "In Hartley, [Wordsworth] clearly considered himself possessed of the means to effect a fusion of emotion and thought, by displaying the organic growth of human consciousness from infancy to childhood according to the principles of associationism" (71); "a fusion of emotion and thought" growing in nature, which can also be said of the character of Lucy. Prickett confirms Coveney's assertion by stating that behind *The Prelude* "is a theory of growth which came, in the first instance, from Hartley" (*Growth* 31). To Wordsworth, this "concept of the child as a *tabula rasa*, impressed, and only impressed by the informing, 'intertwining' influences of Nature" led to virtue; virtue, thus, "for Wordsworth was not innate, in Rousseau's sense," as Wordsworth "followed neither Blake nor Coleridge into transcendentalist intuition (Coveney 75). This final remark of

Coveney, along with Wordsworth's above cited "immortal spirit grow[ing] like harmony in music," defines precisely where Coleridge's and Wordsworth's largely shared notions of the child differ irreconcilably: Coleridge's "transcendentalist intuition" amounts to an *a priori* faculty (similar to the transcendental element that defines the interface of Kant's and Blumenbach's research depicted in Chapter One) – pondering the outside stimuli perceived by the senses, whereas these outside stimuli in connection to the perceived environment to Wordsworth were the sole educator in his idea of the child. James Chandler's findings that 'Coleridge sees associationism as a reduction of human affairs to material affairs, or action to "mere motion,"' whereas Wordsworth "insists that the same force impels all thinking things *and* all objects of all thoughts" (*Second Nature* 260), lend further support to the claim that poets' shared idea of the lively, joyful, imaginative child is characterised by that unbridgeable gap between philosophies. Concluding the above quoted sentence, Chandler sees in the associationist force of growth (that did not live up to Coleridge's idea of the mind) a Wordsworthian "motion *and* a spirit" (*Second Nature* 260). In Goslar, Wordsworth personified that lively motion and its spirit, the "fusion of emotion and thought," and gave it the name Lucy. Lucy was then the child-spirit behind the *Lyrical Ballads*, who had been planned to grow into *The Recluse*, but who was lost as her creators' philosophical paths split.

4. *The Prelude's* Phantom and Intimations of Immortality

In 1802, when Coleridge was occupying himself with creativity and tried to recover "Lucy Gray" in "Dejection," Wordsworth began to write his "Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (Wu 365). The poem starts out in gloom, the very feeling of dejection that Coleridge describes in the poem of that very title and the same year:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem

Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it has been of yore;

Turn wheresoe'er I may

By night or day

The things which I have seen I now can see no more. ("Immortality" 1-9)

Nature was once clothed in a heavenly light that gave to it the feeling of a "glory and the freshness of a dream." Nature, youth, light, and even dream recall the imagery of the "Lucy poems," and so does the underlying tone of loss and resulting dejection. In the following lines, the rose and moonlight deepen the recollections of the "Lucy poems:"

The rainbow comes and goes

And lovely is the rose,

The moon does with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare;

Waters on a starry night

Are beautiful and fair;

The sunshine is a glorious birth;

But yet I know, where'er I go,

That there hath passed away a glory from the earth. ("Immortality" 10-18)

The world has not changed. Beauty is still omnipresent in nature, while the sun shines on it like a surrogate "celestial light." And yet, despite the sunshine being "a glorious birth," one certain "glory" has been lost. The loss of that very glory that had once enveloped the earth is as omnipresent as beauty; Wordsworth, wherever he goes, cannot escape the feeling of gloom that stands in stark contrast to the beauty of nature, a contrast as stark as that of the joy that nature once gave, that has now been replaced by dejection. Still, Coveney sees in the poem a "dedication to new powers" (77), and indeed the initially described pessimism, the dejection

in the very sense of the term, in the face of the loss of a “glory” are being left behind while new strength is regained:

Now while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor’s sound,
 To me alone there came a thought of grief;
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief
 And I again am strong. (“Immortality” 19-24)

Coleridge, in “Dejection,” addresses Wordsworth as the “simple spirit, guided from above,” as the “lofty poet, full of light and love” (136-37), wishing him to regain his creative strength. Moreover, according to Wordsworth’s “Immortality Ode,” he is strong again after having given his “thought of grief” a “timely utterance.” While Coleridge, in the spring of 1802, turns from “This dark distressful dream” – an image which in itself bears resemblance to Wordsworth’s dream in “Strange fits” – and tries to recover “Lucy Gray” (“Dejection” 89), Wordsworth overcomes his “thought of grief” he depicted through the imagery of the “Lucy poems.” Coleridge praises and thereby sustains Wordsworth’s poetic skill by declaring a reciprocal vivacity between all things on earth and Wordsworth’s ability to capture them in his poetry, saying that “Joy lifts thy spirit, joy attunes thy voice, / To thee all things live from pole to pole, / Their life the eddying of thy living soul!” (“Dejection” 133-35). Wordsworth indeed pronounces himself rediscovering the joy of the interplay with nature that he had lost:

No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
 I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
 The winds come to me from the fields of sleep
 And all the earth is gay;
 Land and sea
 Give themselves up to jollity, (“Immortality” 26-31)

As “jollity” is recovered in the interplay with nature, one would also expect Lucy Gray to reappear. A child indeed appears immediately after, but it is not her:

And with the heart of May

Doth every beast keep holiday.

Thou child of joy

Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy shepherd-boy! (“Immortality” 32-35)

Wordsworth is not recovering what, or rather who was once lost; he is leaving behind a former joy while he is discovering a new life and a new joy. Yet even in this progress, which also resembles by the poem’s setting in spring, Wordsworth is constantly being reminded of the lost glory:

And the babe leaps up in his mother’s arm –

I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!

But there’s a tree, of many one,

A single field which I have looked upon,

Both of them speak of something that is gone;

The pansy at my feet

Doth the same tale repeat:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream? (“Immortality” 49-57)

With this question Wordsworth abandons the poem in March 1802, to resume it two years later (Wu 375; Coveney 77). The babe is now male, just like the shepherd boy, while the flower imagery recalls “the visionary gleam” that has “fled,” but also Lucy, the “violet by a mossy stone” who “ceased to be” (“Song” 5; 10). Additionally, the “single field” that “speak[s] of something that is gone” recalls “the last green field / Which Lucy’s eyes surveyed” that Wordsworth gave a picture of in “I travelled among unknown men” (14-15).

While they were both struggling for creativity, from different philosophical angles as it were, Coleridge and Wordsworth continued to share Rousseau's revolutionary view of the child being born innocent, breaking with the Christian tradition of Original Sin. For both poets, nature's influence gave joy to the child. "Book Fourteenth" of *The Prelude* provides the perhaps most impressive account of how the growth of the child as the holder of imagination had caused a conflict between Wordsworth and Coleridge, and how the shared idea of the child came to stand irreconcilably between the poets as a shared symbol of different notions of the imagination. This difference in the philosophy of the imagination offers an explanation as to why Coleridge achieved the fusion of philosophy and poetry in his later works such as "Constancy," while his creative partnership with Wordsworth – and here especially Coleridge's role of contributing philosophical thought – had failed.

The Goslar months represent the timeframe on which *The Prelude*'s histories hinge, and these months also set an *almost* exact timeframe to the composition of the "Lucy Poems." *Almost*, because with the beginning of *The Prelude*'s composition in Goslar we know where Wordsworth's lifelong history of revision commences. But defining where *The Prelude*'s portrayed history leaves us is difficult. A clear line cannot be drawn since the spots in the portrayed history of "Book Thirteenth" and "Fourteenth" intermingle; W. J. B. Owen's notes on dating *The Prelude* can only vaguely suggest a latest recognisable point in the history of Wordsworth's mind, which took place "presumably between late 1795 and summer 1797" (253). Even though we cannot determine a fixed point in time, we can say that this latest chronological reference covers the earliest stages of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's friendship. The addresser meets the addressee, and is soon to poeticise this meeting in the final lines of "Book Thirteenth." Leaping back in time, Wordsworth next recalls his ramblings across Salisbury Plain in 1793 verbatim to finally lead the addressee on to the illuminating event of their first encounter:

. . . : and thou, O Friend!

Pleased with some unpremeditated strains
 That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said
 That then and there my mind had exercised
 Upon the vulgar form of present things,
 The actual world of our familiar days,
 Yet higher power, had caught from them a tone,
 An image, and a character, by books
 Not hitherto reflected. Call we this

A partial judgement – and yet why? . . . (Cornell *Prelude* xiii: 351-60)

Owen highlights Coleridge's comments in the *Biographia* which recall the working of Wordsworth early poetry on his mind (255). In Chapter 4 of the *Biographia*, subtitled "The lyrical ballads with the preface – Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poems – On fancy and imagination – The investigation of the distinction important to the fine arts," Coleridge had referred to hearing Wordsworth recite "Guilt and Sorrow; or Incidents upon Salisbury Plain:"

It was not however the freedom from false taste . . . which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgement. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.

(I: 80)

The description of the creative process in Coleridge's mind upon listening to Wordsworth matches the subject of Coleridge's sonnet to Schiller; Coleridge's "imaginative faculty" experiences the "union of deep feeling with profound thought" as its "fine balance of truth in observing" vividly modifies "the objects observed." In the context of the "Brocken-spectre"

we have already noted Prickett describing Coleridge's notion of the imagination as the "union of the perceiver and perceived" (*Growth* 37); by invoking such an inherently vivid imagination, Wordsworth, like Schiller, has the ability to give imaginative pleasure to the "ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations" that had previously lost this pleasure. Wordsworth creates, and thereby gives life; "all the lustre," sparkle," and "dew drops" become alive once more as the result of Wordsworth's poetic skill. Remarkably, Coleridge sees in Wordsworth the ability "To carry on the feelings childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances" (*Biographia* I: 80-81). Once again, the child is Wordsworth's and Coleridge's shared symbol for creativity, while this creativity owes to different philosophical approaches, Wordsworth's being a non-innate Hartleian associationism, Coleridge's a belief in the *a priori* imaginative faculty of the mind.

Rosemary Ashton remarks that "It was important for Coleridge to include the creation and study of literature in his thorough-going scrutiny of the faculties, just as Kant had followed his critiques of the mental and moral faculties with a third Critique, that of 'Judgement', the faculty of 'purposiveness' in nature and of 'purposeless purposiveness' in art" (49). At the same time, we find Wordsworth's post-Goslar biography working on *The Prelude*'s pursuit-history, the quest for creativity that is being portrayed: Wordsworth's verbatim citations from "Salisbury Plain" build up the scene of Coleridge's philosophical criticism, yet the knowledge of this criticism of 1817 provides a *terminus post quem* in Wordsworth's thought. Through this poetic criticism of Coleridge's own, the two histories circle in on each other and thereby the reader-listener is subtly being prepared for the effect of the first meeting:

. . . for *then*

We were as Strangers; and I may not speak

Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,

Which on thy young imagination, trained

In the great City, broke like light from far. (Cornell *Prelude* xiii: 360-64)

Wordsworth is critical of the “rude” verse of his early days as a poet, but he essentially criticises Coleridge for scrutinising “Salisbury Plain” by means of philosophical methodology. To Wordsworth, this procedure constitutes a betrayal of poetry: the quality of verse is pronounced insignificant for the moment, but the fact that it was this verse that sparked Coleridge’s imagination renders the methodological inappropriateness all the more severe. While we have already seen that both poets shared the idea of the child as originally imaginative, Chandler notes that Coleridge, in the *Biographia*, “seems to be suggesting that the two writers share an understanding of imagination, but are interested in two different aspects of it: Wordsworth the poetic and Coleridge the metaphysical, Wordsworth the fruit of the tree and Coleridge the roots” (*Second Nature* 261). By 1817, Coleridge still claims that “it was Mr. Wordsworth’s purpose to consider the poetry, and from the different effects to conclude their diversity in kind; while it is my object to investigate the seminal principle, and then from the kind to deduce the degree. My friend has drawn a masterly sketch of the branches with their *poetic* fruitage. I wish to add the trunk and even the roots (*Biographia* I: 64). Coleridge is still, as late as 1817, seeing a future collaboration with Wordsworth, most likely in the form of *The Recluse*, and while he grants that Wordsworth’s poetry had made “the operation of natural objects on the mind . . . more lucid” to him, Coleridge is still seeing himself as the contributor of thought to an envisaged joint venture. Wordsworth’s verse elucidated Coleridge’s “young imagination,” “broke” on it “like light from far” and thereby led the poets towards each other and eventually compose the *Lyrical Ballads*.

However, in Chapter Twelve of the *Biographia*, Coleridge has to “confess” that “after a more accurate perusal of Mr. Wordsworth’s remarks on the imagination, in the preface to the new [1815] edition of his poems, I find that my conclusions are not so consentient with his” (I: 194). Chandler interprets the following passage in the *Biographia* by stating that “Wordsworth’s inductive approach, his concern with poetic fruitage, has now been placed in a

new light, and we learn that it has led him to make the same mistake that Coleridge has been attacking throughout the intervening analysis: it has led him to see the mind's constitutive activity as merely associative" (*Second Nature* 262). Thus, the manifestation of "the mind's constitutive activity" is the detail that differentiates the Wordsworthian imagination, and subsequently the child, from the Coleridgean. Furthermore, Wordsworth uses the feminine pronoun when he refers to imagination, stating that "each man's mind is to herself / Witness and judge" (*Cornell Prelude* xiii: 360-64). Subsequently, this feminine breaking light, imagination as Wordsworth conveys her, had from their first meeting built up towards the shared creativity of the *annus mirabilis*.

In "Book Fourteenth" we find a stronger description of this imagination with a mourning undertone reminiscent of Coleridge's "Constancy." After the Snowdon ascent (moved forward from "Book Thirteenth" but still the initiation of the ultimate conclusion) and after Wordsworth's clearly dedicating many lines of "Book Fourteenth" to Dorothy's "sweet influence" (237), the tone of the poem becomes less explicit, less lucid; more indeterminate. Between the lines 268 and 287 of the book, W. J. B. Owen denotes a 'Parallel in phrasing with "She was a Phantom"' (266):

. . . . Thereafter came
 One, whom with thee friendship had early paired;
 She came, no more a Phantom to adorn
 A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
 And yet a Spirit, there for me enshrined
 To penetrate the lofty and the low;
 Even as one essence of pervading light
 Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
 And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
 Couched in the dewy grass. (*Cornell Prelude* xiv: 266-74)

This passage was written around the time when Coleridge composed “Constancy,” and Wordsworth’s “Spirit . . . enshrined” echoes Coleridge’s “living love” with her “answering look” and “ready ear to lend.” Moreover, as the “peacefull’st cot, the moon shall shine upon” in Coleridge’s “Constancy” summons up the imagery of “Strange fits,” the explicit parallel to “She was a Phantom of delight” in *The Prelude*’s last book, alongside the luminous imagery, cannot be overlooked. Wordsworth addresses Coleridge directly: this feminine phantom, “whom with thee friendship had early paired,” suggests that with meeting Coleridge, this phantom of light had appeared. Her “essence of pervading light” which “Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars” calls to mind the imagery Wordsworth uses in “Book Thirteenth” where he describes his earliest impact on Coleridge’s imagination, yet in the above lines Wordsworth is subject to the influence of light. This light, however, has become weak, a neglected “lonely lamp,” the “traveller between life and death” that sums up the state of the heroine in the “Lucy poems.” The creative imagination of “Constancy” and “Phantom” is also being mourned in *The Prelude*, and Wordsworth makes this clear in the lines immediately succeeding the above passage:

With such a theme,

Coleridge! with this my argument of thee

Shall I be silent? O capacious soul!

Placed on this earth to love and understand,

And from thy presence shed the light of love,

Shall I be mute ere thou be spoken of? (*Cornell Prelude* xiv: 275-80)

Wordsworth addresses Coleridge throughout this section on the creative imagination, stating that the latter’s “light of love,” his “kindred influence to [the former’s] heart of hearts / Did also find its way” (281-82). This light is also the “*living Love*” Coleridge mourns to Wordsworth in “Constancy,” a symbol of their shared imagination and subsequent creativity evident in the later writings of both poets, but which first appeared in the “Lucy Poems.”

Mutual love and influence lie at the basis of this personified phantom of creativity, a phantom whose critical condition is observed with the “serene,” solitary mastery of *The Prelude*’s composer:

. . . . Thus fear relaxed
 Her overweening grasp, thus thoughts and things
 In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
 More rational proportions; mystery,
 The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
 Of life and death, time and eternity,
 Admitted more habitually a mild
 Interposition – a serene delight
 In closelier gathering cares, such as become
 A human creature, howsoe’er endowed,
 Poet, or destined for a humbler name; (Cornell *Prelude* xiv: 282-92)

Owen recognises in the lines 282-87 something that “appears not to be a restatement of the refining influence of [Dorothy]” (266). Moreover, shortly afterwards the Cornell editor suggests that Wordsworth “here refers to the dispiriting fear experienced in Paris.” The fear quoted above was a different, yet indeed a “dispiriting” one in the very sense of the word: Wordsworth’s vocabulary of “life and death,” “serene” and “delight” strongly hint at “Phantom;” thus, Wordsworth’s “fear” is rather the anxiety of losing Lucy and her “essence of pervading light” that “Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars,” the fear of losing the “Spirit” that was “there for me enshrined / To penetrate the lofty and the low” of humanity (as can be found in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*’ Preface and *The Recluse*’s Prospectus): the fear in “Book Fourteenth” is the fear experienced at Goslar when he wrote the “Lucy Poems.” The “Phantom of delight,” or Lucy, has in the above context become a mere “interposition” in the history of the “self-haunting spirit,” namely the transient interval of the shared imagination

and creativity in the history of Wordsworth's individually creative mind. The step from "Lucy" to the "happy shepherd-boy" as the childlike personification of creativity has been taken. The hinging years between Wordsworth's portrayed history and the history of revision (namely the years of the creative friendship with Coleridge) are thus the years of this "Interposition – a serene delight / In closelier gathering cares, such as become / A human creature, howsoe'er endowed." Hence, *The Prelude* is a prelude to the friendship with Coleridge, and while adulating this friendship it is still influenced by it during its revision process. By reading the "Lucy Poems," we can examine the state of this creative friendship in the winter of 1798-99.

II. The Lucy Poems

1. "Half a child of my own brain:" Grouping and Reading the Poems

A perfect Woman, nobly plann'd

To warn, to comfort, and command;

And yet a Spirit still, and bright

With something of an angel light. ("She was a Phantom of delight" 27-30)

If we bear in mind the critical attention that the figure of Lucy has attracted over the past two centuries and the status she has acquired in classroom teaching, we may assume that she does no longer dwell "among the untrodden ways," that she has become as familiar to generations of pupils, teachers, and general readers as very few other literary creations. We all know Lucy, and yet we do not, as the main argument since the poems' first grouping by Victorian scholars remains unsettled: is Lucy a fictitious literary creation, or did Wordsworth base her

character on a human counterpart he knew, or perhaps even a combination of the two? The poems' indeterminacy has caused a conflict between symbolist and biographical interpretation, while attempting to answer the question "why Wordsworth's mind reverted to England from Goslar" (Jones 71), early-twentieth-century critics have "exhausted the candidates for Lucy" (Jones 79). Coleridge himself scarcely commented on the "Lucy Poems" after his return to England:

In the letters of the Wordsworth circle, Coleridge's remarks to Poole on 'A slumber' . . . are unusual in offering anything like an interpretation. In another letter of 1800 he says, 'I would rather have written Ruth, and Nature's Lady than a million such poems [as his own "Christabel"]' . . . The only other extant comment by Coleridge occurs in the *Biographia* (1817), where 'Three years' is cited as an instance of 'the perfect truth of nature in [Wordsworth's] images and descriptions' (Jones 57)

Coleridge had misunderstood the first two "Lucy Poems," "Strange fits of passion have I known" and "She lived among the untrodden ways," when he remarked to his wife Sarah that "Most probably, in some gloomier moment [Wordsworth] had fancied the moment in which his sister might die" (E. H. Coleridge *Letters* I: 284). Initially, perhaps due to his not being fully aware of the seriousness of Wordsworth's creative dilemma or the poems' indeterminacy, he had not seen that the poems express Wordsworth's anxiety of losing the shared creativity of the *Lyrical Ballads*. What Coleridge did sense, however, is the immediacy of the "Lucy Poems," that they do not resemble a remote and closed stretch in Wordsworth's history, but that they directly relate to the situation at Goslar. In this respect, Coleridge was considerably ahead of those mainly Victorian critics who attempted to draw lines from Wordsworth to girls he might have known at some point in his past, and who had died at a young age.

In 1966 Sacvan Bercovitch averred that "Lucy embodies the idea of creative *light*, and that the narrator's grief at her loss expresses the poet's fear of losing his creative powers" (11).

Bercovitch's claim did not leave a lasting impression, since in 1978 Richard Matlak readopted F. W. Bateson's (and in fact Coleridge's premature) interpretation that identified Lucy as Dorothy. Nonetheless, the notion of the child experiencing the joy of the imagination fostered by nature corroborates Bercovitch's key claim of Lucy's light as a symbol of creativity; yet having recollected the divergent literary paths Wordsworth and Coleridge took from 1799 onwards, Lucy rather represents the shared creative imagination that had powered the *annus mirabilis*. This shared imagination, unlike Wordsworth's own as stated by Bercovitch, did in fact experience an irreversible decline from 1799 onwards, only to disappear eventually like the very character of Lucy.

Bearing in mind that Wordsworth sent Coleridge first drafts of the poems we know now as "She lived among the untrodden ways" and "Strange fits of passion have I known" in late December 1798 (Wordsworth *Letters* I: 236-38), the "Lucy Poems" take the form of poetic outcries within the desperate situation of creative standstill, insecurity and longing for a past wholeness. Moreover, the poems concur temporally with the pivotal situation of *The Prelude*'s two histories that have been presented in Section One; Wordsworth's lasting occupation with autobiography in *The Prelude*, alongside "Strange fits," "Song," "Three years," and "A Slumber" in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* at the expense of Coleridge's "Christabel," indicates the crisis character of the "Lucy Poems." They are a poetic adaptation of an authentic historical quandary that encompasses a turning point in both poets' lives and transfers real-life distress into the artistic sphere.

Apart from "I travelled among unknown men," written in 1801 and therefore some three years after his return to England, Wordsworth composed all of the common group of the "Lucy Poems" in the same circumstances at Goslar that gave rise to the lifelong task of writing and rewriting *The Prelude*. These circumstances include "Lucy Gray," "Among all lovely things," and "Louisa," yet these poems have often been left out of the grouped set of the "Lucy Poems" taught in schools and universities:

It has long been settled among editors and critics, with few exceptions, that the ‘Lucy Poems’ consist of ‘Strange fits,’ ‘She dwelt,’ ‘I travelled,’ ‘Three years,’ and ‘A slumber’ – most commonly in that order. So well established is this grouping in the public mind that some anthologies even present the five lyrics as numbered sections of a larger super-poem. But so explicit and definite a grouping was never made in authorial editions or described by Wordsworth (Jones 6-7).

To gain a fuller picture of the possibility of Lucy personifying the spirit of the *Lyrical Ballads*, this established grouping will be set aside in favour of that larger number of poems as they are characterised by the circumstances of composition and the poems’ theme of nature, light, loss, and grief. The following subdivision into chapters will show the poems’ themes as they relate to the character of Lucy. She is herself indeterminate because “Though Lucy is clearly beloved, she is so obliquely described that one can hardly tell whether she is lover or child” (Jones 11). All the facets of her indeterminacy spark the reader-listeners’ imagination, her obliqueness having set minds in motion for just over two centuries. She has been showing the creative potential of the input of mind into world ever since Coleridge saw in the poems Wordsworth’s anxious anticipation of Dorothy’s death. Whereas the growth of Lucy’s mind can be described in Hartleian terms, the creative potential of her indeterminacy rivals the creative potential that Coleridge found in the “Brocken-spectre.” Both poets saw the liveliness of the imagination, yet their concept differed in its, or rather her, growth.

Jones argues that “In some respects the modern canon of ‘Lucy Poems’ appears extremely arbitrary,” finding that “‘Lucy Gray’ and ‘Among all lovely things my Love had been’” are “almost universally excluded” (9). However, frequent attempts have been made to include especially “Lucy Gray” to the canon, and when “Eric Robertson prints an ingeniously ‘eviscerate[d]’ ‘Lucy Gray’ (i.e., without stanzas 4-14) to show its affinity with ‘the true “Lucy” group,’” this affinity becomes a strong argument for the coherence of the group defined by theme. Stanzas 4-14 describe how Lucy is lost, which will gain further importance

in Chapter Three, while the remaining stanzas provide the frame structure of grief at the loss of a child. How Lucy is lost will show to be a close snapshot of the poets' situation in Germany, therefore the actuality of the poems (which Coleridge had sensed immediately) requires us to view all poems united by theme and context of composition. For the time being, they are considered facets of an indeterminate cluster of verse on threatened creativity, as this is the hypothesis that the historical context has granted. Marilyn Butler lends support to the (at least temporary) suspension of the established canon, claiming that "There is also a formidable case against continuing with the Victorian canon in its depleted modern version, as the basis either for teaching university students or for pursuing literary research. Over the time the canon seems to have acquired a weird momentum of its own, and to have introduced various restrictive practices into criticism" (70).

In his letter to Robert Southey from July 1802, Coleridge refers to Wordsworth's newly revised preface to the 1802 third edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* as "half a child of my own brain." (Griggs *Letters* II: 830). Additionally, Stephen Prickett finds that "Wordsworth and Coleridge are, for us, essentially congruent not because they always agree, but because they developed between them a creative, but not necessarily consistent idea" (*Growth* 147). Subsequently, Prickett bases his observation on Coleridge's poem "To William Wordsworth," which conveys the admiration of the *Thirteen Book Prelude* and, according to Prickett, "shows how well Coleridge understands his friend at this point [on 7 January 1807]." Both poets certainly use the imagery of light in order to convey creativity, not least when it directly relates to the time spent in Germany: "Now in they inner life, and now abroad / When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received / The light reflected, as a light bestowed" recall the imagery Wordsworth used in *The Prelude*, as cited above. In a previous chapter, Prickett had already drawn attention to the interface between imagination and creativity. Stating that "Imagination is, for Coleridge, the activity by which the mind achieves all outward contact – and is therefore, of course, also the activity by which the mind sees itself. It is thus, by

inference, the basis of all self-conscious reflection” (*Growth* 71-72), a concept already traced in “Constancy.”

Backing up his argument for a consideration of the situation at Goslar, Richard Matlak’s introductory observation sums up the academic discourse on the “Lucy Poems” accordingly:

Critics usually ignore or treat the circumstances of the Lucy poems’ composition perfunctorily, despite the convention of analyzing Wordsworth’s poetry with a full biographical apparatus in hand. This critical anomaly is probably due in part to an assumption that identifying Lucy is the synecdochic equivalent of reconstructing Wordsworth’s Goslar experience. (46)

Finding Lucy’s “real-life counterpart” may indeed allow for an interpretation of what was on the poet’s mind at the time (46). Matlak continues to outline the subsequent step away from this enterprise which many critics have taken after rendering the identification of Lucy irrelevant, ultimately leading to a closer occupation with the imagery and language of the poems. A synthesis of the two “approach-objectives,” a close analysis of the poems’ imagery and language alongside the consideration of historical detail may shed new light onto the whole German episode, with an unexpected outcome that emphasises a unique sensitivity and awareness, namely the anticipation of the falling apart of the creative spirit of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in Wordsworth’s poetic genius.

Matlak sees that the “Lucy Poems” are love poems, agrees with Bateson that Lucy can only be Dorothy, and thereby complies with the assumption made by Coleridge on receiving the poems from Wordsworth while in Germany. Matlak, however, denies any incestuous undertone to the poems; ultimately, he argues that Dorothy’s presence throughout the German tour was just as much a heavy burden to the poet as it was a relief. Not having enough money “to be introduced into high or even literary German society” (Wordsworth *Letters* I: 254), where Coleridge had recently settled, Matlak claims to have lead Wordsworth into the inescapable quandary of having to make ends meet for two people, while the available amount

of money may have been enough to enable him alone to stay in Göttingen with Coleridge and Chester. Thus, Matlak argues that Wordsworth envisaged Dorothy's death as a potentially liberating event which, at least in his imagination, enabled him to live and work with Coleridge once again, as he had done in the prodigious Alfoxden year: "Wordsworth both loved Dorothy and wishes to be rid of her, because of the serious inconvenience of her presence, and the Lucy poems formed as an expression of this ambivalence" (Matlak 46).

At first sight, Matlak's argumentation is both shocking and plausible. The presence of beauty and love in the poems culminates in death or its petrified anticipation, while the liberating aspect is added through a detailed depiction of the self-imposed state of isolation, especially from Coleridge, which Wordsworth was in. This meticulous depiction is Matlak's true achievement; through it he identifies Lucy, but he does not become conscious of it. His whole line of argumentation stands and falls with its initial assumption, and Matlak does not hesitate to admit that in order to prove his point, "an important assumption must be made about the identity of Lucy. Ultimately, [he] concur[s] with F. W. Bateson that Wordsworth's relationship with Dorothy is the emotional foundation of the Lucy poems" (46). Mark Jones draws attention to the nuances of meaning that Coleridge's word "fancy" (in relation to Wordsworth envisaging Dorothy's death) may carry, then relating it to Bateson's argument and Matlak's assumption:

My point is not that Matlack's essay is redundant, merely that its 'development' cannot be gauged as can developments in technology. We cannot fairly gauge this as a progress without knowing where Bateson and Matlack borrow from Coleridge and where they surpass him, and here the question is not simply whether they say what Coleridge said, but whether he said what they say (51).

The terminology of Freudian psychoanalysis, which both Bateson and Matlak use, indeed grants a reading of "fancy" synonymous with "desire" (Jones 51). Nevertheless, the primary argument against Matlak's claim ought to be that Dorothy read the "Lucy Poems," declared

“Strange fits” one of her favourites, and helped Wordsworth write and post his long letters to Coleridge. Writing about Dorothy’s death as desirable, even if artistically concealed, would in these circumstances constitute a disrespectful bluntness entirely un-Wordsworthian. Such cunning behind-the-back misanthropy toward Dorothy is on the whole unimaginable, not only in the face of Wordsworth’s praise of Dorothy in *The Prelude*’s “Book Fourteenth” mentioned above.

As much as Coleridge’s letters imply how Wordsworth missed his friend (and at the same time suggest the financial problems), they ought to be interpreted as follows in relation to the “Lucy Poems.” Originally, Coleridge and Wordsworth had “planned to stay together in an inexpensive town near Hamburg until they had mastered the language sufficiently to take advantage of the preferred, but more expensive, environment of a university town” (Matlak 49). Quickly, the Wordsworths realised that their finances were insufficient to accompany Coleridge and Chester to Ratzeburg, the town they were recommended at their meeting with Klopstock (49). For instance, while still in Ratzeburg in January 1799, Coleridge writes to Thomas Poole that he has “enjoyed great advantages in this place, but I have paid dear for them. Including *all* expenses, I have not lived at less than two pounds a week. Wordsworth (from whom I receive long and affectionate letters) has enjoyed scarcely one advantage, but his expenses have been considerably less than they were in England” (E. H. Coleridge *Letters* I: 268). Thus, the parting was sudden, and its disappointment traumatising to Wordsworth. In the pages to follow, Matlak draws a detailed picture of how severe the absence of his friend Coleridge over the severe winter must have been, yet through his initial assumption that Lucy can only be Dorothy, the critic prevents himself from recognising the elaborate description of the poetic character, whose death strongly indicates a parallel to the feeling of bereavement Wordsworth must have felt upon the absence of Coleridge.

Frances Ferguson briefly touches on Lucy personifying some indeterminable profound idea, recognising the flower-simile describing her, but does not pursue his inkling of a general

misunderstanding at the poems' basis: "The similes and metaphors are figural substitutions for Lucy which stand in completely enough to suggest that there may be a fundamental category mistake in seeing her as a human being – she is, perhaps, a flower (or a simile, or a metaphor)" (534). Or perhaps a personified symbol, as Lucy features only in a short series of poems written during a short time-interval under extraordinary circumstances, namely those experienced in Germany between 6 October and 28 December 1798 and shortly afterwards. Does this not suggest that she, with all her startling characteristics, may be a poetic personification of, rather than a person within, these circumstances? Considering, for instance, Wordsworth having the wind acting as a poet, or having nature adopt Lucy in "Three years," it would have been neither the first, nor the last time that Wordsworth jumped between personified creativity, changing categories as a stylistic device. R. F. Storch, in her attack on Davies's painstaking effort to trace historical evidence for Lucy's identity, argues that "The 'she' is perhaps Wordsworth's 'spirit', but it is personified and given a female form, and becomes something other than the prosaic self" (476). Storch mockingly closes her argument with the claim that "scholarship will have to find the kind of evidence and the method which can enter into this world," namely "the world of poetry". Needless to say, the case of Lucy's identity has to be made on the basis of the presumptive and circumstantial evidence in her historical surrounding; this circumstantial evidence does, however, lend weight to Storch's suggestion that Lucy may be a spirit, and in representing the creative spirit behind the *Lyrical Ballads*, even a spirit of a very distinct kind. Including Wordsworth's biography in its surrounding social history, there appears a very "symbolic or literary value for Lucy Gray" with a profound "'visionary touch,'" that "obliterates her status as human pure and simple." The "Lucy Poems" ought to be viewed as a creative "apocalyptic" (Jones 194).

Thus, this paper's conclusion goes beyond a "low symbolism" where "the symbol is a 'signpost,' significant but worthless in itself" (Jones 194). The poems encompass a "high symbolism" which "stipulates that the symbol has value both in itself and as a symbol for

something beyond it; being, as Paul de Man has suggested, essentially synecdochal, it has being and meaning” (Jones 194). Arguing against David Ferry’s idea of a “low symbolism,” Jones poses and answers the fundamental question himself: “If she died, how could she have ‘had nothing to do with humanity or mortality’? Only by being purely symbolic and dying symbolically” (196).

2. The Phantom: Nature’s Plotting of the Wunderkind

The following section of *The Prelude*’s “Book Fourteenth” “appears not to be a restatement of the refining influence” of Dorothy that Wordsworth poeticised in the lines 232-66 (Owen 266). Wordsworth alludes to “She was a Phantom of delight:”

She came, no more a Phantom to adorn
 A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
 And yet a Spirit, there for me enshrined
 To penetrate the lofty and the low;
 Even as one essence of pervading light
 Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars, (Cornell *Prelude*: 268-73)

This female phantom is the “Interposition,” the “serene delight / In closelier gathering cares” of the growth of Wordsworth’s mind (Cornell *Prelude*: 289-90). She has also become “A human creature, howsoe’er endowed,” a “Poet, or destined for a humbler name” who sent “the deep enthusiastic joy” (291-93). Most remarkably in this context, this female phantom is also Coleridge and the “argument” of him; she is the “capacious Soul! / Placed on this earth to love and understand, / And from thy presence shed the light of love (277-79). Coleridge’s “kindred influence to [Wordsworth’s] heart of hearts / Did also find its way” (281-82) – that is to say, into the history of Wordsworth’s mind. Coleridge’s influence was to Wordsworth “as one essence of pervading light” that “Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars.” “Phantom” was written 1804, not in the circumstances at Goslar, but since it has been argued

that “Phantom” should be included in the “Lucy Poems” (Jones 10). Moreover, “Phantom” is normally classed among the “Poems of the Imagination” (Jones 14), thus it represents a unique border case between the imagination and the “Lucy Poems” that deserves attention, temporarily leaving aside the common canonisation on the behalf of research, as Butler’s quote (above) suggests.

In 1804 Wordsworth had also written to George Beaumont that *The Recluse* was “the chief object upon which my thoughts have been fixed these many years,” and to Thomas De Quincey that “To this work I mean to devote the Prime of my life and the chief force of my mind” (Wordsworth *Letters* I: 518; 454). Coleridge’s visit to Dove Cottage before his two-year stay in Malta had given a new creative push to *The Recluse*, and “Phantom” captures how this push awakened the long-standing project. The imagery of light is still as present as it is in the presentation of *The Prelude*’s late phantom:

SHE was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleam’d upon my sight;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment’s ornament:
 Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
 Like twilight’s, too, her dusky hair;
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
 A dancing shape, an image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, and waylay. (“Phantom” 1-10)

Wordsworth’s “Phantom” had once “gleam’d upon [his] sight” like the “visionary gleam” of the “Ode,” Wordsworth’s 1802 poem whose imagery also closely resembles the freshness of the “May-time and the cheerful dawn.” The “Phantom” is playful like the Wordsworthian child; she is a “dancing shape” and “an image gay,” yet her ability “To haunt, to startle, and

waylay” breaks with her outward description and prepares the reader-listener for a new dimension of her character that is to follow in the second stanza:

I saw her upon nearer view,
 A Spirit, yet a woman too!
 Her household motions light and free,
 And steps of virgin liberty;
 A countenance in which did meet
 Sweet records, promises as sweet;
 A creature not too bright or good
 For human nature’s daily food,
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles. (“Phantom” 11-20)

The “virgin liberty” and the “household motions light and free” call to mind Wordsworth’s idea of the child being originally innocent and moving about light-heartedly. Having been depicted as a natural, but also supernatural “Apparition” in the first stanza, the second stanza’s “Spirit” first affirms this idea of the “Phantom,” while after calling her “a woman too,” all her human characteristics follow. Here, the childlike playfulness and the natural perfection of the “Phantom” that Wordsworth expresses in the first stanza acquire a moral dimension by declaring this “creature not too bright or good / For human nature’s daily food.” Wordsworth humbles the “Phantom” as one of the “transient sorrows, simple wiles, / Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles” as he had humbled the poetic efforts behind the *Lyrical Ballads* as “experiments” that “were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure” (“Advertisement” 1798). Where the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* were meant to “contain[] a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents” (“Advertisement” 1798), Wordsworth’s “Phantom” of 1799 is

A creature not too bright or good
 For human nature's daily food,
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

Among the declared aims of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* is to counteract “that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures: our own pre-established codes of decision,” and to “avoid the prevalent fault of the day,” namely “gaudy and inane phraseology” (Wu 191). Anticipating the criticism by “Readers of superior judgement” that “the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity,” Wordsworth and Coleridge declare that “the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been the most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints of this kind will he have to make” (“Advertisement” 1798). Hence, the “experiments” of the *Lyrical Ballads* are well prepared; contrasting the “gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers,” the language of the common people is intended to serve as the *Lyrical Ballads*' vehicle for the “natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents.” Strikingly, Wordsworth's “Phantom” is

A perfect woman, nobly plann'd
 To warn, to comfort, and command
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright
 With something of an angel light. (27-30)

Similarly, *The Recluse*'s “Program for Poetry” in its Prospectus visualises, according to Abrams, that “the heights and depths of the mind of man are to replace heaven and hell, and the powers of the mind are to replace the divine protagonist, in Wordsworth's triple (or, counting *The Prelude*, quadruple) successor to Milton's religious epic” (25). Like the Prospectus's “prophetic Spirit” is the “primal source / Of all illumination” (Abrams 23-24),

Wordsworth's "Phantom" is a "Spirit still, and bright / With something of an angel light," while she is "not too bright or good" for "the heights and depths of the mind of man." This "Phantom"-spirit was meant to grow into *The Recluse* in the winter of 1798-99, and despite her having been in full bloom in the summer of 1798, she became "a traveller between life and death" in the following winter:

And now I see with eye serene

The very pulse of the machine;

A being breathing thoughtful breath,

A traveller between life and death: ("Phantom" 21-24)

The promising prospect, the well-plotted female spirit "With something of an angel light," is in a critical balance in the winter of 1798-99, when Wordsworth was unsuccessfully trying to compose *The Recluse* in Coleridge's absence. Nevertheless, the child-spirit of the *Lyrical Ballads* did not grow to become the woman-spirit of *The Recluse*; she remained what she had once been, although in a state "between life and death;" she "trips along" endlessly, not ageing, like the legend of "Lucy Gray" after her disappearance (61). "Lucy Gray" stays behind as the "living child" that is bound to be her parents' last memory of her, and while *The Recluse* was not being accomplished, the *Lyrical Ballads* were published in their second edition of 1800. Previously the humble "experiment" of 1798, in the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* "The lives, customs, and language of 'low and rustic life' are the focus, it claims, because here the 'primary laws of our nature' can be discerned most clearly in their operation, untainted by the superficialities of a metropolitan society" (Gill *Oxford DNB*). In this second edition, the poems "'Michael' and 'The Brothers' revivify the pastoral by dwelling on the fortitude and dignity with which the Lake District's inhabitants face the hardships of their life," stressing that "such lowly people are especially worthy of poetic attention is one of the main propositions of the substantial essay which prefaces the collection" (Gill *Oxford DNB*).

As argued in the third chapter, Wordsworth sees the joy that nature gives to the child as a precondition for growth:

The preface's other most important claim is that these are designedly poems of sentiment, differing from the common run of such poems in that here 'the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling'. Numerous causes, Wordsworth maintains, are combining at the present time to degrade public taste. By dwelling upon the 'great and simple affections of our nature' the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* are to serve as an educative counterbalance. Implicit in this proposition is a high claim for the power of poetry to foster human betterment. Major additions to the preface for the third edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) amplify it, as Wordsworth identifies the true poet as one who 'rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him' and celebrates poetry as a cultural power and as the 'breath and finer spirit of all knowledge'. (Gill *Oxford DNB*)

Poeticising nature and "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation" this "educative counterbalance;" the "power of poetry" of nature leads to "moral betterment." We have already noted Coveney pointing out how Wordsworth linked the notion of the child to the imagination, joy, and ultimately "virtue," which sense 2.a. of the *OED* describes as "Conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality; voluntary observance of the recognized moral laws or standards of right conduct; abstention on moral grounds from any form of wrong-doing or vice." The "moral betterment" represents this notion of "virtue," and hence the spirit and aim of the *Lyrical Ballads* match Wordsworth's idea of the growth of the child in *The Prelude*, where the Hartleian model of gradual growth within the nature that, through joy, produces moral virtue. The "scope and audacious novelty" in Wordsworth's concept with the claim "to outdo Milton's Christian story" consists of "realms [that] are available on this earth, to each of us, as an ordinary possibility of every day. We need only to unite our minds to the outer universe in a holy marriage, a passionate love-

match, and paradise is ours” (Abrams 27-28). Wordsworth’s “song,” aided by the “prophetic spirit,” functions as the ““spousal verse,” or sustained prothalamion, of [the marriage’s] anticipated “consummation.” This song will be an evangel to effect a spiritual resurrection among mankind’ (Abrams 27), showing once more the moral dimension of the “plann’d” spirit of *The Recluse*.

Like Beth Darlington, James Chandler also sees the spark of *The Recluse* in Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s shared *annus mirabilis*, stating that

the great literary plan to which all others (including that for *Lyrical Ballads*) were ultimately subsidiary, the plan for *The Recluse*, was first announced by Wordsworth in a letter of 6 March [1798]. One has to believe, I think, that what Abrams calls Wordsworth’s “program for poetry” was born in the weeks immediately preceding early March 1798 (*Second Nature* 83).

The two minds behind this “program for poetry” had already been raising a “subsidiary,” which is perhaps more adequately described as a poetical “spring” to that program, in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Hence the program was “born” with Coleridge and Wordsworth beginning to take influence on one another, whereas the step from the *Lyrical Ballads* to *The Recluse*, the “program for poetry,” was meant to become the maturation of the poets’ collaboration. In this context, another of the most common group of the “Lucy Poems,” namely ““Three years she grew in sun and shower,” provides an additional hint towards Lucy’s being this spirit behind the *Lyrical Ballads*, as “Three years she grew in sun and shower, / Then Nature said, ‘A lovelier flower / On earth was never sown (1-3). What appears to denote symbolic Trinitarianism offers another interpretation if Wordsworth’s previous works are considered. Only a few months before he composed “Three years,” Wordsworth had written “Tintern Abbey.” Signifying the poet’s disillusionment with the French Revolution that had arisen by 1798, the “five summers, with the length / Of five long winters” along with the explicit stating of the exact date in the title of “Tintern Abbey” are almost certainly allusions to the

assassination of Marat on 13 July 1793. Accordingly, having the flower-simile for Lucy grow for three years “in sun and shower,” Wordsworth adopts the same allegorical technique to add a more thorough, yet also less obvious meaning: Wordsworth connects his poem to a person (Coleridge) as the symbol of an idea (creativity).

Even if one wanted to ignore that, strictly speaking, William and Dorothy Wordsworth had known each other for all of their lives, the “Three years” could not refer to their reunion, since it took place in February 1794 (Gill *Life* 78). The poem was written in late 1798. Coleridge and Wordsworth, however, met for the first time in August or September 1795, whether at a “lodging in Bristol” or a “Political Debating Society” (Gill *Life* 93). Thus the “flower,” which for “Three years grew in sun and shower,” functions as a carefully chosen metaphor for the spirit of the creative friendship between Coleridge and Wordsworth. Moreover, considering the course of this poem affirms Ferguson’s idea that this flower is in fact Lucy. Following the trains of thought that Lucy in all her illuminative imagery is the shared spirit of their three-year creative friendship, and that this spirit was once envisaged to grow into the woman-spirit of *The Recluse*, the following lines show once more Wordsworth’s crisis at Goslar: “This child I to myself will take, / She shall be mine, and I will make / A lady of my own” (“Three years” 4-6). Wordsworth personifies nature; in the first six stanzas, he has nature telling about how it is planning to adopt and educate the three-year-old, with the intent to “make / A lady of my own.” Notably, this adoption takes place when Lucy had already been growing for three years *in nature*; nature declares her the loveliest of its offspring, seeing her previously unmatched potential to grow. Nature’s prospect of raising and educating Lucy is hence as promising as Wordsworth’s prospect of advancing the collaboration with Coleridge, taking the “Spirit” behind the *Lyrical Ballads* into *The Recluse*. After three years of mutual inspiration and one year of utmost creativity between the poets, Wordsworth cannot but adopt the “Spirit” in Coleridge’s absence:

Myself will to my darling be

Both law and impulse, and with me

The girl in rock and plain,

In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,

Shall feel an overseeing power

To kindle or restrain. ("Three years" 7-11)

Without Coleridge, Wordsworth's personified nature alone attempts to become "Both law and impulse" to Lucy, to raise her and foster her education "in rock and plain, / In earth and heaven, in glade and bower," that is to say, in nature, where Wordsworth subsequently, in *The Prelude*, saw his own spirit maturing. While "The whole Wordsworthian equipoise lies in the power of Nature to 'kindle and restrain'" (Coveney 81), that Lucy is envisaged to experience growing up "with" Wordsworth, her growth closely resembles Wordsworth's own in *The Prelude*:

She shall be sportive as the fawn

That wild with glee across the lawn

Or up the mountain springs,

And hers shall be the breathing balm

And hers the silence and the calm

Of mute insensate things. ("Three years" 12-17)

Bercovitch claims that "*Three Years She Grew* identifies Lucy with the 'visionary gleam' of the child-poet" of the "Immortality Ode," and that "Lucy explicitly concentrates all the 'wild glee', the 'murmuring beauty', and the 'overseeing power' of the *Ode*'s 'blessed Creatures'" (12). Additionally, while Coleridge was on the verge of turning away from Hartley towards Kantianism and German Idealism, Wordsworth depicted Lucy's coming of age in very much the same Hartleian terms as his own:

The floating clouds their state shall lend

To her, for her the willow bend,

Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motions of the storm
 A beauty that shall mould her form
 By silent sympathy. ("Three years" 18-23)

Personifying nature through having it speak leaves out Wordsworth the poet as the mediator. Nature plots Lucy like Wordsworth's "self had framed the tender lay" ("Dejection" 114), commanding its elements to educate and foster its loveliest child; the "floating clouds," the "willow," and the "motions of the storm" serve as the powers of "beauty" that "mould" Lucy, that "lend . . . their state" to her. Running "wild with glee across the lawn," playing in nature and with nature, Lucy grows as nature "mould[s]" her. The progress is as gradual as Hartley's associationism would dictate, yet also characteristically Wordsworthian by its reciprocity with nature's "silent sympathy," as "To her, for her the willow bend." Nature is both Lucy's teacher and her humble servant. "Moving transcendently between earth and heaven," Bercovitch asserts, "the girl represents Nature's 'law and impulse' for the poet. Through her he feels the glory of rock and plain; in her 'power' he finds a joyous harmony with creation" (12). This joy is the creative joy for Wordsworth's "Program for Poetry" that was meant to culminate in *The Recluse*.

Once "Imprisoned within education, Wordsworth's child, no less than Blake's, was deprived of the influences of Nature and fancy," Lucy's education as "a plea for a sensuous relation between Man and Nature" is part of Wordsworth's "antithesis of town and country [that] became of increasing importance to a century disfigured by the urban outrage of the Industrial Revolution" (Coveney 82-83). Listening closely and watching the nature that surrounds her, Lucy soaks up the life of nature, her surrogate schoolmaster:

Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
 And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight
 Shall rear her form to stately height,
 Her virgin bosom swell,
 Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
 While she and I together live
 Here in this happy dell.' ("Three years" 27-35)

Nature has the vision to pass its qualities on to Lucy, yet considering that nature is speaking in Wordsworth's poem, its vision becomes the poet's "assertion of childhood's visionary quality" in harmony with nature (Coveney 83). Nonetheless, with line 35 nature's monologue ends. Just as suddenly as Wordsworth's voice takes over, all the hope and prospect of Lucy that was built up in the previous six stanzas die along with her:

Thus Nature spake – the work was done –
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!
 She died and left to me
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene,
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be. ("Three years" 36-41)

Nature created and nurtured "the child's consciousness" in which "lay powers of social and personal revitalization" (Coveney 83), yet nature also took it away again. It is as fickle as the clouds of the "Brocken-spectre" that unpredictably granted or barred the creative condition, while, ironically, Coleridge's encounter with that natural phenomenon prevented Lucy's growing into the woman-spirit by becoming the envisioned fusion of poetry and philosophy of *The Recluse*.

Sacvan Bercovitch observes that "Like the Immortality Ode, the Lucy Poems celebrate the child's spontaneous communion with nature in the context of the inevitable passing of this

‘glory’” (11). Bercovitch quotes from “Song,” which appeared in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. In this poem, Wordsworth uses the flower-metaphor to depict Lucy:

She dwelt among th’ untrodden ways
 Besides the springs of Dove,
 A maid whom there were none to praise
 And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
 Half hidden from the eye, (1-6)

Duncan Wu offers three English rivers of the name “Dove” as candidates for a human Lucy’s home region (327). However, the definitions number two and three that the *OED* provides for the term “Dove” suggest that Wordsworth used this term to connect the notion of the flower to that of the child: “2. a. Applied to the Holy Spirit; b. A messenger of peace and deliverance from anxiety, as was the dove to Noah; c. A gentle, innocent, or loving woman or child; d. An appellation of tender affection; 3. a. An image of a dove as a symbol of innocence.” Lucy is characterised by all Wordsworthian notions of creativity: she is the innocent, playful child, raised by and within nature, and also granted by a divine stimulus. In this characterisation, we again find the interplay of the mind, nature, and the Holy Spirit of *The Recluse*’s “Program for Poetry” that became *The Prelude*’s: “Wordsworth preempts Urania, the pagan muse whom Milton, following earlier Christian precedent, had baptized and equated with the “heav’nly Muse” who had inspired Moses and the Biblical prophets and had associated with the Holy Spirit who moved upon the face of the waters at the beginning of all created things” (Abrams 23). Instead, Wordsworth’s Holy Spirit takes influence by raising the Lucy-flower by its springs, thereby integrating nature to the creative interplay of the Holy Spirit with mankind. Abrams also notes that ‘Wordsworth calls upon the “prophetic Spirit,” the “primal source / Of all illumination,” to descend upon him’ (23-24). Wordsworth hopes for a metaphorical light to

guide him in his creative process, similar to the light of his collaboration with Coleridge that he saw in Lucy.

Lucy the flower lived not only far away from any “urban outrage:” the “untrodden ways” imply a minimum of social influence on her surrounding, marking her as pure, innocent, and uncorrupted – the ideal notion of the Wordsworthian child argued above. On a level of higher symbolism, it could be said that Lucy “dwelt among th’ untrodden ways” in very much the same manner that the *Lyrical Ballads* were dissociated from their contemporary “pre-established codes of decision.” As the term “experiment” in the *Lyrical Ballads*’ “Advertisement” suggests, Coleridge and Wordsworth had indeed given life to a poetic spirit who “dwelt among th’ untrodden ways” of common taste. Being “Fair as a star when only one / Is shining in the sky” conveys her matchlessness and also her feature of a “creative light,” which will be of further importance (7-8). Moreover, declaring that “there were none to praise,” Lucy shows Wordsworth’s anticipation of the disapproval of the public, attested by the fact that “At the time of [the *Lyrical Ballads*]’ publication, no one recognized [their] significance” (Wu 190). The only people to whom Lucy was a “*living love*” were Wordsworth and Coleridge:

She lived unknown, and few could know

When Lucy ceased to be;

But she is in her grave, and oh!

The difference to me. (“Song” 9-12)

In the winter of 1798-99, Wordsworth feared that Lucy was no longer a “*living love*,” her premature death preventing her from becoming the promising spirit that her creators had “nobly plann’d / To warn, to comfort, and command.” The “difference” is to Wordsworth, as he is unable to write *The Recluse* in Goslar. Fortunately (and unlike Wordsworth’s apprehension of Lucy’s death), the poet’s further apprehension that Lucy’s natural beauty would remain unknown forever did not turn out to be true; ultimately, this apprehension

confirms the statement of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*' preface that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" – even if they were feelings of despair and anxiety.

3. Light and Music Extinct: Sensing the Death of Nature's Wunderkind

Whilst Coveney argues that Wordsworth's "assertion for the power of the imaginative life, and especially the imaginative life of the child, became a potent Romantic influence" (83), Geoffrey Hartman "persistently... claims an ambiguous or dual nature for Lucy" (Jones 196), arguing that Wordsworth was "binding imagination to nature or world" (Hartman xvi). Stating that Wordsworth was "humanizing... imagination" (xi), Hartman "tries to mediate between the biographical identification of Lucy and the symbolist trading-away of Lucy by grounding her meaning *in* her humanness" (Jones 196). Jones stresses that to Hartman, Lucy had acquired a state of "ontological liminality" between "symbolic interpretation's quest for significance and biographical and high-formalist anti-interpretism's respect for being," which may account for Hartman's "own resolute indecision, his resolution not to decide what [Lucy] is, or rather whether she is or means" (Jones 197). Jones states that this indecision in saying "that she both is and means is in one sense to interpret her, but in another sense to refuse" (197).

However, it takes only one more stylistic device, namely the personification of an existing idea such as the wind-poet, to have this idea "being" and "meaning" at the same time and thereby enter the level of "high symbolism." Personifying, or "humanizing," the imagination lends vitality to the very idea of the imagination, while the growth of that personified imagination depicts Wordsworth's incessant Hartleianism. Lucy, educated by nature in gradual, associationist terms, becomes the symbol of the living creative imagination. She is Wordsworth's and Coleridge's "glory" that "hath passed away . . . from the earth" ("Immortality" 17); just as nature unpredictably steers the clouds that enable the spectator of

the “Brocken-spectre” to be creative, Wordsworth’s nature not only takes away, but also grants new joy such as the “happy shepherd-boy” of the “Ode” (35), supporting deconstructionist disenchantment-readings that claim a division between Wordsworth’s “hostile or indifferent and benign” natures (Jones 198).

Like the “visionary gleam” of Wordsworth’s “Ode” or Coleridge’s joy, the “luminuous cloud” of “Dejection,” the palpable imagery of light and shining gives further support to the idea of the “high symbolism” behind Lucy. As Bercovitch indicates, the Latin word *lux* encompasses these exact meanings, from which again the name Lucy is derived (11). In Latin and the Romanic languages, *lux* is of feminine grammatical gender. Apart from “A slumber did my spirit seal,” this imagery functions as a key element in the poems, and is always inextricably linked to Lucy’s character. In “Lucy Gray. Or, Solitude” Wordsworth presents Lucy in a surrounding atmosphere of intensifying illumination: “I chanced to see at break of day / The solitary child” (3-4). Since “No mate, no comrade Lucy knew” (5), Lucy “dwelt on a wide moor” just as the “violet by a mossy stone” whom “there where none to praise / And very few to love” in Wordsworth’s “Song.” While in “Song” the element of light is only briefly touched upon, Wordsworth’s handling of it in “Lucy Gray” is much more extensive. Here as well as in “Strange fits,” Lucy’s light is praised poetically only to be lost eventually, surrendering Lucy’s “Solitude” to the natural transience that is also the theme “Three years.” Lucy’s loss is also, and always, the loss of light.

Stanza two sees Lucy Gray growing up in solitude within nature as her omnipresent companion, conjuring up Wordsworth’s portrayal of Lucy’s growth in “Three years.” Thereby, mentioning Lucy Gray’s “sweet face” evokes the images of the dancing rivulets’ joy and the “beauty born of murmuring sound” that nature planned to “pass into her face” in “Three years.” After foreshadowing Lucy Gray’s eventual disappearance by saying that “the sweet face of Lucy Gray / Will never more be seen” (11-12), Wordsworth combines the figure of Lucy with a new source of light, the lantern:

To-night will be a stormy night –
 You to the town must go;
 And take a lantern, Child, to light
 Your mother through the snow. (“Lucy Gray” 13-16)

Lucy’s parents are separated in a winter scene, and so were Wordsworth and Coleridge, the creators of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in Germany in the winter of 1798-99. The lantern is the guiding light for her mother, while it is Lucy who is meant to give direction to her mother. This notion emphasises the impression of solitude even further, since Lucy’s lantern will be the only source of light in the vast, stormy darkness of the night, an image of Lucy that is similarly expressed in “Song” through the her description as “Fair as a star when only one / Is shining in the sky” (7-8): Lucy and the explicitly mentioned Latin meaning of her name thereby become one through the element of solitude. The figurative meaning of light as the illuminator of the mind is once more mentioned by Coleridge in the context of homesickness in the letter to his wife Sara from 12 March 1799, stating that “I have at times experienced such an extinction of *light* in my mind” (E. H. Coleridge *Letters* I: 278).

Moreover, the imagery of Lucy’s natural playfulness in “Lucy Gray,” the “fawn at play” (9) and the “mountain roe / With many a wanton stroke” (25-26), parallel the imagery of “Three years” covered above. The “mountain roe,” not “blither, but “with many a wanton stroke” leaves her father’s home in her normal playfulness, which Wordsworth stresses by the use of the evocative detail of “Her feet disperse the powdery snow, / That rises up like smoke” (27-28). Tragically,

The storm came on before its time:
 She wandered up and down;
 And many a hill did Lucy climb:
 But never reached the town. (“Lucy Gray” 29-32)

Lucy's disappearance in the nightly snowstorm sets her parents – and in fact Wordsworth – onto a “negative quest romance” (Ferguson 535), the quest for the diminishing spirit of his creative friendship with Coleridge, which, as argued above, Coleridge also incorporated to “Dejection.” Lucy Gray is sent from the family house to the town in order to guard her mother through the night for the family to be reunited, but she does neither reach the town nor find her way home, so that

The wretched parents all that night
 Went shouting far and wide;
 But there was neither sound nor sight
 To serve them for a guide. (“Lucy Gray” 33-36)

“The sweetest thing that ever grew / Beside a human door” has her parents reunite over her loss (7-8). A Pyrrhic victory; its loss by far outweighs its gain. The light, Lucy, the lantern-bearer is irreversibly lost, and with her all sense of direction until “earth’s diurnal course” (“Slumber” 7) slowly causes new light to shine and thereby hint at what may have happened in the “stormy night” before:

At day-break on a hill they stood
 That overlooked the moor;
 And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
 A furlong from their door.

 They wept--and, turning homeward, cried,
 "In heaven we all shall meet;"
 --When in the snow the mother spied
 The print of Lucy's feet. (“Lucy Gray” 37-44)

Lucy has been lost and pronounced dead, but for a mere few moments, anxious, restless hope returns with the (in the seventh stanza) foreshadowed discovery of her footprints. Wordsworth

notionally accelerates the poem through these means, but also stylistically increases the pace through the Polysyndetic use of the conjunction “and:”

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge

They tracked the footmarks small;

And through the broken hawthorn hedge,

And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they crossed:

The marks were still the same;

They tracked them on, nor ever lost;

And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank

Those footmarks, one by one,

Into the middle of the plank;

And further there were none! (“Lucy Gray” 45-56)

The sequences of impression alongside its risen pace culminate in the loss of Lucy’s footprints on the bridge near her home. The poem comes to an immediate halt, leaving Lucy’s parents and reader in a state of anxious vacuum, revealing that so close from the safe shelter of the house she was lost. However – and this encompasses a significant parallel to Wordsworth’s earliest version of “Strange fits” – all hope has not vanished:

--Yet some maintain that to this day

She is a living child;

That you may see sweet Lucy Gray

Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
 And never looks behind;
 And sings a solitary song
 That whistles in the wind. ("Lucy Gray" 57-64)

Lucy Gray may not be dead, but her legend has her not aging. "To this day" reveals the temporal distance with which her legend is told, passed on from one person to the next, yet she is still "a living child." Her parents lost her, yet in a realm of time- and spacelessness "she trips along, / And never looks behind". Lucy, once the lantern-bearer, lives on as the luminous spirit she was when her parents lost her; she is the "spirit still, and bright / With something of an angel light" of "Phantom." Her having been the parents' "solitary child" makes this loss all the graver for them; the loss effectively means the wiping out of the parents' earthly hope, just as Wordsworth conveyed by choosing the imagery of the vanishing of light, and the solitary source of comfort is a spiritual one, namely the memory of Lucy in her imaginary realm. Could Wordsworth have chosen a more astounding analogy to the situation between him and Coleridge in the fiercely cold winter of 1798-99? This child lives on forever in the minds of those few who knew her, be it her parents personally or the passers-on of the legend, just like the spirit of the *Lyrical Ballads* does in the readers' minds, or even stronger in its creators'. Yet Lucy, the "spirit still, and bright / With something of an angel light" is irreconcilably separated from locality and temporality; a marvel of the past captured in the *Lyrical Ballads*, transient in its existence while eternal in the spiritual realm.

"Strange fits of passion have I known" includes the same elements of nature and vanishing light as "Lucy Gray," though in a different constellation. Most importantly, however, this poem introduces the element of dream to the group of the "Lucy Poems." After "Song," "Strange fits" is the second "Lucy Poem" that the Wordsworths included to their letter to Coleridge in December 1798, and like "Song," Wordsworth also revised "Strange fits" before he added them to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The most striking change he made

was to remove the final stanza of the 1798 letter and insert a preceding, new first stanza of similar content into the 1800 version of the poem. The letter's final stanza concludes the poem by having the narrator tell "her" about the preceding dreamed that turned into a nightmare:

Strange are the fancies that will slide

Into a lover's head,

"O mercy" to myself I cried

"If Lucy should be dead!"

I told her this; her laughter light

Is ringing in my ears;

And when I think upon that night

My eyes are dim with tears. ("Strange fits" 21-28)

The dream's anxiety is relieved by the laughter in the narrator's ears, but the mere recollection of the dream of Lucy's death causes an overflow of feelings that unsettle his countenance. Nonetheless, in the 1798-letter-version of "Strange fits," Lucy is clearly not dead. In fact, were Lucy indeed the personification of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's shared creative imagination of 1798, then these stanzas that the Wordsworths sent to Coleridge while in Germany express Wordsworth's poetic outcry at Coleridge in the hope of reviving Lucy. The preceding poem would then encapsulate Wordsworth's real-life nightmare at Goslar similar to the theme of "Lucy Gray," while final stanza would express the relief that Wordsworth was still hoping for when he composed the poem.

The new first stanza of the poem's 1800 version introduces the following dream as characterised by "Strange fits of passion:"

Strange fits of passion I have known,

And I will dare to tell,

But in the lover's ear alone,
 What once to me befell. (1-4)

Like the omitted final stanza, this new first stanza creates a temporal remove of the following theme of the poem to its moment of narration. However, it also creates an ambiguity that had not previously been there, as the poem is now told more generically in "the lover's ear," while the fear of Lucy's death is left unresolved and uncomforted in the dream turned nightmare that brings to a close the 1800 "Strange fits." Having this later version of the poem precede by the first distancing stanza changes the *in medias res* beginning of the 1798 version; what used to lead the reader-listener directly into the poem's theme had acquired the distance of a tale told by 1800:

When she I loved was strong and gay
 And like a rose in June,
 I to her cottage bent my way
 Beneath the evening moon. ("Strange fits" 5-8)

Wordsworth uses the flower-simile as a vehicle for his love's strength and beauty. In "Constancy," Coleridge addresses Wordsworth as the "loveliest Friend" (16), mourning to him in "Vain repetition" (19) that "Home and Thou are one. / The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon" (19-20). Bercovitch emphasises that "Lucy personifies [Wordsworth's] relationship with nature. She is the image of his 'heaven-born freedom', as a child, in feeling the 'glory' of the lonely violet and the moon's 'delight'" (11). Moreover, all the natural perfection surrounding Coleridge's English home "were but a becalméd Bark" without Wordsworth; Coleridge recalls Wordsworth as irreplaceable of the creativity that, during their shared *annus mirabilis*, had also borne the "Ancient Mariner," which Coleridge's imagery alludes to. The dream of "Strange fits" continues in the comfort and under the guidance of the moonlight:

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,

All over the wide lea;
 My horse trudged on, and we drew nigh
 Those paths so dear to me. ("Strange fits" 9-12)

The "evening moon" guides, but instead of a long moonlit night, a hunch of imminent darkness disturbs the wholeness of the dream:

And now we reached the orchard-plot,
 And as we climbed the hill,
 Towards the roof of Lucy's cot
 The moon descended still. (13-16)

While in "Three years she grew in sun and shower" Wordsworth applies the imagery of firmamental *lux* in association with Lucy – to her, "The stars of midnight shall be dear" (25) – in "Strange fits," the moon descends "Towards the roof of Lucy's cot," thereby creating the image of its light's reflection on the cottage roof in the mind of the reader-listener. The moon shines on this "peacefull'st cot," but with the union of the two sources of light, the hunch of imminent darkness suddenly blacks out the "sweet" dream's delight, "Kind nature's gentlest boon" (17-18), turning the "fits of passion" into a nightmare. The light of Lucy and the shining of the moon are pursued simultaneously; instantly "When down behind the cottage roof / At once the planet dropped" (23-24) – namely with the onset of omnipresent nocturnal darkness – the scare of Lucy's death springs to the pursuer's mind:

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
 Into a lover's head;
 'Oh mercy!' to myself I cried,
 'If Lucy should be dead!' ("Strange fits" 25-28)

Lucy evokes Coleridge's "*living Love*" of "Constancy," and the extinction of lunar light and the fear of her passing go hand in hand: The moon and its light were previously followed, whereas Lucy's and her cottage represented the aim, wholeness, the committed lover's

destination. And yet, in the above passage the sudden absence of light results in a strong inkling, but not the awareness of death. In the 1798 version of “Strange fits,” the fear of Lucy’s death is resolved in the poem’s final stanza as the unfounded “fit” of a nightmare; two years later, there is still a “lover,” but no final comfort granted to the nightmare; and finally, in “I travelled among unknown men” of late April 1801, Wordsworth again touches upon a nightmare in clear connection to his stay in Germany (Wu 356):

I travelled among unknown men
 In lands beyond the sea;
 Nor, England, did I know till then
 What love I bore to thee. (1-4)

Wordsworth had not only felt “a love” to England; he had literarily born her. Lucy is, at least partly, his creation, while she “grew” in the English countryside. The nightmare of “Strange fits,” the anticipation of Lucy’s death during the standstill of the shared creativity, shifts into focus along with the love for England:

‘Tis passed, that melancholy dream!
 Nor will I quit thy shore
 A second time, for still I seem
 To love thee more and more. (“I travelled” 5-8)

The relief is graspable as it is in Wordsworth’s “Ode” when new creativity is being regained through showing the happiness of the shepherd boy in the spring nature. As the “Ode” mourns the “glory” that has passed from the earth, “I travelled” also has a newfound wholeness succeed a previous wholeness:

Among thy mountains did I feel
 The joy of my desire;
 And she I cherished turned her wheel
 Beside an English fire. (“I travelled” 9-12)

This “joy of my desire” is Lucy, the pre-Germany creative wholeness, the “glory” of “Immortality.” While Coleridge was looking for wholeness abroad, in German epistemology, Wordsworth continues to link his notion of wholeness to England, where he has returned. The “she” whom Wordsworth “cherished” was only creative “Beside an English fire,” and her creativity, the “joy of [his] desire,” cannot be disentangled from nature:

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed

The bowers where Lucy played;

And thine is, too, the last green field

Which Lucy’s eyes surveyed! (“I travelled” 13-16)

The “melancholy dream” is over, yet its gloomy apprehension has become certainty. “I travelled” sums up Wordsworth’s German experience, and while his individual creativity was beginning as the *Lyrical Ballads* became slowly more popular, the mourning of Lucy was also being done (despite the short resumption of hope in “Phantom” three years later). Whereas in their sum and with their recurring schematising of dream and anxious anticipation, the Lucy poems’ outcomes oscillate between the awareness and the assumption of death, namely the extinction of Lucy’s light, thus between despair and distressful hope. “I travelled” is a valediction to the creative friendship. Wordsworth had discovered a new mode of poetic expression through the anticipation of the failure of his creative friendship, and while exploring this new mode he was looking back on the year(s) of collaboration. The “negative quest” for Lucy, for the light of shared creativity that was almost certainly lost, set Wordsworth on the new quest of *The Prelude* for most of the remainder of his life.

Conclusion

It has never been quite clear why Wordsworth went to Germany. Kenneth Johnston put forward the hypothesis that he might have been on a (rather insignificant) spy mission. This

seems plausible when the constellation of the European powers at that time is considered: while the Wordsworths “evidently wander about” during the undocumented months of their German sojourn from February to April 1799 (Reed 264), this interval coincides with the weeks when the Rastatt peace talks failed. At Rastatt, the situation escalated immediately after the assassination of two French delegates, and soon afterwards the Napoleonic Wars enveloped the continent for the coming sixteen years. However, it would have been a quick step indeed from being the suspected spy of the 1797 Alfoxden incident, to serving the Pitt government abroad in 1798-99; moreover, Michael Durey has argued convincingly against the reliability of Johnston’s primary evidence.

Wordsworth had written in a letter to the Norwich merchant Henry Gardiner, sent from Hamburg and dating 3 October 1799, that he and Dorothy “intend[ed] to apply with the utmost assiduity to learning the language when we are settled” (*Letters* I: 232). Almost five months later, however, Wordsworth described himself as “not . . . knowing any thing of the German language” (*Letters* I: 255). The settling was no more than make-do, and if he did not find the motivation to dedicate himself to learning German as thoroughly as is expressed in the letter it should also be noted that Germany and many Germans did not present themselves favourably to Wordsworth. From the first days at Hamburg, where “Every thing is very dear and the inn-keepers, shop-keepers &c. are all in league to impose upon strangers,” over the fiercely cold winter in the Goslar exile where Dorothy and he had only “met with one dear and kind creature [who was] so miserably deaf that we could only play with him games of cross-purposes,” to late February 1799 when they were harassed by soldiers at Nordhausen (Wordsworth *Letters* I: 232; 249; 252): Wordsworth’s experience of Germany was scarcely positive. Dorothy’s presence aside, it was the wholeness of the *annus mirabilis* inverted in the course of a mere few weeks.

Coleridge remarked on 14 January 1799 that Wordsworth “might as well have been in England as at Goslar, in the situation he chose and with his unseeking manners His

taking his sister with him was a wrong step” (E. H. Coleridge *Letters* I: 272). Despite financial difficulties that the German tour imposed on the Wordsworths, a deeper tenor of dissatisfaction with Wordsworth permeates these lines. Moreover, Charles Lamb wrote to Robert Southey that ‘I hear that the Two Noble Englishmen have parted no sooner than they set foot on German earth, but I have not heard the reason – possibly, to give novelists an handle to exclaim, “Ah me! what things are perfect?”’ (qtd. in Matlak, 46), which could hint at a quarrel in Hamburg about the further itinerary, perhaps even the main goals of the tour.

As conjectural as such a claim is, it would further highlight the crisis behind the “Lucy Poems” being composed and sent to Coleridge, while Wordsworth’s very accompanying Coleridge to Germany could be interpreted as an attempt to remain in Coleridge’s presence and compose *The Recluse* under his influence. The Wordsworths’ financial means were clearly insufficient to continue travelling with Coleridge, who was looking for a “new Heaven and new Earth” (Ashton 71), which he could contribute to the collaboration. Via the detour of Blumenbach, Coleridge found in fact more than he had been looking for. The German experience had a lasting impact on Coleridge’s life, precipitating his philosophical studies, and should have improved the likelihood of *The Recluse* being achieved.

However, Wordsworth did not agree with what Coleridge found, holding on to the Hartleian concept of growth while adding the strong natural component that his own childhood in the Lake District suggested to him. Ever since the German episode, this conflict manifested itself in the shared notion of the child as being playfully creative. Peter Coveney observes that “It was Blake who declared the ‘vast majority’ of children to be on the ‘side of Imagination or Spiritual Sensation,’” and, conclusively, that “With Blake we have the first coordinated utterance of the Romantic Imaginative and spiritually sensitive child” (51). Wordsworth and Coleridge adopted a very similar notion for their own depiction of the child, and the child came to stand symbolically for their Romantic imagination and spiritual sensitivity in their poems. In the case of Coleridge and Wordsworth, however, the endangered

or lost child became the symbol of their shared creative imagination with Wordsworth's invention of "Lucy." While the *Lyrical Ballads* were to yet mark Wordsworth's arrival as a writer, he was afraid of losing this shared creativity, a creativity he expressed through the "Lucy poems." With the hindsight that the culmination of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's shared creativity in *The Recluse* was never achieved, one may say that Lucy did in fact disappear in Germany, and through her disappearance contributed to the "mountain-spectre" of Romanticism in the divergent paths that her creators took after their return to England.

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