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Wordsworth's The Prelude and the Cinema.

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Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and the Cinema

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Abstract

This thesis uses narratology and film theory to examine the construction of *The Prelude*. It contends that the powers of imagination are consciously displayed in the production of coherence and continuity, a production that is continuously offered to the deconstruction of the reader. In analysing early poems and the prefaces I stress Wordsworth's appeal to the co-operative power of the reader and his own analysis of the way the mind processes images to "make a tale." He assumes that a public, "objective" set of "real" images exist which can inspire various tales. In highlighting his own processes of imagination as narrator of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth suggests and, indeed, exemplifies other ways in which the material may be processed by the revisionary reader. *The Prelude* has an often-stated goal and each episode has an equally overtly expressed meaning in terms of that goal. These discursive intents, however, are frequently crossed, complicated or contradicted by equally overt pointers to other possible meanings. Wordsworth the narrator might show himself hesitant, uncertain and conjectural; Wordsworth the poet/director highlights the optional, creative alternatives open to the active reader who is invited to participate in the growth of the poetic mind. I note the discrepancies discovered by textual and biographical criticism but my central concern is the foregrounding of revisionary moments within one version, that of 1805.

The imagery of the Childhood "spots of time" seems to emerge from an everyday context with the eidetic memory of actually occurring events. These are, however, taken "out of time" and syntagmatic continuity and subject to varying perspectives, including the "mature" viewpoint of the narrator, stressing paradigmatic values sometimes at variance with the suggestions of the images themselves. The responses to Cambridge and London are different, the first being experienced from a more intimately involved point of view that yields more personal and imaginative growth than that overtly acknowledged. London, predominantly a "spectacle" soliciting the gaze of an evaluative observer, yields contradictory moments of self-involving re-valuation and the opposition which the argument sets up between city and country is deconstructed. Giving a subject position to those who viewed the French Revolution in different ways, it is almost impossible to separate

the enthusiastic from the sceptical Wordsworth in chronological terms and even in the extent of his scepticism. While Wordsworth might have other reasons for confusing the account, I maintain that this is quite in keeping with a poem that highlights the capacity of imagination to give different views of the same object and the capacity of that object to evoke different responses. The emergence of Coleridge here as a primary addressee and the dialogic presences of Burke and Godwin sutures the reader into a "public sphere" that is at once intimate, public and creative. Affirming the creative powers of the "common" man in response to the "endless" meanings suggested by the world, Wordsworth concludes by inviting retroactive revision of his own account by a reader he has taught to become a poet like himself.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis started with an interest in the use of space in Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Space and spatial relationships have become prominent topics in postmodernism and its theory and I thought that links might be made with Wordsworth's Romantic use of space. Tim Woods asserts that

> [t]he debate concerning postmodern lived spaces has affected geography as much as any other discipline. In fact, some theorists like Harvey, Edward Soja and Jameson have argued that whereas the modern era was preoccupied with temporality, the postmodern era is dominated by spatiality. Space is the new cultural dominant.[1]

Frederic Jameson, drawing on other theorists such as Lefebvre, indicates the importance of the "production of space":

> But for Lefebvre all modes of production are not merely organized spatially but also constitute distinctive modes of the "production of space"; postmodernism theory, however, infers a certain supplement of spatiality in the contemporary period and suggests that there is a way in which, even though other modes of production (or other moments of our own) are distinctively spatial, ours has been spatialized in a unique sense, such that space is for us an existential and cultural dominant, a thematized and foregrounded feature or structural principle standing in striking contrast to its relatively subordinate and secondary (though no doubt no less symptomatic) role in earlier modes of production. So,

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[1] Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999) 117.

> even if everything is spatial, this postmodern reality here is somehow more spatial than everything else.[2]

What many theorists have in mind is the cultural production of space: spaces for education, family life, working, government, recreation, coming together in commercial, religious or civic activities, spaces that image an "order of life." In what Jameson would see as the logic of late capitalism these spaces are divided, sometimes by protective barriers, sometimes by spatial features that include their own order of relationship, roads, car-parks, railways; but the severity of their functionalism has been softened by eclectic architecture and aesthetic "play." This "play" of images might seek to link the modern with traditional forms of life; it might, in more postmodernist fashion, include more exotic Disneyesque references to cultural iconography. Wordsworth's *Prelude* is prominent among Romantic texts for showing a particularly jaundiced attitude towards this feature of modernity as he meets it in Cambridge and, particularly, London. The bustling commercial life of the city streets celebrated by eighteenth-century writers becomes a meaningless spectacle characteristic of those monstrous aggregations that Cobbett described as "wens." The space of the city is crammed with representations of the world's products, peoples and curiosities, and even of its places in miniature, detached from any unifying context. Yet Wordsworth's presentation is not ideologically simple, nor can his contrast with nature be seen totally as a retreat into nostalgia for a past order, or for maintaining the balance of his spirit. According to Stuart

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[2] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991) 365.

Allen:

> Intent on grasping London in its totality, then, he turns again to thoughts of disciplining intercourse with nature. As in Cambridge, Wordsworth summons to mind the pure outline of a mountain and calls on the "spirit of Nature" (736) to help him reach "Through meagre lines and colours, and the press / Of self-destroying, transitory things, / Composure and ennobling harmony" (739-41).[3]

Such behaviour seems to correspond to a "civic humanist philosophy," but Allen suggests that Wordsworth also explores "London's affective and imaginative potential." Allen enlists the textual strategy of allegory to emphasise Wordsworth's distance from the experience he recreates for the reader, but I would suggest that the management of the images themselves indicates and conveys a particular spatial orientation. This orientation, perhaps paradoxically, is most intensely imaginative when the distancing view of the narrator or persona is lost and most caught up in the experience represented. Wordsworth's quarrel with the "visual culture" that seemed merely to re-present a pre-packaged "experience" does not rule out the possibility of a real personal engagement with the disorienting but vital life of the city. Such disorientation is, I suggest, characteristic of his approach to experience generally. There is, in other words, no "pure outline" that will confine and shape experience.

Jameson emphasises that the "world" includes both the natural and the cultural and that this "world"

> can be opposed to that rather different matter which is its own *representation*, the aesthetic realm, in which both nature

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[3] Stuart Allen, "Metropolitan Wordsworth: Allegory as Affirmation and Critique in *The Prelude*," *Romanticism on the Net* 40 (November 2005):15 pp, online, internet, 15 May 2006.

> and culture (both the natural and the social) can be objects of representation.[4]

Jameson's phrase "the aesthetic realm" might itself cordon off too rigidly an area noted among Marxists for wish-fulfilment and utopian dreams, but representation includes matters of technique as well as represented objects. Wordsworth's images, taken in isolated quotations as they often are, may present a relatively simple attitude towards the represented objects, but his technique is best appreciated in what he does with those images over the lengthy processes of his poem. Book divisions offer one way of cutting, but many of Wordsworth's processes or arguments extend over them. Pamela Black has seen links between Romanticism and Postmodernism in that:

> [B]oth abhor the rigidly dogmatic interpretations of art and nature and the ensuing bureaucratization of meaning that are continually erected out of even the most dynamic attempts to deal with an essentially processive universe. They both address the disappearance of the self-conscious subject which is a corollary of this ossification process.[5]

The "essentially processive universe" is a phrase that reminds us of Wordsworth's "goings-on of the Universe" that he tried to capture in his poetry and his revolt against the rigid, spiritless, mechanical universe that eighteenth-century science presented. Wordsworth's awareness of processes both in nature and in the mind and his sense of the interinvolvement of these processes has long been recognised. The "space" of *The Prelude* includes the processes of "placing" events individually in their plastic-pictorial concreteness, their placing within the

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[4] Jameson 169.

[5] Pamela A. Black, "The Presence of the Unknowable: A Romantic Perspective on Postmodernism," *The Wordsworth Circle* 24.1 (1993): 29

story of a life and within the space of history. Wordsworth's declared hostility towards a metropolitan, modernistic culture which appealed to the "appetitive eye" rather than to cultivated insight might make him an unpromising proponent of the visual aspect of space. Wordsworth's views seem to chime in with the suspicion of visual culture that runs through high Victorian and early twentieth-century thinking and associates it with popular, mass entertainment. Renate Brosch's "Visual Culture" seeks to counter this "antagonism against the visual in Western thought"[6] and gives an interesting overview of modern approaches. Commentators like Adorno use similar terms to Wordsworth to condemn the "savage torpor" produced by the culture industries. Yet *The Prelude* is full of vivid and powerful visual pictorial imagery and Wordsworth's early poetry proclaimed a faith in the eye that cannot choose but see. What Black refers to as the "bureaucratization" of meaning implies a narrowing of meaning, a strict spatializing that ignores the *processes* of coming to a meaning and the *activity* of placing. When Wordsworth talks of taking again the "intellectual eye" with "restored" imagination in *The Prelude*, he is presenting himself as more aware of the multiple possibilities of placing and spacing.

The works of Wordsworth and Coleridge live on that intellectual faultline between the empiricism of Locke and Hartley and the idealism of Kant and Hegel. *The Prelude*, as a joint instauration, seems to mediate between the dominance of the "order of things" and the ordering processes of the mind. Images like those of the ascent of Snowdon in

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[6] Renate Brosch, "Visual Culture," *The European English Messenger* XIII.1 (2004): 33.

the last book are real things—Wordsworth periodically refers to his possession of "real" images—but they can become things of the mind. Such an "object lesson" as the culmination of the work illuminates what I take to be an educational function throughout the poem, an education in the way images can be processed and presented. Wordsworth's injunctions to the reader throughout the last book reinforce this educative function. Despite his reference to a "mighty mind," Wordsworth is still trying to form the *public* taste by which his poetry can be appreciated, in fact encouraging the reader to enter into the act of composition with an active co-operation. He might be better aligned with Walter Benjamin than Theodor Adorno in welcoming and instituting innovatory modes that transform a passive consumerism into an active and productive awareness of the possibilities of art:

> To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose "sense of the universal equality of things" has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction...The adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception.[7]

Though cinema is a new medium, presenting images by reproduction of the real, Benjamin deems that movie-understanding is an interactive process and the viewers, instead of being passive receivers, are invited to join in a "new mode of participation"[8] by using their thoughts and perception to create interpretations of the moving images.

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[7] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Film theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 735.

[8] Benjamin 748.

Benjamin had hopes for film media in fostering this awareness of process and I have used some aspects of film technique to analyse the mutual work of author and reader that Wordsworth highlights in his poems and explains in his prefaces. Film theory has always leaned on literary/linguistic theory and the conjunction has been mutually beneficial. Early films were, indeed, heavily influenced by the methods of literature, both narrative and poetic, in manufacturing unity and suggesting imagistic comparisons by forms of collage and juxtaposition. Narratology, applied to both literature and film, has borrowed freely, from linguistics in adopting terms such as metaphor and metonymy, syntagm and paradigm, from psychology in investigating types of suture and from film in using terms like focalizer. It has been a deconstructive discipline, dissolving characters into functions and traits, displaying the processes whereby unities of character and time are "produced" and can be "reduced" back into their elements like strips of celluloid cunningly woven together. At the heart of narratology is the distinction between a supposed "order of things" independent of the order of presentation. This naïve idea of the historicity of the *histoire* is, in fact, something narratology puts in doubt. Deconstruction argues that nothing can be independent of its representation, yet this "counterfactual" conception of fact, of linear progression and causal connection seems paradoxically essential to our ways of making sense of things. The structuralist basis of narratology is most in evidence when explaining the "naturalization" of flashbacks and analepses as they are assimilated into a presumed anterior "order of things," something that can produce confusion in the filmic "present" of representation. Post-structuralist suspicion would

seek to reverse the priority and Wordsworth himself gives credence to this position in showing how processes of imaginative recollection retroactively create the past. Narratological analysis can display the structural devices by which continuity is established and also, perhaps its more interesting function, highlight instances where Wordsworth violates these techniques of realism in a creative disruption of viewpoint and time-space relations.

Such considerations, I would suggest, are intrinsic to Wordsworth's enterprise of the *Prelude*, where Wordsworth himself draws attention to his creative "confusions." His sense of the order of things is still very strong. It is the "basis" of any construction. Yet the construction of things by the mind is seen as the vital characteristic of individual authenticity in "seeing." The limitations of an "order of things" vouched for only by the individual mind is one point at issue here but more important is the creativity of the mind. The characteristic feature of *The Prelude* is that different creations can be made of the same basic material, and Wordsworth, in a trope much used by critics, "stages" or "displays" this process with educative intent. Armed with various contemporary theories, and making no pretence that they are more than theories, he approaches poetic representation with a new rigour and shows, in the constructive/deconstructive way of narratology, how the processes of imagination can, and should, be used to make authentic sense out of a life of things, an on-going life full of constructive vision and revision.

Wordsworth does not ignore the importance of readers; he wants to remain in a common world of recognisable objects, but he also wants the

readers to join in the creating process, by constantly reminding his "gentle readers" to use their imagination to find meanings in his poetry. Images which might imply different meanings for different readers are the basic tools to present this poetry-making. Modern filmic theory provides this thesis with the foundation to examine the functions of the images, by stereographising the texts as the scenarios of the reading process. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is not only a traditional literary text but contains many modern, even postmodern, features that show problematic issues in the narrative and reading processes. The narrator in the poem is highly debatable: Is he the Poet Wordsworth? Or, is he just a literary "creation" that only exists in the text? Instead of being concealed, writing or editing difficulties can be observed by readers in the text. Finding these "gaps" is one of the tasks of my thesis, as it has been the pursuit of much modern criticism, but my intention is not to catch "Wordsworth" out or discover psychological blockages. The "spots of time" have been analysed, both paradigmatically and syntagmatically, to find elements that produce discrepancies and indeterminacies in the writing and reading processes and highlight these processes themselves, just as I think Wordsworth engages the reader as co-author.

The indeterminacies of *The Prelude* are well-known. Its very title is provided by the suggestion of a reader, Wordsworth's wife, Mary. There are multiple versions of *The Prelude*, as Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill point out:

> *The Prelude* survives in three forms: the much revised official text (1850), published in fourteen Books by Wordsworth's executor after his death; the version in thirteen Books (1805), first printed by Ernest de Selincourt in 1926;

> and the two-Part poem (1799). 1805 remained in manuscript for 120 years, 1799 has had to wait another fifty.[9]

The Prelude is a postmodern amoeboid organism in the language cosmos. Sometimes it changes its style; sometimes it can even change its form. *The Prelude* turns out to be, instead of monophonic, "polyphonic"; one single tune becomes "plural." 1850 is the "official" text and was published soon after Wordsworth passed away. 1805 and 1799 turned out to be the "underground" voices; they remained as the manuscripts for more than one hundred years. Besides the best known three versions, *The Prelude* is famous for its numerous unpublished manuscripts which illustrate Wordsworth's difficulty in editing the same materials, the countless possibilities of the "order of things" and the infinite potential to make different stories. Even Wordsworth himself apparently could not decide which one is the most authentic version, though presumably each version proved more or less satisfactory at the time. Jonathan Culler speculates that:

> Positing the priority of events to the discourse which reports or presents them, narratology establishes a hierarchy which the functioning of narratives often subverts by presenting events not as givens but as the products of discursive forces or requirements.[10]

Each version of the *Prelude*, constructed from the same raw materials, gives a slightly different "order of things" and subverts other "possible" stories in other versions. But each *Prelude* is the product of "discursive

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[9] Jonathan Wordsworth, et al., "The Texts: History and Presentation," *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, by William Wordsworth, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979) 512.

[10] Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981) 172.

forces or requirements" and builds its own "hierarchy" of narrative through different ways of "naturalization." Readers are invited to join in the story-making process when Wordsworth does not hide his own difficulties and confusions. One further aim of this thesis is to show gaps opened by these "discursive forces or requirements," occurring in one single version and enhancing the possibilities of making other stories. My choice of the 1805 *Prelude*[11] is to some extent arbitrary but it is based on the most widely available text and on the one record of its instantiation as the poem for Coleridge, read to him by Wordsworth after his return from Malta.

The fact that no version of *The Prelude* was published in Wordsworth's lifetime may complicate assumptions about the expected readership. It could be viewed as a "private" poem, circulated among its named addressees, never achieving a form that could confidently be offered to the public. I have noted that political considerations might have made Wordsworth reluctant to publish; critical attacks on his "egotism" might have further dissuaded him from such intimate self-revelation. Equally its experimental nature might have given him pause. If we locate this experiment in the uncertainties of the partially-ironized narrator and the complex narratological scheme we might suggest that the poem is continuous with his early poetry which presents similar tasks for the sympathetic and co-operative reader to

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[11] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, by William Wordsworth, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979). The passages of *The Prelude* in this thesis are selected from this standard edition.

negotiate. Much modern criticism of the poem suggests that such a readership is by no means certain today, but that is no reason not to try to envisage the "ideal reader" that the poem seeks.

A Cinematic Prelude

There are problems in applying analytical techniques developed to deal with a modern, primarily visual, medium to a nineteenth-century poem. I feel, however, that such is the visual appeal of the poem, an aspect largely played down in traditional criticism, that cinematic theory can usefully supplement narratological analysis. Theories of static representation might also be useful, but motion is very important in the poem. In city scenes the viewpoint, or camera-eye, is moving among the throng of people and things that have independent motion. Wordsworth's moments of insight in the "spots of time" frequently occur problematically, as I shall demonstrate, in the midst of action. Differences in perspective and focus are associated with the different effects of this immersion, whether it seen as obstructive. My work expands upon previous applications of film theory to Wordsworth's poetry, especially David S. Miall's exploration of proleptic intercutting and foreground/background reversal in the "spots of time"[12] and James

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[12] David S. Miall, "The Self in History: Wordsworth, Tarkovsky, and Autobiography," *The Wordsworth Circle* 27(1996): 11-2. See Chapter 2, p. 84-7.

A. W. Hefferman's analysis of images of Bartholomew Fair.[13] I was also attracted by the notion of the "excess" in film representation discussed by Kristin Thompson.[14] Drawing on Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, she suggests that film, unlike literature, escapes the selectivity of a "system" of meaning and allows the "material" a relatively free play, often destabilising a coherent reading but enriching the experience and encouraging the viewer's creative response. This is similar to what I represent as the relative independence of Wordsworth's visual images, escaping the discursive imperatives of the narrator/director's design. I have used the concept of "suture," itself to some extent naturalized in literary narratology, to explore the devices which connect or "identify" the reader with the hero's viewpoint and which produce the coherence of character and story. Flash-back might be seen to be of the essence of the poem, yet there are difficulties here. The Childhood sections are mostly set in a present of narrated time, interrupted by proleptic anticipations; many remembrances are problematic, creatively visionary, unlike most filmic flashbacks which are held to be accurate depictions of a character's experience. Voice-over, that despised make-do of the cinema, may be attributed to a character in the present or in retrospect or to an "editorial" narration. In dealing with these last devices I have restricted myself to local effects and analysed the different voices and perspectives in

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[13] James A. W. Heffernan, "Wordsworth's London: The Imperial Monster," *Studies in Romanticism* 37.3 (1998): 427-8. See Chapter 5, p. 175-6.

[14] Kristin Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess," *Film theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 487-98.

narratological terms.

Wordsworth's early poetry, with its mission to renew or invent a tradition of poetry and educate the readers, presents lots of "raw materials," the images, to invite the reader to join in the reading process and "make a story" for themselves. Narratological "gap" and filmic "suture" can explain and even visualise how readers/viewers join in the reading/film-watching process. Selection in literary writing is similar to selection in film-making: with the selection of the author's eye, a man-made scene is ready for readers to interpret; with the selection of the camera, the framed moving images are waiting for viewers to decode their meanings. One modern feature of *The Prelude* is that Wordsworth, unlike the Hollywood director who covers the gaps, bares his writing and revising processes; in fact, the producer of the poem enters the poem itself as a created presence.

In Chapter 1, I revisit Wordsworth's theory of imagination to discover how Wordsworth uses images to present his poetic designs and educates his readers to understand this new kind of poetry. With the assistance of filmic theory, we can understand more how Wordsworth manipulates images to invite readers/viewers to enter into their narrative systems. I use Wordsworth's own discussion of the working of imagination and images in his 1815 Preface, applying it to "Simon Lee" in *Lyrical Ballads* and "Resolution and Independence" in *Poems 1807*. These show how images can function through metaphor and metonymy to structure meaning in a temporal presentation marked by cuts and syntagmatic indeterminacy. Wordsworth's disdain for common poetic procedures leads to very loose discursive linking and "editorial" control,

releasing the suggestive power of the images themselves in a cinematic way. The concept of "suture,"[15] explained in its literary and filmic aspect by Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, is used to explore how Wordsworth "sutures" his readers into the narrative system of "Tintern Abbey" and attempts to suture his own past and present into a unity. Here we find the first instance of a poet/editor's uncertainty about the gaps he is revealing as much as trying to suture together.

In Chapter 2, the functions of "I" in *The Prelude* are questioned and examined; my contention is that the "I" is often a "dramatised" creation of a narrator or "director" in the text. The "I" in this autobiographical writing has its own network and, though we cannot ignore the shadow of the poet Wordsworth's own personal history, readers are invited to join Coleridge and Dorothy in suturing themselves into the "I"s of the text. The structure of the poem involves a continual effort to create unity by a succession of paradigmatic moments, images of experience which are presented immediately but interpreted with a poetic insight whose source is debatable. Filmic theory can analyse Wordsworth's paradigmatic "spots of time" in further detail, such as the foreground and background reversal occurring at the moments of epiphany, the relative importance of metonymic and syntagmatic elements and the placing of viewpoint.

Chapter 3 works on the paradigmatic features of Wordsworth's early "spots of time" in detail and the problems associated with them as representations of experience and as providing unifying meaning. In

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[15] Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) 162-75.

refining a narratological analysis, I focus on discrepancies that occur when the "appetitive eye" of childhood and the "intellectual eye" of maturity are displayed in spots of time simultaneously. Readers are able to sense the existence of the hero Wordsworth, the narrator/director Wordsworth and even the poet Wordsworth. Studies of textual revisions and autobiographical studies have uncovered various discrepancies and contradictions in the text. I argue for the revisionary nature of the text as a whole, as contradictory versions survive or are latent, particularly in images that tell different stories. Here, as later in the thesis, I try to discern the organizing principles of a section in terms of its plotting of growth and continuity (Culler's "discursive requirements") and show how the text undermines them or how "Wordsworth" as poet displays the uncertainties, surmises and stratagems of the narrator/director "Wordsworth."

Chapter 4 deals with Wordsworth's confrontation with the city images of Cambridge. While the general presentation conveys the idea that "imagination slept" during his university days, this seems to be only partially true. The influence of past scholars and poets of the place is felt in the poetry and a sense of its possibilities inspires a vision of an "alternative" Cambridge. Above all, Wordsworth responds to the society of his fellows, however much society is presented in this section as a distraction from his higher calling. A disapproving mature consciousness seems to direct some passages in spite of the natural leanings and excitement of the hero, while in other experiences the two consciousnesses seem to merge, as in the descent of the Gondo Gorge. Filmic theories of flashback are introduced to locate the perceiving

consciousness and examine the process of suture, while the idea of "controlled accident" is employed to emphasise the vitality and "reality" of the bustling environment. The "eddy's force" of Cambridge life is evoked with great immediacy and its attraction is powerfully felt as a "reality," maybe overpowering at times, but involving the young Wordsworth in a way that London seldom does.

If the presentation of Cambridge displays a split viewpoint, London seems to be given in two versions. The first, the impression that has dominated most commentary on the poem, is a meaningless flux of appearances that are mere facades; the second is a place of weighty history and the sublime aspirations of congregated humanity. Spread over Books VII and VIII is a lengthy contrast of city with country in the spirit of the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, yet it is a contrast that can be deconstructed. The dominating images of theatre and fair find Wordsworth himself in the role of showman, while the very mystery of human identity so evident in the city yields a sublime experience. The Blind Beggar seems to join company with the Discharged Soldier and other isolates as figures of humanity abstracted from their "stories." Yet even here there are contradictory moments of self-involving re-valuation and the opposition which the argument sets up between city and country is deconstructed, especially when a "second" entry into the metropolis, again at an uncertain time, completely transforms the meaning of London in a sublime comprehension of the human weight of past, present and future aspirations.

The section on the French revolution shows the most imaginative use of chronology and of suturing, the stitching of the life of the hero into

continuity and the suturing of the reader into the point of view. The dual nature of London prepares us for the dual face of the French Revolution, but here Wordsworth seems to split his "hero" into two. One Wordsworth keeps faith with revolutionary hopes, perhaps even to the time of writing; the other deconstructs the sanguine hopes of the first and lapses into despair. The indeterminate chronology of this "progress," with an apparent overlap between the two Wordsworths, leaves the reader with the job of separating two responses, both apparently lived and valid, to the bewildering series of events in the 1790s. His enthusiastic phase is presented dramatically, without sustained intrusion of a "maturer" perspective. Generally the suggestions of weakness or inexperience in this section are carried by overstatements, histrionic gestures and evocations of "romance" that can be read in two ways, given the discursive background of controversy. An apparent defence of the Terror includes horrific images that have justifiably been read as signifying complete aversion. Equally, the picture of the sceptical Wordsworth, while picking up these hints of former weakness, gives an account of his attitudes that contradicts in detail those just portrayed and includes overstatements of the conservative point of view that divorce him from any continuity of character and are heavily qualified from the point of writing. There are, of course, historical reasons why Wordsworth might have an interest in obfuscating his political allegiances during this period but these concern me less than the aesthetic purpose. It is in keeping with the deconstructive/constructive aspect that we have been following and for contemporaries it must be the experience that most dramatically showed the possibility of different constructions of

meaning and continuity from the same basic material.

In the concluding sections of the work, chronology is again disturbed as Wordsworth seems to conflate the recovery from despair of rational, political solutions with a grand reprise of the whole argument of the poem. He seems, in fact, to be "re-covering" the processes of growth with a greater present self-consciousness rather than problematic mature interpretations of present, vaguer intuitions and "feelings." Centring on the time of the production of *Lyrical Ballads*, which is still not the present of writing, Wordsworth for the first time introduces himself as a poet. He refers to the works of Coleridge and his own earlier works as if they are present to the mind of the reader and their characters real people about whom many stories might be sung. Re-iterating the "democratic" arguments of the Preface, he locates the poetic faculty in qualities of response, vision and love rather than verbal craftsmanship. The mysterious inner powers of the mind go forth to meet the mysterious powers intuited in nature and in the beings of others. The capacity of the mind to fashion things is balanced by the ability of things to show themselves in new ways. Drawing on the doctrines and images of *Lyrical Ballads*, he affirms the creative powers of the "common" man and, in the concluding sections, he invites retroactive revision of his account, illustrates the powers of a "mighty mind" in a revision of images from a previous work, and, in frequent hortatory addresses to the reader, impresses the message that he wishes the reader to become a poet like himself. I would suggest that *The Prelude* is not merely an example of such poetry but invites the reader's creative revision.

Chapter 1

Wordsworth's Imagination and Image Making

Wordsworth discusses his ideas about imagination in the Preface to *Poems* (1815). He first describes other capabilities necessary to poets:

> The powers requisite for the production of poetry are, first, those of observation and description, i.e. the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the Describer: whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory.[1]

Though these powers are "indispensable," Wordsworth considers them to be subordinate. If poetry merely rests in such accuracy and fidelity it is "in subjection" to external objects and shows none of the activity of the "higher quality of the mind."

Wordsworth cites W. Taylor's ideas about the working of imagination and fancy:

> Imagination is the power of depicting, and fancy of evoking and combining. The imagination is formed by patient observation; the fancy by a voluntary activity in shifting the scenery of the mind. The more accurate the imagination, the more safely may a painter, or a poet, undertake a delineation, or a description, without the presence of the objects to be characterized. The more versatile the fancy, the more original and striking will be the decorations

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[1] William Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815), *William Wordsworth: The Major Work*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 626.

produced.[2]

In this definition Imagination is linked with powers of observation and description; it can "definitely copy" objects of sense and these copies are "images." The fancy then draws on the store of images to "call up, connect, or associate" them in a lively or striking manner. The fancy here is the only active power and the images remain copies of sensations, pictures that can be arranged and re-arranged without themselves undergoing any modification. Wordsworth, anticipating Coleridge's discussion in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), wishes to make Imagination a term for an active faculty, more important than Fancy in demonstrating the mind's higher powers.[3] At its highest limit Imagination, Wordsworth stresses, is *creative*, a capacity that he demonstrates in Milton's works by the evocation of supernatural sublime figures and the capacity of the Imagination to transport the readers to different regions. As a power in the mind, however, he concentrates on the processes by which images can be "modified," or transformed. As an example he gives Milton's image of Satan "as" a Fleet of vessels, the latter endowing Satan with its own attributes:

> Imagination also shapes and *creates*; and how? By innumerable processes; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number,—alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers.[4]

But how far is this use of imagination different from what Taylor calls

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[2] Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815) 630.

[3] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol. I (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 82-8.

[4] Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815) 633.

"fancy"? It is not confined to visual images, as Wordsworth illustrates by an image of the sound of bird-song "buried" in trees, but Wordsworth's visual effects are of images brought together. They evidence the power of mind originating the combination, but they also call on the power of the reader to respond to the combination. "Taste" is another word that can be considered to be ill-defined and Wordsworth would include not only a passive taste but an active "exertion of a co-operating *power* in the mind of the Reader."[5]

In his "Essay Supplementary," Wordsworth is insistent that poetic images *are* modified "by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the Describer," in fact it is poetry's duty to "treat of things not as they *are*, but as they *appear*; not as they exist in themselves, but as they *seem* to exist to the *senses* and the *passions*."[6] Wordsworth is immediately aware of the uncertainties in the readers' judgment that this introduces: "What a world of delusion does this acknowledged principle prepare for the inexperienced!"[7] As he catalogues the possible extravagances and absurdity of youthful taste or the rigidity of a bigoted mind one may think that the capacity to "be passive to a genuine Poet" and yet to "grapple with him" is as rare as creative genius. As John Williams asserts, Wordsworth is one of the first *modern* poets, writing out of personal experience and hoping that his passions and feelings are general and not

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[5] William Wordsworth, "Essay, Supplementary to Preface (1815)," *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 659.

[6] Wordsworth, "Essay, Supplementary to Preface (1815)" 641.

[7] Wordsworth, "Essay, Supplementary to Preface (1815)" 641.

"merely" personal.[8] Though in the "Essay Supplementary," as in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, he seems utterly convinced of the undying public importance of his poetry, his awareness of the necessity of creating the taste by which he was to be appreciated is perhaps a factor determining the kind of poetry he produced. As education, it perpetually returns to the basic operation of imagination, demonstrating the modification of "ordinary" things. It is therefore initially closer to the observed and described "thing as it is in itself," the universally recognisable reality which it then subjects to poetic transformation.

There are certain obvious similarities between Wordsworth's situation and the making of a film. The audience is diverse, needing to be "educated" into the imaginative world of the film. Connections have to be made with the "ordinary" life widely observed and a level of realism established. Wordsworth's technique implies the capacity to communicate feeling and passion in the way that images are presented. How far can film imitate the process of imagination, a process in which the audience's "co-operative power" participates? We may, like Wordsworth, distinguish two aspects of the working of imagination. One, which Wordsworth describes in some detail in the 1815 Preface, is the modification and mutual interplay of different images which the imagination of the poet and the co-operative power of the reader cause to coalesce or connect to produce a meaning. The second aspect, more elevated in Wordsworth's account but less specifically detailed, is the reader's participation in the vision of the poet, a vision that "glances from

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[8] John Williams, *William Wordsworth: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1996) 101.

earth to heaven"—"present at one moment in the wide Ethiopian, and the next in the solitudes, then first broken in upon, of the infernal regions."[9] The first aspect of imagination concerns the order and manner in which images are presented to the reader and incites him/her to make meaning out of them. The second aspect concerns what is called suturing, the means by which the reader is led to share the view of the camera-eye, to believe—or at least suspend his/her disbelief—that what s/he sees is a true, real world, and that the order of experience presented is similarly realistic whether presented as the experience of a character within the action or as a God's-eye (or helicopter's) view of life.

Making Images Work

We may look at Wordsworth's technique in two pieces of his work from *Lyrical Ballads*. Most criticism follows Coleridge in seeing the particularity of the images as a distraction from the "main point" of the poem. For some, like Geoffrey Hartman, the "true" Wordsworth is a mystic reaching beyond natural, material images and intuiting truths which lie too deep for images. The particularity is an interference by the "ocular man," undeniably an aspect of Wordsworth's poetic character but one whose notation of physical detail is quickly replaced by the more imaginative poetic function:

> What "The Thorn" offers, courageously if not wisely, is a caricature of Wordsworth's own imagination-in-process.

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[9] William Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815) 634.

> The captain is the ocular man in Wordsworth, searching for a sacred or secret spot, spying on nature (his telescope is a big eye), and only clingingly passing from nonhuman to human, from thorn to the woman. He exorcizes his quasi-apocalyptic obsession with clear and centered evidence.[10]

The speaker of "The Thorn" is a captain, who Hartman considers "the ocular man in Wordsworth." The captain's telescope is operating like a camera providing the dominant images—like the thorn, the woman, the moss—for readers to make stories themselves. The dominant images, instead of exorcizing the "quasi-apocalyptic obsession," help readers create their own versions of Martha Ray's mystery. Beyond merely searching the clues of a baby-murderess, like the captain, readers may be more interested in the enigma of this poor woman's suffering. In "Simon Lee," we can even say the speaker, "the ocular man," is the poet. Wordsworth (or his surrogate) provides the reader with the images for them to make stories themselves.

In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth mentions that each poem has its own "purpose." What, then, is the "purpose" of "Simon Lee"? For Andrew L. Griffin the focus of the poem is not on the images or narrative but on the relation of poet to reader, and involves profound anxieties about what constitutes a poem:

> Like "The Thorn" and "The Idiot Boy" and the Preface itself, "Simon Lee" originates in Wordsworth's profound uneasiness about the expectations that poet and reader come together to satisfy. But the poems go further than the Preface, organizing Wordsworth's intelligent anxieties about these expectations into actions more psychological than

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[10] Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1964) 148.

> dramatic, structures more rhetorical than narrative, in which the principal characters are not old men, women, and boys but speaker and hearer, or poet and reader—and a third party: that mysterious thing, place, or moment which has the power to prompt a poem, in which "some tale" is felt (rightly or wrongly) to reside. The real concern of these poems is tale-telling and tale-listening, in confused conflict with the poetic imagination: in other words, the problem of imaginative story.[11]

The real point about "Simon Lee" is not about the old man, Simon Lee. It is the interaction between the "speaker" and the "hearer" or the "poet" and the "reader." In my opinion, the real concern is not merely "tale-telling" and "tale-listening," but also "image-providing" and "image-making." The poet, Wordsworth, provides images to invite the readers to fulfil the complete process of imagination. We can even use Hartman's expression: it is not merely "Wordsworth's imagination-in-progress," but also the readers' imagination-in-progress. Readers might make different stories about Simon Lee as images do provoke narrative effects.

I would not deny the significance of the aspects of the poems emphasised by Hartman and Griffin but I want to show how the presentation and organisation of the images themselves contribute more towards an understanding of the poems than these approaches imply. If we abstract, to a considerable degree, the "voice over" of the poet we may see that the images themselves convey meanings which can be discovered by the co-operative power of the reader. By comparing an earlier version to a later one we may observe how a different ordering

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[11] Andrew L. Griffin, "Wordsworth and the Problem of Imaginative Story: The Case of 'Simon Lee'," *PMLA* 92 (1977): 393.

gives different meanings and the "voice over" becomes more important in exacting a more "poetic" response, that is, one informed by the traditions of poetic expression used in the later poetry.

Although Wordsworth's theory of imagination denigrates the "reproduction" of reality and argues that poetry is creative, his examples of such creativity tend towards such reproduction as the first stage of a transformation. This transformation is often produced by bringing images together, which relies on the co-operating power of the reader. Wordsworth's poems in *Lyrical Ballads* are characterised by a lack of "editorialising," pointing out what is the main point of the poem. They are "dialogic"[12] in Bialostosky's use of the term. Wordsworth received much criticism and was widely misunderstood because of the lack of organization in these poems. He responded particularly to Coleridge's criticism of their organisation and accusations of "unliterariness" when he revised them.[13] The direction his poetry took was in some ways more conventional, since his conviction that the "contract" between the author and the reader could be broken had been shaken by these responses.

An examination of the revisions of "Simon Lee" will clarify the effect on our argument of this development, comparing the version of 1798 with that of 1832.

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[12] Don H. Bialostosky, *Making Tales: The Poetics of Wordsworth's Narrative Experiments* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1984) 107.

[13] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 126.

Simon Lee

There are two versions of "Simon Lee"—1798 and 1832. We plan to check both 1798 and 1832 versions; we can compare what kinds of different images we will make from two different texts. The texts are printed below for easy reference:

Simon Lee, The Old Huntsman,
With An Incident In Which He Was Concerned.

[Version A]—Text of 1798[14]	[Version B]—Text of 1832[15]
[1] In the sweet shire of Cardigan,	[1] In the sweet shire of Cardigan,
Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall,	Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall,
An old man dwells, a little man,	An old Man dwells, a little man,
I've heard he once was tall.	'Tis said he once was tall.
Of years he has upon his back,	Full five-and-thirty years he lived
No doubt, a burthen weighty;	A running Huntsman merry;
He says he is three score and ten,	And still the centre of his cheek
But others say he's eighty.	Is blooming as a cherry.
[2] A long blue livery-coat has he,	[2] No man like him the horn could sounds,
That's fair behind, and fair before;	And hill and valley rang with glee
Yet, meet him where you will, you see	When Echo bandied, round and round,

[14] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1992) 64-7.

[15] Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* 68-70. "Simon Lee" has a history of constant revision. The Cornell edition notes that James Dykes Campell's 1800/02 manuscript first showed the different arrangement of certain stanzas. In 1828, Wordsworth also corresponded with Barron Field and Allan Cunningham concerning various ways to edit and revise a new and better version.

At once that he is poor. Full five and twenty years he lived A running huntsman merry; And, though he has but one eye left, His cheek is like a cherry.	The halloo of Simon Lee. In those proud days, he little cared For husbandry or tillage; To blither tasks did Simon rouse The sleepers of the village.
[3] No man like him the horn could sound, And no man was so full of glee; To say the least, four counties round Had heard of Simon Lee; His master's dead, and no one now Dwells in the hall of Ivor; Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead; He is the sole survivor.	[3] He all the country could outrun, Could leave both man and horse behind; And often, ere the chase was done, He reeled and was stone-blind. And still there's something in the world At which his heart rejoices; For when the chiming hounds are out. He dearly loves their voices!
[4] His hunting feats have him bereft Of his right eye, as you may see: And then, what limbs those feats have left To poor old Simon Lee! He has no son, he has no child, His wife, an aged woman, Lives with him, near the waterfall, Upon the village common.	[4] But, oh the heavy change—bereft Of health, strength, friends and kindred, see! Old Simon to the world is left In liveried poverty. His Master's dead,--and no one now Dwells in the Hall of Ivor; Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead; He is the sole survivor.
[5] And he is lean and he is sick, His little body's half awry, His ankles they are swoln and thick; His legs are thin and dry. When he was young he little knew Of husbandry or tillage; And now he's forced to work, though weak, --The weakest in the village.	[5] And he is lean and he is sick; His body, dwindled and awry, Rests upon ancles swoln and thick; His legs are thin and dry One prop he has, and only one, His Wife, an aged woman, Lives with him, near the waterfall, Upon the village Common.
[6] He all the country could outrun, Could leave both man and horse behind; And often, ere the race was done,	[6] Beside their moss-grown hut of clay, Not twenty paces from the door, A scrap of land they have, but they

He reeled and was stone-blind. And still there's something in the world At which his heat rejoices; For when the chiming hounds are out, He dearly loves their voices!	Are poorest of the poor. This scrap of land he from the heath Enclosed when he was stronger; But what avails it now, the land Which he can till no longer?
[7] Old Ruth works out of doors with him, And does what Simon cannot do; For she, not over stout of limb, Is stouter of the two. And though you with your utmost skill From labour could not wear them, Alas! 'tis very little, all Which they can do between them.	[7] Oft, working by her Husbands side, Ruth does what Simon cannot do; For she, with scanty cause for pride, Is stouter of the two. And, though you with your utmost skill From labour could not wean them, Alas! 'tis very little—all Which they can do between them.
[8] Beside their moss-grown hut of clay, Not twenty paces from the door, A scrap of land they have, but they Are poorest of the poor. This scrap of land he from the heath Enclosed when he was stronger; But what avails the land to them, Which they can till no longer?	[The last five stanzas are almost the same as stanzas 9-13 of the 1798 text.]
[9] Few months of life has he in store, As he to you will tell, For still, the more he works, the more His poor old ancles swell. My gentle reader, I perceive How patiently you've waited, And I'm afraid that you expect Some tale will be related.	[8] Few months of life has he in store, As he to you will tell, For still, the more he works, the more His poor old ancles swell. My gentle Reader, I perceive How patiently you've waited, And I'm afraid that you expect Some tale will be related.
[10] O reader! had you in your mind Such stores as silent thought can bring, O gentle reader! you would find A tale in every thing.	[9] O Reader! had you in your mind Such stores as silent thought can bring, O Gentle Reader! you would find A tale in every thing.

What more I have to say is short, I hope you'll kindly take it; It is no tale; but should you think, Perhaps a tale you'll make it.	What more I have to say is short, I hope you'll kindly take it; It is no tale; but should you think, Perhaps a tale you'll make it.
[11] One summer-day I chanced to see This old man doing all he could About the root of an old tree, A stump of rotten wood. The mattock totter'd in his hand; So vain was his endeavour That at the root of the old tree He might have worked for ever.	[10] One summer-day I chanced to see This Old Man doing all he could About the root of an old tree, A stump of rotten wood. The mattock tottered in his hand; So vain was his endeavour That at the root of the old tree He might have worked for ever.
[12] "You're overtasked, good Simon Lee, Give me your tool" to him I said; And at the word right gladly he Received my proffer'd aid. I struck, and with a single blow The tangled root I sever'd At which the poor old man so long And vainly had endeavour'd.	[11] "You're overtasked, good Simon Lee, Give m[e] your tool" to him I said; And at the word right gladly he Received my proffered aid. I struck, and with a single blow The tangled root I severed At which the poor old man so long And vainly had endeavoured.
[13] The tears into his eyes were brought, And thanks and praises seemed to run So fast out of his heart, I thought They never would have done, --I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds With coldness still returning. Alas! The gratitude of men. Has oftener left me mourning.	[12] The tears into his eyes were brought, And thanks and praises seemed to run So fast out of his heart, I thought They never would have done, --I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds With coldness still returning. Alas! The gratitude of men. Has oftener left me mourning.

Wordsworth's lack of overt "editorial" direction in the first version of the poem perhaps stemmed from the uncertainty of his own political views at the time as he was still engaged in the complicated process of detaching himself from the extreme radical views he held when writing

the "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" (1793) but had not yet adopted a conservative stance on the main questions of the day. Yet this uncertainty was not a negative influence on his poetry. It opened up various perspectives and still questioned conventional moral viewpoints. "Simon Lee," as Wordsworth wrote in the Preface "put the reader in a position" to receive "more salutary moral lessons from such a figure than they had been used to."[16] Wordsworth appeals to the "co-operative power" of the reader when the poem admonishes him: "Oh Reader....you would find a tale in every thing."[17]

"Tale" supposes narrative, and narrative supposes transformation. The "tale" in "Simon Lee," then, is the story of his decline in life, represented by juxtapositions of past and present. The effect is as of a filmic presentation of contrasting images, and as in a film, the audience has some inbuilt scenarios or conventions to which this contrast could conform, scenarios created by other invented narratives and by expectations based on prevailing moral ideas. The picture of the old Simon Lee is pathetic and the poem ends with a thought-provoking observation: "Alas! The gratitude of men / Has oftener left me mourning." This thought is, perhaps, not one common to most readers of the narrative. Given the exclamatory prominence of apparent protests at his position—why should he have to work when he is so weak?—the

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[16] William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 598-9.

[17] William Wordsworth, "Simon Lee," *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1992) 67.

reader might want to understand such apparent injustice and apportion blame, to Simon himself, to the House of Ivor, who left him unsupported, to the Poor Laws which give no relief, or even to the much criticised enclosure of commons which left him with such a small, barren plot. Alternatively the final lines might seem to concern only the narrator and Simon and, in congratulating himself on his good deed, leave the narrator self-righteously criticising the hard-heartedness of the rest of mankind which made such relief so rare and not an expected service of humanity. Personalizing the issue, however, re-directs our attention to the individuals responsible for the measures which brought him to his plight, even if they were legislators or voters.

The two versions share many "editorial" features. However pluralist the first version might seem, it is organised poetically by locally heightened rhetoric and placement of the elements of Simon Lee's condition, suggesting contrast or comparison and making use of the privileged position at the beginning and end of poetic units. The second version is more organised, more literary in its language and allusions. The first version could be called more filmic, more visual in its images, more multivalent in suggesting various scenarios. The second, its "literariness" appealing to a specialized audience, uses different traditions of expression, not the "natural" heightening of language by simple techniques such as repetition but a literary classicism which gives us words like "bereft" and poetic expressions like "Oh the heavy change." The following analysis will demonstrate the effectiveness of a filmic approach in assimilating the literary rhetorical markers to the rhetoric of filmic presentation guided by juxtaposition and order of presentation.

The last five stanzas of the poems contain the invitation to the reader to "make" a tale of what has gone before. They also show the strong emotional reaction of the poet to the plight of Simon and leave us with the enigmatic last lines. All these send us back to the poem in search of scenarios and images that might justify and explain such a reaction. There is a tone of rebuke to the reader in attributing to him/her the expectation of a "tale," as if such an expectation is a superficial desire to be entertained. Such a rebuke might be felt also in the characterisation of the reader as "gentle," as if such a reader does not want to read about "low" characters for which s/he has no sympathy. Some of the images are capable of being read as grotesque, making a spectacle of the old man with his one eye, cherry-red cheeks and "poor old" swollen ankles. Exaggerating these features turns him into a "cartoon" character, inhibiting full human sympathy. The effect of the rebuke is to send the reader back to the images in the frame of mind that would use them to construct a more humanized picture of the man.

A further aspect of "rebuke" or contradiction of "gentle" expectations is seen in the opening lines. The epithets "sweet" and "pleasant" prepare the reader for a setting of rural tranquillity and beauty. As if in a long shot we anticipate the sweetness of a picturesque landscape and the pleasure of a gentleman's country-seat. These expectations are rebuked by the tragedy and hardship discovered in a closer view which incidentally shows the effect of one of these country pleasures on its servant. Such effects and the focus on the reader's response correspond with Wordsworth's aims in the Preface to disturb the "contract" by which readers expect certain characters and events in poetry

and to establish "low and rustic life" as a fit subject. The use of images enacts this intention in the contrasts between long-shot and closer detail and juxtaposition of "cartoon" images with more affecting ones. Apart from affecting the audience's response, images and the order of their presentation suggest scenarios, indicate the comparative importance of events and add suggestions of character.

The major contrast or transformation in the poem is between past and present, which applies to both Simon himself and the Hall of Ivor. The revision in B seems to reinforce this contrast structurally by bringing together pictures of Simon as a young man. Stanza A6 celebrating his hunting feats is brought forward to B3, before the contrast is signalled by "O the heavy change" in B4, a stanza that also incorporates the half-stanza from A3 describing the deserted Hall of Ivor. The greater linear order and combination of the two stories of dilapidation emphasise a general scenario of youth and age, the decline of the once glorious young man to decrepitude. But other scenarios are suggested. The reasons for Simon's lamentable plight might be connected with the House of Ivor in that his service was not repaid with security. This radical social criticism of the landowners who contribute to the lamentable state of the old huntsman might further include the reference to enclosure. This was carried out by act of Parliament sponsored by the major landowners and was widely seen as impoverishing those who relied on common grounds for grazing animals and gathering fuel, a major aspect of another ballad, "Good Blake and Harry Gill."

In A5 the lines "When he was young he little knew / Of husbandry and tillage" follow the description of the injuries sustained in hunting

which begins in A4. This might imply that his service monopolized his life. He has no time for such things, just as he might not have attended to another type of "husbandry": his childlessness is also included in this catalogue. Now he is "forced to work" when too weak for his task, a pathetic and somewhat accusatory expression (A5, 39-40). In B this radical implication is maintained by the pungent phrase "liveried poverty," but a different emphasis is also exploited. Now the lack of expertise in basic life-sustaining skills is associated with the pride of his youth in B2 and he "little cared" for such activities. The blame for his later condition is attributed to his own vanity and imprudence. One could indeed object that this scenario suits badly with the unchanged reference to the couple's apparently ingrained industriousness (A / B 7:53-4).

The ordering of images can also produce differences of emphasis on their significance. The fall of the house of Ivor in A3 comes before the full account of Simon's condition. Like a sudden act of fate it cuts into the account with no preparation. In B4 Simon's condition is indicated in a general list of deprivations before the ruin of the Hall is announced. The "camera eye" passes from the individual to the greater scene of devastation, giving the latter more tragic significance. Simon's plight is the reflection of a far greater catastrophe.

Images may also have a different impact when their order is altered. Simon's continuing pleasure in the sound of "chiming hounds" makes little impact in B3, 21-4, compared with its significance in A6, 45-8. In A the full extent of Simon's deprivation is known and the consolatory power of his memory has more weight as the one thing in which he

rejoices. It both alleviates the harshness of his condition and adds pathos. The reeling and blindness incident to his feats is now more closely associated with his later decrepitude as well as some sort of physical ecstasy of surpassing exertion.

The complicating effect of images not completely under the control of a firm organisation can also be seen in the use of livery-coat. In B4, 28 the phrase "liveried poverty" confine the reader's thought to the stark contrast between poverty and a service that should sustain him. A2 suggests that Simon takes some pride in his "fair" coat, the phrase "fair behind and fair before" (A2, 10) even suggesting a parade of his finery. His lost eye, not mentioned in B, is introduced almost as a minor blemish in A2, 15 before being emphasised as a loss in A4, 25-6. The task of making sense of these discrepant perspectives is left to the "co-operative power of the reader." We may take them as two ways of looking at Simon or we may take one as indicating his own view of himself, still remembering the pride and fitness of his early life.

The more ordered, generalised and controlled use of images in B suggests that Wordsworth felt he had not found in his audience the "stores" of silent thought that would connect his bare, "unliterary" presentations with important passions and principles. "Bereft" of "kindred" (B4, 25-6) with his wife his "one prop" (B5, 37) might show his helplessness; "He has no son, he has no child" (A4, 29) does much more for those who can read meanings into the images. A son, for rural families as well as aristocrats, has preference over daughters, in the case of latter because he is the inheritor, in the case of the former because he not only inherits and perpetuates the father's name but shares and extends

the family's means of livelihood by manual work. As Wordsworth emphasised in the later poem "Michael," he was also the carrier of vital familial virtues into the next generation. This aspect of rural life and this dimension of Simon's deprivation, perhaps only grasped when *Lyrical Ballads* is read as a whole, putting together its pictures of "low and rustic life," disappears in B. The greater "literariness" of B also shows that Wordsworth realised that he has to integrate his poem with the literary tradition more clearly. Instead of relying on his readers to recognise the "permanent" characteristics of the actions and characters he represents, he signposts their similarities with traditional poetic representations just as in "Michael" he evokes Biblical pictures of "patriarchal" rural values. In B2 a classical personification links Simon Lee's "halloo" with the sounds that "Echo" might have learned from Actaeon and Diana. The phrase "oh the heavy change" at the structural turning point of B comes from Milton's *Lycidas* (line 37)[18]. This is a somewhat paradoxical borrowing. Milton's pastoral elegy is "simple, sensuous, and passionate"[19] and demonstrate the virtues that Wordsworth is anxious to perpetuate as the true features of poetry, recapturing the healthy tradition of "our elder poets" from practitioners of a mere craft of "poetic diction." Like any artist, including the film-maker, Wordsworth has to use some recognisable techniques and allusions which are the property of the medium and its tradition. His impatience with this

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[18] John Milton, *John Milton: The Major Works,* ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991) 40.
[19] John Milton, "Of Education," *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Ernest Sirluck, vol. II (New York: Yale UP, 1959) 403.

derivative and limiting necessity is evident at the time of composition of *Lyrical Ballads* when he felt that visual images might themselves carry the weight of significance that an educated modern reader could appreciate using his/her sensitivity to the implications of their presentation and placement in a general cultural perspective. Much of the "original" inspiration of "Simon Lee" remains, however. The more "Jacobinical" criticism of landowners is toned down but still recoverable; what seemed equally "Jacobinical" to Francis Jeffery, the elevation of "low and rustic life," was highlighted and praised by Hazlitt as the emanation of a "levelling muse."[20]

What Roger Sharrock suggests is the most original aspect of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* is its "revolt against literature":

> The whole Wordsworthian theory of poetic diction...represents an attempt to abolish any diction, and literary medium, in favour of the only words which can convey the object or experience as nakedly as possible, the words of the original participants in the action....The qualification of the original battle-cry of 1798 ('the language of the lower and middle classes of society') which caused it to become in 1802 'a selection of the language really used by men', only emphasizes his photographic (or phonographic) conception of the language proper to poetry.[21]

Wordsworth does not follow the literary tradition—choosing the higher and finer language as poetic presentation. He tries to use the rough language of ordinary people to catch the "photographic" reality for his

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[20] William Hazlitt, "Mr Wordsworth," *Lectures on the English Poets / The Spirit of the Age: Or Contemporary Portraits*, introd. Catherine Macdonald Maclean (London: Everyman's Library, 1967) 253.

[21] Roger Sharrock, "Wordsworth's Revolt Against Literature," *Lyrical Ballad: A Case Book*, ed. Alun R. Jones and William Tydeman (London: Macmillan, 1972) 161-2.

experimental poetry. Jeffrey doesn't quite approve of this kind of experiment:

> The poor and vulgar may interest us, in poetry, by the *situation*; but never, we apprehend, by any sentiments that are peculiar to their condition, and still less by any language that is characteristic of it. The truth is, that it is impossible to copy their diction or their sentiments correctly, in a serious composition; and this, not merely because poetry makes men ridiculous, but because just taste and refined sentiment are rarely to be met with among the uncultivated part of mankind; and a language, fitted for their expression, can still more rarely form any of their 'ordinary conversation.'[22]

Sharrock uses two other poems as examples to illustrate what Wordsworth's "unliterariness" has achieved:

> 'The Idiot Boy' and *Peter Bell* are further examples of the poem relying on verbose statements and commonplaces to achieve truth to nature....But I think that we may be wrong if we consider them failures as poems, and contrast them with such fine and unsectarian poems of Wordsworth's as 'Michael' and 'Tintern Abbey'. They should be viewed rather as attempts to get behind poetry altogether and make a photograph (or a recording) of raw data of human experience which might preserve the original emotion. They are in fact, with quibbling, absurdities rather than failures: they try to overcome in words the brutal limitation of language with its inexorable associations and ambiguities.... but there may be times when such a protest against the imperfections of human communication can be of value.[23]

Banality becomes Wordsworth's weapon to create a new tradition of

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[22] Francis Jeffrey, "Southey's *Thalaba*," *Jeffrey's Criticism*, ed. Peter F. Morgan (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983) 49. In "Wordsworth's *The Excursion*," another essay in this edition, Jeffrey is more explicit about his objections to "low" characters (62-5).

[23] Sharrock 165-7.

literature. His selection of raw material raises new possibilities for modern poetry. The rough realistic "photographic" images are still able to serve as useful tools for poetic presentation.

Film Theory and Literary Theory

Film theory has many general similarities with literary theory. Both deal with narratives and their methods of presentation. Film theory is perhaps more open to "genre" expectations and "audience-participation" in the role of filling in the gaps of scenarios. Wolfgang Iser uses an example from Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* to explain the concept of "gaps" in fictional narrative:

> The nondescription of Lady Booby's surprise, and the insistence on its inconceivability, create a gap in the text. The narrative breaks off, so that the reader has room to enter into it. The "schematized views" then guide his imagination, but in order that they should not be felt as restrictions. There follows the confession of their inadequacy. Thus the reader's imagination is left free to paint in the scene. But instead of a concrete picture, the reader's imagination is far more likely to create simply the impression of a living event, and indeed this animation can only come about because it is not restricted to a concrete picture. This is why the character suddenly comes to life in the reader—he is creating instead of merely observing. And so the deliberate gaps in the narrative are the means by which the reader is enabled to bring both scenes and characters to life.[24]

The gap in the narrative invites readers to share the complex process of

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[24] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 1974) 38.

creation by using the schematized scenarios to imagine a "living event" with all the non-specified content. While Wolfgang Iser cites the activity of the reader as filling in physical specifications of scenes which might be presented from a limited perspective, film often relies on the audience filling in gaps in presentation of motive and plot.

What we often praise as "slick" modern cinema short-circuits the links of cause and effect which are "understood" in the genre. A "heist" movie will multiply plots, double-crosses and triple-crosses with a facility granted by its limited psychological depth and transcendence of logistical difficulties. More innovative cinema is recognised by its non-adherence to these conventions and, like Wordsworth's poetry, less determinate, more complex relationships of images, using but questioning elements of the cultural tradition. As a relatively new medium its techniques have been analysed at a basic level and this analysis has owed much to the linguistic and literary terms of the twentieth century. Reciprocally, literary theory has been enriched by film theory, especially by Lacanian ideas of the male "gaze,"[25] the "specular" aspects of the performing self and the identification of the viewer/reader with the camera-eye or point of view. Wordsworth's technique in *Lyrical Ballads* and "Simon Lee" in particular involves complex issues of "placing" the reader (or viewer) which can be dealt with under the category of "suturing," but also more basic techniques of ordering and presenting images, which can be comprehended under the categories of metonymy and metaphor. While

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[25] Christine Gledhill, "Recent Developments in Feminist Criticism," *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 264.

the order of the material should lead us to the ordering point of view, we have seen that in "Simon Lee" there is some distinction between the possibilities of interpretation inherent in the presentation of images and the implied ordering structure. The images, as metonymies and metaphors, have a significance which is only partially controlled and organised by the signifier of the point of view. The evidence for this split in "Simon Lee" is seen in the two published versions and the inability of the later version to include and unify all the suggestions of the first. The contention of this thesis is that Wordsworth's poetry continues to show this inability of the "viewpoint" to contain the images which are supposed to emanate from and be controlled by it. Wordsworth, in other words, is moved by images of experience and this "spontaneous overflow" of powerful emotion often remains a mystery to a conscious interpretation which has filtered its significance into usable elements. Whatever the "conscious" causes of this split, Wordsworth is sensitised to such dichotomies and becomes for many critics the exponent of mystery, the mysterious link between experience and the mind, the sublime mystery of experience that exceeds human mental capacity. His awareness of this split, his presentation of it as evidence of the unfathered, possibly misleading and disturbing but compensating power of Imagination, make him the companion of early film-makers and theorists and of modern artists such as Christopher Nolan, the maker of *Memento*[26]

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[26] *Memento*, dir. Christopher Nolan, perf. Guy Pearce and Carrie-Anne Moss, Columbia Tri-Star, 2000.

and *Insomnia*[27].

A modern account of the use of film theory in narrative analysis, Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories* (Routledge, 1988), is very perceptive in dealing with the "gaps" which have to be traversed in the reader's or audience's appreciation of significance. Before turning to this analytic scheme, however, I would like to establish further reference points in referring to a poem, "Resolution and Independence," which Wordsworth himself analysed in terms of the function of imagination and speculate on how this could be presented by filmic techniques.

Resolution and Independence

We will try to use different shots to find out the resemblance between poetic image making and filmic image making. In the Preface to *Poems* (1815), Wordsworth discusses certain images in "Resolution and Independence":

> As a huge Stone is sometimes seen to lie
> Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
> Wonder to all who do the same espy
> By what means it could thither come, and whence;
> So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
> Like a Sea-beast crawled forth, which on a shelf
> Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun himself.
> Such seemed this Man; not all alive or dead,
> Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age
>
> (64-72)

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[27] *Insomnia*, dir Christopher Nolan, perf. Al Pacino and Robin Williams, Warner, 2002.

> Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood;
> That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
> And moveth altogether if it move at all.[28]
>
> (82-4)

We will focus on the three images: "Stone," "Sea-beast," and "Cloud." Let us check Wordsworth's own idea about these three images in the Preface to *Poems* (1815):

> The Stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the Sea-beast; and the Sea-beast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison. After what has been said, the image of the Cloud need not be commented upon.[29]

Wordsworth points out that both the images of "Stone" and "Sea-beast" bring the quality of strength and life force to the old man, the leech-gatherer. "Stone" presents its strength in silence; "Sea-beast" presents its life force in its movement. Wordsworth does not say much about the "Cloud," but it is very obvious that "Cloud" contains a transcendental quality. The old man is a messenger who will be able to teach Wordsworth something.

We will try to use different filmic shots to create the passage from "Resolution and Independence." The setting is on a certain moor where there is a pond. In the beginning, a long shot can show a whole view of

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[28] William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence," *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 262-3.

[29] Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815) 633.

the moor and the background is the peaceful sky with white clouds. At first, there is a black, or gray stuff, which is like a stone, in the middle of the pond. Our shots move closer, slowly. The stone-like stuff is still motionless: "As a huge Stone is sometimes seen to lie" (64). Then, a close-up focuses on the stone-like stuff. We notice that it is no stone; it could be a cloak. It is an old man with a cloak. He starts to move. He is moving his body and stick; and he is searching for the leeches. Black or gray does give the old man certain strength. The stone-like motionlessness gives him a rootedness and a certain persistent life force. He is no sick old man.

We draw our shots backward, slowly, and turn back the long shot to the whole view—moor, pond, and sky. The old man's life force could be presented in this way. In the long shots, he could be seen again as an indistinct mass, but moving with vitality. The blackness or grayness reminds us of the dark colour of the sea-beast: "Like a Sea-beast crawled forth" (69). The old man is like a vital sea-beast now; he is like a sea-beast hunting for its food. Our shots move closer till the whole pond can be viewed. Then the shots move again and stop with a close-up of the old man. Instead of showing his strength in motionlessness, it can be presented in motion.

Then, we turn our shots to the sky and viewers can feel the peacefulness of the clouds. Again, the shots turn back to the old man. Low-angle shots are used this time; in other words, we shoot from the knees of the old man. When becoming huge against the background of the sky and clouds, the old man displays the aura and power of a prophet. The shot lingers for awhile until the clouds become motionless and

sunlight is coming out from the edge of a certain cloud. At the end, with the old man's motionless position: "Motionless as a Cloud the old man stood" (82), the whole scene fades out. When it is fading out, the old man and the clouds are surrounded by a more mysterious and transcendental atmosphere.

This "director's version" is perhaps too elaborate, but involves similar techniques to those of Wordsworth in the poem and in his own exposition of the effects of these images. By using a carefully posed setting, closing on certain "images" and presenting them in combinations from certain points of view, the director might convince himself that he and the audience perceive or create the same meanings and become the "we" of the exposition.

The use of film shots in this way does not, perhaps, do justice to the extremity of the narrator's emotional disturbance. The manic depressive state he describes in the first part of the poem gives rise to incongruous images that are difficult enough for the literary imagination to meld into one impression. Morphing might be one response to the almost gothic vision of the man as a sea-beast, though this might be too terrifying and do violence to his imagined prophetic status as a messenger from the borders of life and death. The later return and projection of the narrator's despondency could well be represented by a fade into a shot of the Leechgatherer as a lonely wanderer on the storm-ravaged moor in the most abject state. In both cases, I think, a film version would have to fade back, with ironic effect, into the polite and friendly face of the old man, somewhat amused by the poet's intensity.

What we can manage in filmic techniques is the presentation of the

Leech-gatherer as both a prosaic old man and, as he appears to the poet, a messenger from another sphere. Such co-existent significations are almost commonplace in a mode which grew from the combined influences of naturalism and symbolism of the early twentieth century. What film has to do is find techniques that will convey the effects that poetry conveys by metaphor. In visual terms they have to be conveyed by metonymy and montage, juxtapositions of images. Yet film technique, by exploring these effects, has taken us back to poetry with a greater analytical sense of what it is doing with its own combination of images.

Metaphor and Metonymy

By analysing Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires point out the special functioning of metaphor:

> Rather than organizing the poem into a unified and coherent whole, the metaphor actually opens up, as it were, a hole in the text. While the metaphor calls attention to a similarity of seeming opposites (faces of people / petals of flowers), it does not identify what, specifically, makes them equal. That the metaphor does *not* lead to a single determinate meaning establishes a gap between the text's signifiers and a final signified. This gap invites readers to interpret the metaphor, which is only another signifier.[30]

Instead of unifying the text, metaphors create a "gap." This gap

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[30] Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) 28.

"invites" the readers to make their stories from the same metaphor. In other words, viewers also could make different stories from a certain image. The filmic images create similar "gaps."

We may discuss the function of metaphor and metonymy further. Susan Hayward asserts that:

> Metaphors render the unknown visible, make the unknown have presence. Metonyms represent what is absent, stand as part of the whole story to which they refer, which is why they work invisibly.... metonyms are understood to be such only when the story to which they refer has been told. Until then they seem natural, unnoticeable. However, they are only one part of a whole, and what if another part of the whole were given? Would the meaning of the story to which it refers change? Metonyms, then, are encoded, they organize meaning in a precise way. Metaphors have to be decoded. The juxtaposition of shots has to be read, understood by the spectator.[31]

We use certain close-ups, the function of metonymy, to bring out the old man's qualities of "Stone" and "Sea-beast." Wordsworth's mentioning certain detailed qualities about the old man serves the function of metonymy. Yet metonyms are not only parts of a character, like cheeks, eyes, ankles. As Hayward notes, they are part of a story and we have seen how emphasising certain shots at different moments like the livery-coat, the lost eye, the chiming hounds, alters the story of Simon Lee.

Metaphor and metonymy function in language; they also function in film. We will use images from "Simon Lee" and "Resolution and Independence" as examples for judging the functioning of metaphor and

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[31] Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 219.

metonymy in the film, the "moving images."

The dominating metaphors in "Resolution and Independence," as Wordsworth points out, are "Stone," "Sea-beast," and "Cloud." In our filmic presentation of "Resolution and Independence," "Cloud" could be taken as the main metaphor in our selection. "Cloud" and "Stone" could be taken as metaphor in language, but they are metonymy in our filmic presentation. We present images of them as part of the scenery, as indeed they could be—Wordsworth's metaphors are taken from the "natural" scene that he spiritualises by "connecting" with his characters or his own feelings. "Sea-beast" is very difficult to present as metaphor. If we do present a real sea-beast, we could turn it into a horror movie, or an old-fashioned "experimental" film using intercutting to physically present two images—"man" and "beast." Therefore, we use close-ups for "Stone" and "Sea-beast" hoping to enforce a visual likeness. For "Stone," we have a close-up on the back of the old man. For "Sea-beast," we have close-ups on how the old man is searching for leeches with power. "Cloud" represents the tranquil but unearthly quality of the old man. The repeated appearance of clouds could remind the viewers that "Cloud" is the main metaphor and it brings out the tranquil atmosphere for the old man and the film.

We take "Simon Lee" of 1798 as another example. We want to use one scene as the main metaphor: "Ivor-hall" with Simon Lee beside it. This scene does appear repeatedly in the poem's organisation. The scene itself provides the basic image for the viewers to make a story by themselves. What kind of stories hide behind the image of an empty house and an old man? "Ivor-hall" also helps build Simon Lee's image.

The emptiness of "Ivor-hall" provides a possible sad story for Simon Lee. We use lots of close-ups, which we also take as the presentation of metonymy, to strengthen the image of Simon Lee. Our close-ups are on his "livery-coat," "ancles," "legs," and even his "lost right eye." They provide the basic shots for us to make a story from the old man. We could even use certain close-ups on "Ivor-hall" to enhance the image of Simon Lee. They are both metaphors of devastation. The poem deals with the contrast and deprivation of time, which is perhaps more easy to convey in film with its established system of "flash-backs" which do not require the restriction of continuous linear order. This deals with one of the absences mentioned in the poem, "men, dogs and horses." These are gone but can easily be evoked in a "ghostly" flashback (monochrome) of a "meet" in front of the Hall. Another absence, that of a son, is more difficult. Here perhaps the film, with its greater capacity for wide-view and panning, can pass to and from other village households with vigorous children supporting their parents in easy old age.

In the universe of language, metaphor and metonymy rely on each other:

> Rather, they are fundamental to all uses of language because they are the means by which we conceptualize relations between signifiers and signifieds according to a perceived comparability, in the case of metaphor, or according to a perceived contiguity, in the case of metonymy. Put thus abstractly, these terms may seem like paradigm and syntagm. A text is paradigmatically constructed out of substitutions and selections—it works rather like metaphor. And a text is syntagmatically constructed out of combinations and additions—it works rather like metonymy. The sets metaphor and metonymy, and paradigm and syntagm, are not

> identical, however. They provide language with two pairs of coincidental axes: metaphor forming an axis of comparability and metonymy forming an axis of conti[n]guity; paradigm forming an axis of substitution and syntagm forming an axis of combination.[32]

Cohan and Shires bring out this basic principle of "metaphoric comparability" and "metonymic contiguity." This is also the basic principle for viewers to bring out the images of the Leech-gatherer and Simon Lee.

We may further develop these distinctions by drawing the values of metaphor and paradigm closer together in poem and film and suggesting that systematic relations are closer to metonymic. "Resolution and Independence" provides a series of comparable or "substitutable" characters of nature: the hare, enveloped in its halo of dew-drops is compared to Chatterton and Burns and the narrator himself as poets of nature, spontaneous, glad and deified in their own spirits. The old man joins these substitutions and also "answers" the poet's anxieties about the future in which he also joins Chatterton and Burns in their presumed despondency. The metaphoric aspect of strict comparability gives way to a paradigmatic relationship, filling the same place but showing a different fate or facing that fate without despondency.

The congruency of metonymic and syntagmatic relations comes about through the "already told" aspect of the poem and the film that Hayward mentions. Both are reproduced and re-read. Contiguity is "fixed" by the plot and connections pre-established. The congruency is even closer in film. As we noticed in discussing Iser's notion of "filling

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[32] Cohan and Shires 33.

gaps," the creation of physical context in literature often relies on the reader creating a "living experience" from experience. In film, context is fully realised, combinations are available, it depends which are metonymically focused as important. As we shall see, in *The Prelude* Wordsworth's techniques involve "filmic" representation of scenes and episodes, followed by commentaries that focus on certain combinations. In both film and poetry in this latter case, the "realistic" representation of full content can throw into relief the artful or "artificial" principles of selection and exclusion.

Suture

"Suture" occurs in literary narrative and films. We use Susan Hayward's definition:

> This term means, literally, to stitch up (from the medical term for stitching up a cut or wound). In film theory the system of suture has come to mean, in its simplest sense, to stitch the spectator into the filmic text.[33]

By the working of suture, readers/viewers will be able to fit into a certain narrative system. Readers/viewers can identify themselves more in the illusion of a certain place, time and atmosphere of a certain story by looking through the eyes of a certain narrator.

Cohan and Shires illustrate the concept of suture by using a scene in the film *Lady in the Lake*. It is a scene where a lady is standing in front of the mirror and the viewer can see another man, Philip Marlow, played

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[33] Hayward 371.

by Robert Montgomery, standing behind her. The lady can be seen both

The scene of suture in *Lady in the Lake.*

inside and outside the mirror, but Philip Marlow can only be seen in the mirror:

> Philip Marlow's absence from the screen encourages the viewer to identify with the camera and its gaze, its spatial point of view, as the source of the cinematic enunciation (the imagery)....As a result, the viewer seems to occupy the same position in relation to the narrative that Marlow does, which is the position of the effaced camera as the agency putting the story forward....Filling up that empty space with his image, the mirror reflects the signifier (Marlow) as a stand-in for the absent viewer.[34]

Readers/viewers fit themselves in the position of a certain speaker or narrator, here Marlow; they identify themselves as part of the story.

The shot/reverse shot will help create the situation for suture:

> The shot/reverse shot formation is a cinematic set in which the second shot shows the field from which the first shot is assumed to have been taken.[35]

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[34] Cohan and Shires 164-5.

[35] Kaja Silverman, "On Suture," *Film theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 138.

A and B are talking with each other. A is the narrator/speaker. When they are talking, we will shoot from A to B and then B to A. We can create the illusion that they are really talking with each other. The main point is that A is the only narrator/speaker. Since the main narrative line is from A's point-of-view, viewers will not confuse it with B's. In "Simon Lee," this situation occurs too. When the poet puts down his pen and helps the old man, they talk with each other. In this way, literarily, we have "the shot/reverse shot."

"Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," another example in *Lyrical Ballads,* also could be analysed in filmic terms, especially the functioning of suture:

> Once again
> Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
> Which on a wild secluded scene impress
> Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
> The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
> The day is come when I again repose
> Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
> These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts
> Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
> Among the woods and copses lose themselves,
> Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb
> The wide green landscape.[36]
>
> (4-15)

When the "I" tells what it beholds, suturing is occurring—readers/viewers are brought to a "wide green landscape." The speaker, the "I," welcomes readers/viewers to share what he is seeing. First,

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[36] William Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 131-2.

readers/viewers see the "steep and lofty cliffs" in a "wild secluded landscape" with the "quiet sky." Then, the speaker shares more what he sees as the camera-eye shifts to the "plots of cottage-ground", "the orchard-tufts" on the "wide green landscape."

Apart from the function of the eye, "the shot/reverse shot" is also occurring in the interaction between Wordsworth and his sister, in "Tintern Abbey":

> Nor, perchance,
> If I were not thus taught, should I the more
> Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
> For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
> Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,
> My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
> The language of my former heart, and read
> My former pleasures in the shooting lights
> Of thy wild eyes. Oh! Yet a little while
> May I behold in thee what I was once,
> My dear, dear Sister![37] (113-22)

Upon the banks of the fair "Wye," the "I," Wordsworth, is with his sister, Dorothy. When the "I" is trying to find his past self in his sister, he is watching her.

The poet is performing his own act of "suturing." He is finding his identity in the landscape. Holding the continuity of his character from boyhood to age, the landscape is in effect a kind of mirror, a "reverse-shot" which shows him to himself. The contrasting elements of the scene, gloomy wood and haunting cataract, the sylvan farms and the "connecting" quietness of the sky are sensed as a unity. Their unity reflects the unity and continuity of his own life as it has encompassed

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[37] Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 134.

progressively the "gothic" dread and dizzy raptures of youth and the contemplative insight of maturity. The connection and unity of the landscape helps him to suture aspects of his own life. Even his sister becomes an element of the suturing as she reflects his younger self, sharing the gloom and wild exultation of his youth. Metonymies, things that are part of the scene, take on roles that are paradigmatic, as elements of the landscape become exponents of youthful and mature sensibility, while his sister is "promoted" from a metonymic associate to metaphorical comparability. (Some, such as John Barrell,[38] might see her as "demoted" from an independent being to an aspect of the poet himself.) The distinction of metonymy and metaphor which David Lodge has seen as fundamental to modern modes of writing is often unstable.[39] The effects of suturing, or the efforts of the viewer/reader to suture and connect things into a satisfying "viewpoint," are always tending towards converting some metonymic "associated" fact into a metonymic "image of the whole" which, by virtue of it representativeness can participate in a paradigm. The use of metaphorical language (or that of simile) may direct this process, but it may also open up a gap which reader might *not* be able to fill. The effect of filmic "montage" might have been developed as a counterpart to literary images but, in displaying disjunction and the work needed to connect them, it highlights the

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[38] John Barrell, *Poetry, Language, Politics* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988) 155-63.

[39] David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) 75-6. According to Lodge, metonymy and synecdoche have been regarded as "forms or subspecies of metaphor" and involved with the activities of "substitution" like metaphor.

constructive/deconstructive tendencies which Wordsworth too exploits.

"Suture" can also be used more generally for other ways in which elements are bound together, especially in terms of causality and temporality. It is a feature of the detective genre, for instance, for an apparently incidental action to be re-evaluated as part of the "plot," and this, too, is something that is ongoing in any narrative as the reader discovers syntagmatic structure. These transformations in the "plot," are naturally linked to the paradigmatic structure. We are looking for "clues" to the situation of Simon Lee in narrative terms of cause and effect but, as we have seen there are many possibilities, many stories that can be told.

The anticipation of the theme of *The Prelude*, the "growth of a poet's mind," shows tensions in the suturing process in "Tintern Abbey." It is difficult to avoid a sense of loss of intensity in his response to nature and doubt in the natural transition to pantheistic insight is even suggested in the expression of uncertainty:

> Though absent long,
> These forms of beauty have not been to me,
> As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
> But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
> And passing even into my purer mind
> With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
> Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
> As may have had no trivial influence
> On that best portion of a good man's life;
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts

Of kindness and love.[40] (24-37)

The "seclusion" of the scene also emphasises its detachment from other aspects of his life. Although the beauty of the scene corresponds to social virtues—kindness and acts of love—the social life of cities (and therefore his social "city" self) is not echoed in its landscape. The latter in fact seems to be a kind of asylum, a representation of a "deep" self, into which the harassed poet can retreat. The "may have" of line 34 looks forward to deeper uncertainties about the "logic" of his progress: "If this / Be but a vain belief" (50-1).[41]

The approach to "suture" in film theory is based on artificiality. The viewer must be "tricked" into identifying with the camera-eye and the supposed character who is represented by the camera view. This view should appear accurate in detail, relevant to the governing motivations and intentions and inclusive, not excluding important features of "reality." Wordsworth's technique is of "double" suture, both inviting the reader to identify with his interpretation of landscape (and his sister) and also suturing his own identity to the view he beholds. His own experience is offered persuasively as a model for the reader's interpretation of his/her own maturation and sense of "deep" identity. The connection and "interfusion" of the poem must, by the terms of his sublime affirmation "roll through all things" and inspire unity with the "mind of man." Marjorie Levinson, while paying tribute to the art with which he manages this fusion, has noted points of possible discontinuity as mentioned above, questioned his incorporation of his sister into his

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[40] Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 132.
[41] Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 133.

model, and objected to exclusion from his picture of the "reality" he describes.[42] In fact, if he does not disclose the circumstances of his visit to the Wye, fleeing from the French Revolution, the line "flying from something he dreads" (72) might carry some generalised sense of such anxieties. If he does not mention encampments of the destitute at the ruined Abbey itself, he does register the discordant presence of "vagrant dwellers in the houseless wood" (21). His incorporation of his sister is also not an absolute assertion of identity and is replaced by the mere memory of their co-presence and a tribute that sees the landscape enriched for him by association with her:

> Nor, perchance,
> If I should be, where I no more can hear
> Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
> Of past existence, wilt thou then forget
> That on the banks of this delightful stream
> We stood together; and that I, so long
> A worshipper of Nature, hither came,
> Unwearied in that service: rather say
> With warmer love, oh! With far deeper zeal
> Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
> That after many wanderings, many years
> Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
> And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
> More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake.[43]
> (147-60)

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[42] Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 32-43. Levinson considers that the vagrants beside the river Wye are ignored by Wordsworth's "exclusion"; on the contrary, the "smoke" does point out their activity and existence. Because of "selection" for presenting a different theme, the vagrants are not the main focus of the poem.

[43] Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 135.

This opens a gap between Wordsworth and the landscape which is now not a mere reflection of his own identity but an object of love representing the "other" of his sister.

Wordsworth's images and their organisation, then, tell one story but "contain" others. The viewpoint or angle from which it is regarded sutures experience into the unity and continuity of a created persona, but similarly "contains" discontinuities and exclusions. I have suggested that Wordsworth's art, indeed the operation of the imagination in his poetry, is very similar to the art of film-maker. The film-maker presents carefully arranged and selected images and controlled points of view which will support or explore a "reading." Ideally metaphor and metonymy are dominant in this highly artificial created "world." The only "reality" that can act as a realm of substitution (paradigm) is a created one in which patterns of comparability are pre-established (metaphors). The only modes of combinations and additions (syntagm) emerge from the logic of stories that are told (metonymy) rather than from the wider range of "real life" situation. Not only the strong genre identity of films but their more prominent and technological public reproducibility leads to public possession and interpretation, and tends to "solidify" its structure more than the literary work, read probably in a discontinuous way, at an individual pace and with varying concentration.

Yet film is predominantly a "realistic" medium and offers its picture of reality to an audience of varying interpretative expertise. Its attempt to confine paradigm and syntagm within limitations of genre and structure are open to "naïve" appeals to realism and sophisticated attributions of parody, both sharing awareness of alternatives and

exclusions.

Most Romantic theory tends towards the ideal of the structured film, the creation of an "autonomous" work of art with its own laws bearing a highly mediated relation to the laws recognised in ordinary life. Wordsworth however, the poet for unpoetical natures, as J. S. Mill comments[44], while using romantic art, never loses touch with the "naïve" reader and even highlights the possible gaps and incoherence of his formal artifice. A meaning emerges from a matrix of possible meanings or unmeanings and actually gains more personal authenticity for its recognition of alternatives. Michael O'Neill, arguing against the conception of the all-devouring and totalising poem, lays stress on the inconclusiveness of "Resolution and Independence." For him its "moments engage the reader in the drama of sense-making staged in the poem: sense-making that is cautiously and intricately aware of its own processes, and reluctant to claim decisive success."[45] O'Neill usefully captures the "stagy" Wordsworth, the showman who does not fear to show the "tricks of the trade," educating his reader in "dialogic effects which allow poet and reader to explore different perspectives,"[46] alternatively leaving the reader grasping for more or exceeding expectation. Images, like those of the "spots of time" passages in *The Prelude*, yield only a fraction of their possible significance within the stories they are supposed to tell. Experiences which had "slumbered"

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[44] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, intro. Harold J. Laski. (London: Oxford UP, 1969) 126.
[45] Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 41-2.
[46] O'Neill 44.

from childhood are suddenly re-created as essential elements of the self being constituted before our eyes.

In the history of Wordsworth criticism it is Matthew Arnold who first pointed a gap between the "philosophy" and the "poetry" in Wordsworth's long poems[47], and until the coming of more professional academic criticism it was commonplace to privilege the descriptive and evocative passages of *The Prelude* above the prosaic and often tentative analytical commentary. I do not want to re-open that gap too widely but to insist on one aspect of their discontinuous relationship. The passages of "commentary" express the dominant (or provisional) viewpoint which organises the images and suturing evident in the "descriptive" sections. The very filmic presentation of the latter might carry the weight of meaning experienced in the commentaries. Yet just as the commentaries are tentative, so the filmic presentation of images allows other stories to be told, other identities to be suggested and asserted continuities to be ruptured.

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[47] Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism,* (London: Everyman, 1969) 306-7. Arnold's preface to his selection of *The Poems of Wordsworth* (London: Macmillan, 1879) was reprinted in the second series of *Essays in Criticism* (1888). He denigrates the "alleged systematic philosophy" in his work and elevates poetry which shows simply and renders powerfully "the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties."

Chapter 2

The Quest of Self and Imagination

In the previous discussions I have examined Wordsworth's poems as "scenarios," in the spirit of Wolfgang Iser's version of reader-response criticism. In extending this metaphor into that of a film director, I have drawn attention to the way Wordsworth both directs or editorialises by drawing the reader's attention to certain elements of organisation and content and at the same time allows room for other ways of responding to and connecting the elements of the poems. His poetry is, as Michael O'Neill has emphasised, "self-conscious," not only conscious of the self generated in poetry but conscious of the processes of imagination whereby poetry is created. Such self-consciousness might be expected of a poet who could envisage the possibility of clear objectivity of representation as a stage prior to the imaginative transformations of passion and will. It is even more to be expected of one who is anxious to educate his reader about the nature of poetry and re-negotiate the "contract" with his poetic readership in a way that emphasises the reader's active role. Such a poet is fully conscious of the powers of the visual image to suggest multiple meanings and enter into multiple combinations and likely to encourage his readers to follow these suggestions.

In examining the early poetry I have shown how these multiple possibilities lead to alternative "stories" which might be regarded as "suppressed." *The Prelude*, particularly since the discovery of its

textual history and more biographical information, has been widely studied in terms of its repressions. Ranging from politics to psychology and sexuality, modern critics have pointed out suppressions of history and his own personal history in the account of his life. Yet it is also remarkable that these critics can usually find *within the text* signs of these suppressions or pointers to stories not told. Some, of course, to make their revelations more dramatic, ignore these pointers. Alan Liu, for instance, seems to ignore the notes of violence and uncertainty in the Levens Sands passage, where Wordsworth hears of the death of Robespierre, and also ignores the distancing, histrionic self-presentation that complicates his assertion that Wordsworth is assimilating history into a myth of self.[1] Sometimes critics who enlist the textual revisions as arguments for suppressions have to admit that the poetic presentation includes ambiguities that point towards the suppressed matter, as Susan Wolfson does in the case of the drowned man.[2]

Biographical discontinuities even affect the major purpose thought to underlie the work. It was once thought of as a model of the Romantic biography of the artist. Organic genius developed according to its own (or Nature's) laws, with early imaginative inspiration developing into conscious insight and creative power, tested by adversity in terms of the interference of adverse or "unnatural" circumstances. Geoffrey Hartman is seen by John Williams as the seminal critic who affirmed Wordsworth's

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[1] Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989) 383. He reads the welcome of "golden times" as an unequivocal and choric recapturing of the true spirit of the Revolution.

[2] See Chapter 3, p. 104-8.

demotion or sublimation of history in favour of Nature. Hartman's approach also emphasises gaps and uncertainties even within the poet's triumphantly proclaimed status as poet of nature and set the tone for examinations of Wordsworth as the exiled Mariner, in sight of but despairing of the goal of full unity.[3] The conjunction that Hartman seems to envisage, that of mind and nature, is, of course, impossible and sets up oscillations between poetic expressions of the mind of nature and the nature of mind.[4] Hartman, in the spirit of mid- and late-twentieth century criticism, considerably increased the stakes by pointing to Miltonic parallels and issues of personal salvation bound up with the achievement of an Edenic poetry. This self-defeating pursuit of the "Logos" has been taken up by deconstructive criticism as part of a far more wide-reaching critical task, but the idea of Wordsworth's poetic as a consistent and triumphant transformation of all things into aspects of the commanding, "egotistical" self has been accepted as a model, most strongly by those critics who question its supposed triumph.

My own approach will enlarge on Hartman's demonstration of tentativeness and uncertainty within the texture of the poem but will treat the "poetic" less as a matter of salvation and more as one of demonstration. The subject is, indeed, the growth of a poet's mind, but the "poet" is Wordsworth by example and type. Wordsworth continually

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[3] John Williams, *William Wordsworth* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002) 135-42.

[4] Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987) 103. The "interchangeable supremacy" of man and nature is considerably skewed by his assertion that Wordsworth's utterance, though presented as secondary, takes the place of the first *fiat*.

tries to widen his "I" into a "we," and although the events of his life are individual he gestures towards similar, not identical, experience that might be shared in a life of "nature" rather than a specialised education. Even the experience of seeing a crag apparently grow as one rowed into the lake is not individual but a well-known and widely-experienced feature of the district. By showing how events and sights can be transformed in the imagination, Wordsworth is giving a version of a biography within history. A revisionary impulse inhabits most scenes as Wordsworth shows how experience can lead many ways and that biography and history are creative. My method will be to focus not on the "logos" but on visual images, how they are presented, how they are combined and analysed as part of a continuum, using the methods already introduced to expose the alternative, the optional, the possible, as part of the experience represented.

"I" has its own network in the reading and writing process. We cannot ignore the existence of the author, Wordsworth, in his historical reality. But in producing the text, *The Prelude*, it is a matter of the present Wordsworth writing about his past self. Wordsworth might also be influenced by his best companions, Coleridge and Dorothy; in other words, the writing process involves two other "selves." When readers join in the reading process, readers' selves might interact with the already-existing selves. This process could also compare to the watching process of film-viewers, who are in some way "sutured" or stitched into the viewpoint of the film.

Besides the network of the "I," *The Prelude* as an autobiographical poem presents the self in different contexts and in these contexts is found

another network of associations created by patterns of situation and images. Dominating natural images appear recurrently and seem to convey distinct meanings for the poet. Metaphor or metonymy allows the reader to link situations and images and glimpse their meaning as "spots of time," while an "authoritative" commentary often expands on their meanings.

One of the problematic aspects of the poem is that Wordsworth, while theorizing the growth of his mind and poetic faculty, often expresses some uncertainty about the adequacy of such theory:

> But who shall parcel out
> His intellect by geometric rules,
> Split like a province into round and square?
> Who knows the individual hour in which
> His habits were first sown even as a seed,
> Who that shall point as with a wand, and say
> 'This portion of the river of my mind
> Came from yon fountain'?
> (II. 208-15)

> Hard task to analyse a soul, in which
> Not only general habits and desires,
> But each most obvious and particular thought—
> Not in a mystical and idle sense,
> But in the words of reason deeply weighed—
> Hath no beginning.
> (II. 232-6)

He presents his theories (here that of the "infant" babe's bond with the world) as his "best conjecture," but the organisation of many passages seems to highlight their "conjectural" quality. Presentation of experience is followed by meditation or conjecture that highlights a selected aspect of the experience as valuable. Mathew Arnold famously

separated Wordsworth's work into "poetry" and "philosophy," feeling able to dispense with the "philosophy," while other responses to Wordsworth's "two voices" have valued that which is "of the deep" and dispense with the passive representation of mundane realities. The two divisions do not run in parallel but, as in the analysis of the earlier work, I would suggest that Wordsworth is trying to exhibit the process of the imagination even as he describes its growth. Starting from images of memory that might be a true and accurate picture of external reality, he displays the way imagination converts them into images of fear or love and produces a unity of design among initially heterogeneous elements. The unity of *The Prelude* is ultimately the unity of Wordsworth's own self and its view of the world, and this unity is explored in the patterns referred to above and in the philosophical "conjectures." Yet the experiences conveyed yield other possibilities, not entirely excluded from the achieved unity; in fact it might be this sense of the unassimilated and potential in experience that characterises the poem, with its gestures towards the ineffable, the "depths."

Many of the features of continuity as well as discontinuity can be analysed in terms of film theory and its own stress on the fragile unity of a vision stitched together from celluloid strips. The concept of "suturing," developed in terms of Lacanian psychology, plays on the viewer's awareness of the manufactured nature of the product, the cuts and exclusions, the partial viewpoint offered. In an oral, prose or poetic narrative such devices as analepsis, prolepsis and the manipulation of duration are "naturalized" in conventions of tale-telling *by a narrator*. In films they are accentuated as problems to be solved by the

viewer—with help from the director. And though the director can use devices such as metaphor and metonymy, presentation by foregrounding and limited distortion, the frame of vision will always include heterogeneous elements. One of the most influential accounts of suture points to the way a limited view can be naturalized by showing in "reverse-shot" the character who is viewing the scene, thus giving the viewer a situation within the world of the film.

The process of suturing is explained cinematically as constructing a viewpoint for the spectator, or more rhetorically, a means to entice or persuade the viewer to identify with the camera-eye and the "world" that it conveys. The shot/reverse shot technique has been explained by Oudart as the response to a need or lack. In his account a framed view produces an anxiety as to what is constructing or constricting this frame. Whose coercive gaze is the viewer tied to? The reverse shot, showing a character looking out or away from camera comforts the viewer, gives him/her a viewpoint to identify with:

> [a] benign other steps in and obscures the presence of the coercive and castrating Other. In other words, the subject of the speech passes itself off as the speaking subject....The operation of suture is successful at the moment that the viewing subject says, "Yes, that's me," or "That's what I see."[5]

Since the action will be perpetually changing, this suturing has to be perpetually renewed, giving the viewer a consistent character to identify with. (It is, of course, notorious that this technique in a film centred on one character can carry the viewer over many inconsistencies of character

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[5] Kaja Silverman, "On Suture," *Film theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 140-1.

and plot only observed in retrospect or on several viewings.) A similar compulsion has been ascribed to the viewer's investment in narrative:

> [C]inematic coherence and plenitude emerge through multiple cuts and negations. Each image is defined through its differences from those that surround it syntagmatically and these it paradigmatically implies ("this but not that), as well as through its denial of any discourse but it own. Each positive cinematic assertion represents an imaginary conversion of a whole series of negative ones.[6]

The discontinuity of "cuts," as Silverman asserts, is usually "covered over" in classic cinema. It is a replaying of an Oedipal castration anxiety or a Lacanian sense of the dismembered body which is "covered over" by the adoption of a continuous and coherent identity.

The relevance of this theorizing to *The Prelude* can be seen in the doubled investment of the poet in the continuity and coherence of his narrative. He must show the "Poet" immanent in the hero, must identify the "I" in the "not-I." Since the "I" of the present is the object of his quest, the narrative must show a continuity of growth. What is not "classical" about *The Prelude* is that it does not "cover up" the cuts, discontinuities, and incoherence. Just as he laid bare the mechanism of the imagination as a process of creative "distortion" or "confusion," so Wordsworth bares the processes of exclusion and assimilation that produce the "I" of the "Poet." Adhering still to that empirical faith in the possibility of a mode of memory faithful to unbiased representation of actual events, he holds theory at arm's length, even that which validates his poetry. The *process* of imagination is his subject, the transformation of experience into values, of prose into poetry, and both material and

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[6] Silverman 141.

product are displayed. It is as if he is incorporating old home-movies into his film, interrupting them now and again to exclaim "Yes, that's me" and, through intercutting and editing, reinforcing the paradigmatic patterns that anticipate completion.

We hardly need the last book to specify the goal of Wordsworth's quest. The idea of a tranquil, philosophical, contemplative and creative master-mind has been, if not ever-present, rhetorically stressed in many anticipations. Yet its power to assimilate experience and shape it, the reciprocity of powers within and outside the mind, is jeopardised by the long passages in which the "not-I" is represented, the actual contexts which are apparently rejected as inimical to the "I." Yet if the last book is to be believed, all experience is "gratulant if properly understood" and the "theory" may be discounted in a process of assimilation more mysterious than that articulated in theory.

The "I" of *The Prelude*

According to Paul de Man, there is a deconstructive tendency in autobiographical writing:

> He [Paul de Man] proposes that autobiography 'is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all text' [*The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, p. 70]. Autobiography happens when a text involves two persons constructing their own identities through reading in each other. The author reads him/herself in autobiography, making themselves the subject of their own language. This involves a form of substitution, exchanging the writing 'I' for the written 'I', and so implies

> that the two persons are at least as different as they are the same.[7]

De Man's observation is applied to all such writing but in connection with Wordsworth's *The Prelude* it has additional force. Wordsworth splits himself into two, one the "hero" of his poem, the other the Poet he has become. Like much autobiographical writing, the poem seems to chart the "progress" or growth of present powers and consciousness up to the point of writing. There should therefore be a dissonance between the powers and consciousness of the young hero, the "written I," and the mature poet, the "writer I," a dissonance that diminishes through the course of the poem until the chronology of the narrated life merges with that of the life of the narrator. The self which "sets the agendas" and constructs the itinerary of progress with its meanderings, its wanderings from the "true" route, is that of the "writing I." In the last book he can say what the poem shows us is the shape of his development just as at various stages of the narration he gives us signposts on the journey (such as "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man.") In one of his most prominent interjections he invokes the imagination, which is the goal of the autobiographical project, to supplement the "hero's" disappointment on crossing the Alps. In another, he summons up Coleridge to place him in a scene of companionship and nature, celebrating the creative power that triumphs over time and place:

> And o'er the Border Beacon and the waste
> Of naked pools and common crags that lay
> Exposed on the bare fell, was scattered love—
> A spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.

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[7] Martin McQuillan, *Paul de Man*, (London: Routledge, 2001) 75.

> O friend, we had not seen thee at that time,
> And yet a power is on me and a strong
> Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.
> (VI. 242-8)

Coleridge has great influence on Wordsworth. Even when he is not there, Wordsworth always imagines him as one of his company, perhaps because as this was a poem "for" Coleridge, he was present to the mind of the writing "I."

We also know *The Prelude* is written for Coleridge; he struggles to get ideas from Coleridge. Keith Hanley points out:

> With the absence of Coleridge imminent, Wordsworth was obliged finally to seize the initiative by insisting on his own vision of imaginary discourse....While Wordsworth's formulation of imagination was necessary to complete the poem about his own creative subjectivity, so that in the sixteen months starting in January, 1804, he was to complete the eleven remaining books of *The Prelude*, it would always negate the possibility of writing Coleridge's *The Recluse*.[8]

Wordsworth and Coleridge are good friends; they share their ideas with each other. We have mentioned that Wordsworth tries to "plant" Coleridge in certain passages when Coleridge is not really there; we have to wonder whether Wordsworth "planted" some of Coleridge's ideas into *The Prelude* and whether they grew in different ways. Wordsworth, finally, is able to form his own ideas completely when Coleridge is absent, and incorporate him into the poem of himself. Coleridge becomes one of the "I"s of the work.

Not only Coleridge contributes to the writing of *The Prelude*,

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[8] Keith Hanley, "Crossings Out: The Problem of Textual Passage in *The Prelude*," *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 111.

Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, has her share:

> When Wordsworth said of Dorothy, "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears," it was no vain compliment. In her *Journals* we read, for example, of their meeting the poor old man who became the Leech Gatherer of "Resolution and Independence" or that description of the daffodils which Wordsworth transformed into "I wandered lonely as a cloud."[9]

Wordsworth often discusses his writing with Dorothy, he also uses some of his sister's feelings and experiences. The fact that these experiences are easily recognisable in their passage from her prose to his poetry adds to the sense that the experiences have an existence apart from the poetry, that the poetry is "a" version.

Experiences are not only shared by these characters or "selves" both within and outside the poem but Wordsworth's experience is offered as one shared with the reader. As Hallam observes:

> Wordsworth's 'I' is a lyrical 'I,' not always to be identified with an *empirical* self: it can have an application to other, fellow, beings, as in a philosophical example one might say 'I....'....And a reader, imagining the written 'I', may also be a 'fellow being'. 'The bliss of solitude' speaks of a 'blessed mood' available to all individuals, sometimes mysteriously shared by them. Wordsworth's 'I' recognises the inwardness of a 'you' as intimately co-present it need not always even be named.[10]

Readers, by the function of suturing, can consider this "I" as themselves too. In autobiographical writing, the deconstructive "I"—the writing "I"

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[9] Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Nature and the Humanization of the Self in Wordsworth," *English Romantic Poets*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975) 129.

[10] Hallam, N, "Wordsworth Alone," *The Cambridge Quarterly* 25 (1996): 48.

and the written "I"—can interact with readers' "I"s too. We can find an example in Book XI of *The Prelude*:

> Oh mystery of man, from what a depth
> Proceed thy honours! I am lost, but see
> In simple childhood something of the base
> On which thy greatness stands—but this I feel,
> That from thyself it is that thou must give,
> Else never canst receive.
>
> (XI. 328-33)

Here, Wordsworth uses the forms "I" and "thy" when writing of a personal impression. The "I," it seems, is "lost" as in the imaginative interposition in the Simplon Pass episode, but that loss of the "I" allows him access to a universal truth which applies to "man."

In film theory the viewer is sutured into the narrator's viewpoint in a similar way. By the function of suturing, viewers fit into the position of the narrator's "I." The viewers' "I"s are interacting with the narrator's "I"— they are experiencing the narrator's experiences, feelings and thoughts. Though film-makers set up a certain situation for the viewers to fit in, a gap exists between the expectations of the film-makers and the reactions of the viewers. This is because viewers are of different genders, characters, ages. Even when they are facing the same situation, they might have different feelings, reactions and thoughts, and respond to aspects of a scene differently. This produces a critical attitude on the part of the viewer. S/he realises that the film-maker is directing attention to one aspect, attempting to raise a certain feeling, but the viewer cannot wholly enter the perspective. It is difficult to know whether this can always be called a "failure" in a film—that it has individualised its focalizer— yet the possibility of empathy, that the

focalizer's "take" on the situation is one which *might* be shared, is essential to the significance of the enterprise.

In identifying with Wordsworth's "I," the reader is using the capability that Wordsworth describes in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* as the possession of the poet, the ability to put himself in the position of the characters he contemplates and often to confound his own feeling with theirs. A similar "strong confusion" leads the "writing I" to inhabit the feelings of the "written I" and we are not always sure whether the "meaning" of the experience is evolved by the one or the other. Wordsworth's feelings are only confused with his characters, for "short spaces of time," and the to-and-fro movement of sympathy rather than pure empathy opens up a gap that allows for evaluation and supplementation. If Wordsworth was writing a "classic" biography, the distinction would be clear and the continuity of growth would compose a connected progress. But a discontinuity in the story of growth often points to the present operation of imagination.

Wordsworth suggests that imagination is actually an innate quality nurtured rather than implanted, and more a matter of feeling and response than of writing. Experiences of his childhood and youth are ascribed to the "written I" but also experienced imaginatively by the "writing I." The confusion between the two can be seen in the last book. Here the experience of climbing Snowdon functions as the mature counterpart of the crossing of the Alps. In the latter, the "written I" experiences the failure of nature to live up to his idea and it is felt as a disappointment. The poet, at the moment of writing, retrospectively interprets the experience as a tribute to the powers of the mind and imagination. In

the vision on Snowdon, however, the experience is enhanced by demonstrating those powers of the mind acknowledged by the mature Wordsworth. Yet the two experiences are separated only by a matter of months. While this chronology is arguably only available outside the text, it shows the tendencies that are evident in other sections. The map of his childhood and youth is of a world he both "had been" and "was." It is often impossible to separate the "writing I" from the "written I."

The confusion affects the description of the moments, or "spots of time," which are so important in establishing paradigmatic links in the narrative. They help to suture the narrative's coherence and the continuity of the self but at the same time they show a dominance of the "writing I" in its power of interpretation and even creation that actually subverts the story of growth. Meyer H. Abrams mentions that Romantics achieve an important paradigm in Romantic Lyrics:

> Some of the poems are called odes, while the others approach the ode in having lyric magnitude and a serious subject, feeling fully mediated. They present a determinate speaker in a particularized, and usually a localized, outdoor setting, whom we overhear as he carries on, in a fluent vernacular which rises easily to a more formal speech, a sustained colloquy, sometimes with himself or with the outer scene, but more frequently with a silent human auditor, present or absent. The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely intervolved with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened

> understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation.[11]

Abrams points out the following works of the Romantics help build this paradigm: Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp," "Frost at Midnight," "Fears in Solitude," Shelley's "Stanzas Written in Dejection," "Ode to the West Wind," and Keats' Odes. Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" and "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle" also contribute to this paradigm and Abrams considers that "Tintern Abbey" presents a model in the writing of *The Prelude*:

> Wordsworth's *The Prelude* can be viewed as an epic expansion of the mode of *Tintern Abbey*, in both overall design and local tactics. It begins with the description of a landscape visited in maturity, evokes the entire life of the poet as a protracted meditation on things past, and presents the growth of the poet's mind as an interaction with the natural milieu by which it is fostered, from which it is tragically alienated, and to which in the resolution it is restored with a difference attributable to the intervening experiences; the poem ends at the time of its beginning.[12]

Wordsworth does present many "spots of time" in this way—the "writing I" is trying to bring back the feeling and thought of the "written I" in a certain natural setting.

Jonathan Bishop voices a common critical elevation of the moments and their importance in establishing patterns in situations, images and even verbal forms:

> *The Prelude* is at the center of our experience of Wordsworth; at the center of our experience of *The Prelude* are those 'spots of time' where Wordsworth is endeavoring to express

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[11] M. H. Abrams, *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism* (New York: Norton, 1984) 76-7.

[12] Abrams 79.

> key moments in the history of his imagination....The memories we have seem to acquire their special meaning from other and more remote sources; the repetition of language and situation becomes, once it is noticed, a clue to something farther back.[13]

The "spots of time" passages are the keys for us to study Wordsworth's imagination. "Spots of time" are not merely revisited by Wordsworth; readers are invited to share his special moments and meditate with him upon their meaning.

They seem to be stepping stones or, in Herbert Lindenberger's image, islands by which he makes his way across the river, lake or ocean which separates childhood and adulthood. They are moments of imaginative vision when the poetic power within him is confirmed. The two experiences specified by Wordsworth as "spots of time," are natural scenes but coloured by strong human presences and absences. Separated from his guide, the view of a gibbet and a girl struggling against the elements unite with the ominous presence of a warning beacon in one; the death of his father overshadows the second. Critics have expanded the notion of "spots of time" to include the other moments when Wordsworth's imagination is most active in natural scenery and a more comprehensible pantheistic sense of unity and interaction with nature is evident. Many questions could be raised about the selective force of the critical tradition here but I am concerned with Wordsworth's selectivity.

Many of the "spots of time" will be analysed in succeeding

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[13] Jonathan Bishop, "Wordsworth and the 'Spots of Time'," *Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. W. J. Harvey and Richard Gravil (London: Macmillan, 1972) 134-48.

chapters. They cluster in the childhood section where physical experiences are "remembered" in terms of "experience" or "feeling" pregnant with meanings that are occasionally developed in commentary concerning the bond with nature and recognising nature's living force. Later examples show similar experiences, often of contemplation or "impression" with similar potential for meaning. These "scenes" are located in time, but their significance and certain aspects of their presentation disturb chronology and point to paradigmatic "permanent" truths, valid for the writing "I" and written "I."

The idea of "spots of time" can be taken as a "theory" with the same scepticism with which Wordsworth views all such theory. If we "build up" our being on such moments, it is perhaps irrelevant to him whether these "spots" are chronologically punctual moments of deeper insight or experience historically embedded in memory or whether they are experiences vaguely remembered, re-envisaged, or even re-created in the narrative of self that he is creating at the moment of writing. Again, unlike "classic" biography or "classic" film technique, he does not try to "cover" the possible discontinuities. The movements from fact to theory, and from theory to fact are disclosed as problematic. The coherence of the self is achieved at the expense of admitted heterogeneity and manipulation.

He is quite open about the way the "spots of time" and other experiences were not a constant presence in the mind of his "written I." In fact, he might have felt quite differently or not at all about such events in his "real" boyhood. He mentions his growing boyhood feelings of reverence for the figure of the shepherd. But the "writing" Wordsworth

seems not so sure about the feeling of the "written" young self: "Of this I little saw, cared less for it, / But something must have felt" (VIII. 427-8). And he is uncertain what he is seeing in naked truth and what he is projecting from his present position of writer/poet:

> As one who hangs down-bending from the side
> Of a slow-moving boat upon the breast
> Of a still water, solacing himself
> With such discoveries as his eye can make
> Beneath him in the bottom of the deeps,
> See many beauteous sights—weeds, fishes, flowers,
> Grots, pebbles, root of trees—and fancies more,
> Yet often is perplexed, and cannot part
> The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
> Mountains and clouds, from that which is indeed
> The region, and the things which there abide
> In their dwelling; now is crossed by gleam
> Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
> And motions that are sent he knows not whence....
>
> (IV. 247-60)

Wordsworth loves to write or meditate about his past memories, but sometimes he confuses that which is his past consciousness and which is present. He mentions:

> Of these and other kindred notices
> I cannot say what portion is in truth
> The naked recollection of that time,
> And what may rather have been called to life
> By after-meditation.
>
> (III. 644-8)

If the memorialised "spots of time" enshrine the true values of that stage in his career, he is nevertheless anxious to add to them and alter priorities in the retrospect of the last book. His narrative includes sections of his life which seem unconducive to the flourishing of imagination, notably his residence in Cambridge and London, while his political involvement

is an "impairment" of imagination. Yet the last book proclaims his song, even in its "plaintive" parts "all gratulant if rightly understood" (XIII 385). This gestures to a more inclusive appreciation than that which the editorial, directing, "writing I" usually shows. Hartman points to one quality of Wordsworth's memory:

> Wordsworth's "open" style—the displacement of a first memory by a second—shows that memory is creative rather than nostalgic: still sensitive to a past that can modify and even reverse a present state of mind. What is peculiarly Wordsworthian, however, is that the displacement of which we have spoken is continuous, that the supervening memory remains within the frame of its matrix.[14]

Hartman's image of a "matrix" gives a rather too mathematical precision and placement of the fluid process which he describes in which memories can be summoned up to reverse states of mind or supervene on one another. What is peculiarly "Wordsworthian" I would term this very fluidity, the matrix which exceeds a frame and exhibits both frame and excess.

I am not so concerned with Wordsworth's "theoretical" consistency here but with the problems of selection, exclusion and foregrounding that his poem involves. It insists on the coherence of the "hero's" experience, yet admits the value of elements that are de-emphasised in presentation. The position is similar to that investigated in the earlier works and described in terms of film technique. The "writer I"/director lavishes poetic/cinematic craftsmanship on the presentation of certain aspects, yet

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[14] Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Nature and the Humanization of the Self in Wordsworth," *English Romantic Poets*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975) 127.

allows qualifying, even contradictory, emphases to emerge. The "spots of time" are Wordsworth's memories at their peak moments:

> We have a group of memories; these share a vocabulary of imagery, a vocabulary which seems to combine into a story, a story which, so far as it is interpretable, tells of the fears, curiosities, and guilt of childhood.[15]

Wordsworth's memories are built up by the imagery, but images allow readers to construct Wordsworth's stories for themselves.

While the operation of Imagination singles out one aspect of an episode or scene as value-laden and by metaphoric and metonymic means associates it with other similar "spots," the paradigmatic integrity of their patterns is threatened by the syntagmatic activity of aspects that are thrust into the "background." Poetic significance can be seen emerging from "ordinary life" but in an oddly provisional, even arbitrary way.

The "spots of time," as much out of time as in time, proleptic and analeptic in terms of their placement in the life narrated and the narration of the life, are offered as dramatized "raw" experience to the reader, but also naturalized and sutured to the figure of the developing Poet. This decoupling, yet ultimate integration, is very like the suturing of cinematic images.

David S. Miall mentions one intercutting technique, which functions like suturing, in Tarkovsky's autobiographical movie, *Mirror*:

> [M]ore mysteriously, the scenes of World War II are framed by our view of the recalcitrant Asafyey, who has been refusing to cooperate with the drill instructor: after he climbs the snowy hill away from the firing range, he looks off camera to the right as though the scenes intercut with our

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[15] Bishop 148.

> view of him (the Russian tanks, the corpses of soldiers, the atomic bomb exploding) are seen by him—proleptic at this moment, since all lie in the future.[16]

First, viewers are sharing the viewpoint of the narrator, Asafyey. When Asafyey looks away, the director intercuts Asafyey's views as the viewers'. As the intercutting occurs, there will be a scene with a narrator—when Asafyey is looking away, there will be a shot with him. Then viewers will see a scene without narrator because they are suturing into the narrator's viewpoint.

Miall also points out this kind of technique in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. He uses the scene of stealing raven's eggs as an example:

> In both the poem and the film, the human motivation that is normally central to narrative is defamiliarized. The figures in the landscape undergo a type of figure-ground reversal, so that the environment within which human beings derive their meaning and agency is itself foregrounded. Thus Wordsworth's emphasis [in] the childhood experience he relates, as well as [in] later episodes such as crossing the Alps, regularly displaces attention from the experiencing self on the natural processes with which the narrator's feelings appear to be continuous. While Wordsworth hangs perilously on the crag, that is, he notices feelings of concordance with the wind and sky that intervene upon his immediate motives.[17]

When Wordsworth takes the readers back to his childhood experience, the "writing I," the present Wordsworth, is narrating the experience of the "written I," the past Wordsworth. The "writing I" is suturing readers into the "written I's" viewpoints and feelings. When the "written I"

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[16] David S. Miall, "The Self in History: Wordsworth, Tarkovsky, and Autobiography," *The Wordsworth Circle* 27(1996): 11.
[17] Miall 11.

hangs on the crag, the "writing I" comes out to "watch" the "written I" with the readers:

> Oh, when I have hung
> Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
> And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
> But ill sustained, and almost, as it seemed
> Suspended by the blast which blew amain,
> Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
> While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
> Blow through my ears, the sky seemed not a sky
> Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds!
> (I. 341-50)

We are prepared to accept the dizzying experience of the elements as the experience of the "written I," as "vision nascent," feelings which might later be meditated on and turned into meanings by the "writing I." Both perspectives are present. However, the "viewer" might willingly share the experience without necessarily following the "writer I" in any meditations of meaning implicit in the description. If readers/viewers really put themselves in the position of the protagonist, their overwhelming impression might well be one of danger. The "blast" which the protagonist hears as an "utterance" might well be felt as a capricious, overwhelming force, as likely to tear him from his uncertain hold as to "suspend" him. To notice the sky and clouds as independent entities rather than mere attendants of his predicament might seem an unlikely perception and it is more likely that concentration on the goal of the enterprise, seizing the eggs, would be the main sustaining force. Suturing here might be partial.

In another scene in Tarkovsky's *Mirror*:

> The identities of Maria as a young and as an old woman, already partly merged with that of Natalia earlier in the film, here appear to dissolve into one another. The young Maria is asked by her husband, "Do you want a boy or a girl?" Her mixture of emotions in the response is expressively conveyed by the actress, Margarita Terekhova, but she then turns her head away from us to the right, and paralleling Asafyev's view of historical moments to come, appears to see a scene taking place that is literally impossible: herself as an old woman, leading her two young children through her overgrown garden.[18]

With the intercutting, viewers identify with the young Maria but watch the old Maria. Viewers could see the functioning of the deconstructive I—the young self and old self in the same time. When reading the following lines: "A rambling schoolboy, thus / Have I beheld him" (VIII. 391-2), we are in the suturing system in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*—readers can see the young Wordsworth, the "written I," and the adult Wordsworth, the "writing I," simultaneously. But, as we have seen, the co-presence of the "writing I" and "written I" is not just a matter of personal pronouns.

The Dramatised Writer/Narrator

The Prelude is presented as Wordsworth's quest for his true self. Wordsworth always tries to discover his true self from his past young self. Again and again, Wordsworth goes back to his "spots of time" to research his own lessons. In fact, Wordsworth produced so many versions of *The Prelude* that it might be said that he found more than one version of his

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[18] Miall 12.

past self. Perhaps from the perspectives of a changing present, the writing Wordsworth successively found different aspects of his present self foregrounded in the figure he described. The vertiginous confusions of past and present, writing "I" and "written I" that have been described above, and the fact that Wordsworth does not "cover up" the gaps in suturing suggests to me a more sophisticated narratological approach to reading *The Prelude*.

From Abram's account of the "determinate speaker" who, "in the course of his meditation" on an outward scene, achieves some sort of insight, we may separate out the "writing I," who has already undergone this process and is dramatising it, creating the "written I" who, at the start of the poem, has not. What comes into focus in the longer poem, but, I would argue, is equally a feature of the earlier poems, are the very processes by which the "writing I" creates the pattern of change. The hesitancies and uncertainties of "Tintern Abbey" draw attention to the problematic nature of the suturing of past and present, the influence of nature, and the pattern of maturation that are so persuasively and poetically expressed. In *The Prelude*, with its far more ambitious range, we find a similarly poetic and persuasive suturing but even more gaps, many of which are highlighted, especially when we are aware of the biographical distortions introduced by the "writing I." A further narratological distinction appears to be vitally necessary, that between the "writing I" and the author. My contention is that Wordsworth, the author, is dramatising the operations of the "writing I," the surrogate author within the text, showing us the ways in which an autobiographer makes sense of a life, yet showing also that there are other ways of doing

it, that some things escape from control, that others suggest inconsistencies. In one of its aspects it is, like "Tintern Abbey," something of a "How to" guide to Romantic life-writing, but sceptical intrusions throw doubt on the whole enterprise. We may naturalize these moments as moods of one mind. After all, such assertions of unity may be the product of the highest temporary exertions of mind. But if we regard a writer as the authority for assertions, it must be another writer who denies them, and, indeed, seems to regard the process of growth as "in the words of reason deeply weighed" not susceptible to analysis. This sceptical voice could be seen as equally a creation of the author, another narratological device, a counter-author, who alerts us to the gaps displayed and closed by the suturing.

The sceptical voice of *The Prelude* invites us to view the "writing I" with a certain amount of suspicion. The author-surrogate is a "conjecturalist," using, to be sure, his best conjectures, yet unable to offer thorough proof weighed in reason. The heuristic ploy of viewing this surrogate author as a film director is motivated by two main aspects of the work. Firstly, the use of eidetic memory gives a certain autonomy, like that of a film shot, to the images of experience. Secondly, the methods of suturing have the same "artfulness," an artistry that is highlighted and patently manufactured, that has been studied in film theory. Moreover, the extent of the suturing, of scene to scene, stage to stage, is governed by the ultimate goal of suturing in the Lacanian sense, the production of the self, and is offered as a method of producing the self.

The "infant babe" passage, which precedes an extended

anticipation of the theme of the whole poem, was composed in 1798, survives virtually unaltered in 1805, and is primarily about suturing. The passage deals with two topics which engaged Wordsworth and Coleridge at the time: the idea that association is not built on mere contiguity in space and time, metonymic features, but on connections with the passions, and the more Coleridgean theme of the capacity of the mind to perceive things as wholes, not as parts. The babe is said to "gather passion from his mother's eye" and "hence" is "eager to combine / In one appearance all the elements / And parts of the same object, else detached / And loth to coalesce." This disciplines his "organs and recipient faculties," makes them vigorous to "spread" and tenacious "of the forms which it receives / In one beloved presence" (II. 249-55). The passage has been discussed in Freudian terms which make sucking the mother's breast the type of all subsequent sexual (affective) relations for which they are substitutes. In Wordsworth's case this would see the chain of association, of suturing, governed by the desire to find again that originary relationship, which is, of course, supplied by nature. The passage has been discussed by Cathy Caruth, who stresses the "propping" action of the mother's love, referring to the elliptical description of his mother's death as the removal of "the props of my affections" (II. 294). For her, the mother is an indispensable origin but one that has to disappear: "To describe the mother—or is it just her body, the breasts?—as 'props', is to make of her support an artificial structure, part of an edifice which the soul manipulates for its own architectonic

purposes."[19] A cross-over from affective to cognitive relations happens when the mother is seen as a whole, "read" and therefore "removed" as an affective presence "in order to be accessible to experience in the first place."[20] The mother is therefore something like the "spirit" of the edifice built by Wordsworth in the articulations of language, but to many critics she is a very unquiet spirit, the haunting presence of death overshadowing his constructions of experience.[21]

Wordsworth's "conjecture" obviously raises more questions than it answers. If the sensibility that is nurtured in infancy is common to all, the "Great birthright of our being," does it depend on mothers nursing their own children, the mother surviving childbirth and the death of the mother after about seven years? Its "conjectural" quality is heightened by a vocabulary that strains to unite mother and external world as equally "kindred" and "gravitational," and a series of transitions that might be chronological or those of thought. It is uncertain, for instance, whether "from this cause" that Caruth takes as referring to the death of the mother, which enables his own independent activity, does not refer to the result of the whole preceding relationship with the live mother ("All that I beheld / Was dear to me"). Conversely, the progress of the babe's consciousness seems to be chronological:

> the babe
> Nursed in his mother's arms, the babe who sleeps
> Upon his mother's breast, who when his soul

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[19] Cathy Caruth, "Past Recognition: Narrative Origins in Wordsworth and Freud," *Romanticism*, ed. Cynthia Chase (London: Longman, 1993) 104.

[20] Caruth 108.

[21] See my discussion of Wolfson in next chapter, p. 104-8.

> Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
> Doth gather passion from his mother's eye.
> Such feelings pass into his torpid life
> Like an awakening breeze....
>
> (II. 239-45)

Here the central Freudian importance of nursing at the mother's breast seems to be taken as part of the "torpid" life that has to be awakened when a kindred of souls becomes "manifest."

A more Lacanian emphasis, which Caruth's discussion admits, sees Wordsworth's construction of his self as equally "artificial." His "apprehensive habitude" of seeing things as wholes, implies the wholeness of the self, the central self or "soul." He sees himself in his mother's eye as an object of passion, a mirror-image that reassures him of his own wholeness, separateness and identity. If the world is "irradiated" by this passion, then his sense of himself as nature's special care and his progress as "her" tutelage is also bound up with his capacity to connect things and form things into wholes, constructing the very edifice in words and images that confirms this relationship. His remembering is "re-membering." We might suggest that an anxiety, akin to the fear of the *corps démorcellé*, drives his attempts to bring harmony and wholeness to his story and his self, which has to be constructed autonomously. We do, indeed, need "the chamois's sinews and the eagle's wing" to follow a path that is not laid out in the customary "realistic" syntax and metonymy of Lockean psychology (and that derived from it), but in terms of "conjectural" connections of feelings by a creative imagination that confounds time and space. The narrator of *The Prelude* is located in this place of anxiety, but the sceptical voice

allows us to appreciate both the anxiety and the energy of construction. The series of images, babe at the breast, the mother's eyes, the flower which in a later version is irradiated with love as soon as it becomes an object of attention, are linked in ways that suggest connection but which defeat rational analysis. The "infant babe" passage itself displays some of the energetic characteristics of the "figure-ground" reversal previously discussed, in that there is a problematic transition from a foreground occupied by the mother to the background ("nature") which seems to be always already "irradiated" by love and connected by a gravitational bond, confusing the search for origins in a process which the sceptical voice tells us "hath no beginning."

Interacting Images

As we have shown in analysing earlier poems, the presentation of images can lead readers to construct Wordsworth's "stories" without the aid of passages of commentary, interpretation or "philosophy." They may act like filmic images in utilising widely-shared or traditional meanings to direct the viewers' response. Such images include those of wind, water, cave and island, particularly singled out by Herbert Lindenberger. These important images are worthy of our further investigation. I have suggested that these images may function like filmic images—allowing viewers/readers to have their own interpretations of Wordsworth's memories.

Wind and water are two basic images of Wordsworth; they are

essential machinery to invite readers to go into his "spots of time." Lindenberger states their important function:

> One could speak of the wind and water as functioning on two separate levels: on one hand, as we have seen, they are *literally* intermediaries between the visible and the invisible worlds, but they also have a rhetorical function, for they serve to prepare the reader for the great moments of vision. They are, one might say, a mode of transition both between the parts of the poet's universe and between the reader and visionary experience which the poet is preparing him for.[22]

Wind and water bring us into Wordsworth's mental universe—his memory and his imagination—from concrete to abstract. As a symbol, wind has been linked with inspiration from the outset of the poem in the "blessing" of the breeze as Abrams notes:

> This is air-in-motion, whether it occurs as breeze or breath, wind or respiration—whether the air is compelled into motion by natural forces or by the action of the human lungs. That the poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron should be so thoroughly ventilated is itself noteworthy; but the surprising thing is how often, in the major poems, the wind is not only a property of the landscape, but also a vehicle for radical changes in the poet's mind.[23]

The Romantic transformation of the classic idea of wind as "spirit" or inspiration into the more pantheistic idea of a shared force of mental and natural creation is omnipresent in *The Prelude*.

Wind has already been cited as a sustaining element in the

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[22] Herbert Lindenberger, "Images of Interaction," *The Prelude: 1799,1805,1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth et al. (New York: Norton, 1979) 645-6.

[23] M. H. Abrams, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," English Romantic Poets, *English Romantic Poets*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975) 37.

egg-stealing episode; it is more monitory as it combines with guilt in creating a scene of vengeful haunting, akin to that of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." When engaged in stealing birds from other's traps:

> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds,
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod.
> (I. 329-32)

Wind becomes, by Wordsworth's personification, one messenger that Nature sends; "he" comes after Wordsworth for his wrongdoings. But while we note these highlighted instances of wind as an inspirational force heralding the fusion or "confusion" of Wordsworth's imagination with the forms of nature, it is sometimes an elemental force that requires resistance, as in the image of the girl struggling against it, or a "redundant tempest / vexing its own creation," (I. 46-7) a sublime power that prejudices the mind's autonomy or control.

The symbolism of water is less fixed. Baptismal associations are suggested in his naked bathing in the thunder-shower as a boy; he often uses the image of the river of life. The idea of wandering, of losing oneself in the fluid, shifting element can be seen in the "eddy's force" which precipitates him into Cambridge life. The boisterous rowing of his youth is also seen as a kind of disrespect for the mystic powers of the element which hides its secrets in partial revelations or produces a new creation in its reflections. It presides with remote silence over his boat-stealing adventure:

> I struck, and struck again,
> And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
> Rose up between me and the stars, and still

> With measured motion, like a living thing
> Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned
> And through the silent water stole my way
> Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.
>
> (I. 408-14)

The huge cliff, instead of the wind, becomes the personified figure to instruct Wordsworth. The whole scene occurs on water; as Lindenberger points out, it is one signal to invite the reader to come into Wordsworth's universe. "The silent water" is quietly observing what Wordsworth has done.

We also have to study the working of another key image—island. The implication of the image of an island is ambiguous: it could be transcendental, positively, and it could be isolated, negatively. Lindenberger has his viewpoint:

> One could speak of a tendency throughout *The Prelude* to isolate objects in order to connect them later at a deeper level: islands, whether real or figurative, are places which cut you off so that these connections may be made.[24]

Lindenberger considers "islands" devices of connections to a deeper level. He points out that "islands" creates a certain "emptiness":

> In a work like *The Prelude*, which constantly mediates between inner and outer worlds, emptiness becomes an image of transition, the vision itself a type of island. Wordsworth's designation of his visionary moments as "spots of time" (XI, 258) is, in fact a geographical metaphor which suggests the island-like qualities of these moments.[25]

"Emptiness" becomes the device of "transition." Lindenberger thinks that Wordsworth's famous scenes of "spots of time" contain this kind of quality, such as, Crossing the Alps, The climbing of Snowdon, and so on.

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[24] Lindenberger 653.
[25] Lindenberger 654.

He also indicates that the "floating island" in Book Eighth, 92-101 is the "idyllic domain" for Wordsworth.[26] The image of an island successfully creates a peaceful and isolated atmosphere in which Wordsworth could mediate "between inner and outer worlds."

We must point out there is also a scene of "a floating island" in Book III:

> Rotted as by a charm, my life became
> A floating island, an amphibious thing,
> Unsound, of spungy texture, yet withal
> Not wanting a fair face of water-weeds
> And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise,
> A reverence for the glorious dead, the sight
> Of those long vistos, catacombs in which
> Perennial minds lie visibly entombed,
> Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred
> A fervent love of rigorous discipline.
> Alas, such high commotion touched not me....
> (III. 339-49)

Here, the image of an island doesn't function properly, as Lindenberger points out. It is a student's negative feeling about his academic life. The island fails to become the device of transition. The adjective, "floating," brings out more about the sense of "rootlessness" than "emptiness."

Cavern is also an important image which offers ambiguous meanings:

> Unlike the wind, water, and mountains, which dominate the poem's scenic background, the cavern functions chiefly as a metaphor, in fact, a literally submerged metaphor, one which we sense but dimly through the unnamed (and unnamable) depths and under-agents which Wordsworth has such

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[26] Linderberger 651-3.

frequent occasion to invoke.[27]

On the whole the "message" of the "spots of time" passage, that they show the pre-eminence of the mind as "lord and master" of the elements is equivocal, as is his assertion of the powers of superior minds in the last book of *The Prelude*. The two indubitable "spots of time" show loss of self in absorption of an ominous spectacle and disappointment of his hopes of pleasure by death. The Snowdon vision locates imagination in a chasm similar to that of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" with similar unsettling and disorienting effects:

> At distance not the third part of a mile
> Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
> A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which
> Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
> Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
> The universal spectacle throughout
> Was shaped for admiration and delight,
> Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged
> The soul, the imagination of the whole.
>
> (XIII. 55-66)

It seems that the achievement of the transcendent Poetic imagination is not so secure as Wordsworth asserts. The "blue chasm," being a metaphor, provides multi-meanings for readers to interpret. The presentation of water images is not so peaceful as usual Wordsworthian images. The water image is violent and noisy, but powerful and vital. This "blue chasm" becomes the metaphor for Wordsworth's imagination, no "home" but a place of ceaseless motion and confluence.

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[27] Lindenberger 656.

These images are certainly important as they utilise the literary and cultural tradition in recognisable ways, yet they are always liable to transformation and ambiguity, just as the cultural tradition stores ambiguity in these "archetypes." Wordsworth uses different associations of the sea, for instance. In the dream of Book V it is an image of obliteration, the deluge. In the Simplon Pass episode the deluge is apocalyptic and fertilising. The skating episode shows earth "Work like a sea" (I. 500) under the influence of danger and desire, while Newton's mind explores strange seas of thought (1850, III. 64). Like the usurping sea of mist in the Snowdon episode, the image is often associated with the imagination but evokes ideas of destruction, uncertainty, mystery and ceaseless change, as well as the still and tranquil presence of Nature. It is important to the public nature of his poetry that the symbolic language or "code" is a shared one, testifying to a collective use of imagination, rather than an idiosyncratic personal system of associations, but it is equally important that images are malleable and subject to the workings of individual imagination. Like the stone and cloud of "Resolution and Independence," Wordsworth exploits common associations for uncommon purposes, giving, as Hazilitt commented, a new view of nature, yet one which seemed to display its "inherent truth and beauty."[28]

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[28] William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets / The Spirit of the Age: Or Contemporary Portraits*, introd. Catherine Macdonald Maclean (London: Everyman's Library, 1967) 253.

Chapter 3 Childhood

As we know, there is more than one version of *The Prelude*. To some critics, like Raymond Dexter Havens, the1850 version, published posthumously, is the best and most polished version of *The Prelude*. After Ernest de Selincourt printed Wordsworth's manuscript of 1805, this version occupied readers' minds in Britain because it is a product of the young Wordsworth. Jonathan Wordsworth also points out that if Wordsworth had published the 1805 version soon after he finished it, he would have been making a decided bid for fame in following the long poem tradition which few poets attempted.[1] Jonathan Wordsworth, with Stephen Gill, published "The Two-Part *Prelude* of 1798-99" which is considered as a masterpiece in itself, not just merely one version of *The Prelude*. There are also many associated manuscripts. Wordsworth continuously revised his own work; "revisions" become a major feature of *The Prelude* and could correspond to Wordsworth's own description: "The Growth of a Poet's Mind."

The revisions of *The Prelude*, presenting the instablity of the author's intention, bring out the problems of the text itself. In fact, we cannot totally realise the changing processes of the author's intention; the revisions of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* make the conflicts and problems of the text, especially the autobiographic writing, more easily observed. None of the versions of *The Prelude* was published by Wordsworth's own

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[1] Jonathan Wordsworth, "Revision as Making: *The Prelude* and Its Peers," *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 21.

will; even the title was not determined by his own decision. The text stands alone, but it is a text of different layers. Though we are able to find the "sameness," which might be called "the intention of the text" and a "revising intention" in different versions of *The Prelude*, each version is still a poem itself. It is impossible to deal with *The Preludes*; rather, I will focus only on *The Prelude* of 1805. I focus on the "I," the narrator Wordsworth, and the hero Wordsworth, rather than the poet Wordsworth himself. The poet Wordsworth's organising difficulty in *The Prelude* seems to be dramatised in the narrator Wordsworth's difficulties in organising his self-presentation in the poem.

Susan Wolfson deals with some of the difficulties from the point of view of the revising poet but simultaneously envisages *The Prelude* as a "disseminated text." Other critics have dealt with the revisions from the point of view of both the poet Wordsworth and the narrator Wordsworth, sometimes confusing the two. As Wolfson observes, some details of the "drowned man" episode, like the transition within a line from anticipation to knowledge of the death, were retained in moving it from its position in the 1798 version but with an:

> emphatic "re-vision" of how to form this episode in his story of a poet's mind. And with this revision comes a host of related alterations: tinkerings with syntax and punctuation, recastings of metaphor and invocation, expansions or elisions of narrative detail, as well as important rearrangements of the preliminary context. The effort to secure "perfect form" is never secure from the pressure of "second thoughts." All these reworkings, in both the text and context, involve uncertainties about the story of the poem as a whole, for some revisions support, while other

> contradict, or even subvert its plot.[2]

Wolfson, expanding Barthes' idea of a "disseminated" text offered to the interpretation of the reader, would cast Wordsworth as the first creative reader of his text, developing the hints of a former text and suppressing others. Other critics would see as the motive of revision the changing author's sense of his past and the creative work of memory as it plots progress towards changing goals. For Jonathan Wordsworth the revisions chart the process of Wordsworth looking back on a continually receding youth to draw power from it. John Williams points out that

> Hartman reminds us of the way historicist critics call attention to the hesitancy of Wordsworth's progress, to the 'phantom voice' that the poet seeks to emulate, to the way in which he consequently seems to totter on the edge of an abyss, and to the way he has recourse to allusion, creating an egocentric myth in order to achieve progress (a 'stumblingly progressive form'.)[3]

But many critics also seem to share Wolfson's idea that the revisionary nature of *The Prelude* is produced by the aesthetic task of making and re-making a "text" rather than—or as well as—fiddling with his own past. Jonathan Arac maintains that "he did not merely recollect a younger self writing, he repeated that writing and made it different."[4] Even Jonathan Wordsworth, whose approach is mainly biographical, uses aesthetic criteria to explain the moving of the "spots of time" passage:

> His decision to move the 'spots of time' from Part (or Book)

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[2] Susan J. Wolfson, *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 108-9.

[3] John Williams, *William Wordsworth* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002) 153.

[4] Jonathan Arac, "Bounding Lines: *The Prelude* and Critical Revision," *Post-structuralist Readings of English Poetry*, ed. Richard Marchin and Christopher Norris (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 235.

> I of 1799 to the end of the new version can be seen in different ways. Reworking the sequence as it stood in MS V, Wordsworth was no doubt impressed by its power, and aware that a longer poem would need a strong conclusion.[5]

Soheil Ahmed puts the question most forcefully when considering the passages on Paris after the September massacres (1850; X. 78-93):

> When Wordsworth made these revisions...for the 1850 version did he think he was recollecting a reverie in such detail? Or did he feel he was embellishing a literary text? Or both?[6]

Ahmed draws attention to various discrepancies and describes them as the "I" losing control—and it is a moot point whether that "I" is the author and writer Wordsworth or the narrator Wordsworth:

> In *The Prelude* there is a kind of opaque transparency which occurs when the "I" that speaks relinquishes its supervisory control momentarily and encounters itself in that uncertain zone in the interstices of the narrative...The difficulties of storytelling are the same as those of maintaining the integrity of the "I" in the face of narrative contingencies that challenge its authority, even as they determine it. Wordsworth's encounter with this paradoxical feeling is evident in his conscious problematisation of the order of events distorted, he says, by the very narrative entrusted with giving an account of his crucial development from priest of nature to humanitarian liberal. The attempt to rectify this narrative betrayal finds its expression in the rhetoric of

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[5] Jonathan Wordsworth, "Revision as Making: *The Prelude* and Its Peers," *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 34.

[6] Soheil Ahmed, "Textual Revision and the Historicity of the Self: Some Factual Inaccuracies in *The Prelude*," *Romanticism on the Net* 28 (November 2002):15 pp, online, internet, 17 March 2004.

> perceived discrepancy noted in "though thus I speak/ [...] which might almost seem/ [...] that this was really so."[7]

Is it Wordsworth the narrator who does not have control over the discrepancies thrown up in "narrative contingency" or Wordsworth the writer, the "humanitarian liberal," who is trying to paper over the cracks with "the rhetoric of perceived discrepancy"?

History and biography—in the imposingly definite and factual meanings these terms convey—will always haunt an autobiographical work like *The Prelude*. But if we take Wordsworth the author as dramatising, through Wordsworth the narrator, the process of constructing both, we might find that admissions of discrepancy are more than "rhetoric." The image of Wordsworth as director in the cutting room, making filmic sense out of the rushes shot on different occasions, is an apt one. But I would maintain that this is echoed in the processes of the narrator Wordsworth. The strips left on the cutting-room floor (not that Wordsworth abandoned much!), which correspond to the manuscript passages not used or cut, might tell different stories or point to potential stories which are actually hinted at in the finished—or last provisional—version. The revisions might point to particular suppressions and manipulations which are not overtly seen in this last version, but the process of "suppression" or manipulation is, I would maintain, overt.

Wolfson, for instance, speculates on the reasons for the

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[7] Soheil Ahmed, "Textual Revision and the Historicity of the Self: Some Factual Inaccuracies in *The Prelude*," *Romanticism on the Net* 28 (November 2002):15 pp, online, internet, 17 March 2004.

re-positioning of the episode of the drowned man:

> Each revision makes it later and thus more proximate to a major crisis—his mother's death and his consequent removal from the vale of his early years to the vale of the Hawkshead Grammar school. The actual drowning occurred in June 1779, a month after he entered this school, two months after his ninth birthday, and so on the cusp of his tenth summer—a year and three months after his mother's death in March 1778. In the 1799 text, Wordsworth dates the drowning "Ere I had seen / Eight summers"—that is, at the start of summer 1777 (his eighth) and several months *before* his mother died. In this aspect, the memory of the drowned man usurps and replaces the memory of her death, or, in the retrospect of twenty years, figures as its obscure anticipation. Then, in Book 5, Wordsworth says he was "not *nine* years old"—dating the drowning after his eighth birthday in April 1778, and thus just a few months after his mother's death.[8]

Wolfson brings biographical facts to bear on the textual changes and repositioning of the passage from the *Two-Book Prelude*, where it immediately precedes the "spots of time" section, to the other versions. She finds in it a "screen memory" of the death of Wordsworth's mother and its repositioning in Book V "implicates books with death."[9] While acknowledging the subtlety of Wolfson's complex argument that finds death in the quasi-maternal lake and grievances against nature, I would suggest that the later context itself displays the discrepancies of effect she points to. Wolfson observes that, "the productivity of Wordsworth's revisions is such that even what he denies many become more explicit"[10] when the image of the drowned man refuses to be turned into "a literary

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[8] Wolfson 113.
[9] Wolfson 113.
[10] Wolfson 123.

figure, tempering and derealizing its life in the mind."[11] The starkness and horror of its depiction is, as Wolfson notes, intensified in the revised version:

> At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
> Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
> Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape
> Of terror....
>
> (1850; V. 448-51)

Wolfson's valuable research shows us that there are indeed other stories to be told, but that they are still potentially present in the later version. Her conclusion is that:

> throughout, the poem's most powerful moments of imagination, from earliest drafts to late revisions, are triggered by recollections that defeat control by imagination and containment by poetic form: moments of shock, mischance, chance, and surprise that "plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination," and yet threaten the possibility of coherent self-knowledge.[12]

Again it is left uncertain how far Wordsworth was conscious of the self-deconstructive nature of his writing. Does he "show" these suppressions and manipulations in the sense of displaying them openly to the reader, or is this an unconscious or half-conscious display which the modern reader can interpret in the light of his/her "best conjecture" theories. I think Wolfson leaves this open in her use of another ambiguous term, "stage": "Long before de Man articulated the negativity behind language, Wordsworth staged as much in passages such as this

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[11] Wolfson 112.

[12] Wolfson 118. The phrase in quotation is Wordsworth's own comment on "There was a Boy" in the Preface of *Poetical Works* (1815).

"mastery of death."[13]

While, then, recognising that *The Prelude* exists, like films, in many versions, I restrict my study to the 1805 text on grounds of availability and recent common practice. It is within this text that I propose to show Wordsworth the narrator displaying the potentiality for "different stories" within material which a poetic purpose seeks to organise, thus dramatising the poetic process and problematising the status of "images" when subjected to this process. In referring to "moments of shock, mischance, chance and surprise" that "threaten the possibility of coherent self-knowledge," Wolfson is glancing particularly at the "spots of time" passage itself. This is introduced in the 1799 version by a reference to their "fructifying" virtue (I. 290) and power to raise the mind when it is "depressed" by immersion in quotidian trivialities. In 1805 this is expanded to include a more exalted enhancement of pleasure and a "feeling" that the mind is "lord and master" over outward sense (1805, XI. 270). In 1805 the feeling has become "profoundest knowledge" (1850, XII. 221), but it is more cautiously delimited as "to what point and how" this mastery is achieved. The two "spots of time" which these introductions precede are perhaps the most recalcitrant of all the recollected images in *The Prelude* in yielding a univocal meaning. In autobiographical terms they might illustrate the lines of the 1799 *Prelude* omitted in future versions: "images to which in following years / Far other feelings were attached" (1799, I. 284-5). In artistic terms they testify to the struggles of the immediate task of making the poem and

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[13] Wolfson 131.

point to the tension between the images and the organising structure. I shall be concentrating on different ways in which this tension is evidenced in images and their ordering.

Glad Animal Movements

The main "discrepancy" or tension in the depiction of childhood is in the "foreground/background" reversal noted by David S. Miall, which I have attributed to the intrusion of a different viewpoint, that of the narrator Wordsworth.[14] Although this intrusion is not always overt, it is usually marked by a transition from images appealing to the "appetitive" eye of childhood to images that yield insight into the relationship of man and nature that appeal to the "intellectual eye" of maturity. The development is clearly spelled out in "Tintern Abbey."

The narrator Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" tries to distinguish the difference between Wordsworth of 1793, the past young self, and Wordsworth of 1798, the present mature self. The earlier Wordsworth is memorably described:

> like a roe
> I bounded o'er mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Whenever nature led; more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads, than one
> Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by,)

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[14] See above Chapter 2, p.84-7.

To me was all in all.

(68-76)

The energetic "roe," the wild creature in Nature, is the leading image. Young Wordsworth demonstrates his "glad animal movements" among the landscapes of Nature. Though young Wordsworth does express his awe towards Nature, he is still one primitive element of Nature. We can hardly imagine how, in just five years, Wordsworth mysteriously becomes a new mature self. The mature Wordsworth, the narrator, finds peacefulness and harmony in Nature—Nature welcomes him with "the quiet of the sky" (8). No longer alive with active images, the serene landscape becomes a "seclusion" (7) to him. He identifies Nature, again, as "The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being" (110-2).

James Benziger suggests that the "eye" produces the harmony of the mature Wordsworth:

> the memories of the Wye had produced a *tranquil restoration*; the sight of nature impresses the soul with *quietness and beauty*; and, in preparation for the soul's seeing into the life of things, the eye is made *quiet* by the power of harmony. And this pacifying harmony is itself mute, of sights rather than sounds. (It was the opinion of Socrates the eye was the most piercing of senses, the most able to perceive harmonious images of the One.) In short, the soul's goal must be the peace which passeth understanding, even as the landscape's culmination is the 'quiet of the sky'[15].

The eye plays a major part for the young Wordsworth, but it is not the "eye" of soul—at least, not in the past where it is an "appetite" (81).

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[15] James Benziger, "'Tintern Abbey' Revisited," *Wordsworth: Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Alun R. Jones and William Tydeman (London: Macmillan, 1979) 238-9.

The appetitive eye superficially devours the landscape of Nature, but the young Wordsworth does not understand the deeper level of Nature. This dramatising younger eye looks for the "sensational" in sublime landscapes. The eye does play a major part for the mature Wordsworth to find his transcendence in Nature too, but he also starts to "listen":

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused....
> (89-97)

The eye of the mature Wordsworth is made "quiet", but he can see into "the life of things" (49) now. He is still a lover of the landscape of Nature, but he feels the deeper power of Nature. Thus, Nature becomes a new "mighty world" (106). The "feeling" with which the young Wordsworth responded to Nature is of a different quality from his mature feeling. He certainly felt, and felt acutely "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" (85-6). But he presents these feelings as "impressed" by natural appearances on the eye: they are "borrowed." He seems to be taking Burke's notion that sublime "things" take the mind by storm and do not pass through the reason. The "self" is submitted to them, having no control over and drawing no considered conclusions from the stimuli of basic instincts. Hence their oxymoronic formulation and the suggestion of abduction in "rapture." But images, "forms of beauty" as well as the sublime may, in the mature mind, raise other "sensations

sweet" which, in "passing even into my purer mind" (30), yield permanent moral profit and knowledge.

There is a gap in Wordsworth's knowledge of himself in his description of his younger days, an inability to describe what he was then, when the self was carried out of itself by "physical" rapture. Another gap also occurs in the narrative of self as he cannot describe himself then from the standpoint of the present, nor describe how he progressed from the indescribable self to the describable self. He can only analyse the processes of the describable self as if they had evolved:

> I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite: a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, or any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.
> (76-84)

Tenses make the gap obvious—the narrator Wordsworth uses the present tense for his narrative, and the past tense for his past experience. Frances Ferguson takes this as a kind of "comparison" of memory:

> 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.[16]

The Wordsworth here means "the narrator Wordsworth"; he brings back

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[16] Frances Ferguson, "Romantic Memory," *Studies in Romanticism* 35.4 (1996): 525.

his memory, for the reader and himself, to search for something he ignored before. The boy Wordsworth may have the rough ideas of certain scenes, but he concentrated too much on his activities; it is the narrator Wordsworth who finds out the meaning or the sublime in those moments.

On the face of it, this approach ignores the incapacity of "I cannot paint" and looks towards the technique of *The Prelude* for recovering the past, but Ferguson recognises that there are gaps to be sutured:

> On 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.[17]

A gap is in the narrative of self, patched up with reinterpreted memories—Wordsworth could store up images and go back and find new meaning in them. This kind of tendency is obvious in the spots of time episodes—certain images become immortal (the sky seemed "not a sky of earth", the rising crag "instinct with life," and so on) for Wordsworth to go back and infer new meanings in them and they could be basic images for readers to cling to in making their versions of Wordsworth's stories.

The tension appears in the difference of the images involved. The images of childhood experience are of "glad animal movements," associated with action, an unthinking ecstasy of physicality. The images of the "spots of time," however, are always static, passive and

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[17] Ferguson 525.

appreciative. They invite a "deep" reading of their symbolic language, insight rather than sight. There is some discrepancy in the nature of these memories. The recall of a vivid episode, accompanied with equally vivid recall of accompanying circumstances, is characteristic of what are called "flashbulb memories." Dr. Daniel L. Schacter, the author of *Searching for Memory*, describes his own flashbulb memory of the JFK assassination:

> I do not remember much of what happened just before or after the stunning announcement, but an image of the moment when I first learned the news has remained fixed in my mind for over thirty years. For many of us, the memory of that November afternoon in 1963 feels as though it has been frozen forever in photographic form, unaffected by the ravages of time that erode and degrade most other memories.[18]

These are typically of world-important events, like 9/11 or the assassination of President Kennedy. Even the flashbulb memories of an individual life usually concern events that are important to more than the subject and/or are communicated to others at the time. Communication helps to solidify the memories of surrounding circumstances (even when such memories are proved wrong). The unusual things about Wordsworth's "spots of time" are that they are totally private and are not associated with actions important to others as well. They are, however, "frozen" and exist in Wordsworth's memory in "photographic form," with the same kind of apparently minutely remembered circumstances.

The "spots of time" exist in Wordsworth's mind like flashbulb

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[18] "Flashbulb Memories-Where Were You Then?" *Memory Expansion Channel*, online, brainchannels.com, internet, 9 November 2004.

memories; the images are imprinted by Nature in a certain way:

> Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
> How Nature by extrinsic passion first
> Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand
> And made me love them....
> (I. 571-4)

Especially when the boy Wordsworth's focus is on his physical activities, he does, apparently unconsciously, notice things that appear, in the form of images in Nature:

> Thus often in those fits of vulgar joy
> Which through all seasons on a child's pursuits
> Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
> Which like a tempest works along the blood
> And is forgotten, even then I felt
> Gleams like the flashing of a shield.
> (I. 609-14)

Unconsciously, the images are imprinted in the boy Wordsworth's mind and become things which brew in his memory for new interpretations in the future. When these images are recollected, they appear to be powerful—they are "gleams like the flashing of a shield." Nature wants to inspire the boy Wordsworth with different images, but they are "lifeless" (I. 622) because he does not understand what Nature wants to speak to him in the beginning. Only in "maturer seasons" (I. 623), will the images finally be able to "impregnate and to elevate the mind" (I. 624).

While confronting the famous passages, the "spots of time," in *The Prelude*, the most questionable point is how to define them? The common sense of "spots of time" is as John Bishop describes. Narrowly speaking, they "are the two incidents introduced by Wordsworth's own

use of the phrase."[19] But:

> Using the phrase in a looser sense, the 'spots of time' must include the descriptions of Wordsworth's boyhood exploits as a snarer of woodcocks, a plunderer of birds nests, a skater, a rider of horses, and such single events as the famous Stolen Boat episode, the Dedication to poetry, the Discharged Soldier, the Dream of the Arab-Quixote, the memory of the Winander Boy, the Drowned Man, Entering London, the Father and Child and the Blind Beggar, Simplon Pass, The Night in Paris, Robespierre's Death, and Snowdon. Some would wish to include the memories of childhood play at Cockermouth, and the moment under the rock when Wordsworth heard 'The ghostly language of the ancient earth' (II 309), or such border-line cases as the Druid Reverie.[20]

Most readers follow the looser sense of the "spots of time," but, as Bishop suggests, how "loose" is the definition? What are the common elements they share? In the Childhood section, they are usually introduced as an evocation of one particular time, sometimes indicated by "one day" as in the boat-stealing episode. Bird-nesting and skating and other repeated activities are presented as one remembered episode. In some, especially the "one-off" experiences, considerable circumstantial detailed is given. In others, like the bird-nesting, one moment is captured. The moment, a sublime feeling of nature's powers, can be sublime in Burke's sense of the terrifying awareness of obscure and mighty forces threatening the self or it can be an exaltation when the boy seems to share the "going-on of the Universe." It can even be a moment

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[19] Jonathan Bishop, "Wordsworth and the 'Spots of Time'," *Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. W. J. Harvey and Richard Gravil (London: Macmillan, 1972) 134.

[20] Bishop 134-5.

of quiet contemplation of a scene where human and natural life intermingle. This moment of sublime feeling enters into most of the recollected moments and in the "looser sense" seems to qualify them as "spots of time," and paradigmatic in terms of our earlier analysis. But if this one transcendent moment is the "centre," what of the syntagmatic circumstances that surround them and make them possible, what we might call the "narrative contingencies" in Ahmed's phrase?

Motion is a basic component of the episodes; as Bishop notes: "Motion often means climbing, the ascent of a road or crag or mountain, and when the protagonist himself does not rise, another participant in the experience may."[21] No matter what are the "ends" or "centres" of Wordsworth's episodes, the physical situation, the boyish "fun" comes first—whether it is moral or not. The boy Wordsworth is enjoying his fun in being a "snarer," "plunderer," "skater" and "rider"; learning the deeper meanings of the episodes is for the adult Wordsworth.

According to Bishop, these episodes are related to animals, which could represent "vitality", too; he takes "horses" as an example:

> Horses are especially prominent; they appear more or less importantly in Entering London, Robespierre's Death, The Dream (in the form of a dromedary), and the Gibbet and Waiting for Horses. Perhaps we are closest to the meaning horses have for Wordsworth in his recollection of mounted expeditions to the seashore, when 'Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea / We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand' (II 136-37).[22]

Bishop uses the 1850 version in which the "vitality" he exalts is actually

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[21] Bishop 135.
[22] Bishop 136.

governed by the riders: they are "proud to curb, / And eager to spur on, the galloping steed" (II. 96-7); the focus is more on "control." In the 1805 version, by contrast, the focus is more directly on the sensuous/ sensual experience—"To feel the motion of the galloping steed" (1805, II. 103). Though pride might be a feature of certain episodes like rowing the stolen boat, the 1850 version adds a sense of mastery that is absent from the 1805 version. But again in that "discrepant" way we have noted, the meaning of the lines Bishop quotes is latent in their evocation of a centaur-like union of man and animal.

The beginning of the St Mary's Abbey episode is full of boyish fun and love of dangerous activity. The only purpose for boy Wordsworth is riding horses; he does not really plan to visit the ruined abbey for itself, it is the boys' goal only, chosen, maybe, only because it will take them beyond the limits chosen by any cautious man, and beyond those fixed by the horses' owner. The building merely becomes the background of their activities. Through the years, perhaps, the images of the ruined abbey brewed in Wordsworth's memory and became things he might interpret or edit in different ways. Hence, the images have the potential to tell new stories in Wordsworth's different *Preludes*, and to disturb the univocal emphasis of each individual version.

The first scene directly describes St Mary Abbey:

> A structure famed
> Beyond its neighbourhood, the antique walls
> Of that large abbey which within the Vale
> Of Nightshade, to St Mary's honour built,
> Stands yet, a mouldering pile with fractured arch,
> Belfry, and images, and living trees—

A holy scene.

(II. 108-14)

The boy Wordsworth's experience was described in past tense, but the narrator Wordsworth intrudes into his boyhood experience by using the present tense to introduce the ruined abbey. The ruined building stands out as a "holy" image. For the boy Wordsworth, the abbey is the background of their activity; for adult Wordsworth, it is the foreground and a divine image in his memory; the boy Wordsworth's activity is the background.

Don H. Bialostosky points out Wordsworth uses this narrative technique in many of his works:

> Present tense may also be used to include the reader in an immediate experience of the speaker's, only to distance him from the experience with a shift to past tense, as in the beginnings of "Old Man Travelling" or "Resolution and Independence," or *The Prelude*. Wordsworth's tense shifts frequently function in these ways, almost always implying some change in the relations among speaker, hero and listener.[23]

The narrator Wordsworth does use the present tense to speak to the readers and invite them to share his past experiences. The St Mary's Abbey episode is presented in this way—the narrator Wordsworth uses past tense to describe boy Wordsworth's activities, he guides the reader with present tense towards a deeper understanding:

> To more than inland peace
> Left by the sea-wind passing overhead
> (Though wind of roughest temper) trees and towers
> May in that valley oftentimes be seen
> Both silent and both motionless alike,

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[23] Don H. Bialostosky, *Making Tales: The Poetics of Wordsworth's Narrative Experiments* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1984) 62.

> Such is the shelter that is there, and such
> The safeguard for repose and quietness.
>
> (II. 115-21)

The present tense explicitly brings out the narrator Wordsworth's new understanding and observation which the boy Wordsworth ignores. This is the gap in the narrative.

More than just tense alters the relationship between narrator and reader. Past tense, after all, may cover a lot of times. The deictics, the "markers" of time, place and person, may shift. This movement may be unobtrusive when the "naturalizing" processes of reading are invoked but is more evident if we respond to the visuality of the text. Looking at the cinematic quality of *The Prelude*, we can make a movie of the following scenes in the episode:

> Our steeds remounted, and the summons given,
> With whip and spur we by the chauntry flew
> In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
> And the stone abbot, and that single wren
> Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
> Of the old church that, though from recent showers
> The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint
> Internal breezes—sobbings of the place
> And respirations—from the roofless walls
> The shuddering ivy dripped large drops, yet still
> So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
> Sang to itself that there I could have made
> My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
> To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
> And down the valley, and, a circuit made
> In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
> We scampered homeward.
>
> (II. 122-38)

We have a long shot in which we can see the boys and their horses and St Mary's Abbey. The beginning of this passage shows boy Wordsworth's

commotion in shared competition. The boy Wordsworth does know the ruined building is there, but he doesn't really stop to observe what is going on there. There is a striking contrast between the boys and the abbey: the boys' vigorous movement and the abbey's peaceful solitude. Then, as we move the camera closer, we are still observing the boys' activity. They are whipping and spurring their horses, ignoring the "chauntry" they fly by. The "chauntry," the "cross-legged knight" and the "stone abbot" successively come into shot and out of it as they are passed. The boys then seem to ride out of the frame, leaving a perceiving consciousness behind.

The "single wren" is merely there, like any other marker of the horsemen's course, but the camera dwells on it, leaving the boys—and the young Wordsworth—to continue their race unconscious of it. In fact we might doubt whether they had leisure to attend to it. Although the succeeding passage is in the past tense it is clearly not the shared experience of the young Wordsworth on that particular occasion. Voiced over by an indeterminate Wordsworth, the "film" floats free of any shot/reverse shot source when even the wren becomes invisible and the sensuous images of sound as well as sight combine in highly poetic evocation of the life of nature and the living "respiration" of the abbey itself. Guided by close-ups—the "nave" and "ivy"—we mysteriously enter into narrator Wordsworth's memory of the abbey. The sweet song of the wren becomes the haunted theme of the abbey.

The ruined building is a key symbol, which is in contrast to another key symbol, "horses." The horses could represent the boy's "glad animal movement" and the abbey could represent the "sublimity" of time.

The two selected passages which we discussed above about the abbey, are all narrated in the present tense with much poetic inversion and heightened language. This technique distinguishes the abbey's lingering sublimity which is different from shallow "glad animal movement" of the past. The metaphor of the abbey is built up by the metonymic close-ups of the antique "walls," "belfry," "towers," "chauntry," "cross-legged knight" and "stone abbot." Though they could come out as whole in filmic shots, the metonymies tell their own stories of ancient, quiet worship, which reinforces the reverent mood of the passage. But the cross-legged knight introduces the theme of violence (also on horseback) and the insistence on the stony nature of the abbot perhaps hints at an inhumanly rigid discipline. The walls, an equally restrictive image of seclusion, are made more "natural" in their decay, and support the living ivy. The interior of the abbey puts man-made elements and natural elements together—the personified abbey becomes a "being" with human feeling and natural power. The sound image, the sweet song of the "invisible" wren, reinforces the power of this scene with music; the narrator Wordsworth claims that the abbey is his "dwelling place;" he would "lived forever there / To hear such music." The narrator does not directly tell us what his findings about the images of the abbey are; they become open images which welcome reader's interpretations to fill in the gap of the narrative and thus complete the process of reading. But in this gap of signification—what does the abbey mean to him?—simple identifications with Christian worship, seclusion and tranquillity are modified by other implications that the abbey does not completely contradict the values of free, dangerous activity.

Transgression is a basic element of many spots of time. In those episodes, the paradigm is one in which a young transgressor, who was driven by his own curiosity, goes for adventures; then the adult narrator highlights the thoughts and feelings provoked by his past memory. Those intentions of transgression strengthen the adult Wordsworth's memory, strong enough for him to go back again and again, for something more sublime. The adult narrator finds, not only the impressions of a frightened child, but also the mysteries of Nature and Life. Those "inglorious" and "ignoble" deeds bring him the revelations of Nature—Nature inspires him by personified images. In the bird-stealing episode, "low breathings" (I. 330) and "steps" stand out; in the bird-nesting, the "strange utterance" (I. 348) and "the sky seemed not a sky / Of earth" (I. 349-50). In fact, even the narrator Wordsworth does not explain what he really learns—he merely presents the lingering images—but the later Wordsworth's doctrine of the interaction of man and Nature stands ready to guide interpretation.

Transgression is most obvious in the stolen boat episode. This episode is narrated by the narrator Wordsworth consistently in the past tense, like the narration in the bird-stealing episode and the bird-nesting episode. Though the boy Wordsworth knows that "It was an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure" (I. 388-9), the narrator Wordsworth suggests that he is led by Nature at that time. But the narrator Wordsworth does not really tell us how Nature leads him to steal a boat. This gap or absence in the story is really quite important: How can Nature impel him to acts which nature seems afterwards to rebuke? He completely ignores the reason after he is rowing the boat. He enjoys his

sport very much until:

> from behind that craggy steep, till then
> The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
> As if with voluntary power instinct,
> Up reared its head. I struck, and struck again,
> And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
> Rose up between me and the stars, and still
> With measured motions, like a living thing
> Strode after me.
>
> (I. 405-12)

The image of "the huge cliff" suddenly comes alive as a shocking form which frightened the boy Wordsworth and he feels that he has to return the boat. Certain images, becoming "a dim and undetermined sense / Of unknown modes of being" (I. 419-20), are "frozen" in narrator Wordsworth's memory and turn from the background to the foreground of his sublime experience:

> no familiar shapes
> Of hourly objects, images of trees
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
> But huge and mighty forms that do not live
> Like living men moved slowly through my mind
> By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.
>
> (I. 421-6)

The lingering images become indistinct and vague. They lose their colours, no longer the beautiful landscapes around the lake; they exist as images on the negatives, or in the form of a black and white movie. The narrator Wordsworth cannot tell what the scenery beside the lake is really like; only the horrifying and haunting images from "another world" linger in his memory.

We also have to notice the element of "pride" in the spots of time episodes. To the boy Wordsworth, Nature is only the background of his

activity and he is involved too much in it, as we discussed in analysing the St Mary's Abbey episode. In the stolen boat and skating episodes, a boy's pride is the leading element too. Nature is the collateral and ignored background for the boy Wordsworth, but not for the adult Wordsworth. For adult Wordsworth, Nature becomes the memorable foreground which is built by the lingering images in his mind and starts to tell him new stories, or teach him new lessons, when he grows up. Natural images, surpassing the superficial boyish sport and physical fun, turn out to be the monumental signifiers of the spots of time.

The early episodes, in the first two books, involve "glad animal movements": the skating episode is no exception. The boy Wordsworth is enjoying his skating: "I wheeled about / Proud and exulting, like an untired horse" (I. 458-9). Even at this kind of moment, Nature never fails to imprint images in his mind:

> With the din
> Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud;
> The leafless trees and every icy crag
> Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
> Into the tumult sent an alien sound
> Of melancholy, not unnoticed; while the stars,
> Eastward, were sparking clear, and in the west
> The orange sky of evening died away.
> (I. 466-73)

Once again, in the "riotous" boy's activity, Nature occupies the boy Wordsworth's mind in certain way. At first, the din, a confused but vital echo of his activity, fills his senses, accompanied by clear and distinct images of "leafless trees" and every "icy crag." Then, a contrasting alien note of melancholy is apparently produced by hills which are far from the scene. The tranquil images, such as the "stars" and the "orange

sky of evening," surpassing the superficial fun of sport, stand out in the episode and become an immortal scene in Wordsworth's spots of time. The phrase "not unnoticed" creates an ambiguity in the marker of person. Who is noticing? The markers of time (e.g. meanwhile, while) imply simultaneity, but I think most readers experience it as a progression from noise and activity to quiet meditation, or indeed from a scene experienced (by the young Wordsworth) to one recollected in tranquillity by the mature poet.

The continuing passage makes this progressive moment more overt as the imaging confuses the boy's motion with that of nature and again comes to rest in more sublime intimations:

> Not seldom from the uproar I retired
> Into a silent bay, or sportively
> Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
> To cut across the image of a star
> That gleamed upon the ice. And oftentimes
> When we had given our bodies to the wind,
> And all the shadowy banks on either side
> Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
> The rapid line of motion, then at once
> Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
> Stopped short—yet still the solitary cliffs
> Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled
> With visible motion her diurnal round.
> Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
> Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
> Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.
> (I. 474-89)

Aggressively, the boy Wordsworth tries "To cut across the image of a star / That gleamed upon the ice." When he is enjoying his skating, he even ignores the beauty of Nature. The image of the star on the ice is one of

Nature's ways to display Her beauty; the boy Wordsworth seems to violently (or we can even say naughtily) assault it with wilful pride. The boy Wordsworth does not realise his harmony with Nature when he gives himself to the wind and sweeps through the banks. He is too much part of her, like the "roe" in "Tintern Abbey," to appreciate her deeper meaning. In his sport, he is in a spinning world of Nature; after he suddenly stops, he still feels that the solitary cliffs are "wheeling" around him. He compares it to the motion of earth's "diurnal" round with the same "unchildlike" word he uses in "A slumber did my spirit seal." At this moment, the boys' activity becomes the background and Nature becomes the foreground and the sense of Nature's life and power seem present to his apprehension. The markers of time are indistinct, "not seldom," and "oftentimes" contrasting with the immediacy of the experience "at once."

In this episode Wordsworth has used the natural effects of the certain spinning motion on the senses to convey an illusion that is more like a vision, deepening the sense of revelation with sublime defamiliarisation. The hills seem to process in unbroken succession (Burkean feature of the Sublime) and their hypnotic, dreamlike motion finds its resting place in the dreamless sleep. Again a "natural" progression from dreams to sound sleep emphasises the naturalness of what is conveyed as an intimation of nature's powers. The movement from clear and distinct images to "poetic" imaginative vision provides another illustration of the "natural" workings of the imagination. The clear and distinct images are an essential part of the "spots of time," the universally "objective" nature that is transformed by imagination.

Some images in the spots of time have the quality of "flashbulb memory." Sometimes they could be the products of "false" impressions; sometimes they could be the products of "exaggerated" imagination. The snap-shot of the "moon," "stars," and the "solitary hills," in the bird-stealing episode, construct the basic setting of this episode. In the bird-nesting episode, when the boy Wordsworth hangs on the crag, he clearly remembers the images of "knots of grass" and "half-inch fissures," existing as the forms of "close-ups" in his memory. In the stolen boat episode, each stage of his actions is described in detail, each syntagmatic link in the story following in a linear chain, until the crag refuses to be "bounded" by ordinary rules. The huge cliff, from a clear and distinct image fixed enough to set your course by, becomes a live, growing thing; it is exaggerated in his memory, day by day, and becomes the vague, indescribable nightmare in his dream. He never remembers the real reason why he steals that boat, but he can never forget the haunting image of the huge cliff. Images are the basic elements of Wordsworth's episodes; they make their impression on the reader through a poetic representation of the response of Wordsworth's sensibility. But whether this sensibility is that of the young or mature Wordsworth is sometimes unclear, even when he strives to distinguish between them.

When the narrator perceives his epiphanies in each episode, there is a suspension of ordinary life. The markers of time, place, person are confused, a ground/foreground reversal occurs, and vivid depictions are succeeded by sublime images and intimations.

Solitude is also an important element of Wordsworth's spots of time. The earlier, bird-stealing, bird-nesting, stolen boat episodes, are all

experienced in the atmosphere of solitude. Solitude is important for Wordsworth to achieve the ultimate moment of sublimity, but social elements do appear in some episodes. In the St Mary's Abbey episode and the skating episode, Wordsworth finds his sublimity with his boy companions. Solitude becomes more problematic in the "Minstrel of our troop" episode:

> But ere the fall
> Of night, when in our pinnace we returned
> Over the dusky lake, and to the beach
> Of some small island steered our course, with one,
> The minstrel of our troop, and let him there,
> And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
> Alone upon the rock, oh, then the calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
> Never before so beautiful, sank down
> Into my heart and held me like a dream.
> (II. 170-80)

Wordsworth seems to share the experience with the boys under the influence of the music of a minstrel's flute. It is possible for Wordsworth to achieve sublimity in a social condition without solitude being crucial, and it might be the other boys feel the same way (otherwise why do they seek the experience?). As in the St Mary's Abbey episode, music blends with a natural scene to create a sublime moment.

Throughout the Childhood sections there are indications of a purpose. The long review of rejected themes might prepare us for a Romantic re-working of the epic (more appropriate, perhaps to the twelve-book form) in which the "hero" is the poet himself. It is an attempt to fix the "wavering balance" of his mind and spur him to composition by revisiting the invigorating inspirations of his youth; it will

convey to Coleridge how his "heart was framed" (I. 650-6); it will confirm a strength that can resist all sorrow, especially the failure of Revolutionary hopes (II. 447-62). These point to a depiction that is both a "store" of images, hypostasising the state of "infancy" as a "visible scene on which the sun is shining" (I. 663), and a growth in response which prepares him for his mature poetic mission at the age of seventeen. My analysis has stressed the tendentiousness of these claims and also the way in which the poet admits this tendentiousness and lack of certainty. It might be, he admits, that these wished-for results miscarry and he hopes for the reader's (principally here Coleridge's) pardon for indulging in the charm of "visionary things" (I. 655-9). Even his mature insight into the "one life" of joy is hedged by "If this be error" (II. 435). We have to wait until later in the poem to find that he has already embarked on the composition of poetry, encouraged by his school-master.

My analysis has focused on elements of suturing and imagery in which I find a similar overtness of art. The suturing of the depicted self lacks continuity in the presentation of temporal experiences and displays uncertainties in the "theory" that is supposed to explain growth. Alan Richardson had testified to Wordsworth's success in "creating" the new image of Romantic/Victorian childhood and this could be brought about by the complicated suturing of the reader into the viewpoint of the "I" by the meditation of the later Wordsworth and surrogate readers.[24] The presentation of images is similarly marked by a play of immediacy and mediacy and they are subject to only partial explication. Readers are

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[24] Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 1-43.

likely to look for a moral aspect in they way Wordsworth was "fostered" by fear, yet experiences of transgression serve mostly to display the way that "presences" of nature inhabited his mind. We are not told that he ceased being a "fell destroyer" of birds or a borrower of boats. The experience itself, like that of bird-nesting, seems to be the "end" of this ignoble activity and this end is developed by another consciousness. Again Wordsworth is overt about the obscurity of meaning, in that the soul remembers "how she felt" but not "what" and is also overt in the intrusions which shape the presentation of paradigmatic experiences (especially in the St Mary's Abbey episode.) Wordsworth seems thoroughly aware of Bakhtin's dictum that an action "is actualized only by a consciousness...that takes no part in the action with respect to its purpose and meaning."[25] For Bakhtin aesthetic contemplation, which has nothing to do with ethical or cognitive contemplation, strives to achieve a viewpoint which is other than the hero and "consummates" or completes the hero, including the inner experiences that are sympathetically intuited. Nevertheless it concentrates on the concrete instances of a once-only lived life and is a "task" rather than mere function. Wordsworth's concrete visual images with their wealth of syntagmatic and metonymic detail aesthetically "complete" the hero physically and integrate him with his background initially, yet the development of meaning shows this striving, the to-and-fro from one consciousness to another in the task of producing an image which

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[25] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) 45.

includes its emotional-volitional content. More importantly, Wordsworth engages the reader in this task as a Bakhtinian "co-creator" of the text.[26]

[26] Bakhtin 66.

Chapter 4 Cambridge

I have dealt with the childhood section in some detail. It is the section in which "spots of time" as "flashbacks" or partly-remembered and partly created scenes from early life are most frequently presented and in which the distinction of narrator from experiencer is most evident. I propose to deal with the rest of *The Prelude* by roughly following the chronology of Wordsworth's development, investigating the growing consonance between the two. The discrepancies between the overall plan of the poem and individual sections, between the plan of sections and individual images and presentations of experience, will continue to be the focus of the study.

The life in Cambridge is a new experience for Wordsworth. With exciting expectations, he nevertheless finds that the city is not a place for him because, more than once, he expresses his dissatisfaction. Often, he tries to find a time and place which is similar to the natural world he grew up in. The scenes in the city are not like natural landscapes with a spiritual quality; the activities in the city are not like his childhood sports with visionary revelation. His inspiration and spiritual life are limited, but it is a chance for a child of nature to grow up, to understand the city more and to understand people more. The experiences of the city might disappoint him superficially, but he starts to respond to the images of the city and they inspire him progressively. Without these experiences, it might not have been possible for him to achieve his later realisation—the love of mankind. This growth of love of mankind, however, like the

greater power of his imaginative capacity, is something that is for the most part submerged in his remembered experience. When it emerges in the "Retrospect" book, love of man is seen as a development of his love for nature; but in the sections on Cambridge, the vacations and London, we have grounds for other speculations.

Solitude, which is closer to his sublime moments in Nature, is his answer to the city life in Cambridge. The city images, having their own life, display a certain dazzling power to Wordsworth; this is one reason for his frustration. In solitude, Wordsworth tries to face the unfamiliar city images, as he faced the peaceful natural images before, to find his consolation. It is not easy for Wordsworth to find solitude in Cambridge; most of the time he seems distracted by people and new things in society. He complains about this kind of situation often and suggests that he loses his visionary power, which he always has in the atmosphere of Nature. Only at particular moments can Wordsworth distance himself from the sucking power of the city and reread the city images with new insights.

The early account of his progress in Book II says that by his seventeenth year he was in full possession of the power of imagination. Nature had "given" him powers which he could use to coalesce with "unorganic nature" (II. 410) and see into its life by "revelation," thus, he was one with the great universal principle of love and joy. The foreground/background reversals of the childhood section, though often recalled, are no longer central to the production of continuity and progress. The scholar Wordsworth is nearer to the awareness of the mature narrating Wordsworth, but a gap is still recognised. The experiences of Cambridge are to a great extent alienating; it is a place and

time which "he" feels is not made for him. But which "he" or "I" is asserting this? There are ambiguities in the effect of images that are meant to establish the contrast between the "I" that knows that Cambridge is not for him and the "I" that seems to revel in the life of an undergraduate. Moreover, when again amidst nature in the vacation, his response is oddly deficient.

Georg Simmel comments that the metropolis has an influence on mental life:

> With each crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life, the city sets up a deep contrast with small town and rural life with reference to the sensory foundations of psychic life. The metropolis exacts from man as a discriminating creature a different amount of consciousness than does rural life. Here the rhythm of life and sensory mental imagery flows more slowly, more habitually, and more evenly. Precisely in this connection the sophisticated character of metropolitan psychic life becomes understandable—as over against small town life which rests more upon deeply felt and emotional relationships.[1]

Simmel asserts that in metropolitan life people experience a kind of sensory overload and react defensively by decreasing their response, becoming desensitized and "blasé." This could explain why Wordsworth does feel he is being sucked in by the "eddy's force" of Cambridge life. Wordsworth loses his sharp sensory power in city life.

Wordsworth's sense of a slackening of imagination power,

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[1] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), online, DePaul University, internet, 2001-2004.

paradoxically, is conveyed by his assertions of its continuing presence. As a "chosen son" of Nature, Wordsworth does not need the things which Cambridge had to offer:

> Why should I grieve?—I was a chosen son.
> For hither I had come with holy powers
> And faculties, whether to work or feel:
> To apprehend all passions and all moods
> Which time, and place, and season do impress
> Upon the visible universe, and work
> Like changes there by force of my own mind.
> I was a freeman, in the purest sense
> Was free. And to majestic ends was strong—
> I do not speak of learning, moral truth,
> Or understanding—'twas enough for me
> To know that I was otherwise endowed.
>
> (III. 82-93)

Why does grief occur to a mind so self-sufficient, so confident that its own endowments are above "learning, moral truth, / Or understanding"? Wordsworth is convinced that he is the special one with "holy powers and faculties" and he should own the abilities to face his new city life. But is this faith so secure?

We have other clues that Wordsworth does lose his confidence:

> For I, bred up in Nature's lap, was even
> As a spoiled child; and, rambling like the wind
> As I had done in daily intercourse
> With those delicious rivers, solemn heights,
> And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,
> I was ill-tutored for captivity—
> To quit my pleasure, and from month to month
> Take up a station calmly on the perch
> Of sedentary peace.
>
> (III. 358-66)

Even within the confidence of being nature's child lurks the possible guilt

of being a "spoiled" child, someone whom indulgence has unfitted for worthy pursuits. In Cambridge, Wordsworth seems to lose his daily chances to communicate with Nature. He loved to converse with "delicious rivers," "solemn heights," and "mountains." Being a student in Cambridge, he loses the chances to meet his common "neighbours"; for the first time he is alerted to the possibility that he might lose the powers that Nature gave him.

When Wordsworth has his doubt about his slackening abilities, isolation seems to be the only way of recuperating:

> Though I had been trained up to stand unpropped,
> And independent musings pleased me so
> That spells seemed on me when I was alone,
> Yet could I only cleave to solitude
> In lonesome places—if a throng was near
> That way I leaned by nature, for my heart
> Was social and loved idleness and joy.
> (III. 230-6)

Even though his heart is "social," "solitude" is still Wordsworth's answer. This is the most paradoxical statement of the split between a "naturally" sociable heart and one that could only find its place in nature by "cleaving" to solitude. But we might again invoke the differences of perspective to resolve this cleavage: Perhaps it is the "writing I" that wants to devalue the social life of Cambridge. John Beer considers that Wordsworth is leading a satisfactory life in Cambridge:

> While Wordsworth's self-portrait shows himself taking up the preferred modes of his society there was, nevertheless, something unsatisfied under the surface....[2]

In fact, the scenario of Cambridge presented by the narrator Wordsworth,

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[2] John Beer, *Wordsworth in Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979) 39.

is different from Beer's opinion. The narrator Wordsworth often points out his disappointments about his life in Cambridge, for instance, the meaningless activities with his student peers, and his direct complaint about his sleeping imagination.

We might suggest, that under the dissatisfaction that he emphasises, the youth portrayed at Cambridge nevertheless joins wholeheartedly in the customary life of undergraduates. The one moment of "natural" revelation which Beer draws attention to is presented with consummate poetic skill, but again includes marks of suppression:

> Lofty elms,
> Inviting shades of opportune recess,
> Did give composure to a neighbourhood
> Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
> There was, no doubt yet standing there, an ash,
> With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed:
> Up from the ground and almost to the top
> The trunk and master branches everywhere
> Were green with ivy, and the lightsome twigs
> And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
> That hung in yellow tassels and festoons,
> Moving or still—a favorite trimmed out
> By Winter for himself as if in pride
> And outlandish grace. Oft have I stood
> Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
> Beneath a frosty moon.
>
> (VI. 87-102)

The confidence that the ash is "no doubt still standing there" removes the tree from temporality, as the "Oft have I stood" seems to generalise a very specific instance. The movement from the clear and distinct image to more sublime intimations characteristic of the "spots of time," however, is more marked by intention. The vision is a "fairy work of earth" such

as might have nourished the poetry of Spenser. The "seed-time" of his childhood is becoming sprouting time and sublimity is linked with poetry as the product of the imagination. Yet, there are, as usual, ambiguities within the image. The lonely ash might well represent a companionable form to the lonely Wordsworth, but the ivy, which, after all, makes all the show, is a parasite and, "trimmed out" with tassels, the tree reminds us of Wordsworth tricked out in the half-despised apparel of a scholar. The most startling false note in this description of lonely self-sufficiency with nature is that the vision is of "bright appearances" of "human forms" as well as of "supernatural powers" (VI. 105-6). These ambiguities suggest that Cambridge nourished his love of poetry, that the human companionship he enjoyed there was not negligible, and that his estimate of human powers was raised by his acquaintance with past masters, which also provoked an emulative sense of his own potential.

Similar ambiguities affect Wordsworth's depiction of his social life, the "eddy's force" of apparently trivial, meaningless actions that nevertheless have such power over him. The way Wordsworth evokes this life is dramatic and immediate. He uses vivid images of a reality that seems to surround him and into which he is plunged. To fit the designed intention of the Cambridge section, the effect should be one of alienation, distraction, disorientation, but the images he uses convey excitement and fascination. We may account for this by once again dividing the presentation between the experiencing, portrayed "I" and the evaluating "writing I" but its effect is rather similar to the cinematic idea of "controlled accident." In this technique a film is shot in a real location not peopled by movie extras, and the uncontrolled reality of the

context lends an air of reality to the central action. Accidents, however, are likely to happen, and the reality might produce effects beyond control. Wordsworth's images, I have argued, gain some sense of reality from the incompletely suppressed sense of other possible stories, other meanings still to be told, and the vortex of Cambridge life includes the same sense of potential at war with the blasé attitude of the "written I."

Controlled Accident

A writing process involving mimesis must employ selection; it is not possible to put everything in words. Certain things are elevated in importance above others and the "others" are now the "context" of the principal selected features. They could not exist as a representation of reality without this context, but they are artfully or artificially presented as independent entities. This aspect of selection is like Maya Deren's film theory about "controlled accident":

> By "controlled accident" I mean the maintenance of a delicate balance between what is there spontaneously and naturally as evidence of the independent life of actuality, and the persons and activities which are deliberately introduced into the scene.... The invented event which is then introduced, though itself an artifice, borrows reality from the reality of the scene—from the natural blowing of the hair, the irregularity of the waves, the very texture of the stones and sand—in short, from all the uncontrolled, spontaneous elements which are the property of actuality itself. Only in photography—by the delicate manipulation which I call controlled accident—can natural phenomena be incorporated

> into our own creativity, to yield an image where the reality of a tree confers its truth upon the events we cause to transpire beneath.[3]

The film "borrows reality from the reality of the scene." Poetry uses the image that "confers its truth upon the events we cause to transpire beneath." This "controlled accident" is the basic skill for a poetic text to create its own space. In *The Prelude*, the narrator Wordsworth uses his own selections to create a special world for the readers; the spots of time are the most obvious proofs, situated within a "real," contingent world yet yielding a determinate meaning that "co-opts" the reality of the setting into an image of "nature." The intrusion of background into foreground that Deren mentions as a risk in these scenes (they must be framed within a "context of limits") is incorporated into Wordsworth's idea of the uncontrollable life of natural things.

Deren also mentions "Time-Space Manipulation" in films:

> A major portion of the creative action consists of a manipulation of time and space. By this I do not mean only such established filmic techniques as flashback, condensation of time, parallel action etc. These affect not the action itself but the method of revealing it.... The kind of manipulation of time and space to which I refer becomes itself part of the organic structure of a film. There is, for example, the extension of space by time and of time by space.[4]

Films use different techniques to create a different sense of time. He uses an example of "a stairway" to explain the concept of space in the

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[3] Maya Deren, "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Reading*, ed. Gerald Mast et al. 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 221.

[4] Deren 224.

film. If we use three different shots from three different angles, we will have three different kinds of spaces, coalescing in the mind into one "perception."

Poetry can work the same magic. Poetry can lengthen a short period of time; it can shorten a long period of time. Poetry will not merely follow the linear and chronological state of time; it "turns back time" too. Poetry can also use different ways to present a space. Poetry can turn a single-dimensional space into a multi-dimensional one.

"Controlled accident" and "suture" could occur at the same time. The narrator Wordsworth presents us his views of his academic life in Cambridge; readers, fitting in the function of suturing, are brought into a world which is built by his controlled accident. The immediately experiencing viewpoint, however, is so mobile that the individual experiences refuse to coalesce into a general idea of "Cambridge."

The Eddy's Force

Wordsworth presents his scenes of "controlled accident" with a remarkable emphasis on "accident." It is not a "spectacle," viewed from the secure, relatively static position of a self-contained self. A multitude of sights and objects in their vivid particularity solicit the eye and, just as they frustrate any continuous "gaze," they refuse to be classified as the superficial, insignificant trivia of a force that, like an eddy, retards the growth of imagination. The difference from the "picturesque" rendition can be seen in a comparison with William Gilpin:

> Cambridge makes no appearance at a distance. King's-[c]ollege chapel[,] is the only object[,] which presents itself with any dignity, as we approach...King's-[c]ollege chapel gives us on the outside, a very beautiful form: within, tho['] it is an immense, and noble aisle, presenting the adjunct idea of lightness, and solemnity; yet its disproportion disgusts. Such height, and such length, united by such straitened parallels, hurt the eye. You feel immured. Henry the Sixth, we are told, spent twelve hundred pounds in adorning the roof. It is a pity he had not spent it in widening the walls. We should then have had a better form, and should have been relieved from the tedious repetition of roses and portcullises; which are at best but heavy, and unpleasing ornaments.[5]

The view is severely critical and controlled as it approaches Cambridge from a distance and then proceeds from the outer to the inner view of King's-College Chapel. Mixed as the response is to the interior, the impression has an order which allows the "heavy and unpleasing" ornaments to overcome the initial "lightness" of the aisle and seal the impression of being "immured." The eye seems to give authority in its progress from general to particular, the particular metonymically summing up the impression of the whole as "immuring."

Wordsworth's reaction to Cambridge is conducted in unpromising conditions, yet the chapel seems (like the earlier crag) to be instinct with life and motion. The "eddy's force" sucks him in "eagerly" and the quality of "eagerness" dominates his response:

> It was a dreary morning when the chaise
> Rolled over the flat plains of Huntingdon
> And through the open windows first I saw
> The long-backed chapel of King's College rear

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[5] William Gilpin, *Observations* (London: William Gilpin's Trustees, 1809) 10-1.

His pinnacles above the dusky groves.
Soon afterwards we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap:
He passed—nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left a hundred yards behind.
The place as we approached seemed more and more
To have an eddy's force, and sucked us in
More eagerly at every step we took.
Onward we drove beneath the castle, down
By Magdalene Bridge we went and crossed the Cam,
And at the Hoop we landed, famous inn.
(III. 1-15)

Wordsworth here is not the master of his route, but as the coach whirls him through the town he hardly regrets its mastery. The sights overmaster his own will; he is not master of his "I" if that "I" is the ironic spectator and reluctant participant of his later portrayal. We can feel Wordsworth's expectation and excitement about his new life—"My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope"(16). We can understand the excitement of being a new student—new friends, different life, and new things.

The "eddy's force" of uncertainty sucks Wordsworth in. Cambridge presents such a huge power to the young Wordsworth, the written "I." Readers might tend to expect the normal Wordsworthian presentation—the quiet and peaceful space of a loner. Instead, the Wordsworthian space is different; Wordsworth, unprepared, is welcomed by the prevailing dream-like city images:

I was the dreamer, they the dream; I roamed
Delighted through the motley spectacle:
Gowns grave or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
Lamps, gateways, flocks of churches, courts and towers—
Strange transformation for a mountain youth,

A northern villager.

(III. 28-33)

Wordsworth, the "mountain youth" or "northern villager," is the "dreamer" in a "dream." It is obviously not a quiet pastoral dream; it is crowded with people and material things. The loner is, instead of walking by himself, surrounded by many "doctors" and "students." We have not yet seen such a crowded scene in Wordsworth's writing. Even more, there are more material things on the city streets: lamps, gateways, churches, courts and towers. Wordsworth becomes the "dreamer" in a "congested" dream. The technique of "controlled accident" occurs here. We should be able to find some open space in most cities; at least we might find the sky above. Here, Wordsworth seems unable to find any open space; he only focuses on people and material things. The "dreamer" here is not in control of his dream. The incongruity of the image "flocks of churches" suggests the strange distance from solid reality in both the scenes and the "transformed" youth.

New people bring new activities; activities build up the "eddy's force":

Companionships,
Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all;
We sauntered, played, we rioted, we talked
Unprofitable talk at morning hours,
Drifted about along the streets and walks,
Read lazily in lazy books, went forth
To gallop through the country in blind zeal
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
Come out, perhaps without one quiet thought.

(III. 249-58)

Normally, it is easier for us to find the interaction between Wordsworth

and Nature. In this new city life, we find Wordsworth interacts with people. Those activities, somehow, seem meaningless to Wordsworth. They are parts of normal student life, but he uses many negative words. They played and they "rioted." Their talks were "unprofitable." They sailed on the breast of the Cam "boisterously." Wordsworth does not even focus on the description of the country, or even the star, a natural subject. But the activities he cites are very similar to his boyhood activities. The horse-riding and sailing echo the "glad animal movements" of younger days. They were not pursued in order to have "quiet thought"; in fact, the quiet thought is often supplied in retrospect. In Cambridge, however, the free, "natural" life of an unconstrained undergraduate does not seem to bring the insight he expected to be more explicit and more articulate.

If we expect Wordsworth to arrive at a more structured and articulate presentation of "thought" by way of his undergraduate training, we are to some extent disappointed. Though later passages affirm what he owed to books, the picture of the student Wordsworth is one of truancy and slackness. The "spoiled child" of nature reacts against confinement and control, he escapes:

> To books, our daily fare prescribed, I turned
> With sickly appetite; and when I went,
> At other times, in quest of my own food,
> I chaced not steadily the manly deer,
> But laid me down to any casual feast
> Of wild wood-honey, or, with truant eyes
> Unruly, peeped about for vagrant fruit.
> (III. 524-30)

The narrated Wordsworth seems to lose the desire to study books, mental

food, in this constricted recess. He wants to go out and find his own food in Nature; yet in some way this could be seen as a refusal to grow up, to join the "manly" pursuits.

Nevertheless, the influence of his studies can be seen. Wordsworth is more conscious of the power of his "eye" in this section, not only for seeing resemblances and relationships but, as befits a scholar, for seeing differences and making subtle discriminations:

> for I had an eye
> Which in my strongest workings evermore
> Was looking for the shades of difference
> As they lie hid in all exterior forms,
> Near or remote, minute or vast—an eye
> Which from a stone, a tree, a withered leaf,
> To the broad ocean an the azure heavens
> Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
> Could find on surface where its power might sleep,
> Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
> And by an unrelenting agency
> Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.
>
> (III. 155-67)

It is perhaps, no surprise that Wordsworth's eye is here working like a camera, glorying in its capacity to alter focus from microscopic to telescopic. This is the active I of the film director, the future writer of *The Prelude*. He is not passive or at the mercy of outward things but has the capacity to frame them. His eye becomes mature and helps him observe natural surroundings more calmly; under the category of "logic," it sutures us into the narrator Wordsworth's vision of Cambridge.

The influence of books, the study of past masters, enters Wordsworth's discourse in this section. The reference to Spenser, already noted as accompanying sublime visions, is one of those

evocations of Cambridge past which seems to interact with his experience of Cambridge present:

> Beside the pleasant mills of Tompington
> I laugh with Chaucer; in the hawthorn shade
> Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
> Of amorous passion. And that gentle bard
> Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State,
> Sweet Spencer, moving through his clouded heaven
> With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace
> (III. 276-82)

His imagination guides Wordsworth to find his "profitable" companions, the past great poets. Laughing together, Chaucer, personally, tells Wordsworth his tales in the natural surrounding of the university, with birds for company. With the power of vision, Wordsworth also sees "the gentle bard," Spencer, moving upon the moonlit heaven. The time marker and the observer are blurring. It may not be a scene of flashback; it is similar to the sublime moments of spots of time. In the limited condition of Cambridge, Wordsworth's imagination is still working. Instead of being inspired by nature images, Wordsworth starts to respond to city images.

Wordsworth's "visions" are now more consciously imaginative. Instead of being moments from his own past carrying uncertain meaning, the visions he creates are more obviously the product of his own imagination working on images of the historical past. Instead of "flashback" we encounter "vision." The two might be close together if we consider them in cinematic terms.

Flashback and Vision

Wordsworth's spots of time are similar to filmic techniques of flashback. These techniques invite readers/viewers to join in the construction of narratives in texts/films. Concurrently, they "naturalize" a narrative spanning extended time and convince readers/viewers that they are experiencing true events.

Maureen Turim discusses this process of "naturalization." The event in real life is different from the presentation of film. The viewers must realise that the filmic techniques are suturing them into the cinematic world; at the same time, they also have to forget the techniques that guide them into the imaginary world of cinema:

> The split between knowledge and forgetfulness through which the flashback operates within filmic fiction is similar to the more general split belief system that operates in fiction's formulation of the "impression of reality" as it has been described by Christian Metz. One knows that one is watching a film, but one believes, even so, that it is an imaginary reality. The difference I am pointing out here is that flashback structure tends to override this split constituting the impression of reality with a second level rearticulating a similar conflict. On this level, the spectator is again presented with a duality, and this time the balance often tilts towards a knowledge of structure, an awareness of the process of telling stories about the past....They have a potential for disturbing a participatory viewing of a film and encouraging a greater intellectual distance, although, again, the countervailing forces that naturalize the flashbacks as personal memories can produce just the opposite effect—no emotional distance, extreme identification.[6]

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[6] Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History*, (London: Routledge, 1989) 17.

Techniques of suture and "naturalization" may be made prominent or "difficult." Readers may accept such narrative in literary works, though they too can become aware of "structure,"

Concerning "naturalization," Turim considers that literary works are less problematic than films. Flashback is problematic in films and stable in literary works:

> The literary equivalent to flashback is often less distinct and abrupt than the cinematic flashback in temporal shifts. Verbal storytelling can ease temporal shifts through the sustaining power of narrative voice, whether that of authorial omniscience or of a character in first-person narration. An arsenal of verb tenses and qualifying clauses render these shifts as an invisible act of language.[7]

Turim wants to stress the linguistic pointers that indicate pastness in a flashback. Cinema has to use other means to locate a sequence in a past that is nevertheless the present of viewing. As we have seen, Wordsworth's "flashbacks" are in fact deficient in markers of time, place and person, and thus approximate to the conception of the "unfixed" flashback of cinema. Turim, stressing cinematic markers of time and especially of person, sees only one variety of interpolated scene corresponding to the "unfixed" flashback: the vision scene in pre-1910 silent film with its more poetic techniques:

> Flashbacks in this period are difficult to distinguish from vision scenes that are meant to be understood as imaginary, or actions that happen simultaneously, but are "seen" by a character in no position to observe them.[8]

We have seen that in Wordsworth's spots of time the perceiver is

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[7] Turim 7.
[8] Turim 27.

sometimes vague, the reality is problematic. It is part of my argument that these problematic "flashbacks" are one of the ways in which Wordsworth does emphasise "structure" and the structuring intention of the "writing I," regarded as a film director. Nevertheless the early "spots of time" can be naturalized within a linear "real" history of Wordsworth's life by the strong effect of ingrained reading habits, just as connected narrative is created from sutured film clips by a practiced viewer.

In Cambridge, Wordsworth's imagination creates more obviously imagined scenes of a past beyond his experience. Even when lamenting the sleep of imagination he shows it working in this new way:

> Imagination slept,
> And yet not utterly; I could not print
> Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
> Of generations of illustrious men,
> Unmoved; I could not always lightly pass
> Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
> Wake where they waked, range that enclosure old,
> That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
> Place also by the side of this dark sense
> Of nobler feeling, that those spiritual men,
> Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
> Seemed humbled in these precincts, thence to be
> The more beloved, invested here with tasks
> Of life's plain business, as a daily garb—
> Dictators at the plough—a change that left
> All genuine admiration unimpaired.
>
> (III. 260-75)

Wordsworth's "imagination slept," but certainly not totally. He seems to be able to feel the presence of the great scholar, Newton; he is conjured up within the everyday context of Cambridge. It is a step towards

Wordsworth's finding the "ethereal" in the ordinary and the co-existence of both qualities.

Even the confinement that he feels in Cambridge can be transformed by an evocation of the past:

> Different sight
> Those venerable doctors saw of old
> When all who dwelt within these famous walls
> Led in abstemiousness a studious life,
> When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped
> And crowded, o'er their ponderous books they sate
> Like caterpillars eating out their way
> In silence, or with keen devouring noise
> Not to be tracked or fathered.
> (III. 459-67)

Hardworking students are "in forlorn and naked chamber cooped and crowded." Both "wall" and "chamber" increase the confined atmosphere of academic Cambridge. But they are "famous walls." The academic life is restricted, but "caterpillars" imply that students are in the process of transformation: the new future is waiting for them. The following passage becomes visionary and indistinct again:

> when illustrious men,
> Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
> Bucer, Erasmus, Melancthon, read
> Before the doors or windows of their cells
> By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.
> (III. 486-90)

After industrious learning in the isolated conditions, one day students could become as distinguished as these past scholars. The "ethereal" and "ordinary" qualities appear again; the unknown observer brings the reader to a scene with indistinct time: the scholars are humbly reading under the moonshine "through mere lack of taper light," uniting the

natural with the cultured.

But Wordsworth's imagination is not now confined to the past. It becomes truly visionary in envisaging an institution—perhaps a Cambridge of the future—that will fulfil its role in a better way.

We have to be aware of the power of "I," the narrator Wordsworth:

> Yet I could shape
> The image of a place which—soothed and lulled
> As I had been, trained up in paradise
> Among sweet garlands and delightful sounds,
> Accustomed in my loneliness to walk
> With Nature magisterially—yet I
> Methinks could shape the image of a place
> Which with its aspect should have bent me down
> To instantaneous service, should at once
> Have made me pay to science and to arts
> And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,
> A homage frankly offered up like that
> Which I had paid to Nature.
>
> (III. 375-87)

The narrator Wordsworth strongly suggests that he could imagine (and create in poetry) a place with a different, better influence than the given Cambridge. He builds this multi-dimensional space in *The Prelude*. In fact, he claims his power in the beginning:

> So was it with me in my solitude:
> So often among multitudes of men,
> Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich,
> I had a world about me—'twas my own,
> I made it....
>
> (III. 139-44)

His visionary Cambridge might be created within a book here, but it implies a wish to see it realised. In this Wordsworth is thinking not only of the value of such an institution to himself but to others in his

place and even to society as whole. The vision, at first, is only a "recess," a hidden, secluded place:

> Toil and pains
> In this recess which I have bodied forth
> Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves,
> Majestic edifices, should not want
> A corresponding dignity within.
> The congregating temper which pervades
> Our unripe years, not wasted, should be made
> To minister to works of high attempt,
> Which the enthusiast would perform with love.
> (III. 387-95)

Obviously, the "recess" brings out the feeling of being locked up, which might explain his dissatisfied and negative attitude toward his life in Cambridge. But this recess is a useful place of transition between childhood and adulthood, a preparation for the world of action. The narrator Wordsworth can, undeniably, create a better space for his academic life; he draws a blueprint of an ideal Cambridge for decent studying and learning. Here the "congregating" of youth would not be wasted in meaningless activities but be an inspirational force to high endeavour. This "enthusiasm," which looks forward to the shared hopes and attempts of the Revolution era, engendered in group activity, has a strongly positive potential. In these visions there is the customary uncertainty of narration. Are these visions those of the experiencing I, the undergraduate Wordsworth, or are they those of the "narrating I"? Both seem possible, but in either case the visions seem to contradict the general impression conveyed by the "writing I" that Cambridge provided no inspiration for the imagination.

Given the negative presentation of city life in Cambridge we are

prepared for a joyful reunion with Nature in vacations. Book IV does not initially disappoint us. Making the circuit of his lake, Wordsworth feels "consummate happiness" (IV. 130) and, dropping the "veil"(IV. 141) of any disguise, the legacy of his artificial life at Cambridge, his soul stands "Naked as in the presence of her God" (IV. 142). But the expression of his renewed strength is expressed with some ambiguities:

> As on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
> A heart that had not been disconsolate,
> Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
> At least not felt; and restoration came
> Like an intruder knocking at the door
> Of unacknowledged weariness.
>
> (IV. 143-8)

This again raises questions about the consciousness of the expressing self. It could express the kind of relief that comes simultaneously with the recognition of the burden it lifts. Alternatively it might suggest that in fact the young Wordsworth did not recognise the need for nature's intervention that the narrating Wordsworth deems necessary. In either case, while the intervention of Nature is described in extensive detail, the consciousness of this intervention is problematic.

In fact Wordsworth admits an "inner falling off" (IV. 270) in his neglect of Nature for the same social pleasures that occupied him at Cambridge. In similar expressions of guilt for neglect of Nature and of study, he singles out one incident in which he attends a dance party. But this is an exception; if anything, it is a partial justification of his social dissipation. It presents, in part, a typical "vague heartless chace / Of trivial pleasures" (IV. 304-5) in provincial dance and assembly but it leads to a more valuable experience on the walk home. Like the

experiences of childhood, what was engaged in for trivial reasons becomes a transcendent experience:

> Magnificent
> The morning was, a memorable pomp,
> More glorious than I ever had beheld.
> The sea was laughing at a distance; all
> The solid mountains were as bright as clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds
> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
> Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
> And labourers going forth into the fields.
> (IV. 330-9)

After the scene of Wordsworth's returning home from a social activity which also is related to the delight of the shallow "glad animal movements," readers/viewers are directly brought into a mysterious dream-like state. One of the prominent elements of spots of time, solitude, comes out again. When Wordsworth, by himself, notices the magnificent morning, the foreground/background reversal occurs and Nature, which is the unimportant background, becomes the prominent foreground. The natural images, "sea," "mountain," and "cloud," enhancing the beauty of dawn, inspire Wordsworth again; they are also open images for readers/viewers to find their meanings at the same time. Dawn, with its suggestions of new beginnings, is described in elevated terms that imply a heraldic magnificence ("pomp," "glorious," "empyrean") that might be a warrant for the future, yet it is still a "common" dawn. Before readers/viewers are sutured into this special moment, they might see one scene—the young Wordsworth is watching the magnificent sky. Then, readers/viewers are successfully brought

into the narrative system. But who is the real observer at this moment? Is it the experiencing I or is it the mature feeling of the narrating I? The culmination of the experience is again equivocally phrased:

> I made no vows, but vows
> Were made for me: bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be—else sinning greatly—
> A dedicated spirit.
>
> (IV. 341-4)

Again the agency is unknown, mysterious and suppositious. Is the experiencing I conscious of what is being done for him? Is it a kind of baptismal experience with Nature as Godparent?

There are continuities as well as discontinuities between the city and the country. Though he is just as severe on the "polite society" of the Lake District, he expresses a more than merely sociable feeling towards the country folk. His first movements on his return are towards friends and acquaintances among the working population. Even in the end of the morning scene above, Wordsworth notices "labourers going forth into the fields" (IV. 339). Human association becomes the new direction of his vision.

After the experience in the city, Wordsworth's attention is drawn towards common people who are also a part of Nature:

> Yes, I had something of another eye,
> And often looking round was moved to smiles
> Such as a delicate work of humour breeds.
> I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,
> Of those plain-living people, in a sense
> Of love and knowledge: with another eye
> I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,
> The shepherd on the hills.
>
> (IV. 200-7)

Nature seems to help him understand one important thing—the love of common people. Wordsworth seems to be wanting to present Nature as always his guide, providing material that will "naturally" lead him to respond to it. It is rather similar to Cambridge's presentation in "Frost at Midnight" of a nature that is more obviously teaching Godly things. Coleridge's son will learn by responding and the motive force of his learning will be a God that by "giving" makes him "ask" (67).[9] But Wordsworth cannot disguise the fact that it is his own active powers that are increasing. They are even being transformed as he gains "another eye," that insistence that we have noted on the power of vision as insight. The passage goes on to mark the acquisition of "another sense," what eighteenth-century philosophers might call a "moral sense" or sense of *conscious* sociability. Readers might have noticed a growing social sense in Cambridge, but the poem leaves its self-recognition to the natural setting:

> Nor less do I remember to have felt
> Distinctly manifested at this time,
> A dawning, even as of another sense,
> A human-heartedness about my love
> For objects hitherto the gladsome air
> Of my own private being, and not more—
> Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit
> Or angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
> Might love in individual happiness.
> But now there opened on me other thoughts,
> Of change, congratulation and regret,
> A new-born feeling.
>
> (IV. 222-33)

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[9] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi et al (New York: Norton, 2004) 121.

Wordsworth is able to broaden his love, from the love of Nature, to the love of mankind.

In this section the feeling for the familiar and rooted is often counterpointed by more sublime indications of the power of the mind and the power of nature to provide sublime experiences. In the Discharged Soldier episode this sublime experience is presented as an encounter with the supernatural within human nature itself as the soldier takes on the "otherness" of characters like the Ancient Mariner, the "Old Man Travelling" or Margaret of "The Ruined Cottage," who display depths beyond the normal range of human existence:

> While thus I wandered, step by step led on,
> It chanced a sudden turning of the road
> Presented to my view an uncouth shape,
> So near that, slipping back into the shade
> Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
> Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
> A foot above man's common measure tall,
> Stiff in his form, and upright, lank and lean—
> A man more meagre, as it seemed to me,
> Was never seen abroad by night and day.
> His arms were long, and bare his hands; his mouth
> Shewed ghastly in moonlight from behind,
> A milestone propped him, and his figure seems
> Half sitting, and half standing, I could mark
> That he was clad in military garb,
> Though faded yet entire. He was alone,
> Had no attendant, neither dog, nor staff,
> Nor knapsack; in his very dress appeared
> A desolation, a simplicity
> That seemed akin to solitude.
>
> (IV. 400-19)

This sublime moment is constituted merely by the human element, the detailed description of the soldier, without the support of natural images.

Wordsworth uses other elements to support the main figure in the "The Ruined Cottage" and "Simon Lee"; natural elements build up the sadness of Margaret, while the image of Ivor-hall enhances the pathos of Simon Lee. The sublimity of the Leechgatherer is evoked by means of natural images. Yet here, the focus is merely on the soldier himself. Wordsworth studies him very carefully, first by describing his characteristics, and then metonymically focusing on his "arms," "hands" and "mouth." Human beings could become as sublime as nature images. Wordsworth does not really tell us his thoughts and feelings about this episode; the Discharged Soldier is another open image for readers to search for their own meanings. Geoffrey Hartman's opinion is that the Discharged Solider is "a belated version of the Dantesque and Miltonic sublime."[10] By using "The Thorn" as an example, Alan Bewell categorised the pattern of this kind of "primitive encounter"[11]:

> a speechless state, producing fear and allied with sight ("I did not speak—I saw her face") gives way to a new one in which emotion is conveyed in language, in the crude, passionate cry "Oh misery! Oh misery!" Wordsworth emphasizes that a radical change has taken place, one that is arguably the origin of the sailor's ability to speak and remember, for this transition occurs only after he has "turned about," away from the image. Other poems exhibit a similar narrational movement.[12]

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[10] Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989) 91.

[11] Bewell 74. Alan Bewell explains that Etienne Bonnot de Condillac interrogates Bernard Mandeville's ideas, the origin of language in the primitive encounter between a "wild couple," including a language of looks and gestures, in his *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* (1746), and Wordsworth is familiar with this influential work.

[12] Bewell 72

Wordsworth uses this pattern to present the encounter between The Discharged Soldier and himself; the "speechless" tension creates different kinds of interpretations, for Wordsworth and for the readers. Different scholars may endow the Discharged Soldier with different meanings and origins. In Wordsworth's surprise at such an "uncouth," "ghastly" gigantic figure, there is an element of superstitious horror that awakens various supernatural forces. The language of posture, so often a guide to human emotion in the mode of sensibility, is equivocal ("half and half"); the prop, a milestone, tells us of journey and goals—perhaps those of life or of just being "between." Close scrutiny yields a recognisable garb, but none of its customary accoutrements, and the succession of negatives seem to pare the figure down to an essential, bare "Being." Even the stirring events and fearful trials he has experienced are toned down by his seeming "indifference." The absence of demands or requests he makes to others, for which Wordsworth reproaches him, draws the strange retort that his trust is in God and " in the eye of him who passes me" (IV. 495). As an enigmatic image presented in a mysterious crepuscular light, he might well draw the "eye" of those with a leaning towards the Gothic, but the long dwell of the camera eye on his motionless figure is designed to produce an insight that goes beyond curiosity to a deep mutual recognition and "trust." Anticipating the Blind Beggar in London, he gives a glimpse of essential humanity in its mysterious, incommunicable depths. Wordsworth starts to realise that the stories and histories behind human beings are as mysterious and thought-provoking as those of nature images.

Among Wordsworth's accounts of his vacation experiences, his

personal and familial friendships take a prominent part. His feelings for Coleridge are evident in his wish that they had been contemporaries at Cambridge. One of the developments of imaginative power evident in the section is the "interference" of the narrating I in the experience of the experiencing I. He expresses the rather pretentious thought (considering his own represented dissipation) that he could have influenced Coleridge for the better. When remembering his vacation rambles with friends over the Border regions, including the beacon that features in the bleak spot of time expressing his childhood experience of loneliness and desertion, he plants Coleridge among them in imagination:

> a power is on me and a strong
> Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.
> Far art thou wandered now in search of health,
> And milder breezes—melancholy lot—
> But thou art with us, with us in the past,
> The present, with us in the times to come.
> (VI. 247-52)

Imagination, fired by feeling, can, in the present of writing, alter the past. It is an idea that has always been implicit in Wordsworth's evocation of the past but now it is openly gloried in. The director is stepping forward to disclose the mechanism of production, not to dispel illusion but to assert its power. There is an accumulation of imaginative power in the books dealing with Cambridge and the vacations that finds its most overt expression in the Simplon Pass episode. Even the excursus on books in Book V with its visionary parable of the Quixote-Arab testifies to the supernatural power of imagination in childhood romances and confronts a narrowly rationalistic education and materialistic world-view.

Wordsworth is longing to find more inspiration from Nature. The

experience of climbing the Alps is his trial; he hopes that Nature could inspire him as much as She does in his childhood, especially after the seeming disappointment of life in Cambridge. The Crossing of the Alps figures itself to his imagination as transcendent experience, but ironically, he surmounts the pass without noticing it. After coming back from city, Wordsworth hopes to find his consolation and inspiration from Nature again, but Nature disappoints him. W. J. B. Owen explains the possible reasons of Wordsworth's disappointment:

> Wordsworth was "lost as in a cloud," not because of Imagination, but because of what the peasant told him (F) [1850], or because of his recollection of what the peasant told him (A) [1805]; because, as Dorothy writes in her Journal of 1820, Wordsworth had "youthful feelings of sadness and disappointment when he was told unexpectedly that the Alps were crossed...The ambition of youth was disappointed (*DWJ* [*Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*]. II. 190, 260)[13]

In fact being "lost" is very much part of the imaginative experience and of the Wordsworthian sublime. It is most metonymically associated with the boyhood spot of time when he loses his guide, an experience narrated later in this version of *The Prelude*, but it corresponds to the disorientation which is their fundamental characteristic. As Wordsworth explains in his account of the sublime, the experience cannot be "delivered" punctually by outward circumstances, the inner responding power is equally important. As we have seen, the experience of disorientation is not always as disappointing as that conveyed here. In

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[13] W. J. B. Owen, "Crossing the Alps Again," *The Wordsworth Circle* 25.2 (1994): 105.

the skating episode, it conveyed a oneness with a living, moving universe and the descent of the Gorge provides a similar sense. It is quite common in film to present such states in a kaleidoscopic series of images accompanied by a joyful, bounding soundtrack and often to prolong them in a more menacing or sluggish way, with accompanying musical tempi, to imitate the effects of drunkenness or a bad trip. Wordsworth rarely gives one version of experience—though the London scenes do tend towards the negative pole—and analyses the experience in various ways which usually yield a positive impression. Here the disjunctions of the experiences are exaggerated by swift temporal cuts and a pattern that has been taken as paradigmatic by Neil Hertz[14] and other critics who choose Kantian or psychological explanatory schema. The steady self-possession and reverence for the inner faculties which belong to this paradigm are, however, balanced by or put in tension with a joyful loss of self-possession and disruption of mental categories. As Owen asserts, the initial experience is one of disappointed expectations, expectations generated by second-hand accounts of sublimity and conquest, as if history can be repeated and experience conform to one model. The young heart is expecting the conquering achievements of Hannibal and

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[14] Neil Hertz, "The Notion of Blockage in the Literature of the Sublime," *Romanticism*, ed. Cynthia Chase (London: Longman, 1993) 78-97. Hertz interprets the sublime moment as incapacity of overloaded thought and seeing to provide an integrity of viewpoint and reading, leading to the danger of eliding the gap between representer and represented. For Hertz, Wordsworth establishes a boundary that "keeps the poet-impresario from tumbling into his text" (95), a boundary that is most obviously transgressed in the rising up of Imagination in Book VI. I am suggesting that both hero and "poet-impresario" are "in" the text, and are used to investigate the gap Hertz draws attention to.

Napoleon, but Nature welcomes him with plainness. To him, the summit of Mount Blanc, which is the highest mountain of the Alps and famous for its beauty and sublimity, is merely a "soulless image" (VI. 454). Wordsworth's mental images are more beautiful and sublime than the real scenes of the Alps. He suddenly realises that imagination has its own power; he claims:

> Imagination—lifting up itself
> Before the eye and progress of my song
> Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,
> In all the might of its endowments, came
> Athwart me, I was lost as in a cloud,
> Halted without a struggle to break through,
> And now, recovering, to my soul I say
> 'I recognize thy glory'.
>
> (VI. 525-32)

Because of the failure of this experience, Wordsworth realises that imagination has its own life, without relying on the inspiration of Nature. After he understands this fact, his mind reaches a new higher level and imagination reveals itself to him again. But when does Wordsworth understand the glory of his imagination? It could occur after the young Wordsworth heard the peasant's words and it could occur when the narrator Wordsworth is working on this section, too.

Miall considers that Wordsworth is at a crucial turning point:

> What Wordsworth is struggling to make conscious in *The Prelude* (and not only in the Simplon passage), is his sense of the commonality of the powers in Mind and Nature, temporarily obstructed by the youthful commitment to the visual that he records in "Tintern Abbey" and in *The Prelude*. Through the temporal disruption of his narrative in *1805*, Wordsworth is able to rehistoricize his position as a consciousness that simultaneously inhabits and is inhabited

by Nature, and transcends Nature.[15]

Wordsworth achieves a new insight: Nature inspires him, but this does not mean he has to rely on Nature forever. His mind has its own power that can transcend the power of Nature. Geoffrey Hartman's famous formulation that Nature leads him beyond Nature[16] attributes too much power to external nature and not enough to the creative powers of his own "nature." Wordsworth, however, holds both in equal awe.

The experience of crossing the Alps is not totally unsuccessful; the Gorge of Gondo, the "chasm" (VI. 553), unexpectedly recompenses Wordsworth's disappointment:

> The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And everywhere along the hollow rent
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears—
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them—the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.
> (VI. 565-72)

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[15] David S. Miall, "The Alps Deferred: Wordsworth at the Simplon Pass," *European Romantic Review* 9.1 (1998): 88.

[16] Geoffrey H. Hartman, "A Poet's Progress: Wordsworth and the *Via Naturaliter Negativa*," *The Prelude: 1799,1805,1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth et al. (New York: Norton, 1979) 599.

This experience is presented in the past tense. The indeterminacy of the speaker occurs: the narrator Wordsworth again intrudes into the linear narrative with mature thoughts. The recognition of the power of imagination and its object as "infinity" and the "ever more about to be" is in the present of writing, yet the description of the gorge and the experience of descending it is so coloured by this account that it might be considered an exemplary illustration. The binary elements of the images, "tumult and peace," "the darkness and the light," exhibit Wordsworth's apocalypse, like "the overflowing Nile" (VI. 548), which can be both destructive and regenerative. The chasm itself could be a symbol of "eternity, / Of first, and last, and midst, and without end," and of the imagination that produces such sublime conceptions. The anticipated sense of triumph and mastery in conquering the Alps is replaced by a sublime that could be terrifying. The quick cuts and shifts destabilize the subject-position in a similar manner to the "eddy's force" of Cambridge. Rational categories of temporality and direction are confused in this "giddy prospect," yet the experience is welcomed. These are signs to be interpreted and Wordsworth joyfully embraces an idea of infinity and apocalypse that seems to unify the most disparate elements and intuits a power "like" a mind within the workings of Nature.

Nothing could be farther from the eighteenth-century "prospect" poems that he had imitated in "Tintern Abbey" with picturesque scenery and stable transcendent viewpoint. Nothing could be further, we might think, from the calm, steady "central self" towards which Wordsworth is progressing in the poem as a whole. But these moments of confusion and disorientation are recovered for the imagination by a sublime sense,

not of a static "oneness" but an ongoing, ceaseless "mindful" activity. The precarious nature of this intuition is conveyed by the equivocal visual images. The sense of unmastered motion, evoked in De Quincey's "The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion" and in Wordsworth's entry into Cambridge, looks forwards to the even more "unnatural" speeds of the new locomotives. In the exhilaration of speed and the intoxicating succession of images brought to most people's visual imagination lay the possibility of trivial excitement or the deeper meaningful experience that Wordsworth prized. The "moving" spectacle of London displays similar opportunities for experience that "move" Wordsworth in different ways.

Chapter 5 London

In dealing with Wordsworth's experience of London it is essential to deal not only with Book VII but with the succeeding book as well. They are unified by an argument that is not immediately apparent but follows a distinct logical path. This is particularly necessary to redeem the city from the negative view which dominates Book VII and which many critics take as the definitive Wordsworthian condemnation of modern city life.

In Cambridge, city images presented the eddy's force which makes him confused and lost in them; in London, city images are even more powerful. Here, on the contrary, Wordsworth does not lose control; he seems to develop a more stable kind of observation of city images. In presenting the potent movement of city images, constituted by numerous metonymic filmic cuts, Wordsworth is more mature and adopts the position of the experienced guide to the city. Generally, he is willing to allow the famous sights of London their capacity to move spectators, but the diminished awe which he has experienced, leads him to view them as merely "interesting" in a superficial way. The images of life in the capital are seen in an even more disparaging way as disunified, disorientating and meaningless, only mastered by an eye that sees their essential triviality. At moments, however, the spectacle brings deeper involvement and even a sense of sublimity. Common people help him experience the sublimity in the city and he thus extends more of his love

from Nature towards human beings.

The City Images

Towards the end of his account of Cambridge Wordsworth displays the kind of seeing that becomes characteristic of his response to London. Regarding things around him as exhibits in a "cabinet" or museum, he registers them as curiosities, interesting but not involving, not "endeared" by any near personal connection and fundamentally unconnected and incoherent. His response is not neutral or condemning, in fact certain things evoke sharp feeling:

> Yet still does every step bring something forth
> That quickens, pleases, stings—and here and there
> A casual rarity is singled out
> And has its brief perusal, then gives way
> To others, all supplanted in their turn.
> (III. 656-60)

This response is that of the "appetitive eye," seeking stimulation from without. In London, with its famous sights, its cosmopolitan population and especially its commercial activities and various "shows," such an "appetitive eye" is linked to consumerism.[1] While Cambridge initially

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[1] Stuart Allen, "Metropolitan Wordsworth: Allegory as Affirmation and Critique in *The Prelude*," *Romanticism on the Net* 40 (November 2005):15 pp, online, internet, 15 May 2006; Ross King, "Wordsworth, Panoramas, and the Prospect of London," *Studies in Romanticism* 32.1 (1993): 57-73. These articles give a good conspectus of approaches that see Wordsworth's response to London in terms of consumerism and the effects of commerce. See also Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 56-7; Jon Mee, "Mopping up Split Religion: The Problem of Enthusiasm,"

disoriented him, drawing him into other ways of life in the eddy of sociability, London seems to unroll before him, subservient to his own movements and soliciting his gaze. All, however, is a show, a spectacle, numerous facades with no depth or integrity of meaning. Like the advertisements he observes, these words or signifiers are "in masquerade" (VII. 214). It *is* disorienting, and Wordsworth believes that those raised in cities must have little stability of moral being due to this "outrageous stimulation."[2] Wordsworth can imagine this chaotic sensibility, but he presents himself as bringing with him the strong centrality of being gained from a country upbringing, conversant with "permanent forms."[3] Books VII and VIII adhere closely to the views expressed in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, and he paints himself as partially subjected to the shallow sensationalism that produces what he there calls a "savage torpor,"[4] the sleep of all deep responsive powers. Here again imagination slept, though the mind is full of images. In Cambridge he succeeds in drawing all the various unsatisfying aspects of life into a

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Romanticism on the Net 25 (February 2002); Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 246 ; Mary Jacobus, *Romanticism, Writing and Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) 206-36; Mary Jacobus, "Wordsworth and the Language of Dream," *ELH* 48 (1979): 618-44; J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 114; Geraldine Friedman, "History in the Background of Wordsworth's 'Blind Beggar,'" *ELH* 56.1 (1989): 125-48.

[2] William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 599.

[3] Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) 597.

[4] Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) 599

whole and transforms them into a vision of a better institution. In doing this he is responding to the metonymies of the place by using the power of his mind to produce a satisfying whole of which they can be part. In the London passages the metonymies are signifiers of chaos, of disunity and unrootedness. As parts of a whole they seem unified only by their message of confusion until the last sections of Book VIII when Wordsworth records his sublime experience of the unifying spirit of the place, which turns out to be nothing less than the historical hopes and suffering of humanity and its ambitions for a better world. In this transformation, which takes place at an uncertain time in his experience of the city, Wordsworth's own powers of mind are stimulated by the very "weight" of the weary world he fled from in "Tintern Abbey."

Firstly, the images in the mind of the famous sights of London, the fabulous, fairy-tale atmosphere of riches and splendour are dispelled in the same way that Mont Blanc is divested of glamour. This is done by report, through the experience of a returning country-boy. Wordsworth is therefore not violently disappointed but apparently prepared for the more prosaic reality. London is granted its importance in objective terms, but it is clear that it no longer engages his subjective power. The reader is taken on a walk around London as Wordsworth indulges in the "pastime" of copying the images of memory. Even in the closest press of humanity, Wordsworth is thoroughly in control of the journey, which proceeds along a representative route with a sense of detached amusement.

Wordsworth's selections of city images show their filmic quality and the importance of the eye. In the beginning of Book VII,

Wordsworth gives us his guided tour of London:

> the quick dance
> Of colours, lights and forms, the Babel din,
> The endless stream of men and moving things,
> From hour to hour the illimitable walk
> Still among streets, with clouds and sky above,
> The wealth, the bustle and the eagerness,
> The glittering chariots with their pampered steeds,
> Stalls, barrows, porters, midway in the street
> The scavenger that begs with hat in hand,
> The labouring hackney-coaches, the rash speed
> Of coaches travelling far, whirled on with horn
> Loud blowing, and the sturdy drayman's team
> Ascending from some alley of Thames
> And striking right across the crowded Strand
> Till the fore-horse veer round with punctual skill:
> The comers and the goers face to face—
> Face to face—the string of dazzling wares,
> Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
> And all the tradesman's honours overhead....
> (VII. 156-75)

Wordsworth is able to decode the city images with his personal interpretations by "voice-over." Wordsworth can stop temporarily when "we" (VII. 185), he and the readers, seek some "sequestered nook" (VII. 186). Later on the passage talks of "we" and "us" as if Wordsworth is taking the reader by the hand. The impression is at first a confused one, a stream of moving images and a "Babel" of noise, but gradually the images gain distinction as if Wordsworth is pointing to them and explaining them. He distinguishes the kinds of transport we view, their routes and functions, and we orient ourselves by well-known landmarks and street names. If the reader has an initial confusion, Wordsworth does not and he is fully in control.

The commercial nature of the capital is prominently displayed, with its multitude of signs, names and advertisements, again from an amused, sceptical point of view. The nature of "spectacle" is expanded by concentrating on acknowledged "performances," performances of plays, the performances of preachers, the performances of members of Parliament. All seem hollow, inauthentic, shadows without substance or egotistic display. They do not engage the deep passions though they still titillate the senses. His reaction to the playhouse is typical:

> For though I was most passionately moved,
> And yielded to the changes of the scene
> With most obsequious feeling, yet all this
> Passed not beyond the suburbs of my mind.
> (VII. 504-7)

These dazzling city images, stronger than the ones in Cambridge, do catch Wordsworth's attention; they are challenging Wordsworth's mind and imagination in a new way.

London also displays its other side to Wordsworth; critics notice the tranquil and peaceful quality of London in "Composed upon Westminster Bridge." Harvey Peter Sucksmitth is aware of this special moment of London;

> 'Mighty heart,' of course, concisely yet pregnantly conveys the power of the metropolitan centre of a nation and an empire, along whose arteries are pumped the vital life blood of commerce ('Ships'), political cohesion ('towers'), religion ('domes', 'temples'), and culture ('theatres'). Yet the image implies much more than this…Surprisingly, Wordsworth, the poet of nature, tells us that his most sublime experience of the rarest beauty was not in the contemplation of a natural landscape at all, but in the

contemplation of the city.[5]

By presenting its beauty, London touches Wordsworth in the quiet early morning. Instead of being disturbed by the city images, everything stabilises before him; he experiences the tranquil moment of London and he can respond to the city images, in the same way he does to natural images. Sucksmith points out the analogous moment in *The Prelude*:

> Scenes different there are—
> Full-formed—which take, with small internal help,
> Possession of the faculties: the peace
> Of night, for instance, the solemnity
> Of Nature's intermediate hours of rest
> When the great tide of human life stands still,
> The business of the day to come unborn,
> Of that gone by locked up as in the grave;
> The calmness, beauty, of the spectacle,
> Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty streets, and sounds
> Unfrequent as in des[a]rts....
> (VII. 626-36)

The day-time city activities all calm down; London, in the night time, displays another peaceful and beautiful moment to Wordsworth. This transcendent moment is built up both by the city images (spectacle and empty streets) and the natural images (sky and moonshine). Human elements are also involved: "the great tide of human life stands still", Wordsworth can feel the strong power of humanity in the city, yet it is suspended animation, almost death-like. The images have not received that "internal help" that would make them truly live.

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[5] Harvey Peter Sucksmith, "Ultimate Affirmation: A Critical Analysis of Wordsworth's Sonnet, 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge', and the Image of the City in *The Prelude*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 6 (1976): 115.

James A. W. Heffernan discusses the dual qualities of London:

> So Wordsworth's London is Jekyll and Hyde, by turns a Babylonian monster and a city of heavenly light. But this Biblical or Stevensonian polarity cannot fully explain Wordsworth's fascination with London. If he loathed its monstrosity, he need hardly have returned again and again just to see its nighttime stillness or catch a sunrise glimpse of its radiant calm on his departure from it, as in "Westminster Bridge." Rare moments of calm were not the only things that Wordsworth liked about London. It thrilled him even when—or especially when—its mighty heart was beating and awake.[6]

Wordsworth also finds the positive side of the city; in Cambridge he finds his vision in the future, in London, he finds the sublime moments in real life. Wordsworth becomes the calm and quiet "observer" of the city and has his new vision of London.

Bartholomew Fair, which Wordsworth would "represent as epitomizing London's monstrosity,"[7] displays the ultimate superficial part of London.

> A work that's finished to our hands, that lays,
> If any spectacle on earth can do,
> The whole creative powers of man asleep.
> For once the Muse's help will we implore,
> And she shall lodge us—wafted on her wings
> Above the press and danger of the crowd—
> Upon some showman's platform. What a hell
> For eyes and ears, the anarchy and din
> Barbarian and infernal—'tis a dream
> Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound.
> (VII. 653-62)

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[6] James A. W. Heffernan, "Wordsworth's London: The Imperial Monster," *Studies in Romanticism* 37.3 (1998): 427-8.

[7] Heffernan 428.

The "spectacles" feed the need of Wordsworth's appetitive eye, and go beyond it to the ultimate limit where man's creative power can not follow. The city images, displaying their "monstrous" power, forms and cacophony, overwhelm his sight and hearing, but Wordsworth is not completely dominated by them—his vision situates itself in a vantage-point above the fracas.

Bartholomew Fair is one way Wordsworth reads London. Ross King uses Richard Altick's views to study the panoramas of London:

> Altick argues that panoramas and other spectacles of London were intended to function pedagogically, but Wordsworth's London is not a locus of original knowledge, a site where one encounters truth, unmediated or otherwise, but rather a place only of mimics, of "caged parrot[s]" (106) and "chattering monkeys" (688), a place where knowledge is produced purely for its exhibition value and takes the form of the "horse of knowledge, and the learned pig" (682), available in its dubious forms to all who pay. Far from illuminating anything, the city of London exhibits only a "blank confusion" (699).[8]

The scenes of the Fair are full of exotic images and those unnatural things are far from the sublime images in Nature. Wordsworth introduces these images like phantasmagoria, cut by cut, and no one will have time to distinguish the meanings of them.

The negative image of London reaches its culmination in the picture of Bartholomew Fair, which seems to Wordsworth a scene of:

> blank confusion, and a type not false
> Of what the mighty city is itself
> To all, except a straggler here and there—

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[8] Ross King, "Wordsworth, Panoramas, and the Prospect of London," *Studies in Romanticism* 32.1 (1993): 66.

> To all the whole swarm of its inhabitants—
> An undistinguishable world to men,
> The slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
> Living amid the same perpetual flow
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end....
> (VII. 696-705)

The camera position in the Fair is raised, as if on a hoist, emphasising the lofty position of judgment that Wordsworth is assuming. But Wordsworth explains the position by saying that it is on a raised showman's platform. This introduces a note of irony into the description. Here is Wordsworth denouncing shows, yet placing himself on the level of the showman.

According to Mary Jacobus, "spectacle" is also an indispensable element to understand the "writing self":

> Spectacle, the tyranny of the eye ("a transport of the outward sense, / Not of the mind," XI. 188-89), furnishes the theatrical underworld of *The Prelude*, that mingled threat to and seduction of the imagination called London. It might as well have been called Vanity Fair; framed by Wordsworth's puritan ethic, it offers the this-worldly profits of the eye in place of the other-worldly spiritual gains of the mind. "Great God!" writes Wordsworth, "that aught *external* to the living mind / Should have such mighty sway" (VIII. 700-02; his italics). When he wants to admit its legitimate pleasures, he has to subsume spectacle into spectrality, animating the show in the visionary cinema of imagination.[9]

In contrast to the "guided tour" earlier, the spectacles of Bartholomew Fair are not casually met with, ordinary sights of the city at work that can

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[9] Mary Jacobus, "Wordsworth and the Language of the Dream," *ELH* 46.4 (1979): 629.

be decoded according to role and function. Like the "cabinet" at Cambridge they are "moveables of wonder from all parts" but here they actively demand attention and might be overwhelming but for the elevated positions of the viewer:

> All moveables of wonder from all parts
> Are here, albinos, painted Indians, dwarfs,
> The horse of knowledge, and the learned pig,
> The stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
> Giants, ventriloquists, the invisible,
> The bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
> The waxwork, clockwork, all the marvellous craft
> Of modern Merlins, wild beasts, puppet-shows,
> All out-o'-th'-way, far-fetched, perverted things
> All freaks of Nature, all Promethean thoughts
> Of man—his dulness, madness, and their feats,
> All jumbled up together to make up
> The parliament of monsters.
>
> (VII. 680-92)

The emphasis is on freaks, perversions and monsters, and especially on the "jumbled" lack of any order or unity. The "parliament of monsters" might refer to the attempt by Anarcharsis Clootz to introduce into the French Assembly members from all parts of the world, a recipe for anarchy indeed. To dignify Bartholomew Fair with comparison to a "parliament" might stress the empire that these spectacles seek to establish over the sensibility of their audience. But even in this catalogue of monstrosities the phrase "Promethean thoughts / Of man" strikes an odd note, as if among these "far-fetched" images there are hints of more elevated achievements to which man might aspire.

Book VIII, originally written before Book VI, is an extended exposition of the way in which he had been raised to his position of

comparative invulnerability to the influence of the city. It is, he asserts, "By nature an unmanageable sight," but "not wholly so to him who looks / In steadiness, who hath among least things / An under-sense of greatest" (VII. 709-12). This under-sense is the gift of his country childhood.

There is, however, a fundamental contradiction in this position. Wordsworth seems to value the "steadiness" of his "look," which detaches him from the realities of the city and makes it a spectacle rather than the eddy that prejudiced his calm self-possession in Cambridge. But what he also seems to value is exactly the deeper involvement that does disorientate the self, activating subjective energies which lead to self-transformation. The quotation that Jacobus uses to seal the purely "outward" stimulation of London could in fact be a tribute to aspects of the city that do fundamentally move him, resisting the easy assimilation into the theatre of the mind and instead expanding the mind's capacities. Periodically in Book VI we see these moments intervening in the meaningless round of trivia and we might ask whether it is London that fails him or is it his response that is defective? This question may well be prompted by the culmination of Book VIII in which his response to the city is of a truly sublime nature and takes the "love of man" beyond the reverence for country-dwellers to encompass the hope of mankind, something that prepares us for his enthusiasm for the French Revolution.

Sometimes even the confusion of the city is seen not as a spectacle but again as a self-involving eddy. One "feeling," or response, seemed to belong to the city "by exclusive right" (VII. 594). This is, predictably, a feeling brought about by "lostness." Passing through the "overflowing streets," Wordsworth at first speaks "to himself" about the anonymity of

the crowd as he moves with it: "The face of every one / that passes by me is a mystery" (VII. 597-8). This is a departure from the earlier stance of the guide who could name and characterize the classes of the crowd with the freedom of a *flaneur*. This time he seems to be searching for individual, responsive contact "face to face" with a human soul. He describes this state as a sort of "negative sublime" in which he is deprived of customary conditions of intercourse:

> all the ballast of familiar life—
> The present, and the past, hope, fear, all stays,
> All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man—
> Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.
> (VII. 604-7)

This is something like the state of disconnection that he imagines Coleridge and other city-dwellers experience, but it is presented as a condition of some (equivocal) value. Musing on this state in a manner rather similar to the poet's response to the Leechgatherer, Wordsworth is suddenly "smitten" with the sight of the Blind Beggar, a face in which there is no response, and a "label" that gives a brief "story" of "who he was." "Abrupt" and "upright" convey the shock as this image detaches itself from the background like the Drowned Man surfacing from the lake. Wordsworth records the strength of his reaction in a natural image: "My mind did at this spectacle turn round / As with the might of waters" (VII. 616-7). What he has gained is again equivocal. It is the negative message that this is an emblem of "the utmost that we know / Both of ourselves and of the universe" (VII. 619-20) and he is "admonished" (VII. 623) in his wish to know further. Yet the beggar seems to share with the Discharged Soldier the basic humanity whose appeal must be to an

answering humanity in the onlooker. There is a lack of "knowing" but a mystery of "feeling" that affects all deep knowledge, even of the self.

The figures of the Discharged Soldier and the Blind Beggar share something with other decrepit "grotesques" in Wordsworth's poetry, like Simon Lee and the Leechgatherer. E. W. Stoddard has usefully defined this figure as:

> an aesthetic structure, the grotesque represents a mid-point between the sublime and beautiful. Whereas the sublime is associated with obscurity and formlessness and the beautiful with form, the grotesque embodies de-formity and trans-formity, suggesting the need for re-form. All three aesthetic terms, but especially the grotesque and the sublime, refer both to sensory phenomena and to the emotional responses they stimulate in the perceiver. Sublimity is the material conditions of our desire. The grotesque arrests that move of erasure, capturing in one moment the desire and the reality, the elevated and the low.[10]

Wordsworth's desire might well be to "re-form" and "trans-form" these characters in his imagination. In the case of Simon Lee this is performed by the knowledge of his younger days that allows us to see the young huntsman in his glory; the Leechgatherer gives a succinct life-story that admits the self-identification of the poet. In the more taciturn grotesques the "story" is incidental: the poet is caught in his wish for one and the wish itself becomes the "subject." Between sublime and beautiful, both engaging the subjective powers of the onlooker, the bare images are like those of film when a striking appearance leads the audience to desire a story that will allow this appearance to be classified

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[10] E. W. Stoddard, "'All Freaks of Nature': The Human Grotesque in Wordsworth's City," *Philological Quarterly* 67.1 (1988): 40.

and integrated into some form of imagined life.

Wordsworth does not read the "label" or attempt to provide a frame for the beggar. He has been flung from the syntagmatic movement of the crowd into momentary stasis and prominence and provides a "type," but a type of the dislocation that afflicts, for good or ill, both crowd and involved onlooker. As Geraldine Friedman puts it:

> Since language cannot recover from the uncontrollable syntagmatic drift that finds its concrete counterpart in urban crowds, the specific figural activity of self-representation in the "blind Beggar" is bound to be reduced to the play of signifier. Context—here the flux of the crowd—destabilizes the passage by intruding into its interior. In the broadest terms, we find at work in the "blind Beggar" one more version of the oscillation between figure and ground as the oscillation between figuration and historical context.[11]

For the first time, the background and foreground are both human beings, with binary quality: singular vs. multitudinous; the images of human beings are disturbing and challenging Wordsworth's imagination this time. The Blind Beggar, suddenly becoming the foreground from background, displays the power of "the might of waters." Readers try, like Wordsworth, to decode the meanings of this sublime image. While the "play of the "signifier" does produce these indeterminacies, the figure itself, in its mutely appealing, even demanding, posture does more than represent the "specific figural activity of self-representation." It is irreducibly other, yet is also intimately other as is the self, an otherness

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[11] Geraldine Friedman, "History in the Background of Wordsworth's 'Blind Beggar,'" *ELH* 56.1 (1989): 142-3.

that Wordsworth has been playing with throughout the poem. The absence of syntagmatic links to a "history" is similar to the way in which Wordsworth has played fast and loose with his own history and to the way in which, in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, he announced that feeling rather than situation was to be his object. Yet history, story, mythos, are indispensable and Wordsworth undeniably uses stories to develop the passions of his characters. If the London passages allow this dislocation of figure, they also involve a complex meditation on the "nature" of imaginative narrative.

City vs. Country

Vice in the town is compared with vice in the country in the context of artificiality, the "de-naturing" of woman, especially in the case of the Maid of Buttermere. Wordsworth tries to present this woman in two versions, the real one in country life and the character in the city theatre. Mary Jacobus in an influential essay has linked the uncontrolled proliferation of city images, the vice of the city and its theatrically exaggerated language to the figure of the painted whore. Wordsworth's desire to remain a pre-pubertal "country" paradise and deny the "fall" into language entails the elision of sexual difference and the casting out

of the sexual female.[12] While acknowledging the powerful contrasts that Wordsworth establishes, I suggest that he goes far to deconstructing them himself. Mary of Buttermere, who appears predominantly as the figure of "whore" in Jacobus's essay (when she is not being buried in screen memories) actually seems to be for Wordsworth thoroughly integrated in real life and only cast out by conventions of the London stage.

In the London passages there seems to be an attempt to link the debased art of the city, as he described it in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, with artifice and vice and contrast it with fidelity to nature and the life of the countryside. The city gives countenance to vice, as he notes in recording his first meeting, presumably in Cambridge, with a woman blaspheming in public amid the equal profanity of her like. This recollection leads in to a discussion of the theatrical exhibition of "The Maid of Buttermere" by the troupe of Sadler's Wells, a London depiction of vice in lurid terms, which is contrasted with the "real" maid, living out her life in the tranquillity of the countryside. From the dramatised depiction of the "lost woman" and her polluted offspring on stage we quickly and confusingly cut to an actress and her child, seen in another theatre, though presumably offstage, where the rouged cheeks of the actress and the rough company of the players contrast with the innocence of the child, for whom Wordsworth fears inevitable corruption, and he once again invokes the innocent (dead) child of Buttermere as a preferable fate. Wordsworth was obviously aware of the possible

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[12] Mary Jacobus, "'Splitting the Race of Man in Twain': Prostitution, Personification and *The Prelude*," *Romanticism*, ed. Cynthia Chase (London: Longman, 1993) 113-39.

confusion of his transitions, because he added a passage in1850 to "clarify" his argument:

> But let me now, less moved, in order take
> Our argument. Enough is said to show
> How casual incidents of real life,
> Observed where pastime only had been sought,
> Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
> And measured passions of the stage, albeit
> By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.
> (1850 VII. 400-6)

While here and in the 1805 version his love of London theatre is freely admitted, this re-iterates the policy of *Lyrical Ballads* and prepares us for the contrast between artifice and nature.

According to the Norton Critical edition, *Edward and Susan*, or *The Beauty of Buttermere*, a melodrama in rhyme, based on the story of Mary Robinson, daughter of the innkeeper of Buttermere, was performed by the actors of Sadler's Wells in April—June 1803.[13] This is obviously a melodramatic version of the story:

> And how the spoiler came, 'a bold bad man'
> To God unfaithful, children, wife, and home,
> And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,
> And wedded her, in cruel mockery
> Of love and marriage bonds.
> (VII. 323-7)

The story in the theatre is crude and different from the reality; the characterisation is superficially stereotyped—good and bad are exaggerated. Wordsworth recollects his impression of the country maid in her real life:

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[13] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth et al. (New York: Norton, 1979) 242.

With tender recollection of that time
When first we saw the maiden, then a name
By us unheard of—in her cottage-inn
Were welcomed, and attended on by her,
Both stricken with one feeling of delight
An admiration of her modest mien
And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
Not unfamiliarly we since that time
Have seen her, her discretion have observed,
Her just opinions, female modesty,
Her patience, and retiredness of mind
Unsoiled by commendation and excess
Of public notice.

(VII. 328-40)

Far from a vicious woman in people's eyes, she is innocent with "unexampled grace." Though Mary had a child out of wedlock, the country receives her as the same; she can live her decent life with dignity:

Mary of Buttermere! She lives in peace
Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
Without contamination does she live
In quietness, without anxiety.
Beside the mountain chapel sleeps in earth
Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb
That thither comes from some unsheltered place
The rest beneath the little rock-like pile
When storms are blowing. Happy are they both,
Mother and child!

(VII. 351-60)

The mother can live happily in the country without the "contamination" that surrounds her "city" image.

Wordsworth does not tell the "real" story; that is left to the melodramatic telling of the play. He does not even enter into country customs that made pregnancy common in betrothed couples. The countryside is presented as a place of more natural attitudes, uninfected

with the sense of sin that, in vice's ubiquity and apparent acceptance, seems to permeate the capital.

Wordsworth uses the images of mother and child to distinguish the moral judgement of the city. As a country-boy in the city, he seems to cast himself as the innocent introduced into the world, retrospectively valuing the innocence of his country feelings. But when viewing the actress and her child these feelings are merely ascribed to his "youth":

> those ingenuous moments of our youth
> Ere yet by use we have learnt to slight the crimes
> And sorrows of the world. Those days are now
> My theme, and, 'mid the numerous scenes which they
> Have left behind them, foremost I am crossed
> Here by remembrance of two figures: one
> A rosy babe, who for a twelvemonth's space
> Perhaps had been of age to deal about
> Articulate prattle, child as beautiful
> The other was the parent of that babe—
> As ever sate upon a mother's knee;
> But on the mother's cheek the tints were false,
> A painted bloom.
>
> (VII. 362-74)

In the city, the contrast between adult and child is evident: The child is pure and innocent while the mother is vicious and artificial. The contrast between city and country breaks down when he describes the child as

> a cottage-child, but ne'er
> Saw I by cottage or elsewhere babe
> By Nature's gifts so honoured.
>
> (VII. 381-3)

The child is "A sort of alien scattered from the clouds" (VII. 378) and thus transcending both city and country. The bleak prognostication of his enrolment among those exposed to "distress and guilt / Pain and

abasement" (VII. 405-6) (among whom he includes himself!) leads Wordsworth to poetically embalm him. He wishes him to live only in this innocent embodiment, though he speculates that he might have lived long enough to regret that he did not die as the innocent child he was:

> he perhaps,
> Mary, may now have lived till he could look
> With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps
> Beside the mountain chapel undisturbed.
> (VII. 409-12)

Wordsworth's emotional identification with the innocence of the countryside is marked by this apostrophe to the "lost" woman who bears the same name as one of the most beloved addressees of the poem. The boy is dislocated from the syntagmatic chain of his-story, to be re-located within that of Mary Robinson and the company of *The Prelude*. Jacobus draws attention to Wordsworth's practice of "stopping" the development of characters caught frozen in a characteristic image and has related it to psychological denials. Like the child of Winander, the boy's image is frozen in a death-haunted, epitaphic inscription. Such images are visually "arresting" and frequently recall one another, as the actress and her child recall for Jacobus the Blest Babe and its mother. They can function as archetypes (here a kind of "boy eternal") and as "flashback" images which suggest complex comparisons and contrasts.[14]

Wordsworth's slighting of the playhouse's "set events and measured passions" in favour of the reality of the country receives another qualification when the recollection of country theatres crosses his mind. Indeed, considering the value he attributes to imaginative

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[14] Jacobus, "Prostitution, Personification and *The Prelude*" 118-21.

children's books in Book IV, he can hardly restrict a crude and melodramatic art with its superficial pleasures to the city. He fondly recollects:

> Pleasure that had been handed down from times
> When at a country playhouse, having caught
> In summer through the fractured wall a glimpse
> Of daylight, at the thought of where I was
> I gladdened more than if I had beheld
> Before me some bright cavern of romance,
> Or than we do when on our beds we lie
> At night, in warmth, when rains are beating hard
> (VII. 481-8)

The fact that he looks back here on Romance, while the London stage is characterized by Siddons and tragedy, suggests that it is in its dealings with vice and sin that the London theatre co-operates with the city environment to cheapen and suppress the emotions that should address such subjects. Wordsworth might imply that the country is a healthier society because the problems of the city are worsened by its negative attitudes towards humanity.

While "sickly and stupid" tragedies[15] might represent the artifice of the London stage, Wordsworth cannot help paying tribute to those of our "elder writers," still, apparently, widely performed. He does not name the dramatists, but points to a use of imagination such as he aspired to himself:

> 'Twas only then when gross realities,
> The incarnation of the spirits that moved
> Amid the poet's beauteous world—called forth

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[15] William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984) 599.

> With that distinctness which a contrast gives,
> Or opposition—made me recognise
> As by a glimpse, the things which I had shaped
> And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
> Had felt, and thought of in my solitude.
> (VII. 509-16)

In these experiences the co-operating power of the onlooker's mind is called out and the creation is a joint production, bearing typical signs of blurred demarcations. The indeterminacy of the origin of power occurs; does the narrator Wordsworth come out to state his mature thought, or does the young Wordsworth sense the inspiration of dramatists such as Shakespeare when he is in London?

Book VIII continues the meditation on the imaginative depiction of common incidents of real life. In part a justification for the doctrines of *Lyrical Ballads*, it goes further into the qualifications and possible contradictions of these tenets and further confuses the opposition between city and country.

In support of his doctrine Wordsworth "quotes" the story of the shepherd and his son as it was supposedly delivered by Ann Tyson, his "household dame." The story is certainly commonplace in its theme of shepherding and trying to rescue a sheep marooned on an islet in a rising torrent. Heroism and self-sacrifice are depicted in the son, but gaps are left in strategic places which are obviously meant to be filled by the reader. Why should the son have the nerve to jump onto the islet to save the sheep but, once that had been lost, no power to jump back? What is the mysterious instinct that leads the shepherd to his son? Why does it only need the shepherd's staff to be held out for the son instantly to be at his father's side? Are these narrative devices so different from the

melodramatic co-incidences, marvellous deeds and supernaturally powerful passions of the stage? In portraying shepherds, Wordsworth lavishes considerable rhetorical power on their images, as seen by him at atmospheric times of day, and not only contrasts them but actually links them with the shepherds that people traditional ancient pastoral poetry. Like them and like Milton's Lycidas, they play on their rustic flutes in a life that has many pleasures as well as hardships.

After Wordsworth's life in London, he could understand the reason why he loves country life so deeply and embraces it whole-heartedly again. He points out a country is not a slavish or man-made world like that of the ancient Chinese dynasty:

> Beauteous the domain
> Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
> Was opened—tract more exquisitely fair
> Than is that paradise of ten thousand trees,
> O Gehol's famous gardens, in a clime
> Chosen from widest empire, for delight
> Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
> Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous
> China's stupendous mound!
> (VIII. 119-27)

City images may attract Wordsworth's attention while he is in London, eventually they are merely artificial materials; though they have their dazzling beauty, it is the human element makes city life meaningful. Wordsworth does find that a city is a more restricted and twisted place for common people, and the country life in the Lake District is an ideal society for them:

> But lovelier far than this the paradise
> When I was reared, in Nature's primitive gifts
> Favored no less, and more to every sense

> Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
> The elements, and seasons in their change,
> Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there
> The heart of man—a district on all sides
> The fragrance breathing of humanity,
> Man free, man working for himself, with choice
> Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
> His comforts, native occupations, cares,
> Conducted on to individual ends
> Or social, and still followed by a train,
> Unwooed, unthought-of even: simplicity,
> And beauty, and inevitable grace.
> (VIII. 144-58)

In this idealised Lake District, humans are freer beings: they can work for themselves by their own will, in harmony with Nature. Nature provides a peaceful living space and healthier moral sense for humanity. To Wordsworth, the country, without limited surroundings and the hypocrisy of the city, is a real paradise, or even a utopia, for common people.

Imaginative heightening is not restricted to the commercial products of modernity; Wordsworth describes how his imagination passed through a phase of the "tragic super-tragic" (VIII. 532) in peopling the landscape with distraught personae suited to the stage-props of the natural scene. His account of this undisciplined imaginative activity suggests such features as the woman and children frozen on the moor that he included in the early *Descriptive Sketches*. That this had actually occurred (as his note confirms) takes nothing away from its melodrama. The later poem "The Thorn" conforms even more closely to the kind of imagination here condemned:

> Then, if a widow staggering with the blow
> Of her distress was known to have made her way
> To the cold grave in which her husband slept,

> One night, or haply more than one—through pain
> Or half-insensate impotence of mind—
> The fact was caught at greedily, and there
> She was in visitant the whole year through,
> Wetting the turf with never-ending tears,
> And all the storms of heaven must beat on her.
> (VIII. 533-41)

The very process by which these images are arrived at has the validity of reciprocity:

> Nature and her objects beautified
> These fictions, as, in some sort, in their turn
> They burnished her.
> (VIII. 523-5)

What saved Wordsworth from melodramatic excesses by his account was that he kept within the bounds of nature. There were "forms distinct / To steady me" (VIII. 598-9), a "real solid world / Of images about me" (VIII. 604-5). We might doubt this as a control, since melodramatic happenings were also real and solid enough. He had, he implies, a grasp of human nature moved naturally by natural passion. If he poetically ascribed a woodman's death to disappointed love, he knew that he had actually succumbed to illness caused by nights amid the dank woods. This too seems unconvincing. Many of the most touching of Wordsworth's creations are of the "unmeasured" passions, such as that of Margaret in "The Ruined Cottage." The major source of his poetic "sanity" seems to be the ability to join things together, exactly the sense of coherence and unity that Coleridge apparently lacked. Wordsworth:

> did not pine
> As one in cities bred might do—as thou,
> Beloved friend, hast told me that thou didst,
> Great spirit as thou art—in endless dreams
> Of sickness, disjoining, joining things

Without the light of knowledge.

(VIII. 605-10)

We are taken back to the assertions of *Lyrical Ballads* of the known, familiar, permanent features of the life of nature, surrounded by known, familiar and permanent natural features. Wordsworth's "habits of association" had associated his feelings with elemental forces and the permanent passions of mankind. All else, the diversity and differentiations of modernity, are unnatural. It is a strong protest against the life of the modern city, to be echoed by Arnold later in his characterisation of pressures of modern life which prevent people from seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. But Wordsworth not only made the familiar dauntingly unfamiliar in his poetry, he came to grips with the city on its own terms in the final section of the book:

Never shall I forget the hour,
The moment rather say, when, having thridded
The labyrinth of suburban villages
At length I did unto myself first seem
To enter the great city. On the roof
Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
With vulgar men about me, vulgar forms
Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,
Mean shapes on every side; but, at the time,
When to myself it fairly might be said
(The very moment that I seemed to know)
"The threshold now is overpast', great God!
That aught *external* to the living mind
Should have such mighty sway, yet so it was:
A weight of ages did at once descend
Upon my heart—no thought embodied, no
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,
Power growing with the weight.

(VIII. 689-706)

It is a "spot of time" devoid of impressive images and sublime meanings:

we have to wait for these to be spelled out. Like many of the "London" images, it concentrates on a feeling which is "out of time" or history. It is "as if" it were his first entry into the metropolis, though it obviously is not, but this is the first time he is fully conscious of the place and can say it "to himself." As if the last two books have been a false beginning, only now is the "threshold" passed in an experience that can be likened to Keat's passing of the threshold of Moneta. The Kantian paradigm allows us to appreciate the painful growth of mental power to overcome the "blockage" which is constituted by the preceding books and their attitude to London. The mean and vulgar forms and men around him have none of the impressiveness of shepherds or natural appearances: they, like his mean conveyance, are "vehicles" of a spiritual force emanating from the vast city. Even the sense of history invoked later is mean compared with that of Greece or Rome, but it shares the same collective values.

Chris Jones has emphasised the importance of this passage as a counterweight to earlier accounts of London and stated:

> London presents itself now not as bewildering chaos overmastering the individual sensibility but as a source of sublime conceptions. Wordsworth's mind, oppressed by the weight of experience, develops an inner power to apprehend the manifestations of human spirit in the great metropolis and its history....[16]

Indeed the passage introduces a series of "retractions" of his previous assertions. Instead of confusion and dislocation, Wordsworth now

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[16] Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 192.

intuits "one" sense and spirit working through the massed humanity of the city, present and historical, a spirit that affirms moral insights and strivings:

> Thus here imagination also found
> An element that pleased her, tried her strength
> Among new objects, simplified, arranged,
> Impregnated my knowledge, made it live—
> And the result was elevating thoughts
> Of human nature. Neither guilt nor vice,
> Debasement of the body or the mind,
> Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
> Which was not lightly passed, but often scanned
> Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
> In what we may become, induce belief
> That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
> A solitary, who with vain conceits
> Had been inspired, and walked about in dream.
> (VIII. 797-810)

The experience of humanity in the city, mixed as it is, *validates* the "teachings" of his country upbringing. The opposition of country and city is dissolved, as also is the play of reality and dream. The city is no dream or nightmare afflicting him with a sense of its otherness, neither is he a dreamer inspired by false images of humanity. A sublime unity links him to the city's past, present and future. This spirit is powerful enough to contain the vice and commerce of the city without detriment to its value:

> In presence of that vast metropolis,
> The fountain of my country's destiny
> And of the destiny of earth itself,
> The great emporium, chronicle at once
> And burial-place of passions, and their home
> Imperial, and chief living residence.
> With strong sensations teeming as it did

> Of past and present, such a place must needs
> Have pleased me in those times. I sought not then
> Knowledge, but craved for power—and power I found
> In all things. Nothing had a circumscribed
> And narrow influence; but all objects, being
> Themselves capacious, also found in me
> Capaciousness and amplitude of mind—
> Such is the strength and glory of our youth.
> (VIII. 746-60)

The problem with this final section is that though couched in terms of the sublime, there is no imagery that can express it. It is truly Kantian in that it is a pure insight of the Reason, but for that reason less impressive as poetry. The only imagery used is that of the cave (transferred from its previous position in the Simplon Pass episode) and the image of virtue in the city. The first carries on the idea of a double impression. At first the cavern roof seems to "impress" as an external, unsettling force in its "ferment quiet and sublime" of shifting, spectral appearances before the mind masters its contours and reduces it to a "senseless" mass, "lifeless as a written book" (VIII. 728). Both the cavern and the book, however, invite a further creative response which vivifies the spectacle, finding images "recognised or new" that bear the "pressure" of life. In this co-operative interchange between world and mind, images hold an intermediate place, both specific and typical and perpetually changing. Here and in the Gorge of Gondo Wordsworth attempts to align the infinite aspirations of humanity with his idea of the working of the imagination "to which there is no end" (VIII. 741).

The image of a "brawny" working man caring for his sickly child with "unutterable love" (VIII. 853-9) is a companion-piece to the previous pictures of vice. Whereas vice had been represented by the

corrupt female—the "de-natured" female of the city—virtue is seen as the touching figure of a man's "female" care of a child. But can this short passage undo the work of the rest of the two books? Its status as a "new start" strives to negate the early response, but we are left with two opposed views, neither of which is allowed to predominate. This technique of giving different overlapping views of the same event is continued in the sections dealing with the French Revolution.

Chapter 6 French Revolution

Wordsworth's reaction to the French Revolution and the hopes of reform which it encouraged is usually divided into chronological phases. The first phase is his enthusiastic identification with the French reformers in France, the second his highly conflicted phase as he struggled to maintain hopes of reform after the outbreak of war, and a third phase looking back with disillusionment on these hopes. This third phase itself can be divided into putative chronological periods, one in which Wordsworth sees the insufficiency of reason and gives up moral question in "despair," the second a long period of gradual "restoration." The chronology of these phases is, however, disputed and, I think, highly disputable if based on Wordsworth's account in *The Prelude*.[1]

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[1] Emile Legouis set some parameters for these phases, attributing them to the influences of various philosophers, Beaupuy and Rousseau prior to 1793, subsequently Godwin, and, after a period of doubt and self-questioning from 1795-7, recovering during a year at Alfoxden in the company of Coleridge, after which Legouis considers him "cured." [*The Early Life of William Wordsworth*. trans. J. W. Matthews (London: Libris, 1988) 382.] Nicholas Roe roughly follows this chronology, attributing Wordsworth's early radicalism more generally to his "experience" and seeing a growing appreciation, from 1795, that Godwin's philosophy was "inadequate" which left him accessible to Coleridge's ideas and a complete revulsion against the French similar to Coleridge's in 1798. For Roe, "Tintern Abbey" provides "philosophic restitution for the collapse of the Revolution in France and the associated demise of reform at home." (*Wordsworth and Coleridge: Radical Years*, 274.) This chapter follows Chris Jones' three versions of the French Revolution in his *Radical Sensibility*. Jones questions the chronology of Wordsworth's changing views but does not investigate the chronology of the representations. Many scholars discuss the instability of Wordsworth's

The second phase of Wordsworth's account of the Revolutionary decade is usually thought of as his attraction to and rejection of Godwinism and allegiance to Reason as the "prime enchanter" (X. 699) in a situation that is usually placed chronologically later than the enthusiasm of his personal account of experiences in France. As France became less propitious to hopes of reform, the usual account goes, Wordsworth turned to Godwin's *Political Justice*, published in February 1793, soon after Wordsworth returned from France, for a theory that would base progress on the rational nature of man. What Jones suggests, as Jon Mee emphasises, is that there is an interplay of reason and sensibility in Godwin's work that makes it continuous with the inspiration that had nourished Wordsworth's enthusiasm for France's revolution.[2] Furthermore, the text suggests that the hope "of passionate intuition" (X. 587) that France would march on to universal triumphs did not die until some unspecified time after the death of Robespierre in 1794. The account of Wordsworth's disillusionment with Godwinism, therefore, condemns the early phase of enthusiasm as well as the later one. The feature that characterises Wordsworth's enthusiasm for France is the expectation that human nature was being "born again" (VI. 354), which is

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account of the French Revolution. Stephen Gill mentions, in his *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), p. 56, that though Wordsworth wants to look back and find the ultimate "Truth" that he learned from the past experience in the French Revolution, he can never achieve it. The instability not only occurs in his constantly revised versions of *The Prelude*, but also in each version.

[2] Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 254.

echoed in the "Godwinian" phase by the hope that

> man should start
> Out of the worm-like state in which he is
> And spread abroad the wings of Liberty
> (X. 835-7)

It is difficult to know when Wordsworth starts to view his enthusiasm as the result of "juvenile errors" (X. 638). The accounts of his reaction to the measures of the English government are so scathing as to carry conviction, yet their very vehemence might show a weakening conviction: he says that one of his errors was to use their foolishness to justify his faith in their opponents. In Book X the "change and subversion" he chronicled as the result of England's declaration of war is no longer seen as it is presented earlier, a continued allegiance to the larger cause of mankind against a corrupt English parliament. It is now something that "Soured and corrupted upwards to the source, / My sentiments" and led to "false conclusion of the intellect" (X761-6). In the later critical account of himself as an "active partisan" he talks of dismissing the violence of the revolution as a licence that inevitably accompanies liberty (X. 747), yet we have already had the most horrendous description of the French terror.

The progress of Wordsworth's thoughts towards the French Revolution through the 1790s has been the subject of much discussion and charges of suppression have again been levelled at the text of *The Prelude*. What do we make, for instance, of his implied acquaintance with Gorsas, one of the leading organisers of the attack on the Tuilleries? Stephen Gill points out that:

> Late in life Wordsworth told Carlyle that he had witnessed

> the execution of the journalist Gorsas. Proscribed with other Girondins at the beginning of the Terror, Gorsas had returned from Normandy to Paris, where he was recognized and guillotined on 7 October 1793....the evidence that he did is very strong. Carlyle, the historian of the French Revolution, was not likely to mistake the name of Gorsas any more than Wordsworth was to invent such an experience as watching the execution of a man he knew.[3]

This experience could explain why Roe speculates that Wordsworth, by the concussion of different thoughts and events, develops different revolutionary selves in 1792, including identifying himself as Gorsas, a journalist and delegate who "might have written or spoken out against political violence."[4]

We might at least settle on some date in the 1790s for a thorough revulsion against the false hopes for reform raised by the Revolution if we attend to his account of them as "a work / Of false imagination, placed beyond / The limits of experience and of truth" (X. 846-8), yet this would negate too strongly comments made at the time of writing. His faith that "one paramount mind" might have led the French through revolution to their goal without violence is a "Creed which ten shameful years have not annulled" (X. 178). The hope for an evolution of humankind from its "worm-like state" is "a noble aspiration!—yet I feel the aspiration" (X. 839-40). The qualifications to this last affirmation take us into the turning-point of the second "movement" of his development, his dissatisfaction with the restless analysis of society and of nature, and points to the third account that subsumes his travails in a general

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[3] Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 77.

[4] Roe 41.

maturing from the domination of the eye to a more comprehensive form of insight. "I was," he says:

> perplexed and sought
> To accomplish the transition by such means
> As did not lie in nature, sacrificed
> The exactness of a comprehensive mind
> To scrupulous and microscopic views
> (X. 841-5)

Until we arrive at this general diagnosis of his condition, we are faced with two views of revolutionary transformation, one enthusiastic, one disillusioned, with an indeterminate chronological overlap. In fact the two views seem to be overlaid in much the same way as the two views of London. Both views seem viable, one supporting the aspirations of the French and of English radicals, palliating the violence of the revolution and condemning the prejudice, corruption and excesses of the English government, the other regretting his "unripe" involvement with politics, his neglect of natural feelings and his enslavement to utopian rationalism. Of course, both positions, or varieties of them, were common to many people during this confusing decade and Wordsworth describes his reaction as typical of "ingenuous youth." It could be that Wordsworth is trying to give a view of the feelings of the decade with which many may sympathise. It is not an "objective" view, but one that incorporates different viewpoints. The practice of using his persona as a camera-eye contributes to this attempt at "stereoscopic" viewing.

Noel Carroll discusses the possibility of "objective" photography:

> Let us photograph a man with a 16mm motion picture camera. Let us take three shots in which we keep the man

> the same size in the finished frame of each shot while also varying the focal length of the lens in each shot. We may take one shot with a 9mm lens, one with 17mm lens and one with 100mm lens—i.e., one shot with a normal lens, one with a wide-angle lens and one with a telephoto lens. The result will be three shots each of which, all things being equal, one would expect to be re-presentations of the self-same subject.[5]

When we are shooting the same object, by using different lens, we have various images, but the mind can combine them into one object.

Carroll uses Stanley Cavell's ideas to expand his thought:

> Cavell also argues that "sights" are rather queer metaphysical entities that might be better banished from one's ontology in the name of simplicity—indeed, imagine how very many "sights" each object, viewed from an infinity of angles, will have. But if it is not the "sight" or the "appearance" of the object that a photographic image re-presents, then it must be the object itself that is re-presented. That is, Cavell assumes that a photographic image must either re-present the sight of the object or the object itself. And, since there is no such thing as a sight of an object (independent of the object), then it must be that photographic images re-present objects.[6]

How many "sights" will we have, if we viewed from different angles? Obviously these "sights" will not change the object but the object must be seized by one of the senses. Its "nature" cannot be known in any other way than that seized on or "viewed." Historical events are usually named in retrospect by those who participate in them or view them from afar near the time of their occurrence. Others may view the event from a far greater distance "dispassionately" and analyse causes and phases

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[5] Noel Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996) 40.

[6] Carroll 43-4.

unknown to the participants. Something of the arbitrariness of the "historic" event is conveyed by Wordsworth's picture of himself picking up a stone from the Bastille. Already invested with symbolic importance as the start of a liberating revolution rather than a local riot, its scene can be seen as a "show" or spectacle and Wordsworth, pocketing the object as a souvenir, seems to be aware that he is accepting others' memories. These collective memories have been "objectified" and given a meaning similar to that of the famous sites/sights of London. For someone to whom personal, passionate experience constituted best knowledge, his own reactions have an overwhelming authority and this complicates his approach to history as it did not his view of Cambridge or London.

In the cinema, as Maureen Turim points out, it is impossible to give a "sight" of something without supposing that someone is seeing it. This has been the problem for directors who wish to present "history." Whatever historical scene they dramatise, it is always tied to the personal experience of a character, either in flashback retrospect or dream-sequence or in proleptic anticipation. It carries the limitations and distortions of a "point of view." Wordsworth seems to be offering two viewpoints on the Revolution, since history, for him, is never "objective"—come to that, neither are objects. All is seen with the distortions, the passionate and imaginative colourings, of the human mind. Perhaps that is why statements of one point of view often hover between sincerity, parody or satire and why we might be confused about the vehement condemnations of British statesmen or the admiring account of reason's enchantments. Wordsworth is sincere, at least momentarily, in

the feelings represented: they were genuine and are still genuine representations of true reactions. Wordsworth writes of inspecting the "shield / Of human nature from the golden side" (X. 662-3), as if an experience can have two different sides and yet be the same thing. These differences may be the source of deadly conflicts, as in the case of the knights who fight to attest the mettle of the side they see. The implied "moral" solution is a reconciliation of differences in recognition of fundamental unity, but an "aesthetic" view might insist on the integrity of the "object."

The second disillusioned account of Wordsworth's experiences is given in retrospect and its supposedly greater authority has tended to dominate the story of Wordsworth's growing conservatism, perhaps pre-dating it too much in view of the confusions we have noticed. Dealing with such matters was, as he admitted, dangerous. It was "Reality too close and too intense," (X. 641) and continued to be involved with causes of personal condemnation after 1805 as the early "Jacobinism" of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey came under continual scrutiny in the periodicals. I am not concerned here with disputing matters of fact but in showing how Wordsworth, in presenting the "matter of the 1790s," seems to give authority to one view in one section, yet shows the presence of other views, other experiences. Once again, this "revisionary" text carries its re-visions within it and Wordsworth the director shows the ways in which the film can be cut in one way but could be cut in another. The interpenetration of one view with another is particularly seen in the images and their organisation, which is my main focus. One of the features of this section that merits

special notice is that Wordsworth is dealing with "history" and using images from that history that have passed into an accepted form and interpretation. He can refer, for instance, to the attack on the Tuilleries and the September massacres, and both carry the impact of interpretations sanctioned by "history," or the accounts of the time that became shared. These he could not contradict without penalty. One of his authorities on French affairs, Helen Maria Williams, had been widely criticised for parading her female but radical sensibility through the bodies of the Swiss guards he envisages piled up in the Place de Carrousel[7] and had actually praised the Marseillois who had besieged and taken the Tuilleries. But on leaving Paris he does not allow his picture to be dominated by foreboding. He focuses on Louvet's denunciation of Robespierre and the possibility of counteracting the forces that, in historical retrospect, seemed to be gaining inevitable control. He does not go as far as Shelley and produce a new film showing the "beau idéal"[8] of the Revolution in *The Revolt of Islam* (*Laon and Cythna)*, a replay without its disfiguring violence, but he shows its possibility.

In dealing with the first part of Wordsworth's account of France, I will be showing how his enthusiasm for the Revolution is presented as continuous with his previous experience, how the hope for a transformation of human nature finds a fitting illustration in Beaupuy and

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[7] Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 145.

[8] This term first appeared in Shelley's letter to his publisher, October 13, 1817. "*The Revolt of Islam* (*Laon and Cythna)*: Introductory Note," *Percy Bysshe Shelley: The Complete Poetical Work*, online, Bartleby.com, internet, 27 Jan. 2006.

his transformation of chivalric attitudes into a wider humanitarian stance. But within this section the forebodings or "overlay" of the "later" view often intrude as aspects of the experience that cannot be ignored.

After his life in Cambridge and London, Wordsworth's concerns expand from Nature to humanity, the meaningful, but mysterious images hidden in compelling and spectacular city life. The experience of the French Revolution is another important stage for his mature soul; no longer limiting his thought within the solitary self, Wordsworth cares about the welfare of human beings. Since his love is broadened to all humanity, Wordsworth can eventually go beyond patriotism and understand the implication of the French Revolution: the true meaning of Liberty. Whether personal experience gives solid grounds for such a political faith is tested in these books.

The Ingenuous Patriot

Jones explains that Wordsworth's first account is

> continuous with his French experiences and affirms a faith in progress towards a more just and egalitarian society based on man's social affections. He credits the Revolution with this aim, and still feels in 1803 that the influence of 'one paramount mind' might have guided the Revolution to that end, quelling internal faction and resisting external aggression.[9]

Wordsworth, like "all ingenuous youth," supports the French Revolution; he thinks France will become a better country which will give her people

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[9] Jones, *Radical Sensibility* 205.

more welfare and human rights.

Wordsworth's experience in France is framed by the meditation in the Place de Carrousel referred to above and the initial meditation on the Fall of the Bastille. Both offer images of the revolution that are equivocal, the later one giving hope as well as foreboding, the earlier one aping an enthusiasm that is not truly felt:

> Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
> Of Bastile I sate in the open sun
> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relick in the guise
> Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
> Though not without some strong incumbencies,
> And glad—could living man be otherwise?—
> I looked for something which I could not find,
> Affecting more emotion than I felt.
> For 'tis most certain that the utmost force
> Of all these various objects which may shew
> The temper of my mind as then it was
> Seemed less to recompense the traveller's pains,
> Less moved me, gave me less delight, than did
> A single picture merely, hunted out
> Among other sights, the Magdalene of le Brun,
> A beauty exquisitely wrought—fair face
> And rueful, with its ever-flowing tears.
> (IX. 63-80)

It is as if the Revolution, the event that should rejoice every "living man," lacked a commensurate outward image. Like Mont Blanc or London, the lack of anticipated sublimity makes him question his own feelings. This could be the response of the mere tourist, one that is to be deepened with subsequent experience, but it also raises the doubts that later will deprive the Revolution of its decisive, monumental significance. By putting the Bastile stone, the "relick" of the French Revolution, in his

pocket, Wordsworth guides the readers into the tunnel of history. Wordsworth tries to find his feelings and thoughts towards revolution; his feelings are mixed—he is "glad" in some way, but there is uncertainty about where the revolution might lead. He refers to another image, a painting, the Magdalene of le Brun, which expresses his sympathy for the people and the sublime moral aspect of the revolution.

Alan Liu postulates that Wordsworth only wants to see the "beautiful" side of revolutionary France;

> *The Prelude* shows him misjudging the overall type of pictorial experience political France offers. The razed Bastille is a signature, not of beauty ("something that I could not find"), but of sublime violence, and it affects him with "strong incumbencies"—powers "incumbent" or pressing down from overhead like Apollo on Niobe. The young Wordsworth would suppress such incumbencies under a shield of "gladness." "Could living man be otherwise," he half states, half asks in a strange parenthesis. Yet such gladness rings hollow. Everywhere the young traveller looks, he sees a landscape contoured like the rubble of Bastille and mandating that he be indeed otherwise than glad; everywhere the beautiful revolution is violated by characteristic earthquakes and storms of the sublime.[10]

Liu captures well the uncertainties expressed particularly in "incumbencies;" yet he himself, I think, misreads the section as a "beautiful" contrast to the Burkean "sublime."

The Revolution is yet to figure itself in images of fearful sublimity, but Wordsworth anticipates their pressure and presents himself as more attuned to Beauty, here that typical subject of sensibility, Beauty in

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[10] Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989) 371-2.

distress. Yet the image can have sublimity, though not of the Burkean variety, if it forecasts the renovation of humanity and womanhood, as Jones suggests:

> Wordsworth's image derives greater moral force from its position in *The Prelude*. The previous elevation of the feminine as mother, sister, and guardian of domestic moral values, and his horror at the shameless women of the town in Cambridge and London lends the image a Blakean capacity to reflect on society the responsibility of the harlot's curse. The picture echoes his utopian hopes that the Revolution will do away with the oldest profession and become a support for the genuine domestic feelings of woman.[11]

For Wordsworth, then, the "true" sublime has no essential connection with terror but can be beautiful as an exertion of renovating power on the part of society itself. Here, as later, it might be misleading to read the passage in terms of Burkean ideas.

Wordsworth presents his first significant companions in France as military officers. This knot of military officers is planning to join the émigrés on the borders of France preparing to attack the new French government. Their old-fashioned "chivalry," connected with defence of royalty and aristocracy, is contrasted with the "gallant" youth of France sacrificing their domestic ties and going to the armies that will defend the new France. He sees "the bravest youth" (IX. 269) who are willing to fight for France:

> Even by these passing spectacles my heart
> Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed

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[11] Chris Jones, "Travelling Hopefully: Helen Maria Williams and the Feminine Discourse of Sensibility," *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775-1844*, ed. Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000) 105.

> Like arguments from Heaven that 'twas a cause
> Good, and which no one could stand up against
> Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
> Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
> Hater perverse of equity and truth.
>
> (IX. 287-93)

Despite its obvious partisan enthusiasm, the multiplication of epithets of extreme condemnation directed at *any* dissidents from the Revolutionary cause is a possible sign of immaturity. Wordsworth points out the continuity of his own experience of life, in which respect for aristocracy was not in evidence. His admiration of chivalry and the deeds chronicled in old romance did not carry with it support for the "regal sceptre":

> It made my heart
> Beat high and filled my fancy with fair forms,
> Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds—
> Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
> Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
> Then, or had ever even in crudest youth,
> That dazzled me, but rather what my soul
> Mourned for, loathed, beholding that the best
> Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.
>
> (IX. 209-17)

Though Wordsworth does not deny the good deeds of old-fashioned "chivalry" portrayed by kings and their knights, he knows these are not what French people really need. Despite the fact that his father worked for Lord Lowther, he maintains that his boyhood knew nothing of such distinctions, that his early relish of chivalric tales did not "dazzle" him with the glamour of rank and that Cambridge gave a fair impression of the "republic of letters" where distinction was open to all:

> Of many debts which afterwards I owed

To Cambridge and an academic life,
That something there was holden up to view
Of a republic, where all stood thus far
Upon equal ground, that they were brothers all
In honour, as of one community—
Scholars and gentlemen—where, furthermore,
Distinction lay open to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents and successful industry
(IX. 227-36)

Wordsworth is able to deal with the historical issue of the French Revolution by reference to the training of Cambridge where he learns to be a "republican," at least of the scholarly variety.

The royalists are also contrasted with Beaupuy, who seems to have developed new chivalric feelings devoted to the common man:

He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order.
(IX. 305-13)

The most important experience for Wordsworth in the capital is the meeting with Michel Beaupuy. As Nicholas Roe points out, Wordsworth paints him as more friendless and abandoned by his comrades than the historical record permits, but this makes him more similar to Wordsworth who is similarly painted as a lonely enthusiast for the ideals of the Revolution then and later. Beaupuy is the perfect image for those who fight for the justice of the French Revolution.

Wordsworth follows his enthusiasm for a better future; his relation to Beaupuy is like Dion to Plato (IX. 416). They and the supporters of the Revolution believe if they fight for the justice and welfare of common people, a utopia will come naturally.

Wordsworth uses a celestial image to verify his own belief:

> To aspirations then of our own minds
> Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
> A living confirmation of the whole
> Before us in a people risen up
> Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
> Upon their virtues, saw in rudest men
> Self-sacrifice the firmest, generous love
> And continence of mind, and sense of right
> Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.
> (IX. 388-96)

The turbulence of France disturbs people's belief in the justice of the revolution, but Wordsworth always has faith in it. The "morning star" does not only signify the new hope for the French, but also for those who support humanity. Most significantly, Beaupuy seems to share the respect for "rudest men" that Wordsworth has himself developed.

This faith in the strength of the common people is different from the most commonly cited "sentimental" cause for support of Revolution, that sympathy for their weakness and oppression that Stelzig emphasises:

> For Wordsworth and Beaupuy a "living confirmation" of their republican creed is the image of "a people risen up / Fresh as the morning star" (9.390-92), and their "hatred of absolute rule" (9.504) is fuelled by striking images of actual suffering epitomized by the "hunger-bitten" peasant girl at Blois—"Tis against that / Which we are fighting" (9.512-20)—which in Wordsworth's more romantic imagination also assumes the chivalric guise, as Kenneth R.

Johnston has noted, of knights rescuing damsels in distress.[12] Without knowing how long and with what results the French Revolution will proceed, Wordsworth thinks that a better world will come by the participation of strong, active and righteous common people.

With Beaupuy Wordsworth wanders the Loire valley imagining the figures of old chivalric romance as part of the landscape. He glances at Spenser and Ariosto but also includes the "better deeds" of the kings whose royal seats he passes. He takes this opportunity to once again distinguish his own relish of such romantic tales from those who see them as supporting absolute rule and the orders of aristocracy.

> Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
> Religious, 'mid these frequent monuments
> Of kings, their vices and their better deeds,
> Imagination, potent to enflame
> At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
> Did also often mitigate the force
> Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,
> So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind,
> And on these spots with many gleams I looked
> Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
> Hatred of absolute rule....
>
> (IX. 494-504)

Beaupuy seems to be an alter ego for Wordsworth, his "new chivalry" picking up Wordsworth's own previous views. As a persuasive device, he is an answer to Burke and an illustration of Helen Maria Williams' picture of a reformed chivalry:

> I sometimes think that the age of chivalry, instead of being past for ever, is just returned; not indeed in its erroneous

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[12] Eugene L. Stelzig, '"The Shield of Human Nature": Wordsworth's Reflections on the Revolution in France,' *Nineteen-Century Literature* 45.4 (1991):421-2.

> notions of loyalty, honour and gallantry, which are as little 'l'ordre du jour' as its dwarfs, giants and imprisoned damsels; but in its noble contempt of sordid cares, its spirit of unsullied generosity, and its heroic zeal for the happiness of others.[13]

Here is a modern "knight" who is not, like Burke, transfixed by the tragedy of Marie-Antoinette and, in Paine's phrase, "pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird."[14] Yet Wordsworth can also describe his own attitude as youthful "bigotry."

He has his imaginative picturing of the old chivalrous romance:

> Sometimes I saw methought a pair of knights
> Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm
> Did rock above their heads, anon the din
> Of boisterous merriment and music roar,
> With sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
> Of satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
> Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst,
> A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.
> (IX. 457-64)

These chivalric images have a continuity with his younger enthusiasms and their place in the debate on the French Revolution is legitimated by the engagement with Burke. Nevertheless, just as Burke was criticised for his fanciful extravagance, Wordsworth's Spenserian visions lay themselves open to the same charge, one that he seems to acknowledge later when saying that France seemed a country in Romance.

In a transformation of aristocratic public spirit like that wished for

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[13] Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France* (Delmar, New York: Scholars Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975) 5.

[14] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings,* ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 102.

Helen Maria Williams and by Godwin in the third edition of *Political Justice*, Beaupuy feels for the ordinary, downtrodden peasants of France. This draws a greater realism from Wordsworth; instead of "damsels in distress" or a pictorially beautiful Magdalene, we have the "hunger-bitten peasant girl":

> And when we chanced
> One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl
> Who crept along fitting her languid self
> Unto a heifer's motion—by a cord
> Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
> Its sustenance, while the girl with her two hands
> Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
> Of solitude
>
> (IX. 511-8)

Like the "Discharged Soldier" and the "Blind Beggar," the hunger-bitten girl comes to imprint her image in Wordsworth's memory and inspire the readers to interpret the possible stories about her. Why does a girl have to get her food in this way? What kind society will allow this situation to occur on the public road? The hunger-bitten girl could be employed to the capacity of her young strength in serving a feudal master; she might be also knitting to support the family. Tethered to the heifer, compelled to follow its motions, the girl is reduced to the level of a beast.

The image of the hunger-bitten girl is the reverse of Wordsworth's vision of an ideal society. His ideal society is described in Book VIII where Wordsworth refers to the people of the Lake District. In a "paradise" full of the "fragrance" of humanity, they can work for themselves; they are "free" because they can choose their own time, place and object (VIII. 144-58). The hunger-bitten girl is one of the causes for which the French Revolution is being fought: France does not give her

people enough freedom to live ideally as Wordsworth's "man working for himself."

Wordsworth is here impelled to his most radical political manifesto:

> that poverty
> At least like this, would in a little time
> Be found no more, that we should see the earth
> Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
> The industrious, and the lowly child of toil
> All institutes for ever blotted out
> That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
> Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
> Whether by edict of the one or few—
> And finally, as sum and crown of all,
> Should see the people having a strong hand
> In making their own laws, whence better days
> To all mankind.
>
> (IX. 522-34)

This is the first layer of his reaction to the French Revolution and within in it there are various hints of weakness. This political credo comes from one who has admitted his comparative ignorance of politics. It emerges from riverside rambles and poetic reveries. New to both France and the political dimension, it presents a youth swept away by generous but naïve enthusiasm and, most ominously, it tells us of the death of the similarly inspired Beaupuy, apparently doomed like the ideals he fought for. The proleptic picture of Beaupuy, dying in an unavailing battle against "ignorant men," is very cinematic. It "fixes" the image of Beaupuy in the way that Wordsworth wanted to arrest the images of children and women before life and experience sullied their innocence. A Beaupuy who survived the wars of the Vendée to perish when the cause of France had been compromised in 1796 would not have suited his

purpose even if he had known the truth.

Vaudracour and Julia is a "tragic tale" (IX. 551) related by Beaupuy. The main character might have some relation to Wordsworth's position and condition, even to his own private or "secret history" of romance and desertion of Annette Vallon, though if this is so, it is heavily disguised. From the viewpoint of structure, Wordsworth intercuts another narrative into his narrative about Revolution. This technique is novelistic rather than poetic. It is even more cinematic: an illustrative episode shows how the Revolution affects other people's lives. Though Wordsworth puts the story in the mouth of Beaupuy, it seems to many commentators to be composed in the spirit of Helen Maria Williams' narratives in her *Letters Written in France* (1790-95) , in Jones' opinion, "*histoires* of history"[15] or paradigmatic extensions of the theme of Revolution. These involve similar elements that highlight the injustice of the *ancien regime*, especially the restriction of marriage caused by different ranks and the imposition of parental will which can imprison daughters in a convent, or use *lettres de cachet* that allowed parents to have their own children arrested. In Helen Maria Williams' stories, the Revolution sets young men and women free to marry and live in happiness. But in Wordsworth's story, Revolution comes too late and does not bring freedom and happiness. Revolution does not prevent guilt and injustice. Vaudracour and Julia are guilty in the conception of a child; Vaudracour

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[15] Jones, "Travelling Hopefully: Helen Maria Williams and the Feminine Discourse of Sensibility" 97. Jones points out that Helen Maria Williams' account about her former tutor, Augustin Thomas Du Fossé might influence Wordsworth's writing about Vaudracour and Julia (*Radical Sensibility*, 138)

injures and kills officers of the Law. The relation between Vaudracour and his parents is not one of mere oppression but includes some feelings of loyalty. The situation contains human suffering that the Revolution does not touch. Wordsworth's narrative shows an instability of effect that is a possible warning for the readers; maybe the author Wordsworth of 1805 shows that the hero Wordsworth of 1792 or 1793 is too enthusiastic in believing that revolution will cure all social and moral ills.

After this high point of commitment, it is tempting to read the succeeding accounts of the Terror as reality contradicting romance, yet the account could only have been written by one who held firm to his beliefs against all contradicting pressures. Though there are overwhelmingly negative opinions and condemnations in England, Wordsworth is still willing to believe in the justice of the French Revolution.

The most appalling images of the revolutionary terror are actually included in the section when Wordsworth is presented as accepting them as the cost of revolution. The violence and injustice of the ancient regime had stored up a vast "reservoir" of guilt and "ignorance" that burst under the pressure of aggression from abroad. The explanation itself bears the mark of Godwin, the idea that circumstances form the individual and the assassin cannot resist such necessity any more than the knife:

> Domestic carnage now filled all the year
> With feast-days: the old man from the chimney-nook
> The maiden from the bosom of her love,
> The mother from the cradle of her babe,
> The warrior from the field—all perished, all—

> Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
> Head after head, and never heads enough
> For those who bade them fall.
>
> (X. 329-36)

It is a dramatised description of Wordsworth's uneasy vision; the scenes of "domestic carnage" present the hellish power of Wordsworth's imagination:

> As Wordsworth's characterizations of the revolutionary terror suggest, its licentious and orgiastic energies are marked by repetition, accumulation, and proliferation. Beset by external foes and internal division, "the goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few / Spread into madness of the many" (10.312-13). "Domestic carnage," which "now filled all the year / With feast-days" (10.329-30), claims "head after head, and never heads enough / For those who bade them fall" (10.335-36)—the carnivalesque grotesqueries of London's Saint Bartholomew Fair (satirized in Book 7) have undergone a dreadful Channel-change in this terse account.[16]

As Stelzig observes, the presentation of St Bartholomew Fair prepares for the following scenes of the French Revolution; Wordsworth, again, uses techniques which are similar to the modern cinema. The body-parts of the victims are framed for readers to feel the power of turbulent anarchy. Readers might first respond to "Head after head" as a common use of metonymy: "head" stands for the whole body. Even the "fall" of heads might be used as a literary metaphor. But these are real, severed heads and they "fall" into the executioner's basket. Wordsworth uses the same technique in the drowned man episode—he seems to present the scene of horror on the aesthetic level, but the presentation of visual images contradicts this and stimulates the sense of shock. Instead of the exotic

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[16] Stelzig 427.

objects that occupied the readers' eyes in St Bartholomew Fair, human bodies, or body-parts, exotic in their monstrosity, become the dominant and haunting images for the feast of their eyes. The scenes of horror both imply the dark element of the revolution and the monstrous side of human nature; by putting them together, Paris becomes an earthly inferno. If this is the price that the French have to pay for Liberty, some would say that they were incapable of it. Despite its position within the narrative, it seems to glance at one of James Gillray's most ferocious caricatures of the French as cannibals on their "feast-days" of Revolution. If human nature is being "born again," it might have a long journey to mature adulthood.

Wordsworth intercuts a scene of a child playing with his toy, a "windmill" (X. 336-45). This surreal scene offers another perspective on the Terror. The innocence of children is juxtaposed with the violence of revolution. Wordsworth uses his earlier experiences to develop the child images and his understanding of people, history and revolution. Ann Wierda Rowland thinks that the violent quality of a child is associated with Wordsworth's childhood experiences in the early books of *The Prelude*, such as the "fell destroyer" and the "plunderer" in Book I.[17] The child imagery does enhance the "immature" quality of the French Revolution. The "child-like" nature of the French had often been commented upon, and ascribed to their national character or to their political situation: governed by an absolute ruler, they had nothing to do but obey the laws, like children, and had been kept in this immature state

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[17] Ann Wierda Rowland, "Wordsworth's Children of the Revolution," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 41.4 (2001): 683.

by political oppression. They have a similarly immature attitude towards violence. After the violence of the Terror, not only the French, but Wordsworth and other supporters start to realise that it is not easy to build a better country by means of revolution; the dark side of revolution might lead people through unnecessary processes of horror.

Wordsworth describes his troubled dream of Terror to Coleridge:

> Most melancholy at that time, O friend,
> Were my day-thoughts, my dreams were miserable;
> Through months, through years, long after the last beat
> Of those atrocities (I speak bare truth,
> As if to thee alone in my private talk)
> I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
> Such ghastly visions had I of despair
> And tyranny, implements of death,
> And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
> Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
> Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
> Of treachery and desertion in the place
> The holiest that I knew of—my own soul.
> (X. 368-80)

Wordsworth cuts into the represented sequence of events to speak from the point of writing. The orality of the present speaking voice might correspond to a historical reality—he did read the poem to Coleridge—but it is also rhetorically effective. The intimate, almost confessional, disclosure of his dreams is less confident than the earlier account of his troubled dreams after stealing the rowing boat. There they testified to an ennobling interchange between nature and imagination; here they are far more disturbing and their disclosure is only possible in the most confidential setting. Such deep self-doubt, represented by this mode of representation and by the substance of the dreams, lasts for years.

Either it is not restricted to the period in which he changed his "day thoughts," or the period of indecision about the revolution was greater than has usually been allowed. Cinematically, such traumatic dreams would be represented by a reiterated dream-sequence interpolated at strategic moments in the sequential narrative. The power and, I would say, the uncertain temporality of Wordsworth's dream have been very influential in describing his response to the Terror. This traumatic dream has also no determinate setting. Deeply personal as it is presented, it could correspond to a number of subject-positions available for imaginative participation in the revolutionary decade. "He" might be any victim of state power under an anarchy such as Robespierre's France. He might be in England, pleading amid incredulous hostility for the ideals of the revolution. The tribunals might be treason trials such as those that threatened the lives of people he knew among the radical groups of London. He might, on the other hand, be a Girondin like Madame Roland, pleading revolutionary ideals against the injustices of Robespierre's tribunals. He might also, it is hinted, be pleading the revolution's cause against his own better judgment, seated in his "soul." Just as Gothic novels of the 1790s such as Ann Radcliffe's could suggest many counterparts to the terrors, imprisonments, inquisitions and tortures they hint at, so the gothic of Wordsworth's dreams provides displacements for the horrors and violence present on both sides. These visions seem to give the lie to all rational explanations or hopes that such an experience could be surmounted, yet he seems to draw something of value from the experience. The terrible visions of domestic carnage do influence Wordsworth's imagination, but they undercut his commitments

rather than lead to new positive views.

Though different thoughts are battling in the text, Wordsworth never gives up his sympathy with the French; even overshadowed by the influence of the Terror, he is willing to believe that there must be a right basis for the revolution:

> And in their rage and dog-day heat I found
> Something to glory in, as just and fit,
> And in the order of sublimest laws.
> And even if that were not, amid the awe
> Of unintelligible chastisement
> I felt a kind of sympathy with power—
> Motions raised up within me, nevertheless,
> Which had relationship to highest things.
> (X. 411-8)

Wordsworth has his sympathy with godly power. He refers to the "prophets" (X. 401) in the old testament of the bible; they point out that in wars and devastations, God's "punishment" (X. 405), a kind of purification of people's misdeeds, may come. People are themselves corrupted, but a higher power works through them with its purpose; with the justification of historical necessity, good will come.

After Wordsworth hears the news of Robespierre's death, he intercuts the images of wanton boys who are returning home through Levens Sands from St Mary's Abbey (X. 559-66). He seems to imply that the French Revolution may eventually find its right course, but, simultaneously, the violent elements of sea images, such as a precarious estuary, also suggest that the future of Revolution is dangerous and not a smooth, peaceful one as he imagines. In this episode Wordsworth focuses on many things in a wide-ranging sequence. His mind returns to his childhood and St Mary's Abbey, in looking both back and forth,

thinking about the poetic inspiration of his past, looking forward to the poetic achievement of his future and considering the old ideal of revolution. He returns to the churchyard graves of Cartmell's rural town to memorialize his teacher, the Reverend William Taylor, who encouraged him to be a poet. Wordsworth knows if his teacher were alive, he would be proud that he was becoming a better poet, no longer the child who "Began to spin, at first, my toilsome songs" (X. 514). The sea rock, a part of a "Romish Chapel" (X. 520) beside River Leven and St Mary's Abbey itself are both images of violence. In the time of Henry VIII, establishments of medieval Roman Catholic foundation, such as St Mary's Abbey, were destroyed. This might indicate that the future of the Revolution still could be a dangerous transition, not "gentleness and peace" (X. 517) as it should be. His immediate reaction toward Robespierre's death is: "Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy / In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus / Made manifest." (X. 539-41). After his apparently positive welcome for Robespierre's death, he instantaneously brings in the vision of a better time, but his violent "glee" and joy in "vengeance" seems not to be suited for the promise of a "golden time" (X.541). Wordsworth's images are still full of violence and danger; they remind readers that though the Revolution may finally turn out right, it is still a long distance from home.

Wordsworth's weakness is that he does not understand politics much; he mentions that he is "untaught by thinking or books / To reason well of polity or law" (IX. 201-2). The reasons why he supports the French Revolution are the "zeal" that has "burst / Forth like a Polar summer" (IX. 259-61) and "bigotry" of a "youthful patriot's mind"

(IX.500-1). What Wordsworth confronts are the knots of French military officers who do not have the righteous reasons to support the old regime; therefore his naïve understanding can be "in their weakness strong" (IX. 266). Simultaneously, this passage also indicates that if he meets someone with a stronger background of politics, like Burke, his belief might not build up that easily and could be shaken.

Wordsworth represents all the "ingenuous youth" who would fight against the injustice in society and for the welfare of common people with chivalry. He can understand the justice of the revolution; not being influenced by the narrow-viewed patriotism of England, he is a "patriot" of revolution and humanity.

Juvenile Errors

The second account of his feelings during the revolutionary period begins almost imperceptibly after his affirmation "of passionate intuition" of the invincibility of the French Republic and its "universal" triumph (X. 584-7). Going on to speak of the false optimism with which he turned to the task of reformation in Britain, he justifies his opposition by pointing to the patent faults of the British government. His hopes are described as built on the insufficient grounds of a "noviciate" mind (X. 683), yet "natural" to any youth who began to think of political affairs with "fervour." The much-quoted lines about "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!" (X. 692-3) have an uncertain irony. As in his later assertion of a supposed "Godwinian"

creed, "What delight— / How glorious!" (X. 818-9), such feelings and confidence belong to youth, and perhaps should not be wholly condemned. In his own case he admits that he was "a child of Nature, as at first, / Diffusing only those affections wider / That from the cradle had grown up with me" (X. 752-5). But the Wordsworth here is not the Wordsworth of the first account and shows, in a different persona, a different way of reacting to French excesses. The Wordsworth of this account, who confidently asserts "throwing off oppression must be work / Of licence as of liberty" (X. 747-8) is not the Wordsworth of tortured dreams, and this Wordsworth reacts sooner both to the declaration of war with France and to the French war of expansion, whether this is dated 1792 or 1974: "I read her doom," he declares (X. 796), in flat contradiction of the passionate faith expressed earlier. In fact this Wordsworth has no "faith / of inward consciousness" in principles and sentiments and engages in rational analysis of society in search of safer universal grounds of hope. A maturer narrator observes that in this rational investigation the passions "had the privilege to work, / And never hear the sound of their own names" (X. 812-3) but the images of dissection and calling to the bar of "passions, notions, shapes of faith" (X. 889) is oddly fervourless. The process, which has been compared with the unjust tribunals of "his" dreams, seems to end in a perplexity and despair that is almost wholly intellectual and can apparently be resolved by turning to mathematics (X. 902). This analysis is further described in the next book, where its target is the "sage, patriot, lover, hero" of history and the creations of poets, which yield him no more satisfying image of rational man (XI. 63-73). Now this is a wild parody of any of the

radical creeds current at the time, a parody only equalled by those of Burke in which a Frankenstein-Priestley new-created man in some chemical laboratory or some passionless Godwin framed him from the first principles of reason and justice. It is as if Wordsworth took the idea of man "parted as by a gulph / From him who had been" (XI. 59-60) and worked it to a logical conclusion, without any of the sense of continuity and possible progress that marks those philosophers' ideas or of the continuity in his own ideas of what man is and could be that is traced by the work itself. Even within this barren task there is the typical concession that reason has exalted and "shall" exalt and refine mankind (XI. 87), yet hope for the brotherhood of the human race rests with the "mysteries of passion" (XI. 85). The suggestion that his view of nature was affected by a "kindred spirit" (XI. 116) and became infected with rules of picturesque beauty, a microscopic myopia and a love of sitting in judgement, shows how far this Wordsworth seems to be divorced from his own past.

The presence of exaggeration or parody, with that uncertain irony noticed earlier, could be extended to other passages. It is noticeable that the images of immediate experience are largely confined to the first part of his revolutionary career. Unlike previous representations of personal experience they are not meditated upon by another consciousness or set in any wider context. Sometimes, as in the images of the terror, they seem to defy precise meaning or setting in their concentration on effect. They contain affirmations and gestures that can be seen as histrionic, as in Beaupuy's exclamation about the hunger-bitten girl or Wordsworth's re-commitment to the cause of the revolution by Levens Sands and bitter

denunciations of the government. While these scenes and gestures are cinematic, there is a certain one-dimensionality about them. One of the most obvious ways in which the images of the earlier section are undercut is the treatment of romance. The idea of a "new chivalry" associated with Beaupuy is expressed with many references to imaginative constructions, to Spenser, Ariosto and old tales. Their conversations indeed deal with constitutions, laws and statues, but they have the attraction, as he says in the section, of a "country of romance." It leads to "wild ideas" in the head rather than grappling with hard realities, to overweening confidence in man's capacity to make reality, as if the world were "plastic" to his wishes. The second section seems to undercut the attractive images of the first, or, as in the two pictures of London, overlay them in a confusion of chronology. In delivering a view of this confused time, Wordsworth has given two, centred in different consciousnesses. One simply does not know when the more disillusioned consciousness overtakes the first, and to what extent, especially given the continued aspirations voiced by the "writing I." The confusion might be convenient to a Wordsworth anxious to be both true to his experience and to evade charges of "Jacobinism"; they might represent the uncertainties of a Wordsworth who wants to maintain a reformist enthusiasm without making the patent mistakes of the unsuccessful efforts of the 1790s. The very uncertainty of the narratological scheme might prepare us for the grand reprise of Wordsworth's project into which he now launches.

The Imaginative Eye

The third account of Wordsworth's revolutionary "impairment" and its cure in effect returns us to the subject of the whole work. Introduced by the dominance of the judgmental eye in picturesque theory, Wordsworth describes a recovery, aided by Coleridge and Dorothy, in which he gains, or regains with more secure knowledge, his spiritual insight into nature, its processes and the principle of life which links man to nature. The most notable thing about this recapitulation of his past experience and regained sense of continuity is that it seeks to highlight the *unconsciousness* of the growing Wordsworth of the wisdom which the mature Wordsworth was able to interpret in the earlier books. Only now, it claims, has the hero of the work reached full consciousness of that significance that the narrator or director has been anxious to express in experiences that the younger Wordsworth enjoyed without such knowledge. As narrator and hero are now apparently one, he is prepared to assert his elevation to a "creative" being. Perhaps, however, this creation refers to the *Lyrical Ballads*, since he goes on to give an account of the importance of low and rustic life that echoes the Preface. In this case the hero and narrator are not one in 1805 and it is yet another stage in the process. The re-positioning of the "spots of time" passage is another signal of this retrospective movement back to 1798.

Other features of this "return to nature" are reminiscent of the poetry of 1798. His denunciation of the "appetitive eye" is very similar to that of "Tintern Abbey." There, the dominance of the eye was associated with boyhood, which did not really fit the chronology of the

poem. Here it is associated with the whole revolutionary period:

> The state to which I now allude was one
> In which the eye was master of the heart,
> When that which is in every stage of life
> The most despotic of our senses gained
> Such strength in me as often held my mind
> In absolute dominion.
>
> (XI. 170-5)

Most awkwardly he has to admit that his "new" appreciation of man as "an object of delight, / Of pure imagination, and of love" (XII. 54-5) is actually a re-gaining of something achieved before. When he writes that he "Again…took the intellectual eye / For my instructor" (XII. 57-8), we do indeed feel that this might be a different intellectual eye than that with which he studied Godwin, yet his assertion that he was "studious more to see / Great truths, than touch and handle little ones" (XII. 58-9) is tendentious. What could be greater than the destinies of nations and of mankind? Such reversal of scale, however, is associated with the passing of revolutionary events into perspective: "The promise of the present time retired / Into its true proportion" (XII. 64-5) and a withdrawal from the practical involvement implied by "touch and handle" with its implication of meddling. The "tyranny" of the eye now picks up the resonance of political tyranny, but, despite his promise or threat to enter into "abstruser argument" (XI. 176), the means by which nature delivers within the faculties of man and within their objects a subservience to "the great ends of liberty and power" (XI. 183) is left unargued. In the 1850 version some images of nature's gentle yet

irresistible power are given, but in 1805 the analogy is not disclosed.[18]

Charles Rzepka sums up the differences of the new Wordsworth:

> In the end, Wordsworth becomes (1) a man primarily of feeling, not of action; (2) a man of nature and impulse, not of society and rationale, and (3) a man seeking an audience of intimates, like Dorothy and Coleridge, a captive audience whose expectations he can count on as coinciding with his own, rather than audience of strangers.[19]

Wordsworth, in the "inward" nature of his work, invents the new tradition of British poetry at the end of the eighteenth century.[20] But he is not merely seeking "an audience of intimates;" he also educates the readers to become his intimate audience. In the Preface, Wordsworth introduces two important issues: the new contract with his readers and the use of the language of common people. In other words, the key mission of *Lyrical Ballads* is to communicate and educate readers to understand this new poetry and to make it their own. In Chapter 1, I use "Simon Lee" as an example to explain how Wordsworth uses his poem to communicate with his readers and encourage them, by using their own "co-operative" power, to interpret the poem and "make a tale" by themselves. Furthermore, Wordsworth presents himself as the poet of the "real." He might not be

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[18] 1850 XII. 10-8.

[19] Charles Rzepka, "Books 10 and 11 of *The Prelude*: The French Revolution and the Poet's Vocation," *Approaches to Teaching Wordsworth's Poetry*, ed. Spencer Hall and Jonathan Ramsey (New York: MLA, 1986) 115.

[20] John Williams indicates that "Wordsworth repeatedly bridged the chasm between public and private by subtly imaginative strategies that rested ultimately on accepting the legitimacy of his personal convictions" (*William Wordsworth: A Literary Life*, p. 122).

a "man of action" but his poetry will deal with common subjects without the misleading colourings drawn from traditional poetic language or romance. His appeal to experience (or recollected action) will emphasise that "perspective" that much of his revolutionary rhetoric lacked, and he will certainly not deal in feeling that might raise a thousand swords or cudgels in violence.

Chapter 7 Retrospect

The mood and mode of retrospection begins early in the last sections of *The Prelude*. It is as if Wordsworth wants to put behind him the experience of the Revolutionary period, yet he cannot quite break its hold on his imagination. Nor can he write of the time when he had lost hope and things to hope for without invoking the comforting presence of those who aided him. The healing intervention of Coleridge and Dorothy is invoked immediately after his account of the "despair" to which he had been reduced in his dissection of society. We are assured of its efficacy in restoring him to his former self: It revived "the feelings of my earlier life, / Gave me that strength and knowledge full of peace, / Enlarged and never more to be disturbed" (X. 924-6). Wordsworth then refers to the present of writing in noting the fate of the French, when a Pope anoints the head of the new emperor. The image of "the dog / Returning to his vomit" (X. 934-5) breaks decorum and shows a state of mind far from "undisturbed." Thinking of Coleridge visiting Sicily during his return from Malta, the pastoral muse is not the first thing to come to his mind. Another great nation sunk to the level of slaves of arbitrary power occupies his thought, as he imagines how Sicily appears to Coleridge. But "indignation works where hope is not" (X. 966), and that seems to be his own response to Britain as well as France in 1805. Sicily has "not even /A hope to be deferred – for that would serve / To cheer the heart in such entire decay" (X. 963-5) and hope is what is

sought in the last sections. The tale may be of the revival of former faith, but it comes with qualifications that tell of his disappointments. The power he now apprehends "matures / Her processes by steady laws, gives birth / To no impatient or fallacious hopes ... provokes to no quick turns / Of self-applauding intellect" (XII. 26-31). This power does not need "extraordinary calls" (XIII. 101) and raises emotions "which best foresight need not fear" (XIII. 115). The most prominent juxtaposition of disappointment and surviving hope appears at the conclusion:

> though too weak to tread the ways of truth,
> This age fall back to old idolatry,
> Though men return to servitude as fast
> As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
> By nation sink together, we shall still
> Find solace in the knowledge which we have,
> Blest with true happiness if we may be
> United helpers forward of a day
> Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work—
> Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe—
> Of their redemption, surely yet to come.
> (XIII. 431-41)

The note to this passage in the Norton edition is quick to point out that this apparent commitment to the cause of truth and long-term social and political reform is actually in keeping with the interpretation of the editor, M. H. Abrams, which he elaborates in *Natural Supernaturalism*, and that it actually refers to the transformation, the "new world" delivered by the poetic imagination, which is the subject of the concluding lines.[1] The beauty and divine power of the human mind, however, has been developed in contexts other than that of the individual poet and even

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[1] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971) 116-7

extended to the inarticulate countryman. Wordsworth is also concerned to link the power of the human mind to love, an intellectual love extending from the personal to the social as well as to the external universe. In a conclusion that seeks to gather together the strands of development followed in the poem as a whole it seems unlikely, or, indeed, a major flaw, if it does not confirm that concern for humanity and its progress that has been growing throughout the account and reached a "false conclusion" in revolution merely because it chose the wrong means. The emphasis on co-operation, on joint labour and united efforts certainly distinguish this approach from that condemned as thrusting oneself or trusting any who thrust themselves on the world as self-appointed leaders but it does not rule out any more gradual communal enlightenment in which, as Godwin asserted, there would be no need of violent revolution.

The reader addressed by Wordsworth in the latter sections of the poem is one more aware of public issues and the public standing of the poet and his friends. As in his dealings with history, Wordsworth has been giving interpretations of recognisable publicised theories, such as those of Godwin and Burke, and rendering others through the mouth of Beaupuy. It is not, however, an intellectual survey of his encounters with ideas; no *Biographia Literaria*. All these theories are interpreted in terms of the images of Man and the world that they create. Coleridge is not only the intimate "friend" to whom he confided his dreams but also the contributor to *Lyrical Ballads*, the creator of the Ancient Mariner, and the closing section centres upon this period when Wordsworth himself first enters the public consciousness as a distinctive poet. In this self-presentation the deconstructive even-handedness with which he had

presented competing views of history and places is replaced by more argued dialogue in which the assertions of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* are given a context in these competing views of Man. Some of these assertions might have previously been deconstructed, as in the presentation of city and country, but the temporal situation of this section of the poem allows his then opinions to stand as a poetic creed justifying a continued optimism in the possibilities of human nature.

The quarrel with Godwin's ideas is clear from the outset of his new re-orientation, yet the influence of Coleridge, though equally obvious, is qualified in similar ways. Stated briefly, his quarrel with Godwin concerned the use of reason, unqualified by imagination or feeling, to "sit in judgment" over the achievements of history and humanity. To Coleridge he owes the stress on imagination, the emphasis on inner faculties and their transforming power, a feature which, of course, he has been developing in his own way throughout the poem. Yet both thinkers place a value on education and expression that he finds misplaced. Both Coleridge and Godwin, as well as Burke, could be criticised as thinking "Retirement, leisure, language purified / By manners thoughtful and elaborate" (XII. 189-90) to be prerequisites of that extended love or "magnanimity" that he seeks. True, he goes on in this dialogue with Godwin, abject poverty and deprivation do produce the brutes to which Godwin thought the oppressive spirit of society reduced the labourer, but there are "real" men living in more "natural" conditions that give grounds for more optimism. The characters of the ballads resist the stunting apathy or vengeful impulses that could be implanted by "that injustice which upon ourselves / By composition of society /

Ourselves entail" (XII. 103-5). Wordsworth does not go on to develop the social/political implications of his elevation of rustic life. The contention that the conditions of such life foster essential human characteristics and social customs in which habit does the work of reason is inherent in the volume of *Lyrical Ballads* and a defence of these conditions is given in his letter to C. J. Fox.[2] In referring to the project in *The Prelude* he is particularly concerned with mental, emotional and moral development and the poems he refers to are "The Thorn" and "The Idiot Boy," the latter one, incidentally, least appreciated by Coleridge. These poems and Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner," to which he also refers, have mystery at their heart. All involve characters whose powerful inner movements are compelling but lie beyond distinct expression or the probing of reason. It will be the argument of this chapter that Wordsworth continues to see mysterious potential within the "real," and that perhaps the condition of being "real" renders an image liable to vital transformation.

When he imagines Coleridge in Sicily, Wordsworth seeks comfort (for both Coleridge and himself) from historical and poetic images, but they do not seem to alter significantly the mood of hopelessness. They are "fancied images" and have an air of inauthenticity. Coleridge might be "willingly deceived" by any stream given the name of Arethusa, but Wordsworth doubts whether the real Arethusa now exists and seems

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[2] William Wordsworth, "To Charles James Fox," 14 January 1801, letter 152 of *The Letters of William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 312-5.

incapable of a Coleridgean suspension of disbelief (X. 1033-6). The "spots of time" are perhaps in their most appropriate place in Book XI as they are the most enigmatic of the experiences he describes and those whose elements—beacon, mist, sense of being lost—have been subject to continual displacement. The lines "Feeling comes in aid / Of feeling, and diversity of strength / Attends us, if but once we have been strong" (XI. 325-7) point to the vital link of feeling as well as the cluster of impressions that make up an experience. As mentioned before, Hartleyan associationism can still be seen while in the process of being transcended. The imprinting of experiences on the brain with all their contiguous circumstances gives a basis for the complication, enrichment and even transformation of those associations by future experience. The power that impresses such experiences, however, while it might sometimes be called nature, is often seen to be a "strong" power in the mind, identified with feeling or, finally, love, which itself can perform transformations.

The re-positioning of the "spots of time" passage from a childhood context to a position near the conclusion perhaps offers the strong assertion of unity that is aesthetically fitting.[3] It is, however, like the cavern sequence, capable of joining in the local movement of thought as well. As Bishop observes, there is repetition not only in elements of the images but in "language and situation" and they are like a "clue to

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[3] Jonathan Wordsworth, "Revision as Making: *The Prelude* and Its Peers," *Romantic Revisions*, ed. Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 34. See Chapter 3, p. 102-3.

something farther back" in the sequence of paradigmatic images.[4] Re-evoking these childhood images also activates their mystery and their disturbing power; they are seemingly unpurged traumatic moments, without the comforting gloss that the maturer mind might provide for images like that of the impending crag. (Most readers have, in fact, felt impelled to give them some kind of gloss or interpretation.) Mysterious as they are, the narrator insists that they have a liberating effect and reinforce the power of mind. They might take their place beside such sequences as the dream of Druids. This too begins in the mysterious savagery of their fancied rites but finishes in evoking their exploration of the heavens, a kind of mythology of progress inherent in even the most disturbing and seemingly barbaric experience of mankind. Mystery seems to be the incentive for the mind's activity, and this activity in the later sequences of the poem is seen optimistically as progress.

As in his earlier comparison of his own upbringing with that of Coleridge, he insists that he has "real," solid images to draw upon when estimating the worth of man (VIII. 603-5). In this later section, however, we do not see glimpses of heroic shepherds dignified by their deeds, though, indeed, the travellers of the public road are invested with the grandeur of adventuring mariners (XII. 153-5). It is sufficient for Wordsworth to refer to the subjects of *Lyrical Ballads* and describe in general terms "the depth of human souls— / Souls that appear to have no depth at all / To vulgar eyes" (XII. 166-8). It is appropriate that he

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[4] Jonathan Bishop, "Wordsworth and the 'Spots of Time'," *Wordsworth: The Prelude*, ed. W. J. Harvey and Richard Gravil (London: Macmillan, 1972) 148.

should repeat his claims to find a healing strength in their confrontation with sorrow, although that aspect of the poems found little appreciation among his first readers:

> Sorrow that is not sorrow but delight,
> And miserable love that is not pain
> To hear of, for the glory that redounds
> Therefrom to human-kind and what we are.
> (XII. 245-8)

The main emphasis, however, is upon their difference from the "talking world." They are not dependent on the admiration of others but express "liveliest thoughts in lively words / As native passion dictates." Even more impressive are those:

> Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
> Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase,
> Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
> Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
> Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
> The thought, the image, and the silent joy;
> Words are but under-agents in their souls—
> When they are grasping with their greatest strength
> They do not breathe among them.
> (XII. 266-74)

This is a strong departure from any Coleridgean idea that words are necessary for thought and that the moral quality of life depends on linguistic resources that descend from philosophers and theologians to the language of common life. It is also a movement away from outward signs, from story and image, to inner feelings of which only a glimpse may emerge. The central characters of the poems he refers to, Martha Ray and the idiot Johnny, are the subject of speculative stories which give only a slight indication of their own feelings. In some of the *Lyrical Ballads*, like "Old Man Travelling" and "Simon Lee," the "outward"

view seems contradicted or heavily qualified by the words of the protagonist. Simon Lee, for instance, dearly loves the sound of the hounds even though the emphasis of the poem is on the heavy cost of his hunting past with some hints of the injustices of society. In *The Prelude*, too, we have seen in the Discharged Soldier and the Blind Beggar figures that seem to be dissociated from any particular stories and make their impression through a mysterious recognition of essential humanity. Yet perhaps, as I suggested earlier, this mysterious bond, or "love," may inspire the beholder to invent stories, speculate on causes and situations which might "explain" the figure he invests with significance. In the last book of *The Prelude* there are many addresses to the reader, often hortatory in tone, that emphasise the necessity of personal response. "Here must thou be, O man, / Strength to thyself ... No secondary hand can intervene / to fashion this ability" (XIII. 188-93). This seems to be the condition for the action of imagination which involves a willingness "to work and to be wrought upon" (XIII. 100).

This love, which could be described as "interest" or "attention," is similar to the initial attraction which must "draw in" the reader or the film-viewer, and Wordsworth's particular specifications of this interest should be borne in mind. It should come from the interest of the human passions depicted rather than any sensational "gripping" situation, as he says in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. It should also derive from associations formed in life rather than from other aesthetic constructs. It "cannot stand / Dividually," however, and, in conjunction with the imagination, produces that active, creative response that he has been describing in his own experience. Bakhtin again provides a parallel

when he insists that the author's attitude to the hero must be one of "aesthetic love" above all moral evaluation. The author is the only one who can "love" the hero in the sense of giving values to an aesthetically conceived character.[5] Working on the boundaries of self and other, Bakhtin realises, though, that this conception of a character is a task-to-be-achieved for both author and reader.[6] The last sections of the poem, therefore, involve a more overt appeal to reader-response and efforts to enlist the reader as co-creator.

The implicit revisionary, or re-creative nature of the poem becomes more explicit as he brings his own previous publications into the poem, speculates on those to come, and points explicitly to omissions such as schooldays (XIII. 313-6), which have to be put in their place retrospectively by the reader, and books (XIII. 279-80), which might lead the reader to reassess their value in the same way that the second "entry" to London reassesses the value of city experience. Above all, perhaps, is the stress on the "democratic" availability of this responsive and creative power. It is a pity that the "vision on Snowdon" has been extracted from its context by many who would see it exclusively as the culmination of Wordsworth's awareness of his own poetic powers and his graduation to the status of "mighty mind." It is hailed as his ascension to the role of Poet/Prophet by M. H. Abrams[7] and seen as the climactic assertion of the imperial masculine intellect by Anne K. Mellor.

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[5] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," *Art and Answerability*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) 90.
[6] Bakhtin 84.
[7] Abrams 78-9.

Abrams, however, recognises the reciprocal influencing that modifies the autonomy of the poetic soul and Mellor recognises that any suppression of the Other is precarious.[8] I think further uncertainties can be introduced by considering its revisionary character and its place in the progressive argument of the last sections. Wordsworth opens a dialogue with his previous poetry, including *Descriptive Sketches*, where a very similar passage appears. The argument, running over the book division like others, links the description of the "mighty mind" as an example or at most a more conscious use of powers ascribed to the lowliest of men: "the power, / The thought, the image, and the silent joy." The central feature of the experience, as in the later elaboration of its similitude to mental operations, is the mysterious chasm and "whatsoe'er is dim / Or vast in its own being" (XIII. 72-3). This "under-presence," reminding us of words as "under-agents" in the parallel experience of aspiring rustics, relegates the importance of words or images in favour of the mysterious, sublime inner powers that manipulate them. Here Wordsworth highlights the creative process not only to show how other stories can be made, how configurations of images can be altered, but also to point to the deep human powers, more common than are supposed (as he says of sensibility in the Preface), that are active in apprehension and creation.

In *Descriptive Sketches* Wordsworth seems set for self-presentation in solitary grandeur: "I stand alone / sublime upon this far-surveying cone" (356-7), but human presences and sensed human stories soon

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[8] Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 149.

disturb him. A chamois-hunter crosses his vision; his icy death and grieving family are evoked. A boy, seeing a stranger, calls from the valley. A Swiss patriarch, evoked in imagination, becomes material and visible, climbing the inhospitable cliffs, and it is to him that nature gives the vision, one of the "Joys only given to uncorrupted hearts":

> —'Tis morn: with gold the verdant mountain glows,
> More high, the snowy peaks with hues of rose,
> Far stretch'd beneath the many-tinted hills,
> A mighty waste of mist the valley fills,
> A solemn sea! Whose vales and mountains round
> Stand motionless, to awful silence bound.
> A gulf of gloomy blue, that opens wide
> And bottomless, divides the midway tide.
> Like leaning masts of stranded ships appear
> The pines that near the coast their summits rear;
> Of cabins, woods, and lawns a pleasant shore
> Bounds calm and clear the chaos still and hoar;
> Loud thro' that midway gulf ascending, sound
> Unnumber'd streams with hollow roar profound.
> Mounts thro' the nearer mist the chaunt of birds,
> And talking voices, and the low of herds....[9]
>
> (1793, 492-507)

A comparison with the climbing of Snowdon reveals the same elements and, interestingly, the same community of vision. Wordsworth does not share Coleridge's opinion that rustics do not appreciate the sublime scenery of their own country. The comparison makes even closer the link between the elevated rustic soul of *The Prelude* and the Swiss. The expedition to Snowdon comes quite in the course of "one of those excursions" on the public road which has yielded appreciation of such

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[9] William Wordsworth, *Descriptive Sketches*, ed. Eric Birdsall (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1984) 86, 88.

figures. The climb is a social one as the experience is shared by his companions, a shepherd guide and a dog. Though he first meets the experience as the foremost ("as chanced") among them and registers it in the first person singular, the appearance of the plural indicates that they join him. The Snowdon experience is at night by moonlight and the moon's "majesty" seems to preside more strongly over the landscape than the sun in *Descriptive Sketches*. This might suggest the quality of imagination which Coleridge discusses in *Biographia Literaria* and likened to moonlight thrown over a known and familiar landscape. Coleridge was also fond of quoting Wordsworth's line about "The light that never was on sea or land" for the same purpose.[10] Certainly the elements in the Snowdon vision are more unified, less discrete and particularized. The light, however, is only one element that defamiliarizes the scene. The "usurping" mist creates its own sea, headlands and promontories. In fact, it is hard to isolate the "one object" that impresses and pervades the scene in the Coleridgean gloss that Wordsworth provides in lines 78-83. The element which is, perhaps, given the most sublime description is the chasm, which is situated at an oddly separate location:

> At distance not the third part of a mile
> Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
> A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which
> Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
> Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
> ...in that breach

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[10] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 5, 151.

> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thoroughfare, had nature lodged
> The soul, the imagination of the whole.
> (XIII. 55-65)

In *Descriptive Sketches* the gulf is prominently in the "midway" and though it is described as "bottomless" it seems to be continuously connected to the "banks" by shallower mist through which comfortably familiar noises rise. The sublime is framed by the beautiful. From Snowdon, the chasm is abrupt and unmediated, it is a "fracture." Yet, despite descriptors like "gloomy" and "homeless," it is a place of breathing life or inspiration, confluence, interchange and everlasting motion. "Homeless" in this context might carry the overtones of "infinity" which the "unfathered" vapour of the Simplon Pass gave note of as our "home." The "scenic" operations of secondary agencies seem here to be separated from the power-house of their production.

Natural images seem to have an inexhaustible life of their own, and they do not lose this capacity when they are represented. They also have a capacity to experience transformations and recall other images. This capacity is produced by powers within Nature, such as atmosphere, cloud and light, and by imaginative powers within man. We can reproduce these images, either in words or by judicious use of lighting and dry ice. Their meaning, however, proceeds from an indefinable source and is poised between world, author's mind and beholder's, just as that of the cinematic image is poised between the thing represented, the audience's imagination and that of the director. The analysis of the Snowdon scene seems to separate the workings of imagination from its source, the latter being characterised by whatever is mysteriously creative in both mind

and nature ("the sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim / or vast in its own being" XIII. 72-3). Wordsworth's assertion of the creativity of the human mind at the conclusion of the poem is not new; the world we behold would be spiritless but for the co-operation of the human mind, but its pre-eminence in beauty is. The mental images of Mont Blanc or the heights of the Alps owe something to the real things that evoked them, but here the mind is "exalted" in beauty above the world. This is apparently on the grounds of its "more divine" origin and that the world of nature remains the same, while the mind is capable of ever more beautiful conceptions in its transformations of nature. The context of this assertion is the mind of Man, not individual man, and its continual, though often thwarted, communal aspirations.

Read in this way, the last sections of *The Prelude* act as a fitting conclusion to a work that has continuously brought the reader nearer to the creative origin of the text, highlighting the processes of production and revision. The use of filmic analogies has, I hope, foregrounded Wordsworth's self-conscious manipulation of images that "moulds … endues, abstracts, combines" (XIII. 78). Instead of focussing the camera on himself as the last shot of the film, he turns it on the imagination within the "mind of man" which, indeed, has been the force creating the selves of *The Prelude*.

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