

FROM: The Wordsworthian Enlightenment; Hopkins UP, Johns
2005

70 *Ortwin de Graaf*

Perhaps Hartman is right: Wordsworth did shape a specifically English—and increasingly global—culture unable to entertain, let alone join, a genuinely political structure which it is hard to sympathize with precisely because it does not suffer intimate imaginative identifications—least of all perhaps as a family. And for once, the then-leader of the British Conservative Party may have been right, too, when he declared in 2000 that high taxes drive out good conscience.²⁷ But instead of leading to “a deep cynicism about the institutions that give our lives moral shape,” the impersonal bad conscience constituting the superstrate at least entertains the promise of a shift in the shape of our lives that would translate sympathy beyond the confines of domesticated justice. Wordsworth’s memory deserves this “intolerable thought” (GS, 659).

CHAPTER THREE

Romantic Memory

Frances Ferguson

Locke pointed, now some three centuries ago, to the importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time. If, he suggested, human beings were capable of continual rearrangements of the elements of their thought and behavior, one could nevertheless see, through an examination of memory, that memory could provide testimony that one was still the same person despite the contradictions between what one said and what one did, despite the inconsistencies between what one had done earlier and what one had done later. Locke’s treatment of memory meant that one didn’t have to stake one’s identity on the claim that a particular person must always be able to persuade others—and oneself as well—that one has remained the same person by being characteristic of oneself and, hence, recognizable. The persistence of memory relieved one of the need to continue to look the same or to produce consistent and predictable patterns of behavior. Locke was, in this, lending his support to a remarkable feature of the philosophy of everyday life—that we don’t imagine

I am grateful to audiences at Tel Aviv University and the School for Criticism and Theory in the summer of 1996 for their responses to an earlier version of this essay.

that the continuity of an individual's identity rests on a series of ocular proofs, that we most often take someone who behaves differently from one day to the next to be the same person in a different mood rather than a different person altogether.¹

Memory, from the vantage of the Lockean account, provided two very palpable services. First, in a fashion that is only superficially paradoxical, memory opened the way for considerable flexibility and innovation; it freed individuals from having to repeat the same actions continually and introduced them instead to a vision of their own possible progress and development.² Moreover, memory provided a theater that one could regularly open to compete with the theater of immediate experience. As historians of the novel have long recognized, an intensification of attention to memory underwrote the phenomenal rise of literature in the centuries after Locke.³ It was, in that sense, regularly implicated in what we mean by the internalization of experience, the psychologization of everyday life that we connect with modernity, inasmuch as memory was identical with reflection, and with a reflection that did not simply reproduce an image of one's past but adapted it in the process.

Now there is probably nothing more common than to move from such an account of memory in all its self-revising aspects to the claim that our history is a version of memory. Indeed, the function of the humanities in the university and the school is, these days, regularly and routinely described as one of cultural memory. The justification for all of the humanities occurs in terms of a justification of a kind of history that models itself on individual memory, and we thus continually encounter a notion of a memory that is constituted largely outside of individuals, a social or collective memory that an individual comes to produce rather than to recall, in a kind of Jungian mutual recruitment between personal memory and phylogenetic memory.⁴ The purpose of this essay is to examine, through a few key examples, the uses that romanticism develops for memory and the consequences that such uses of memory have for both history and the notion of individual identity. It will, in the process, try to indicate how memory became more individualized in the romantic period and, second, how this process includes reference to the claims of the collective.

Of course, the first difficulty with history — one that develops with the eighteenth century's intense interest in history-writing — is that the increasing popularity of this kind of writing establishes what we might call pure history as an absent ideal.⁵ Modern history arises with historiography, which is to say that pure history is regularly described — by both historians of literature who are marking

out the differences between historical and pseudo-historical chronicles and by Freud — in essentially archaic terms.⁶ History in its pure form would record actual events that are confirmable by more than one witness. Moreover, historical witnesses are taken to be most credible — most fully historical — when they describe events in which perception requires only minimal instruction. The history of battles and wars thus represents a paradigm for such a notion of history. By contrast with social history, the history of battles and catastrophes is a very pure form of history. It relies upon the fact that one can imagine a variety of witnesses, who might come from different cultures and speak different languages but who would nevertheless be able to confirm one another's sense that a flood or an earthquake had occurred or that thousands had perished on the battlefield.⁷ For if Rousseau's account of history makes it look like a problem for an event that might be susceptible to more than one description, the catastrophic event always seems to qualify as an event because the description of it as a catastrophe is imagined to drive out all others.

Such an image of pure history does not cease to have an impact because of its comparative rarity — indeed, its existing as a null set. If pure history sets a standard of historical adequacy that other versions of history continually chafe under, it is the scarcity of pure history that prompts most of the important accounts of history that we have. Social history, the "history" produced by the novel, and individual psychoanalytic history all provide images of how one might produce historical facts in the absence of such universal agreement as pure history seems to require. Social history defines itself against pure history by insisting upon analyzing different periods in order to see how the training of a particular society contributes to the ability of witnesses to observe anything like the same events. Literary history, as instanced in Ian Watt's important account of the rise of psychological realism, traces the rise of psychology as the emergence of an interest in memory as the record of how formal procedures of completeness — well-madness — come to produce their own characteristic ways of identifying facts. Psychoanalytic history, as Freud argued in making his claim that the Wolf Man could remember having observed his parents' coitus in infancy, recalls the ancient law of testimony — that there must be two witnesses to corroborate one another — to present his case study as a legitimate representation of memory even though it revolves around the belated testimony of an adult recalling or imagining an experience from his infancy.⁸

What is striking about most of these versions of testimony is that they might appear to replace the old (or virtually unavailable) model, the one in which

persons can regularly corroborate one another's perceptions, with a resolutely individualistic model in which both the perception of a pattern and its confirmation lie in the same hands. Memory, as recorded in history, seems thus to become not what all possible observers would confirm but instead a process of internal matching, in which memory or its formal simulacrum qualifies an individual to count as his own corroboration. The formal scheme of the fiction writer produces a conviction that needs no evidence from the real world; and Freud's psychoanalytic model is in the somewhat peculiar position of producing permutations for the patient's testimony that are simultaneously formal — insofar as they are merely translations of what has been said — and evidentiary — in that the original material is seen as evidence of experience.⁹

In the trajectory of arguments about evidence, the most surprising element in Freud's treatment of the Wolf Man is his claim that the only plausible evidence must be original with the patient. Indeed, the very corroboration that would once have served to confirm an individual's testimony — the testimony of a second witness — comes to seem less like confirmation than contamination. Thus, Freud takes great pains in his discussion of the Wolf Man not just to insist that he, Freud, had not influenced the patient but also to argue that no others compromised his recollection of the imagery that constitutes his account of the primal scene, something he is said to have identified as an event.¹⁰ Memory, in this latter psychologized form, is memory less because it confirms the identity of an event (its occurring for all observers in terms that can be agreed upon) than because of its assertion of the identity of apparently dissimilar events (the intercourse between the parents that the child did not understand as he would later come to understand intercourse as an adult).¹¹ Moreover, psychological memory comes to register the sense of the uniqueness of this identity; although it could have been any one of a number of persons who might have recognized such an identity, it was only one — the Wolf Man — who recognized it in this particular case.

We may now take stock of the difference that the psychological or individual account of memory makes. For if it seems to supplant the archaic (or mythic) model of testimony in which numerous witnesses confirm one another in the production of the facts of the world, it is not, even so, subjective in the sense of simply producing the facts of the self, the individual's point of view that is valued precisely for being the individual's. Moreover, it goes well past the epistemological problems that the critics of the novel routinely raise — the recognition that fictions, as descriptions of things we have never experienced, may infect our sense of what we do in fact experience. That set of epistemological problems

regularly resolves itself into two worries: first, that our descriptions can come to count as creating the real but unjustified belief that we have ourselves experienced something; and second, that our descriptions come to create skepticism about the plausibility of any well-formed story (so that it looks as though experience is only credible when it seems to have the most minimal appearance of design).¹² This is as much as to say that the individual, psychologized memory comes to be charged less with a relationship to truth as such than with the capacity for recognizing oneself in the world, seeing oneself as connected to one's actions.

Thus, the most important effect of the charge that memory takes on is to make the deficiencies of memory look as though they are anything but trivial. For memory has become not merely a way of asserting a basic continuity of the observer in the face of continual lapses and confusions; it has developed into something that must be treated as a right, and to just the same extent as it has come to be treated as a duty. If romantic psychology expands the repertoire of the individual to emphasize moods, anticipations, and memory in one's life, it concomitantly imposes those enlarged powers, so that the right to have a memory becomes very nearly identical with the right to psychological life. Thus, even if countless observers were to attest to an individual's existence by affirming that they were there at the event of that person's birth, the psychological account would make it clear that this kind of information about one's life isn't what's in question at all. For memory here stands less for the ability to know that certain events happened or even that one was there to witness them than for the possibility of reflexivity itself, for a faculty of mind that can only imperfectly be translated into public law or be received from the testimony of another.¹³ Memory, that is, comes to be less important for the facts that it produces than for its ability to produce facts with personal application, for what I'll be examining as the ability to move from one description to another. Moreover, as I will be suggesting in this discussion, the looser, or more expansive, romantic sense of what memory ought to be opens on a claim that memory is important for producing what we ought to designate "moral certainty," the sense of certainty about what must have been the case and how an individual feels involved with it even if there is no possibility of producing an actual confirmation. (Moreover, inasmuch as memory comes to be an expression of the sense of knowledge from acquaintance rather than from reports, we even come to see descriptions of reports that are treated as if they were experience. Thus, Stanley Fish's account of how *Paradise Lost* leads the unsuspecting reader to be "surprised by sin" — and thus to

experience in *propria persona* Adam's fall — anticipates the work that Shoshana Felman and Cathy Narkiss have recently done to argue that reading reports of trauma is itself traumatizing. What is most important, from our perspective, is the urgency with which the insistence upon the dispersion of individual experience is pressed in these various cases, as if to provide evidence of the premium being placed on the personalization of memory, in which even a report is seen as producing experience.)¹⁴

To try to sharpen this account of the importance of memory, I shall be examining a series of examples — the first from Geoffrey Hartman's recent work on videotestimonies of the Yale Holocaust Archives, the second from Wordsworth's account of one of the famous spots of time in Book 12 of *The Prelude* and Hartman's commentary on it, and the third from James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. As my repeated reference to both the eighteenth century and the twentieth will, I hope, make clear, what I am calling "romantic memory" is by no means confined to the early nineteenth century but is a characteristic modern way of identifying the stakes of memory in relation to the individual.

The first question that presents itself concerns the relationship between the faculty of memory and the media of its representation. In a series of recent articles, Geoffrey Hartman has argued that the videotestimony has become — and ought to be recognized as — a significant new genre. In essays such as "Learning from Survivors: The Yale Testimony Project" and "The Cinema Animal: On Spielberg's *Schindler's List*," Hartman identifies a variety of genres that aim to represent memory — histories and psychoanalytic case studies, Hollywood cinema and poetic fictions.¹⁵ Yet while he is concerned to identify all of these various representational modes as versions of memory, he would distinguish the videotestimony from all of them. Thus, he acknowledges that the videotestimony cannot claim the kind of corroboration that historians might require of a proper history and admits that the videotestimony does not always have the density and detail of a cinematic representation of a fictional or fictionalized memory. In his view, however, these differences mark out the comparative strength of the videotestimony. The videotestimony does not fail to meet the standards of other modes of memory; rather, its example reveals their previously inconspicuous deficiencies.

Time and again, he rehearses the power of one representational mode after another, only to end in a statement of the suspicions that their successes arouse. Thus, while Hartman asserts that "it is important not to sanctify witness accounts," he also claims the videotestimony "as a representational mode with a

special counter-cinematic integrity" ("Learning from Survivors," 198). Writing of *Schindler's List*, he talks about the effectiveness of the film "as a film that conveys to the public at large the horror of the extermination" ("Cinema Animal," 127), only to begin to register his unease with "the premium placed on visually by such a film" and with the way in which seeing "things that sharply, and from a privileged position is to see them with the eyes of those who had the power of life and death" (128). In his view, the formal vantage that Spielberg's camera provides ineluctably captures its viewers in the same angle of vision as the Nazis. However sympathetic 1990s viewers might take themselves to be with victims whom they see tormented and tortured in the past that the film depicts, they cannot escape this privileged vision. Such power corrupts, for the modern spectator as well as for the historical actors in the past who shared it and acted viciously on it.

Notice that Hartman is basically arguing here against what might seem to be the fundamental premise of the Spielberg film. *Schindler's List* recounts Schindler's story in order to suggest that it was and is possible, even for someone who shares an extraordinary number of circumstances and life experiences with the murderous, to take an active role in preventing such murderous acts; but Hartman is essentially arguing that Spielberg's use of the cinematic medium itself compromises such a view. The moral dilemma he is interested in locating is this: if one's way of gaining information about a crime involves one's being put in the privileged position of witnessing it but never running the risks of victimization, doesn't that position of superiority compromise one's judgment? If we were to tease out the implications of his remarks here, it would be possible to talk about two distinct ways of suggesting the problems that are raised by Spielberg's representation of moral choice.

The first is to argue, as Hartman seems to, that the conditions of viewing lend viewers all too much of an invitation to participate in a power structure that they would repudiate were it not camouflaged as the discreet charm of visually. Adapting the argument that critics like Laura Mulvey and Mary Ann Doane have made about the misogyny that attaches to the "male gaze" of viewers of women in film, Hartman suggests that the conditions of viewing may override the particular views that we might have and express.¹⁶ Seeing like a Nazi may thus be, in Hartman's account, being like a Nazi, so that persons come to occupy positions that they would never independently have chosen.

The second approach acknowledges the power of the visual perspective in Spielberg's film but does not argue that this perspective aligns modern viewers

other people will judge one differently from the way in which one judges oneself. It is, rather, that the impact of one's actions on other people come to cause one to reevaluate what one's actions were — and that the extension of the time of such remembrance increases the liability that one incurs in the process.

It is at this point that we are in a position to return to the notion of pure history and to comment on its recurrent attractions. For pure history is nothing other than the sense that an event has been established so definitively that one is unlikely to alter its basic shape. The testimony of various witnesses and the circumstantial record in these cases resolve themselves into comparatively uniform definitions of acts and events. (Whatever work historical fiction may do to alter such agreements, it is unlikely to alter the agent's sense of the value of his or her actions.)

Yet there are a host of ways in which external circumstances operate to cause one to change one's sense of the value of an act that one has already committed. The most familiar occurs in what Benjamin describes as the victor's history; history as written from the perspective of whatever position, in having triumphed, seeks to establish its own genealogy.²¹ Or, the simple movement from one place to another can drastically alter the value of one's actions. Thus, Burke (in *An Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*) singles out the Homeric description of a fugitive who, though conscious of his crime, crosses a territorial boundary and thus escapes all the external sanctions that would before have punished it.²² The sense that history might have been written differently if a war had turned out differently, like the sense that a crime would be punishable in one place and go unrecognized in another, may seem to make action look like an especially fragile notion. For if a moral action comes to look like an action at all from having had an impact on another person, the circumstances that permit such an action to occur are themselves continually being acted upon in the process of being formalized and enforced, ignored and allowed to lapse.

This is as much as to say that insofar as external structures like laws and histories make actions perceptible, they contribute to the process of making actors of us all. Laws can teach us to extend the range of consequences that we see as capable of contributing to an action, can teach us to understand omissions as possibly forms of action and not merely insignificant gestures. Histories can at least encourage us to recognize the present in the mold of actions that have already been recognized as such. In providing formal or actual ways of imagining what an action would be or has been, they do not so much ask for exact duplication as provide a standpoint for comparison.

Yet it is clear that this way of talking about action constitutes a departure from both pure history and from the model of individual memory. Inasmuch as it does not restrict the notion of action to a time period confined enough to simulate the unity of time that the drama lends to action, it is not always susceptible of the kind of instantaneous multiple confirmation that pure history might seek. Inasmuch as it does not restrict action to an individual's private assessment of whether or not he has acted, it does not claim that individual intention must remain forever unrevised by outcomes or that one would never feel retrospective grief over an action that one had entered into under the happy conviction that it was a quite different action from what one later had occasion to discover it to be.

The kind of problem about action — the blending of the notion of action with description — that I am interested in here is one that finds some of its starkest and most exact illustrations in romantic writing in general and in Wordsworth's poetry in particular. Think, for instance, about Wordsworth's statement, when he is looking at Tintern Abbey again for a second time, that "the picture of the mind revives again." He is describing an immediate experience almost as if might it be a memory, as if the process of seeing were indistinguishable from the memory of having seen. And in saying of the landscape, "I remember this," rather than providing a description of a previously unobserved scene, Wordsworth is suggesting the ways in which memory is not simply a preservation of past experience but also a contribution to it. For in the poem's careful calibrations of how this viewing of Tintern Abbey is better than the earlier one in some respects, worse than the earlier one in others, the efforts to sharpen memory are not so much about creating the sense of having a history as about using memory to install comparative experience within individual consciousness.

In other words, the Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey" is attempting to treat memory as a process that involves, simultaneously, both continuity — the connection between one experience of the same place and another — and differentiation — the bench-marking that keeps holding the two experiences up for comparison. The almost completely retrospective movement of that poem may make it seem easy to assimilate Wordsworth's depiction of memory to the pattern of simple recollection of the past, but the anticipation of how "in this moment there is life and food / For future years" (64–65) continually projects memory forward. It repeatedly describes memory in the future perfect tense.

The conundrum of memory in "Tintern Abbey" has prompted some of the most interesting critical speculations we have on Wordsworth's attitude towards memory — on his confidence or uncertainty about its efficacy. For our purposes it

may be sufficient merely to note the starkness with which the problem of memory is presented. On the one hand, memory is able to establish continuity in the face of—and through the means of—an ongoing process of alteration in both the speaker (as he is aware) and the landscape (as he can infer). On the other, memory is treated as if it could be converted into static images, squirreled away for future use and occasionally deployed to patch up what come to look like gaps in an individual's experience. Yet its interest for us is in establishing a point of contrast against which we can measure accounts of memory like those that Hartman takes up in his essay "The Poetics of Prophecy."²³

There Hartman is commenting on an attitude that he sees as linking Wordsworth with figures like the Old Testament prophets: "The ambivalent sympathy shown by the prophet for the powerful and terrible thing he envisions" (165). And he specifically ties that sympathy with the "seduction that power exerts, when seen as an act of God or Nature" (166). The major point of this portion of Hartman's discussion will be that the very ability to see—or foresee—events, even events that one dreads, involves something approaching an acceptance of—indeed, an endorsement of—those events. And he will go on to mention in particular one of the famous "spots of time" episodes in *The Prelude* (1850, 12.292–333) as an instance of this pattern. In that passage, Wordsworth describes how he had strained with expectation as he waited to be transported from school at the Christmas holidays, and how he had climbed a "crag overlooking two highways to see whether he [could] spot the horses that should be coming" (168). As he recalls the particular episode, which is in itself no more notable than what someone waiting for a bus might produce, he extends its range. Without introducing a single hostile thought or murderous intention, Wordsworth recounts that his father died within ten days of his return home, concluding (in part) that "the event / With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared / A chastisement," a divine correction of his desires (1850, 12.309–11; 314–16).

In Hartman's reading, the passage raises the question of temporality, and enables him to note the powerful lack of apparent connection between one term and another: "There is no hint of anything that would compel the mind to link the two terms, hope against time and its peculiar fulfillment" (170). Yet if it describes what Hartman calls "a sin against time," in its anticipation of futurity, the passage also prompts him to distinguish between two different stances toward time: one, the apocalyptic, which involves "an anticipatory, proleptic relation to time, intensified to the point where there is at once desire for and dread of the end being hastened," and in which "there is a potential inner turning against

time, and against nature insofar as it participates in the temporal order" (167); the other, the prophetic, which represents "a perfectly ordinary mood [that] is seen to involve a sin against time" (170). As Hartman puts it, "the aftermath points to something unconscious in the first instance but manifest and punishing now" (170).

Since Hartman's concern with the passage is its usefulness in getting at the relationship between religious and secular (literary) language, I am necessarily departing from the terms of his discussion at this point. For the question that I want to address in this discussion of memory is the relationship between what Hartman has called "the seduction of power" and the kind of retrospective action that conscious memory is capable of constructing. For the passage is one in which Wordsworth links two memories that have nothing in common except that he experienced the awareness of them at roughly the same time in his life, and in both the distinct, if subtended, sense of guilt appears to emerge from nothing more than a kind of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* logic. That logic suggests that, because Wordsworth's father's death occurred later in time than Wordsworth's boyhood experience of expectant waiting, it has been brought on by it. Moreover, because that logic makes the process of perceiving objects or events look as though it were an endorsement of those objects or events, a participation in the objects of experience that amounted to some kind of implicit ratification of them, it makes the experience of living in a world in which undesirable things happen look like its own variant on the notion of original sin. Neither the purest of motives nor the greatest attention to things apparently indifferent would protect one from the experience of ineliminable guilt in the face of any negative outcome or undesirable event.

I produce this gloss to suggest that romantic memory, particularly in Wordsworth's handling of it, is more than just a capacity for recording events, and that the special pressure that romanticism brings to bear on memory is the pressure of an expanded moral obligation, an obligation to reexamine one's own past actions to see if their value has been altered by subsequent events. In this, romantic memory is allied with the kind of mental techniques that Weber described so vividly in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.²⁴ Like such techniques of spiritual and material development, it involves subjecting one's own experience to a standard more demanding than that of truthfulness or even accuracy, because it makes every individual's memory stand in the same relation to experience as Rousseau's general will does to the individual. It requires a continual review of actions through the lenses of a variety of different sets of consequences.

From this vantage, it begins to appear that romanticism, in the process of changing consciousness with the revaluation of actions that can be recalled only in the sense of being remembered and not at all in the sense of being revoked or undone, creates a mental apparatus for manufacturing guilt much more rapidly than it can forgive it. From this perspective romantic memory might seem to be completely identical with liberal guilt, with its sense of regret at the possibility that one's very identity might involve the appropriation of some resources that would have been more useful to another existence. Yet if the possibility of being a conscious subject capable of identifying events and actions would seem from this perspective to be an entirely undesirable state, it becomes especially difficult to reconcile that account with Wordsworth's gloss on his memory of the expectation now tinged with a lurking sense of guilt:

And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
 And all the business of the elements,
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist
 That on the line of each of those two roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes;
 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
 As at a fountain. . . .

(1850, 12, 317-26)

That combination of anxiety and pleasure is particularly difficult to sort out. If, as Hartman's reading powerfully argues, Wordsworth's description of his experience is "prophetic" because it recruits his earlier experience as a kind of participation in the later event of his father's death, why should Wordsworth "repair" to this memory cluster as if it were a pleasurable one? Memory, in this case, provides sustenance by presenting a set of kindred elements, "spectacles and sounds" that don't cohere to produce an accusation of guilt: Wordsworth tells over the beads of memory to see that they never sort themselves into a causal chain, so that the work of memory comes to involve the sense of *still* not yet having the evidence to accuse himself of having brought about his father's death. What Wordsworth's "spot of time" enables us to track is not just romanticism's stress on memory as memory solicits a consciousness of what one has done—insofar as one judges oneself by the actions that one has performed. It also registers the increasing

pressure that romanticism will come to put on the memory that can provide convincing evidence *that one hasn't acted*, that one hasn't yet seen things that would make one regret one's past for the consequences that have attended it.

The phenomenon I am describing here is what we might think of as circumstantial memory. And what I am arguing is that circumstantial memory entails something more than the cultivation of the capacity to have and harvest exceptionally vivid memories that numerous studies of memory from Wordsworth to Proust have focused on in talking about the combination of extraordinary detail and apparent randomness that attach to them. For circumstantial memory provides a kind of balm to the potentially corrosive memory that might seem to make an individual responsible for all the events that he was capable of knowing about from experience or report; it sets a limit to the extent to which the theater of memory can recruit any of us to a particular action and provides its own alternative history, which relies on the exceptional vividness of its various images precisely to the extent to which it resists assimilation to narrative's tendency to produce events. The good news of the memory of these clustered elements is that *there is no news*, that nothing has happened.

Thus, if Wordsworth's account of circumstantial memory enables him to accuse himself of having, perhaps, been at fault in the occurrence of events that he never meant to originate, it also seeks to cure such potentially illimitable self-accusation by producing a transcript of images that never cohere into a causal pattern. *The Prelude* seeks to address this question of expansive moral consciousness in almost exclusively autobiographical terms—only occasionally adverting to Coleridge or Dorothy Wordsworth or Mary Hutchinson Wordsworth to thank them for their confirmation. Yet even in those rudimentary gestures, gestures that in no way overstep the bounds of the autobiographical account of Wordsworth's attempt to cultivate and manage his own memory, we can discern the outlines of an important charge that the nineteenth century directs to the publicness of circumstance.

What we have been tracing *in mure* is a rise in the importance of circumstantial evidence in an analysis that infers actions from circumstances as they might be observed by anyone at all, not simply by their initiators.²⁵ Moreover, insofar as one's sense of having acted involves an expansive time frame, the consciousness of oneself as a moral agent—as a better or worse moral agent than one meant to be—continually charges the memory with the task of observing and retaining the materials that may come to be actions. Were this expansive memory to expand forever, it would produce a kind of anticipatory guilt of massive—indeed, para-

