

chronic adulteress, and a congenital liar. Flaubert makes it clear on page after page that Emma's fate stems from the nature of her desires and her conspicuous absence of values.

Danahy moves even further away from the novel when he argues that because Emma is in touch with men as they are in their reality, she is left "unsatisfied emotionally and sexually." In other words, the "norm for reality" lies in Charles, Léon, Rodolphe, and Homais? Surely even the most casual reading of *Madame Bovary* shows Flaubert no more sympathetic to his male characters than he is to Emma. Equally vacuous, they share the perverted material and emotional values that dominate Emma's consciousness. Flaubert passes judgment on them all when, at the end, Canivet is called in to perform an autopsy on Charles: "Il l'ouvrit et ne trouva rien."

The source of Danahy's dissatisfaction is not so much with my interpretation as with Flaubert's novel. "The survival of Emma Bovary," he says, "perhaps depends on her becoming more self- or female-centered." He wants *Madame Bovary* to be something it is not: a positive, sympathetic exploration of a woman who endures. But that is not the novel Flaubert wrote. His response to the mind- and heart-dulling "mœurs de province" spares neither men nor women. "Only connect," Forster says. Emma's problem, as well as that of her male companions, is that she prefers fantasy to connection.

Danahy's contention that I undervalue Emma is counterbalanced by Brenner, who sees my article opting for Emma's achievement of redemption. What I said was not intended as an apology for Emma, and I think Brenner stumbles over my point at the end: "While her initial response is to the ravaged features reflected in her mirror, the dream metaphor suggests a discovery that goes beyond Homais's brief moment of doubt. Awakening to reality during the last moments of her life, she discovers that the nature of the dream she has lived, 'le fruit d'une imagination en délire,' and the horror of that realization cannot be avoided by uttering a Cartesian dictum whose terms have been responsible for her own misapprehension of the world." One reason I cited the canceled ending, in which Homais suddenly questions his own identity, was to show that Flaubert had taken hold of the idea early in the composition of the novel.

As for Brenner's argument that my "conclusion requires explanation of the difference between Emma's deathbed scene and previous mirror scenes," I would point to the sentence where I make this distinction: "Awakening into life, Emma requests the mirror that gave form to her dream of life only

to discover that the magic is gone." This discovery, coupled with her response to the beggar's song, makes *Madame Bovary* an echo chamber of ironies, and her laughter blends terror with self-knowledge. Emma's brief awareness of the void of her life as she is poised over the void of death, symbolized by the beggar's face in the darkness, completes the ironic pattern of the novel.

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Wordsworth's Preface

To the Editor:

In "Coleridge's Interpretation of Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" (*PMLA*, 93 [1978], 912–24), Don H. Bialostosky finds himself "in fundamental disagreement" (p. 924, n. 7) with my interpretation (in *Wordsworth as Critic* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969], pp. 7–13) of Wordsworth's views on subjects drawn from rustic life. I am interested here, not in examining Bialostosky's chastisement of Coleridge, but merely in suggesting that, where Bialostosky's and my discussions overlap, there is more agreement between us than he claims.

I share the chastisement for omitting from my discussion the first sentence of the passage from the Preface cited by Bialostosky on pages 914–15. The omission would perhaps have been reprehensible had my purpose at that point been to discuss Wordsworth's "principal object." It was not. It was to test the credibility of Wordsworth's idealization of rustic life—an idealization that, if proved, would be in accord with his "principal object"; that would see rustic life as a suitable basis for an exposition of "the primary laws of our nature"; or that would, in the terminology of my first chapter, lead to a subject matter "well adapted to interest mankind permanently" (Wordsworth's phrase), since "the primary laws of our nature" provide such an interest; or that would suggest, in the terminology of my fourth chapter (where Bialostosky could have found the missing sentence in a more appropriate context [p. 108]), that "The rustic . . . is mankind's epitome, and general truth [i.e., 'the primary laws of our nature'] may be presented in an imitation of his passions and actions and language" (p. 104). My conclusion, which is that of some other critics, Coleridgean or not, is that Wordsworth's idealization of rustic life is perhaps false and, in the Preface, certainly unproved.

Bialostosky offers no such test and consequently

no conclusion, whether in agreement or disagreement with mine. He does, indeed, summarize Wordsworth's ideas, in the paragraph beginning "Wordsworth, however, does not . . ." (p. 915), and in terms so closely in accord with my own (pp. 7–10) that I can find no basis for disagreement with him; he even adopts my gloss ("associated," p. 10, n. 12) on Wordsworth's unclear "incorporated." But he is so unconcerned with the validity or credibility of the ideas as to lead one to suppose, from his silence, that he assumes their credibility to be outside the province of the critic. It is hard to understand this neglect; for if it should happen that Wordsworth's account of the characteristics of rustic life is false, or only partially true, or hazy, or merely unproved, his thesis fails, or at least requires amplification, which, as Bialostosky insists, the Preface does not provide. On the contrary, Wordsworth assumes that the primitivistic presuppositions of the passage under discussion are self-evident; my criticism of the Preface arises from my unwillingness to accept this assumption, especially when Wordsworth himself significantly qualified one of the more important presuppositions in a letter of 1802 (*Wordsworth*, pp. 8–13).

It is true, of course, that in the passage under discussion Wordsworth does not, in so many words, "praise low and rustic life for its own sake or try to explain the characteristics he finds there; he explains why what he finds there is useful for his poetic purposes" (p. 915). The point of my criticism is precisely here: "what he finds there" is not demonstrated to be there and is therefore not a demonstrated reason for its usefulness, though praise of rustic life or explanation of its characteristics might have persuaded the reader. In addition to failing to test for validity or credibility, Bialostosky ignores evidence outside the Preface for Wordsworth's attitude toward rustics. It is indeed difficult to read the passage under discussion without inferring Wordsworth's praise of rustic life; for failure to make this inference leaves us free to surmise that Wordsworth drew for his poetry on a social class that he hated, or despised, or regarded with indifference, merely because its mores offered such exemplifications of "the primary laws of our nature" as suited his "principal object." It is, then, misleading to allege that "Wordsworth . . . does not consider rustic life desirable in itself so much as he finds it desirable for the purpose of presenting human passions in unimpeded and unconcealed operation" (p. 915). That he does find rustic life desirable is implied, though not stated, in the passage under discussion; but if evidence is needed, it can be found scattered throughout *The Prelude*, *Home at Grasmere*, and *The Excursion* (to name only major

poems) and the early correspondence. I cite some of this evidence (*Wordsworth*, pp. 9, 10, 11–12, 35, 62–63, 101, 110); Bialostosky does not.

In sum, Bialostosky disagrees with me because of the limitations that he has imposed on his own discussion, that is, because he does not test (or confirm) Wordsworth's unproved presuppositions about the nature of the rustic and because he does not draw on Wordsworthian material outside the Preface in order to discover Wordsworth's attitude toward rustic life. Where our ground is common, I can find no disagreement. I need hardly add that Bialostosky could have found some of his other arguments anticipated elsewhere in my discussions of the Preface: for instance, the refutation of Marjorie Barstow Greenbie's interpretation of "language" as figures of speech, or the interpretations of the phrases "in a state of vivid sensation" and "the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement" (pp. 916, 918; my edition of the Preface [Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1957], pp. 157–58).

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To the Editor:

Don H. Bialostosky concludes his reassessment of "Coleridge's Interpretation of Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" with the worthy proposal that we should "approach Wordsworth's Preface afresh" and establish the fundamental differences between the critical principles of the two poets. But I find Bialostosky reaching this conclusion not only by leaving out historical information bearing on Coleridge's purposes in writing *Biographia Literaria* but also by distorting Coleridge's intentions and arguments in the passages on Wordsworth. Although Bialostosky's arguments are rigorously logical, they appear vitiated at some points by the tone and method of his essay.

In building a case to show that "Coleridge's refutative interpretation of the Preface has obscured" points of real agreement and disagreement between the writers (p. 923), Bialostosky adopts the tone of prosecuting attorney to refute, in turn, what he alleges to be "Coleridge's inaccurate interpretations" of Wordsworth (p. 921). This tone, reminiscent of that adopted by many of the romantic reviewers against whom Wordsworth and Coleridge protested, in effect attenuates the tone of Coleridge's discourse by making it seem that Coleridge was constructing arguments against Wordsworth alone, and only in the adversarial manner that Bialostosky has adopted.