Mark J. Bruhn, *Wordsworth Before Coleridge: The Growth of the Poet's Philosophical Mind, 1785-1797*. New York: Routledge, 2018. Pp. 179. £115. ISBN 9781138486447.

Wordsworth Before Coleridge has both a negative and a positive agenda. Its negative argument, which I find wholly convincing, is against the critical view of Coleridge as Wordsworth's key philosophical mentor, shaping his thought in the years between 1797 and 1805. Bruhn shows that key principles of Wordsworth's philosophy – actually, his metaphysics and aspects of his psychology (ethics remain tangential to this study, though not to Wordsworth) – were in place by 1797, before his close collaboration with Coleridge. Those key principles are the ontological dualism of mind and matter; the 'one life' that animates 'the great system of the world' (102-11, 130); and the ontological 'fitness' between mind and nature (112, 130).

From where did Wordsworth derive these principles? Bruhn's positive argument unfolds as source study, and it can be insightful and persuasive. At the top of his 'Conclusion,' Bruhn clearly rehearses his main points, which I quote with commentary. 'Wordsworth profited from more than a decade of philosophical preparation prior to the advent of Coleridge' (129): agreed. 'A student in the higher geometry at Hawkshead Grammar School and Cambridge University, Wordsworth was exposed…to a philosophical discourse that insisted upon the qualitative difference between the material ideas generated by the senses and the immaterial deductions of the abstract intellect' (129). This is something Wordsworth tells us himself in *The Prelude* (6.135-59), but Bruhn's Chapter 1 elaborates the point against scholars 'increasingly prone to emphasize and valorize Wordsworth's representations of the embodied and environmentally situated mind' (27). Chapter 1 also contains provocative side-glances at Wordsworth's possible debts to Plato and Descartes.

Bruhn's next points, corresponding to his book's middle chapters (2-4), are less persuasive. Wordsworth's 1794 'Corrections and Additions' to *An Evening Walk* allegedly respond to Pope's *Essay on Man*, which allegedly 'arraigned the passions along with the senses for embodied offenses against the dictates…of reason' (129). Pope is, through Chapter 2, labeled 'antipathetic' (47, 54). Bruhn presents several lines from Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1.353-5) as 'an explicitly contra-Popean view of man' (48): 'There is a dark / Invisible workmanship that reconciles / Discordant elements,' including passion and thought. But Wordsworth should rather be seen as concurring with the optimism of *An Essay on Man*, in which Pope proclaims: 'All Discord, [is] Harmony not understood" (1.291); 'REASON, PASSION, answer one great aim' (4.395). Pope belongs to an eighteenth-century near-consensus (compare Addison, Mandeville, Hume, Akenside, Fielding, Sterne) about the mutual dependence of reason and passion: as Pope puts it, 'On life's vast ocean diversely we sail, / Reason the card [mariner's chart], but Passion is the gale' (2.107-8).

Because of Bruhn's crucial misstep with Pope and the eighteenth-century literary tradition, his following two chapters, 3-4, which trace Wordsworth's liberation from that (caricatured) tradition, are largely unnecessary. In 1794 Wordsworth did not need 'to work out a non-oppositional metaphysics in which sense, feeling, and intellect cooperate to moral purpose' (129): the 1700s had amply achieved this. Bruhn sees Wordsworth as transformed by reading Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* shortly after its 1792 publication, but I can find nothing particularly original in this work, at least from the quotations that appear in this study.

After its disappointing middle section, *Wordsworth Before Coleridge* arrives at a substantial and rewarding fifth and final chapter, 'The Finishing of Wordsworth's Philosophical Education, 1795-1797' (101-128). For Bruhn, Wordsworth's 'one life' and mind-nature 'fitness' derive 'in all likelihood directly from Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* [1678], which he had at hand through the entirety of his tenure at Racedown Lodge,' September 1795-June 1797 (130). Bruhn has the discretion to add that even if Wordsworth didn't read Cudworth, 'Cudworth's thought pervaded the English philosophical and poetic traditions' through intermediaries including Shaftesbury, Pope, and Thomson, all of whom are aptly quoted via secondary works by Abbie Findlay Potts and Duncan Wu (118-20). Bruhn then introduces Friedrich August Nitsch, a German-born Kantian (perhaps influenced by Cudworth as well) who moved to England in 1794 to offer lecture series on Kant which were soon thereafter revised and published. When Wordsworth speaks of 'that most apprehensive habitude' of the Infant Babe (*Prelude* 2.286), his terminology seems almost certainly derived from Nitsch's Kantian lectures (123-25). However, Bruhn finds Nitsch's 'science of morals' altogether alien to 'Wordsworth's mature philosophy': 'our will is pure,' writes Nitsch, 'when it is determined by necessary and universal rules and laws,' not by 'feelings' (126). But this Kantian ethics would surface in Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty* and his later, Stoic-inflected compositions, which are not considered here.

In sum, while Bruhn advances the case for Wordsworth's philosophical maturity before his collaboration with Coleridge, *Wordsworth Before Coleridge* is not consistently reliable as a source study of what influenced, or constitutes, that maturity. Nonetheless, its first and final chapters, on dualism and mind-nature fitness, are recommended.

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