

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

FALL AND RECOVERY
IN WORDSWORTH'S MAJOR POETRY

by

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to my parents
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Abstract

Between 1798 and 1807, Wordsworth moves steadily towards the belief that the mind is the predominant partner in the marriage of mind and nature, a marriage that makes "Paradise" the "simple produce of the common day." With the increased emphasis on the predominance of the mind, paradise becomes more and more a "paradise within," a construct of the mind alone. The first three chapters of this study trace the movement towards such a paradise within in "Tintern Abbey," the "Lucy" poems, and The Prelude. As the mind works ever more independently of nature in establishing, or recovering, an inner paradise, the possibility for a permanent state of inward stability emerges; when the poet perceives this possibility he begins to desire permanence and stability in the midst of flux. His wish for such stability modulates into a tendency to fortify his innermost self against both external and internal flux. The final chapter of this study examines these developments in "Resolution and Independence," the Intimations Ode, "Ode to Duty," and "Peele Castle."

The last chapter explores, as well, certain changes in poetic practice which accompany the poet's increasing trust that Eden exists as a construct of the mind. In comparison with the poetry from the start of the 1798-1807 decade, later poems are both more prospective and more generalized. In addition, the later poetry shows an increase in conscious symbol-making.

Introduction

Critical interpretations of the nature of Wordsworth's genius have varied considerably over the course of the years. Nineteenth-century criticism, even while engaged in a debate as to whether Wordsworth's poetry is essentially lyrical or philosophical, concerned with nature and feelings or with ideas, spoke uniformly of Wordsworth's "healing power."¹ In the early twentieth century, such ethical considerations yielded, by and large, to interest in the epistemological and metaphysical dimensions of Wordsworth's poetry, when the relationship between the mind and nature emerged as the fundamental problem to be explored. Attempts were made to systematize Wordsworth's philosophy; a new and still current debate arose, between those who wished to make of Wordsworth an empiricist and those who sought to prove him a transcendentalist.² In addition, the Arnoldian view of Wordsworth as a simple poet celebrating simply and unequivocally the joy of nature and of human affections began to be challenged. In 1909, A. C. Bradley, declaring Arnold's assessment of Wordsworth incomplete, described a poet of "strangeness" and paradox, whose poetry is "peculiar," "audacious," and whose attitudes are complex and full of contradictions. Bradley introduced, too, the idea of the visionary Wordsworth whose inclination towards sublime moments of experience hints at a "certain hostility to 'sense'" and the natural world.³ Critics still tend to follow either Arnold's or Bradley's approach to Wordsworth, as M. H. Abrams has pointed out in a review of Wordsworthian criticism.⁴

Abrams provides a useful summary of these two basic critical approaches:

One Wordsworth is simple, elemental, forthright, the other is complex, paradoxical, problematic; one is an affirmative poet of life, love, and joy, the other is an equivocal or self-divided poet whose affirmations are implicitly qualified (if not annulled) by a pervasive sense of mortality and an ever-incipient despair of life; one is the great poet of natural man and the world of all of us, the other is a visionary or "mystic" who is ultimately hostile to temporal man and the world of sense and whose profoundest inclinations are toward another world that transcends biological and temporal limitations; one is the Wordsworth of light, the other⁵ the Wordsworth of chiaroscuro, or even darkness.

As the title of the present study, "Fall and Recovery in Wordsworth's Major Poetry," indicates, my discussion will highlight aspects of each of the two Wordsworths. To "fall" is to fall into division, conflict, darkness of vision, and despair. "Recovery" brings joy, light, wholeness, but not--at least not in the tradition within which Wordsworth works--simple or elemental joy and wholeness.⁶

Behind the idea of fall and recovery stands, of course, the conception of paradise, or an Edenic state of being. In the Prospectus to the projected work The Recluse, Wordsworth speaks of "Paradise, and groves / Eysian, Fortunate Fields" and asks,

why should they be

A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?

"For," Wordsworth declares,

the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.⁷

In the poetry of the period known as the great decade (c.1798-1807), Wordsworth moves steadily towards the belief that the mind is the predominant partner in the marriage of mind and nature that makes paradise the "simple produce of the common day." With the increased emphasis on the predominance of the mind, paradise becomes more and more a paradise within, a construct of the mind alone. The first three chapters of the present study trace the movement towards such a paradise within in "Tintern Abbey"(1798), the "Lucy" poems(1798-1801), and The Prelude(1798-1805). In the final chapter the tendency towards the fortification of an inner state of recovery, which emerges in the poetry of the latter part of the decade, is examined in "Resolution and Independence" (1802), the Intimations Ode(1802-1804), "Ode to Duty" (1804), and "Peele Castle"(1806).

The paradise Wordsworth speaks of in the Prospectus seldom figures simply or explicitly as theme or image in the poetry under consideration in the present study. Rather, Wordsworth's conception of paradise is identifiable by, and with, certain recurrent, interrelated motifs and themes, the most important of which are the sense of unity with the external world and the feeling of the continuity of the self in time. As Abrams remarks, "unity with himself and his world" is for Wordsworth "the primal and normative state of man, of which the sign is a fullness of shared life and the condition of joy."⁸ Related to these motifs, and a further component of an Edenic ideal, is the state of man variously labelled by Wordsworth as composure, calm, tranquillity, and repose, in which discordant elements within the self or between man and the external world are absent or reconciled.

However, Wordsworth rarely celebrates paradise as an already

achieved state; the poetry of the great decade registers the struggle to re-gain a lost paradisiacal state. Thus, of equal weight with those motifs which identify paradise are themes and motifs which figure the fall from an Edenic state of being: the feeling of isolation from the world, the sense of a fragmented self, the experience of inner conflict and of conflict between the self and the external world, and the recognition of man's mortality.

While the concerns, fears, and experiences which precipitate a fall remain much the same from the start of the decade to its close, the recovery, as I have said, becomes increasingly a function of the mind working alone. Certain changes in poetic practice accompany Wordsworth's belief that the mind alone effects recovery. To begin with, comparison with the poems from the start of the decade finds the later poetry growing more and more prospective. And although retrospective movement does not cease altogether, it becomes less an excursion into the poet's personal past and more an exploration of Man's state of childhood. Finally, a marked increase in deliberate symbol-making attends the movement towards a poetry that is both more prospective and more generalized.

My study begins with the poem which stands at the start of Wordsworth's great decade. Chapter One examines "Tintern Abbey" as a poem in which a lost unity with nature is mourned, while a higher unity, in which nature still plays a vital role, is vouchsafed the poet. At the same time, however, "Tintern Abbey" initiates the process whereby the mind grows predominant in the partnership with nature.

Chapter Two focuses on the "Lucy" cycle as poems in which the poet confronts mortality more openly than in "Tintern Abbey." The

confrontation issues in a fall from which the poet recovers by, paradoxically, accepting human limitations. Moreover, although the poet's recovery includes a vision of Edenic nature, nature plays no role in the actual process of recovery; the agency of recovery in the "Lucy" cycle assumes a wholly human form.

Chapter Three centres on the establishment, in The Prelude, of an inner paradise. The early books of The Prelude demonstrate the need for, and in fact portray the poet as possessing an inner refuge. However, as a result of his physical, intellectual, and emotional excursion into revolutionary France, the poet's inner refuge, now revealed to have been inadequate because untried, collapses. The poem offers three recountings of the fall and recovery of the poet, only the first of which links the recovery to nature and natural processes. In the second and third recountings Wordsworth emphasizes that recovery involves a state of mind and that Eden can be only a construct of the mind.

The fourth and final chapter examines "Resolution and Independence," the Intimations Ode, "Ode to Duty," and "Peele Castle" as poems reflecting greater and somewhat altered emphasis on the mind's predominant role in recovery and the maintenance of a paradise within. In each of these poems, recovery is achieved independently of nature and natural processes of renewal. Such independence holds forth the promise of permanence of recovery, and the poetry increasingly reveals a strong desire for permanence and stability in the midst of flux. The poet's wish for stability modulates into a tendency to protect his innermost self not only from flux in the external world, but from internal flux as well.

CHAPTER ONE

"AND SO I DARE TO HOPE": MIND AND NATURE
IN EQUAL PARTNERSHIP IN "TINTERN ABBEY"

;

In "Tintern Abbey" a lost unity with nature is mourned while a higher unity, in which nature still plays a vital role, is vouchsafed the poet. Briefly, the poet laments the loss of a unity based on an immediate, sensuous response to the physical forms of nature: "that time," he tells us, of "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" when nature's colours and forms were an "appetite," "a feeling and a love," is gone (76-85). However, "other gifts" of nature, which the poet celebrates as "abundant recompense," have followed (86-88). Among these is another and higher sort of unity with nature in which the poet experiences

a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

(95-99)

Because of this "sense sublime" Wordsworth can assert, "Therefore am I still / A lover of the meadows and the woods, / And mountains; and of all that we behold / From this green earth" (102-5). He declares further that "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her" (122-3). When the poet claims in addition that it is nature's privilege "Through all the years of this our life, to lead / From joy to joy" (123-5), he is not glossing over his very real regret at the loss of an

immediate response to nature, as at least one critic has suggested.¹ Instead, he is affirming that nature herself has somehow led him to a higher unity (the second "joy") in which sensuous attachment to physical form is transcended.

Loss and recompense, or fall and recovery, are central, then, to "Tintern Abbey," a poem which presents a speaker taking stock of himself, as it were. Spiritual and psychological inventory is both invited and made possible by the poet's return to a landscape which has remained unchanged during a five-year absence. Grounded as it is in the unchanged landscape before him, the poet's evaluation of his growth must, as Alan Grob observes, take into account the relationship between the mind of the poet and nature.²

The poem opens with a lengthy description of the Wye landscape which points to an underlying disjunction between the poet and the world before him, even while it holds forth the promise of unity:³

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur. —Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That 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,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

(1-22)

Having experienced "five summers, with the length / Of five long winters," the poet returns to what is literally a spring landscape and figuratively the spring, or source, of his "genial spirits" (113). He does not, however, undergo an immediate renewal of these spirits. Where the reader might expect an impulsive, immediate response to the scene-- a rolling verse attuned to the "rolling waters"--, he finds restraint and a series of starts and stops: "Once again / Do I behold;" "The day is come when I again repose;" "Once again I see." It can be argued, of course, that the quiet restraint of the opening voice merely reflects or corresponds to the tranquillity of the scene. Certainly the lines convey, on one level, a general sense of the poet's relief and gratitude at finding himself away from the "din" (25) of the city and in the presence of tranquil nature once again. More particularly, the vertical cliffs and the upward-spiralling smoke adumbrate, as Albert Gérard points out, the poem's "recurring pattern of ascent toward spiritual insight" and the consequent visionary unity with nature.⁴ Insofar as the "steep and lofty cliffs . . . connect / The landscape with the quiet of the sky," the natural, the divine, and the human aspects of the landscape appear united in quiet harmony.⁵ Many readers assume, tacitly or otherwise, that unity within the scene necessarily means there is unity between the observer and the scene.⁶ But the same cliffs which point skyward also "impress / Thoughts of more deep seclusion" upon an already wild and secluded scene; in Harold Bloom's words, "an intensification of the dominant aspect of the given landscape, its seclusion, . . . implies also a ^{deepening} ~~deepening~~ of the mood of seclusion in the poet's mind."⁷ At this stage in the poem, I would contend, the speaker does not attend to the upward movements in the landscape or in any way assimilate their

~~their~~ intimations of unity. Rather, he remains secluded and isolated from the world he describes.

Several observations, in fact, point to the speaker's distance from the harmoniously unified world of the opening verse paragraph. For instance, the physical distance between the landscape and the poet, who stands far enough away to see "hedge-rows" as "little lines," expanses of pastures and orchards as "plots" and "tufts," and various shades of green as "one green hue," underscores the disjunction between mind and world suggested by the absence of an impulsive response to the scene. Physical distance expresses a more radical division between the poet and the scene; time, specifically the poet's experience of "Five long [spiritual] winters," separates the two. The poet has brought his experience to a pastoral, innocent landscape and the opening section presents a mind looking back in time to an innocent, Edenic world. This pastoral landscape possesses certain human aspects; the outlines of a human world emerge in "plots of cottage-ground," "orchard-tufts," "hedge-rows," and "farms." But no clear line of demarcation exists between the human and the natural; the orchards "lose themselves / 'Mid groves and copses," the hedge-rows turn imperceptibly into lines of "sportive wood run wild," and farms remain "green to the very door." Such a blurring of worlds suggests the union of the human and the natural, of course. A mutual innocence, however, sustains the union; the human world can be incorporated into this pastoral nature because, like the landscape, it is in its spring season. Although the phrase "unripe fruits" refers explicitly to "orchard-tufts," it precisely, if obliquely, characterizes the human world sketched in these lines. The poet, on the other hand, has been

ripened, as it were, by his experience of summers and winters.

"Thoughts of more deep seclusion" press upon the poet's mind as he recognizes that there exists a gulf between his experience and this innocent world; his mind becomes like a "dark" (10) thought brooding over the green landscape. As his mind deepens to fathom the gulf, it seeks images of itself in the landscape, imagining first "vagrant dwellers" (20) and then the Hermit (21-22). His mind entertains only briefly, however, the "vagrant dwellers" who live temporarily in this natural scene and give merely "uncertain notice" (19) of their presence in the landscape. That the speaker dismisses them so readily and turns, with a decisive "Or" (21), to the Hermit who keeps a permanent home, a cave, in the landscape, betrays his longing to find a permanent place for himself in nature.

A darker aspect of the Hermit image intimates, however, that a permanent place in nature does not guarantee unity with nature. The tautology of the line, "The Hermit sits alone" (22), suggests that the Hermit enclosed in his cave represents, finally, the most isolated thing in the landscape. Moreover, while the secluded poet can at least behold the forms of nature, from howsoever great a distance, the Hermit, embedded in the landscape, sees only the shadows cast by his fire. He thus remains blind to the landscape and is implicitly rejected as an image of the poet's mind; "These beauteous forms," says the poet, "have not been to me / As is a landscape to a blind man's eye" (22-24).

In the remainder of the second section the poet recounts what he feels he owed to nature during his five-year absence. He felt no divorce from nature during that time; response to the landscape in his mind's eye was immediate and sensuous: he "owed" to nature's forms

"sensations sweet / Felt in the Blood, and felt along the heart" (26-28). More importantly, what started as sensation fulfilled itself as "tranquil restoration" in his "purer mind" (29-30). The sense of quietude here recalls the "quiet of the sky" from the opening description, and so establishes an important link between the two sections, a tie which the final, climactic movement of the second section (35-49) repeats and strengthens. Indeed, lines 35 to 47 bring the suggestion of divinity inherent in "the quiet of the sky" to a more explicit, and fuller, realization. The poet tentatively declares that he "may have owed another gift, / Of aspect more sublime" (36-37) to nature's beauteous forms. He recalls that the response to the forms, which began as sensations felt in the blood, fulfilled itself in the cessation of that very motion, in that

serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on, —
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul.

(41-46)

Ascent to tranquillity finds a parallel in the movement from a mind's eye which is yet bodily in that it perceives and responds to the forms of nature (22-27), to a mind's eye which is visionary in that it perceives through forms to the "life of things" (49). In fact, the bodily eye must be closed and the forms of nature must disappear, as it is with "an eye made quiet" (47), that is, with an eye not excited by forms, that "we see into the life of things." This line concludes a passage which presents at once a vision of divine apprehension and a vision of unity between the perceiving mind and the external world.

That it is a vision of unity realized in, and sustained by, a mood in which the forms of nature fade and sensuous responses cease must be emphasized; for, somewhat paradoxically, the poet trusts that he has owed the gift of the mood to the forms of nature: "Nor less, I trust, / To them I may have owed another gift" (35-36). The uncertainty expressed in these lines anticipates the note of doubt with which section three of the poem opens: "If this be but a vain belief" (50). Doubt arises from the poet's realization either that he has not owed this gift to the forms of nature (since in the vision of unity forms disappear), or that nature herself has pointed beyond her forms.⁸ The poet's memory of his experience during his absence calls him back to the belief that he has indeed owed this gift to nature:

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft —
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart —
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

(49-57)

But while memory seems to confirm so infallibly the debt to nature's forms, the poet's present experience, his return to the Wye landscape, yet seems to belie the affirmation. After all, the opening section of the poem, spoken in the presence of the very forms to which the poet believes he has owed the mood in which unity is realized, points, as we have seen, to an underlying disjunction between the poet and the world before him. It is almost as if nature has betrayed the poet into a false trust. The poet's trust proves

well-founded, however, once he learns the exact character of his debt to nature's forms. In lines 50 to 57 the poet addresses the landscape directly once again, and so invites a return to the opening description. And a reconsideration of the first section in the light of the second (especially 35ff.) reveals that the poet had not, upon his return to the Wye valley, fully assimilated what he had been taught by nature during his absence.

The poet introduces the final movement of the second section with words that bring to mind the "steep and lofty cliffs" (5) of the opening verse paragraph: "To [nature's forms] I may have owed another gift / Of aspect more sublime" (35-37). While the feeling behind the image of "steep and lofty cliffs" resembles that which informs the gift "of aspect more sublime," the opening section finds the feeling of sublimity displaced, as it were. As noted earlier, the "cliffs" impress dark thoughts of seclusion; the mind, weighed down by these thoughts, sinks into even greater seclusion as it fathoms the gulf between itself and nature in an attempt to discover an image of itself in the landscape, and thereby to find a unity with nature. The section thus descends to the Hermit who sits alone, held within one of nature's forms as if entombed there. Such a movement is the very antithesis of that which informs the entire second section and its third movement in particular. In the latter, the feeling of sublimity, far from being displaced by dark, heavy thoughts of seclusion, becomes "that blessed mood . . . In which the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world / Is lightened . . . [And] we see into the life of things" (37-49). The passage thus culminates in a vision of the unity of the perceiving mind and the external world sought, but not achieved, in the poem's opening

section, precisely because the poet has been led on by nature towards a mood in which the forms of nature fade and sensuous responses cease. In so leading him on, nature has shown him that the unity he seeks with her is realized most fully on a level which transcends the earlier, lower unity of form and sensation. Indeed, having once attained this loftier unity, the poet cannot re-establish the lower form of unity. Such is the lesson nature teaches the poet when, upon his return to her forms, his mind moves downward into those forms and finds at the bottom of the landscape, not unity, but an image of nearly total seclusion and isolation in the Hermit.

By the fourth section of the poem the speaker has assimilated more fully what he has been taught by nature and brings his new understanding to the Wye landscape. He "now" (58) stands before the forms of nature "with pleasing thoughts / That in this moment there is life and food / For future years" (63-65). These thoughts are quite different from the opening section's thoughts of seclusion; those dark thoughts no longer press upon the poet because his mind is no longer moving down into the forms of the valley. Indeed, his eye is not looking at the landscape at all:

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again.

(58-61)

The "picture of the mind" represents at once the picture of the Wye valley the poet had carried in his mind during his absence, and the picture of his mind five years earlier. Section four of "Tintern Abbey" thus introduces a shift in interest, from a concern, now largely settled,

with the unity between the poet and nature, to questions about the continuity of the self through time and growth.

The picture of the landscape carried for five years in the poet's mind and the picture of his former mind are, finally, one and the same, of course; together they form a picture of "that time" (83). Although the poet says "I cannot paint / What then I was" (75-76), the same stroke of the brush with which he depicts the "sounding cataract" (76), the "tall rock / The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood" (77-78) serves to draw his former mind as well, for "Their colours and their forms" (79) were to him "an appetite; a feeling and a love" (80). What he cannot paint is a separate picture of his former mind since the outlines of that mind merged with nature's outlines--in much the same way as, in the opening section, the outlines of the human and the natural worlds blend. And, just as in the opening section the poet senses the gulf between himself and the innocent world he perceives, so now he discovers a gap between his present and his former mind: "And so I dare to hope / Though changed, no doubt, from what I was" (65-66).

"And so I dare to hope." The poet's awareness of a fundamental and absolute change within himself emerges thus cushioned by affirmation, by a "hope" which derives "not only [from] the sense / Of present pleasure, but [from] pleasing thoughts / That in this moment there is life and food / For future years" (62-65). This moment contains the same sustenance that had informed the moment of his visit to the Wye valley five years earlier. The poet can believe this, even though the kind of unity with nature from which he derived the "food" for his absence has been irreparably sundered, because he has learned that a

greater unity is realized when he transcends the lower. But the affirmation remains tentative here. The hesitancy in "And so I dare to hope / Though changed, no doubt" betrays the poet's lingering perplexity over exactly why the memory of a greater unity with nature should sustain "pleasing thoughts" and "hope." That the statement of affirmation is immediately followed by--indeed incorporates--the lines devoted to the mind of five years before suggests that a precise recognition of what separates the poet's present from his former mind is of central importance to the avowal of hope. The poet, I would suggest, cannot fully understand why the memory of loftier unity should give him hope until he understands why nature has sundered the earlier, lower unity.

When he first came to the Wye valley, the poet, "like a roe . . . bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides / Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams, / Wherever nature led" (67-70). He dwelled in nature, she was a home to him as she is to the animals; he followed unthinkingly wherever she led. He knows now that nature "led" ultimately to the blessed mood of divine apprehension in which forms fade and senses grow quiet. Nature thus led the poet out of his early home, as it were; while he was a dweller in nature when he first came to the valley, he was only a "vagrant dweller" (20).

As the poet completes the picture of his former self, he comes to a deeper understanding of why he was, and could only be, a vagrant dweller:

I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and 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, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

(75-83; emphasis mine)

Wordsworth now realizes that he can no longer respond to the colours and forms of nature on the level of direct sense perception that has no need of the charm supplied by thought. In recognizing that he now has need of thoughtful interest, he recognizes that his senses have started to fail him. The time when nature was "all in all" to him cannot be recaptured: "That time is past, / And all its aching joys are now no more, / And all its dizzy raptures" (83-85). It would be easy to feel betrayed at the loss of those joys and raptures, for "that time" is so completely gone. He feels, however, no betrayal: "Not for this / Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur; other gifts / Have followed; for such loss, I would believe, / Abundant recompense" (85-88).

With the lines just cited, the language of affirmation starts to grow stronger, and the poem's second celebration of unity begins. Wordsworth enumerates the "other gifts" of nature which provide a sure foundation for the assertion with which the fourth section began--"And so I dare to hope" (65). The first of the gifts involves the capacity

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.

(89-93)

This music is, of course, the music of mortality, heard clearly for the first time by the poet only moments before when he recognized that his senses could no longer respond immediately and directly to the forms of

nature. That learning to look on nature while hearing the music of mortality secures Wordsworth's hope seems puzzling only until one sees, as the poet does, that had he not learned to do so, he would have ultimately been betrayed by nature. Had he continued to look on nature "as in the hour of thoughtless youth," seeking only the unity of sense and form, nature would have proved a tomb--as she does for the Hermit in the opening section of the poem. In death that lower unity would have been finally sundered and the poet left in deepest seclusion. Thus the gift of so learning to look on nature provides "abundant recompense" indeed; in giving it, nature precludes the possibility of such ultimate betrayal. The poet now sees that he is a vagrant dweller in nature in that he is mortal, and that to seek a permanent home in nature is to seek a grave. Now he understands fully why nature pointed beyond her forms and did not permit the re-establishment of unity based on the tie between sense and form.

Knowledge of why nature sundered the early unity brings with it an intuition of exactly why the memory of loftier unity should give "hope" and "pleasing thoughts" of "food and life for future years" (63-65). Quite simply, with the dawning of the poet's realization that his senses can, and have already started to, fail him comes the insight that something in his own mind--something not tied to mere sense perception--must have helped to sustain the "blessed mood" (37) of divine apprehension in which that loftier unity is realized. In the poet's words, this something is the "remoter charm by thought supplied." The very phrase "remoter charm" recalls all the earlier suggestions of divinity in the poem, from the "quiet of the sky" (8), to the "aspect more sublime" (37) of the "serene and blessed mood" (41). Thus the

poet's recognition that his own mind supplies the remoter charm involves the knowledge that his mind must be a dwelling place for the divine, equally with nature.⁹ And this represents nature's ultimate "gift" to the poet: she has led the poet out of his early home--sundered the unity of sense and form--in order to teach that both she and the poet provide a dwelling place for the divine. Wordsworth acknowledges his indebtedness and expresses his newly found awareness in the poem's most famous affirmation of unity with, and abiding love for, nature:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

(93-102)

ii

The central avowal of unity with nature in "Tintern Abbey" is curiously, and for our purposes, significantly, double-edged. On one side, as we have seen, Wordsworth believes that nature herself has led him beyond her forms to a higher unity, one not dependent upon sense and form. Nature, then, plays an active, vitally important role in the process by which the poet reaches the visionary heights of unity, and the poet pays due tribute to her agency:

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy.

(122-25)

On the other side, as we have also seen, a thorough understanding of nature's lesson brings with it the clear knowledge of the mind's independent role in creating and sustaining the lofty, visionary unity with nature. John Nabholtz makes much the same point when he writes that the poem's fourth section "defines the emergence and independence of the mind." He adds that, at this point in the poem,

the mind fulfills itself by the recognition
of its identity with the forces producing
the landscape; and in the second climax (ll.102-11),
the persona declares his love for the landscape
for fostering and representing that identity.¹⁰

This statement comes very close, in effect, to my contention that the climactic lines express Wordsworth's newly found knowledge that his mind and nature are both homes for the divine. Nature and mind, that is, appear as equal partners in the relationship, or interaction, between the poet and the landscape.

But "Tintern Abbey" does not end with the affirmation of the fourth section. The poem concludes with a fifth section which to some extent re-adjusts the relationship of mind and nature. Nabholtz goes so far as to claim that the final movement of the poem shows the "primacy of the mind" (233), that, in fact, the entire fifth section of the poem

is about acts of the mind, which fulfill
themselves in reciprocity with and service
to other minds, and in loving nature for
initiating that progress toward benefits
that nature herself cannot give-the
defeat of mortal limitations and the
preserving of richly human experience.¹¹

Nabholtz overstates, I think, the predominance of mind in the concluding section of the poem. He does not give due weight, for

instance, to Wordsworth's commitment of Dorothy wholly to nature's care:

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee.

(134-37)

It almost seems that the speaker aims the whole of the poem--the entire process by which he ascertains nature's role and trustworthiness in creating and sustaining joyful unity--towards just this moment of commitment. Wordsworth has tested nature, found her trustworthy, and "Therefore" entrusts his sister to nature's guidance. Wordsworth's giving of Dorothy constitutes his "gift" to nature; as such it remains an unsurpassable expression of faith in nature.

Nabholtz correctly senses, nevertheless, a greater emphasis on the mind in the fifth section. Or, to put it in a slightly different light, the poet no longer seems to need nature as much as in the first four sections. Indeed, the fourth section itself ended, as Nabholtz points out, with

a 'recognition,' rather than a statement of
needy dependence, that "nature and the language
of sense" are "The anchor of my purest thoughts,
the nurse / The guide, the guardian of my heart,
and soul / Of all my moral being." 12

The fifth and final section begins on what might be called a note of release. The poem opens up, as it were; for the first time it goes beyond the specific issue of the relationship between the poet's mind and nature, and the question of what the poet owes to nature and her teachings:

Nor perchance,
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more
 Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
 For thou [Dorothy] art with me here upon the banks
 Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend.

(111-15)

These lines strike the reader as an almost nonchalant dismissal of the lengthy, painstaking exploration of the relationship between the poet's mind and nature which occupies the first three-quarters of the poem. They are not, of course; Wordsworth subsequently pays tribute to nature and her teachings, as we have seen (122-37). But the rather surprising change in tone and in attitude toward nature's teachings detectable in the first few lines of the section does adumbrate, at least, a time of the mind's greater independence from nature. Within the context of the poem, for example, we discover such an independence in Wordsworth's prophecies about Dorothy:

when thy mind
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
 And these my exhortations!

(139-46)

At such a stage in Dorothy's life not nature but "thoughts" and "memory"--acts of human consciousness--will provide solace. These acts of mind, moreover, will be directed towards another human being rather than towards nature.

Since Dorothy's prophesied future roughly corresponds to the poet's present stage of development,¹³ we might see in the lines to his sister Wordsworth's indirect acknowledgement of the extent to which his own acts

of consciousness have contributed to the recovery effected in "Tintern Abbey." That extent is considerable. After all, an act of memory ("These beauteous forms . . . have not been to me . . .") enables the poet to review and so to assimilate nature's teachings. Also, in addition to "sense" (62), "thoughts" (63) convince the poet that in his return to the Wye "there is life and food / For future years" (64-65). Mind enjoys full partnership with nature, playing a role equal to nature's in the transactions between mind and nature which make possible affirmation in the face of loss. But if the larger context of the subsequent poetry of the great decade provides any indication, to make or discover the mind's power equal to nature's is to initiate a process by which the mind grows predominant in the partnership with nature.

CHAPTER TWO

THE "LUCY" POEMS: LUCY--LOST IN NATURE,
REGAINED IN HUMANITY

In the winter following the composition of "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth wrote the first four of his "Lucy" poems, completing the cycle two years later with a fifth and final lyric. The "Lucy" poems expand, in several ways, upon themes and motifs to be found in the earlier poem. Knowledge of mortality pervades both "Tintern Abbey" and the "Lucy" cycle. But in "Tintern Abbey" such knowledge hovers in the background for most of the poem, becoming overt only in the last section with, "Nor perchance— / If I should be where I no more can hear / [Dorothy's] voice, nor catch from [her] wild eyes these gleams" (146-48). And even here confrontation with mortality is oblique, preceded and padded as it is by statements which strongly affirm a new unity between the poet and nature, and the continuity of inner hope through time and growth. Since the scales are thus weighted, so to speak, on the side of affirmation, the knowledge of mortality loses much of its sting. In the "Lucy" cycle, on the other hand, Wordsworth confronts the question of mortality far more openly and directly: the cycle begins with the irreducible fact of Lucy's death and then moves gradually towards affirmation. We have seen, too, that the question of betrayal of man by nature raises its head in "Tintern Abbey" only to be firmly quashed by the poet. The issue resurges in

the "Lucy" cycle with even greater strength, and this time the poet does experience betrayal by nature. He recovers from the betrayal, but without nature's help; the agency of recovery in the "Lucy" cycle assumes a wholly human form.

Geoffrey Hartman's view of Lucy as a "boundary being, nature sprite and human, yet not quite either" proves relevant to an understanding of the cycle.¹ What he calls a "janus-faced quality . . . one side toward nature, one away from it,"² accounts entirely for the dynamics of the first four poems. In these lyrics, the poet consistently explores the side of Lucy turned towards nature, and just as consistently resists her human side. Significantly, in each of these poems, the poet fails imaginatively to regain the dead girl. Hartman's observation does not hold for the Lucy of the final poem of the cycle, however. In this final lyric, Wordsworth presents a wholly humanized girl and regains his Lucy.

Hartman provides a thorough treatment of the concept of humanization in his discussions of romanticism and consciousness. The crucial problem confronting the Romantic poets is, according to Hartman, essentially one of consciousness, or more precisely, of self-consciousness: "every increase in consciousness is accompanied by an increase in self-consciousness." Indeed, this is an age-old problem:

The link between consciousness and self-consciousness, or knowledge and guilt, is already expressed in the story of the expulsion from Eden. Having tasted knowledge, man realizes his nakedness, his sheer separateness of self.³

While inherent in every age, the problem becomes especially acute for the Romantics. Earlier ages found remedies for the "fixated

self-consciousness" in "religious control of the intellect," but the Romantic poets

seek to draw the antidote to self-consciousness from consciousness itself. . . . It is the destiny of consciousness, or as the English Romantics would have said, of Imagination, to separate from nature, so that it can finally transcend not only nature but also its own lesser forms.⁴

Although every age finds the means to convert self-consciousness to imagination, "in the Romantic period it is primarily art on which this crucial function devolves," as this period sees the separation of art from religion.⁵ For Hartman, the crucial purpose of Romantic art is "to explore the transition from self-consciousness to imagination, and to achieve that transition while exploring it."⁶

As a remedy for self-consciousness Romantic art becomes analogous to religion:

The traditional scheme of Eden, fall, and redemption merges with the new triad of nature, self-consciousness, imagination; while the last term in both involves a kind of return to the first.

But,

the journey beyond self-consciousness is shadowed . . . by the lure of false ultimates. . . . Nature in its childhood or sensuous radiance (Blake's Beulah) exerts an especially deceptive lure. The desire to gain truth, finality, or revelation generates a thousand such enchantments. . . . Romanticism, at its profoundest, reveals the depth of the enchantment in which we live. We dream, we wake on the cold hillside, and our "sole self" pursues the dream once more.⁷

This waking on the cold hillside, this fall into self-consciousness, constitutes humanization. Humanization is a "sunder(ing) to self-realization" when consciousness of self emerges wholly from consciousness of nature.⁸ While self-consciousness, or humanization, brings with it an awareness of the mortal self and of death, unself-consciousness encompasses an illusion, or dream, of immortality; in this dream state, a consciousness fixated on nature fosters the illusion of immortality.

The emergence of consciousness of self is painful and the mind seeks to resist the "point of self." Such a resistance informs the first poem in the "Lucy" cycle, "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known," and finds expression, as Hartman observes, as the "hypnotic ride" of the second through the fifth stanzas. Hartman goes on to say that the lines, "My horse moved on; hoof after hoof / He raised, and never stopped,"

suggest a monotone and supernatural slowing,
 . . . the horse advancing, as it were, apart from
 the rider. . . . There is no consciousness
 intervening between horse and moon. . . . The
 only way to interpret this ghostliness (or
 depersonalization) is to suppose that
 the sense of self has been elided, that the
 rider and moon approaching the cottage in the
 infinity of a slowed moment express powerfully
 an obscure resistance: resistance to a
 centering action that draws them together
 to one point; the 'point' of self.⁹

The drop of the moon behind the cottage breaks the hypnosis, and consciousness and the thought of death intervene:

When down behind the cottage roof,
 At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide

Into a Lover's head!
 "O mercy!" to myself I cried,
 "If Lucy should be dead!"

Clearly Lucy has been identified with the moon. Such an identification comes as a surprise to both the rider and the reader; the more so as Lucy had earlier been imaged as "Fresh as a rose in June." And if the conventional associations of the rose with passion and the moon with chastity hold, as surely they do, the transition from rose to moon puzzles us even more. The poet's opening declaration that he will tell of "Strange fits of passion" indicates that the rose should be taken as emblematic of passion. Further, the "quickenning pace" of the horse signals the rider's mounting passion. The fear that his excessive desire might destroy the freshness of the rose leads the rider to seek a more inviolable image for Lucy; and so he fixes on the remote, untouchable moon.

This reading can explain why the rider establishes the link between Lucy and the moon; carried a little further, it can explain how he establishes the tie between Lucy's death and the drop of the moon. As horse and rider draw nearer and nearer to Lucy's cottage, the moon sinks ever lower until it finally drops from sight. Syntactically, it is as if the movement of horse and rider towards the cottage actually causes the moon to sink and fall:

And, as we climbed the hill,
 The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
 Came near, and nearer still. . . .

My horse move on; hoof after hoof
 He raised and never stopped:
 When down behind the cottage roof,
 At once, the bright moon dropped.

The movement of horse and rider towards the cottage is that of passion towards the object of desire. Such a movement causes the moon to fall since, in a meeting of lover and beloved, the inviolability of the beloved would be destroyed.

My reading lends support to Hartman's view that "the rider and moon approaching the cottage in the infinity of a slowed moment express powerfully an obscure resistance . . . to a centering action that draws them together to . . . the 'point' of self." The centering action drawing the rider towards the "point of self" is his passion; the acknowledgement of a passion existing in himself would lead to both consciousness of self and of the beloved as an other. The rider's resistance to the centering action of his passion finds expression not only in "the infinity of a slowed moment," but in the attempt to image Lucy as inviolable as well. The inviolability of the beloved would render passion ineffectual and preclude the meeting of lover and beloved, a meeting which would force the acknowledgement of passion in self acting upon an other.

A fixated consciousness both generates and sustains the "hypnotic" quality of the ride, that "sweet dream" which is "Nature's gentlest boon." Fixation is stressed throughout the poem:

Upon the moon I fixed my eye, . . .

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

As long as the rider's consciousness remains thus fixated upon nature, he can find in the untouchable moon an emblem for the inviolability of his beloved. In his "sweet dream" the association of Lucy with a

natural object can hold just as in all dreams associations between disparate objects can hold. But just as, on awakening from dreams, the borders of the human world grow more and more distinct, thereby sundering the associations set up in dreams, so too does the link between Lucy and the moon begin to weaken as the human world begins to intrude upon the rider's dream. The borders of the human world begin to emerge in the fourth stanza:

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

"Orchard-plot," with its suggestion of man's ordering of nature, points to the human world; the moment this humanness begins to intrude, the association between Lucy and the moon is weakened: the moon is now "sinking." Horse and rider move on towards their destination--Lucy's cottage. Again, the thoroughly domestic image of the "cottage" encompasses a wholly human world. Lucy, in her cottage, is located squarely within the boundaries of the human world. When the horse and rider arrive at the destination, the borders of the human world have grown so very distinct that even the "cottage roof" is clearly delineated. And Nature is completely eclipsed by this world: "down behind the cottage roof / At once, the bright moon dropped." The dream is broken, the association between an untouchable moon and an inviolable Lucy is sundered. Nature is eclipsed and the dream broken because the rider's consciousness no longer remains fixated on nature: his eye, in following the path of the moon, is left to focus directly on the cottage. His focus on the human world brings with it the thought of death.

If in "Strange Fits . . ." Lucy is located squarely within the

borders of the human world, in "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" she seems to know no such circumscription. The poet images Lucy as

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky.

F. W. Bateson remarks that the reader here

begins by looking down at the violet and then up at the star, and in the process the two juxtaposed images form themselves into a single landscape. . . . Lucy inevitably comes to occupy the whole interval between them. Lucy is the whole evening scene.¹⁰

Insofar as she occupies the interval between the images, Lucy seems to be what Hartman calls the "type" of the boundary being "[stretching] through all the spheres, from ocean to heaven, containing a being at once human, divine, and natural."¹¹ Her divinity is suggested by her proximity to the "springs of Dove," a proximity not only in space but also in time. Indeed, the moment of Lucy's existence coincides with the moment of creation. The landscape is thus the unfallen one of Eden (these are "untrodden ways"), and Lucy fills--is identical with--the natural, Edenic landscape in the manner described by Bateson.

But while the images in the poem contain a being "divine and natural," they deny Lucy the "human." She is "A Maid whom there were none to praise / And very few to love." Such a denial appears to make Lucy precious; she is a "violet," a "star". As the middle of the poem soars from the unnoticed, half-hidden violet to the visible, shining star, a more public fulfillment seems to await Lucy. But the promise of such fulfillment is belied, and in the final stanza, a grave

circumscribes the Lucy who had filled the landscape. The violet has been crushed, as it were, by the "mossy stone" that had seemed to protect it. The transience, not the delicate beauty, common to Lucy and the violet ironically validates the metaphor. There is a similar ironic validation of the "star" simile, for, in her grave, Lucy is as remote as a star. Not only has the poet lost Lucy, he has lost the Edenic landscape as well: the violet is now merely transient, easily crushed, while the star remains unattainably remote. As in "Strange Fits . . . " the dream breaks, and for the same reason: Lucy's humanness, manifested in her death, intrudes. The "difference" to the poet is a difference of consciousness. He is one of the few who does "know" that Lucy has "ceased to be," and with this knowledge comes the loss of the power to find either Lucy or a return to Edenic nature. The poet is trapped in the middle term of the triad "nature, consciousness, imagination."

In both "Strange Fits . . . " and "She Dwelt . . . " the "dream" which is "Nature's gentlest boon" generates the illusion, or fiction, of Lucy's immortality. Images drawn from nature (moon, violet, star) prove valid so long as a consciousness fixated on nature sustains the dream; once the consciousness is sundered to self-realization (either directly, or obliquely, as with knowledge of Lucy's death), the metaphors and similes rooted in nature fail. The difference in consciousness that comes to the poet with the knowledge of Lucy's death thus manifests itself, on one level, in an inability to find images that can bear the burden of self-consciousness.

In "Three Years She Grew In Sun and Shower" the poet seems to find the images that can bear such a burden. The pairing of Lucy and nature

appears to be poetically fruitful; imagery of growth and vitality fill the poem. Moreover, the poem seems to promise fulfillment for Lucy. Indeed, the opening stanza presents nature as the principle of growth and fulfillment of being:

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A Lady of my own."

A design that works through opposites informs the principle of growth into fulfillment: Nature shall be "both law and impulse" to Lucy; Nature shall "kindle or restrain." It is this design that controls what follows in the poem. "Law and impulse" find images in "rock and plain," "earth and heaven," "glade and bower." The power that "kindles or restrains" appears in the "wild glee" of the "sportive" fawn and the "silence and the calm of mute insensate things"; it re-appears in the "motions of the storm" that "mould the Maiden's form"; and it recurs "Where rivulets dance their wayward round, / And beauty born of murmuring sound / [passes] into her face." The last lines quoted, where something liquid becomes form, recall the "Maid" who dwelt "beside the springs of Dove" and took the murmuring sound of those springs up into the form of a beautiful violet. Here, however, the flower seems not to be crushed. No longer "half-hidden from the eye," this flower flourishes under the eye of nature, under an "overseeing power." And under this blessing eye of nature "vital feelings of delight / Shall rear [Lucy's] form to stately height" in a final reconciling union of impulse and law. In this perfect coincidence of inner impulse and external form, or restraint, Lucy will reach complete fulfillment.

However, such union, or fulfillment, is short-lived:

Thus Nature spake — The work was done —
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!
 She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be.

The poem thus ends with a feeling of betrayal, a sense that the kindling impulse is gone and only the restraint of the law remains. The parody of the divine decree in "Thus Nature spake — The work was done" only strengthens the feeling of betrayal. The "work," far from being the creation that gives a vital impulse to the moulded form of man, has as its end Lucy's death and a form empty of life and impulse. The poet had given complete authority to nature, as is demonstrated by the dictatorial "shall" of nature's narration ("She shall be mine," "The Girl . . . shall feel," "She shall be sportive," and so on). Nature having exercised her authority, the poet now is left with "This heath, this calm, and quiet scene; / The memory of what has been, / And never more will be." These final images of "heath" and "quiet scene" are empty; whereas, in the middle of the poem, Lucy had seemed to draw a deeper life from the "breathing balm" of "mute insensate things," the closing landscape knows no such vivifying breath.

Throughout "Three Years . . ." Lucy again seems Hartman's type of a "boundary being . . . (moving) through all the spheres from ocean to heaven . . . at once human, divine, and natural." But in giving all authority to nature the poet locates the divine in nature, rather than in Lucy. And a nature endowed with such authority cannot offer the possibility of fulfillment into humanity; indeed, this possibility is precluded. Such a nature takes the child to herself, makes the child

wholly hers; such a nature plucks the flower sown on earth, and a plucked flower can only wither and die. Once more Lucy is denied the human. In fact, as with divinity, humanness is given over to nature, as a personified Nature narrates the story of Lucy's growth. Thus the narration is purely fictional; it is, finally, a poetic trick, from which the imagery of growth and vitality derives. The poet has not, after all, found the images able to bear the burden of self-consciousness. When, with Lucy's death, the poet is sundered to self-realization, he is left alone with empty images and the "memory of what has been, / And never more will be."

My reading of the poem hinges, to some extent, on an understanding of what "memory" means. Christopher Salvesen finds, in his interpretation of the poem, that a feeling of consolation informs the final stanza:

The heath is at once a reminder of Lucy,
a symbol — of loss, and a consolation.
It stands for memory itself, its workings
no less than the object of its strivings;
for although it is a symbol of change, and
an image of regret, yet it will impart
something of its calm, evoking a memory whose
value will outweigh the grief it brings.¹²

But this "memory" involves the acknowledgement of Lucy's past existence; as Hartman points out, "The mind which acknowledges the existence of past existence of immediate life knows that its present strength is based on a separation from that life."¹³ Memory, then, is another manifestation of the sundering to self-realization. The memory merely brings an increase in knowledge whereas "a creative mind desires not mere increase in knowledge, but 'knowledge not purchased by the loss of power' (Prelude V)."¹⁴ Memory alone is knowledge purchased precisely by the loss of power, here, specifically, the loss of the power to find Lucy.

As Salvesen himself remarks, the sorrow in "Three Years . . . " is for "something absolutely gone, completely inaccessible."¹⁵

Sorrow for "something . . . completely inaccessible" finds its most powerful expression in the fourth of the "Lucy" poems, "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal." The absence, in this poem only, of Lucy's name attests to her inaccessibility. The note of betrayal on which "Three Years . . . " ended is struck once again, far more forcefully this time. The sense of betrayal is especially strong when one reads "A Slumber . . . " as a pendant to "Three Years" While the earlier poem, filled as it is with imagery of growth and vitality, may seem like a more substantial and important poem, it actually functions as a foil to "A Slumber" As has been noted, the feeling of growth and vitality in "Three Years . . . " derives from pure fiction, from a personified nature narrating a story of growth. The poet now recognizes this fiction as a "slumber" of the "spirit." In the earlier poem the poet had fallen into one of those traps which, according to Hartman, shadow the journey beyond self-consciousness. He had been lured by the "false ultimate . . . [of] Nature in its childhood or sensuous radiance."¹⁶ Furthermore, the "enchantment," or "dream," of "Nature's sensuous radiance" had been generated, once again, by a consciousness fixated on, and governed by, nature. The "overseeing power" of the poem--nature's eye--represents the poet's natural, or sensuous, eye. The journey beyond self-consciousness can only be effected by the faculty of imagination; and, as Wordsworth makes abundantly clear elsewhere, "Imagination" rises "in such strength / Of usurpation, when the light of sense / Goes out."¹⁷ In "Three Years . . . ," the poet, far from "penetrating the veils" of

sensuous experience, had been utterly seduced by it.

The feeling of betrayal which is introduced at the end of "Three Years . . . " and which prevades "A Slumber . . . " is the feeling which must follow any such seduction. The poet presents the feeling largely in terms of the ironic fulfillment, in "A Slumber . . . ," of the promises and prophecies of "Three Years" There is motion in the later poem, but empty motion only; there is no longer any promise of growth or vitality for Lucy:

No motion has she now, no force;
 She neither hears nor sees;
 Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
 With rocks, and stones, and trees.

Having awakened from his "slumber," the poet can look back on the "dream" of "Three Years . . . ," penetrate the veils of sensuous experience, and see that its growth and vitality merely anticipate the blind, blank motion of "A Slumber" Whereas in the earlier poem Lucy had seemed to draw a deeper life from the "breathing balm" of "mute insensate things," those things now subsume her; she is "Rolled round . . . With rocks, and stones," and has become a "thing" with "no motion . . . no force." The "motions of the storm" that had promised to "mould the Maiden's form" have, ironically, moulded Lucy into the earth's form. Similarly, the prophecy, "Where rivulets dance their wayward round / And beauty born of murmuring sound / Shall pass into her face," finds ironic fulfillment when the "round" of the rivulets becomes "earth's diurnal round," the "wayward" dance becomes the blind, purposeless diurnal course, and Lucy's face becomes the blank face of earth.

The blankness of the imagery of "A Slumber . . . " validates the

empty images of the last stanza of "Three Years . . . ," and strengthens the feeling that the kindling impulse is gone and that only the restraint of the law remains. Lucy knows no vital feelings (she has "no motion," "no force"); she knows only the law of mortality, only the "touch of earthly years." Further, the barrenness of the imagery belies the promise of poetic fruitfulness which the union of Lucy and nature had seemed to offer in "Three Years" Along with images of rocks and stones, the cyclic sound of "A Slumber . . . ," which reflects the endless, purposeless cycle of earth's diurnal course, points to the ultimate sterility of the union. The "e" sounds which predominate in the first stanza, carried by the rhyming words, "seal," "fears," "feel," "years," and the important phrase, "She seemed a thing," yield to the mournful "o" sounds of the second stanza's "No motion has she now, no force . . . Rolled round . . . With rocks, and stones." With the last word of the poem, "trees," the cycle begins again. Like the earlier poems in the "Lucy" series, "A Slumber" presents a mind confronted by the knowledge of Lucy's death. As in the earlier lyrics, a loss of power accompanies this knowledge: the poet cannot find Lucy, and the poem's landscape is one of empty forms and images. Indeed, in ironic fulfillment of the divinity ascribed to the nature of "Three Years," the landscape seems finally demonic in its barrenness and its subsumption of the dead Lucy.

On a first reading it may seem that the poet's loss of power results from his acknowledgement of Lucy's humanness, as manifested by her death. But, somewhat paradoxically, this is not the case. Lucy now has "no motion . . . no force" for the poet because when she was alive the poet "had no human fears." In having no "human fears," the poet had denied

Lucy her humanity, just as he had in "She Dwelt . . . " and in "Three Years" Even in the first of the poems, which places Lucy within the borders of the human world, the rider's resistance to the centering action drawing him towards the cottage expresses a wish to deny Lucy her humanity. In each of these poems, the poet's denial of Lucy's humanness represents an attempt to resist the painful emergence of his consciousness of self. The attempt fails as Lucy's death inevitably intervenes, sundering the poet to self-realization. Moreover, the "Lucy" images in these poems prove unable to bear the burden of the poet's self-consciousness: the "moon" drops, the "violet" becomes transient, the "star" grows merely remote, while images of growth and vitality become blank, empty images. The images fail precisely because they are drawn from nature. The poet has consistently explored that side of Lucy which is towards nature, and has consistently failed to transcend self-consciousness and knowledge purchased by the loss of the power to find either Lucy or a return to Edenic nature. In "A Slumber . . . " the poet acknowledges that this failure derives from the denial of Lucy's humanity when he recognizes that his having "no human fears" during Lucy's lifetime has led to Lucy's having "no motion . . . no force" in death.

Having recognized this fact, the poet turns, in the last poem of the cycle, to the exploration of that side of Lucy which is away from nature--her human side. The opening stanza of "I Travelled Among Unknown Men" indicates that the poet has turned from nature:

I Travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

The poem's concern lies not so much in the English landscape as in English

society; emphasis will fall not so much on Lucy's place in a natural setting, but on her place in a social setting.

The poem turns upon the very domestic scene of the third stanza:

And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

The wheel's motion recalls the cyclic motion of "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees," with one very important difference: while the blank, diurnal motion in "A Slumber . . . " had subsumed Lucy, the present, domestic scene restores Lucy to the poet. Far from being subsumed by it, Lucy, in fact, controls the motion; the poet no longer sees a dead girl rolled round and round, he sees Lucy's hand turning the wheel. And this image controls what follows in the next lines:

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played.

Earth's diurnal course no longer seems purposeless, as in "A Slumber . . . "; its function is alternately to reveal and conceal, almost playfully, a Lucy engaged in very human activities. Its purpose is to roll round a landscape ("bowers") that reveals a human form.

The poet not only re-gains Lucy, but also finds a return to a more Edenic nature. The landscape appears precious to him: "Among thy mountains did I feel / The joy of my desire." These mountains are not the empty, demonic "rocks and stones" of "A Slumber . . . "; "vital feelings of delight" infuse the forms of these mountains. The landscape grows precious, and form becomes imbued with impulse, because, in a reversal of the roles of "Three Years . . . ," nature has felt Lucy's

"overseeing power." The poet has moved to the vision of a nature seen purely under the aspect of the human:

And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eye surveyed.

The poet's act of giving humanity to Lucy seems to grant her divine powers as well. We sense that Lucy has blessed nature, that her eye, in surveying England's field, made it a green world of redemption.

Moreover, the poet himself has been redeemed. He has transcended the self-consciousness manifested, in the first four lyrics, by the inability imaginatively to re-gain Lucy and to return to Edenic nature. In the final poem of the cycle, the poet paradoxically overcomes his self-consciousness, which emerged with Lucy's very human death, by giving Lucy her humanity.

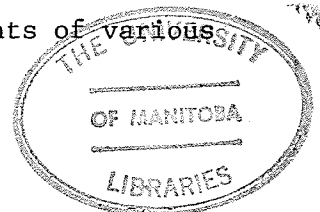
CHAPTER THREE

THE PRELUDE AND THE PARADISE WITHIN

Throughout most of The Prelude Wordsworth attempts to establish or confirm an inner paradise. The centrality to Wordsworth's epic of the "paradise within" points, of course, to Wordsworth's emulation of another English prophet of paradise, Milton. Wordsworth casts his inner refuge in terms quite different from Milton's, however; The Prelude offers a naturalistic, secular equivalent to Milton's paradise within, as Book I of the poem makes abundantly clear. Wordsworth accomplishes this naturalization through his imagery, as section i of this chapter demonstrates. The next five sections of the chapter follow the evolution of the "paradise within" through Books II to XI.

Section ii focuses exclusively on the presentation of the inner Eden in the second book of The Prelude. In Book II, Wordsworth extensively develops his representation of paradise as a home and refuge, emphasizing that to be inviolate, the inner refuge or home must be subjective and figurative. The book presents the poet as increasingly in possession of just such a subjective inner Eden.

Secure in this inner refuge, Wordsworth leads a privileged or insulated existence in the midst of a world which the subsequent books increasingly portray as fallen. In Books III, IV, VI, VII, and VIII, we witness the testing of the poet's inner refuge in his accounts of various



experiences in the outside world, his experiences at Cambridge and in London, for instance. Section iii of this chapter examines the effects of these trials upon the poet, or more precisely, upon his inner state of refuge. Wordsworth not only survives the trials, but also comes through them with his inner Eden still inviolate; throughout all the "trials" he remains distanced from events and persons, and so essentially untried by his experiences. In the middle books of the poem, VI, VII, and VIII, Wordsworth adds a further dimension to his treatment of the paradisiacal theme. Even while presenting the picture of an untried, innocent youth, he darkens the poetry with foreshadowings of the fall into experience occasioned by his commitment to the French Revolution.

Section iv explores Book X's representation of the poet's fall--the collapse of his initial, untried inner refuge--and the recovery which establishes an inner Eden that proves adequate to the demands and trials of a fallen world. Wordsworth offers two recountings of his fall and recovery in Book X. In the first, the poet accommodates evil in a way that makes recovery a part of natural process. But in the second he emphasizes that recovery involves a state of mind and that Eden can be only a construct of the mind. Wordsworth gives a third version of his fall and recovery in Book XI. Section v examines the ways in which the eleventh book's "spots of time" underscore more firmly than ever that Eden exists as a construct of the human mind. The sixth and final section of this chapter considers the role of the "spots of time," as sources of recovery, in the larger context of The Prelude as a whole.

In the first book of The Prelude Wordsworth establishes his relationship to Milton in terms which point to his break from the tradition Milton represents. Wordsworth signals his intention to emulate Milton virtually from the outset as we hear the first of The Prelude's many pointed Miltonic echoes, "The earth is all before me" (15).¹ It has become a critical commonplace to observe that Wordsworth takes up the prophet's mantle precisely where it fell from Milton--at the threshold to the "paradise within thee, happier far" (PL XII.587).² The inherited role cannot be assumed quite so readily, though, as the waves of despondency which follow closely upon the initial exuberance of the preamble indicate.

The opening book ends with an affirmation which credits the actual writing of the last two-thirds of the book with curing Wordsworth's despondency (I.640-53). The cure for a despondency which had been precipitated by the inability to decide upon theme and subject incorporates, naturally, the choice of theme and subject:

One end hereby at least hath been attain'd,
My mind hath been revived, and if this mood
Desert me not, I will forthwith bring down,
Through later years, the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me; 'tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds.

(I.664-69)

"The road lies plain before me." Wordsworth returns to his first Miltonic echo and so brings the opening book full circle. The curative choice of theme and subject thus permits the reiteration that Wordsworth indeed is beginning where Milton ended. Why, then, could the poem not

begin immediately after the initial Miltonic echo? Why was there despondency and the inability to settle upon theme? In simplest terms, Wordsworth first had to break more finally from the constraint of the traditional Christian manner of Milton.

Wordsworth's deepest instincts at the time of writing The Prelude drew him earthward, to "the very world which is the world / Of all of us, the place on which, in the end / We find our happiness, or not at all" (X.725-27). The opening lines of The Prelude bear witness to the attraction of this world. Wordsworth finds "blessing" in a breeze which blows from "fields," "clouds," and the "sky" (I.1-2). These images and those which follow immediately in the spontaneous celebration of new freedom resist any heaven-ward pull from the word "blessing." However, the second reference to the breeze locates its source not in field or sky but specifically in Heaven. With this breeze comes the first mention both of poetic enterprise and of that vexation which will lead to despondency:

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of Heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A corresponding mild creative breeze,
A vital breeze which travell'd gently on
O'er things which it had made, and is become
A tempest, a redundant energy
Vexing its own creation.

(I.41-47)

Wordsworth believes this "storm" brings "vernal promises"

Of active days, of dignity and thought,
Of prowess in an honorable field,
Pure passions, virtue, knowledge, and delight,
The holy life of music and of verse.

(I.48-54)

Patently, Milton figures as the model of the hero/poet/priest here, as he does a few lines later when Wordsworth tells how

poetic numbers came
Spontaneously, and cloth'd in priestly robe
My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,
For holy services.

(I.60-63)

But the Miltonic "robe" fits his spirit rather poorly: "My own voice cheer'd me, and, far more, the mind's / Internal echo of the imperfect sound" (I.64-65). Impulse and form, inspiration and convention, do not match; the fault lies with the form, the "imperfect sound," not with the inner impulse. Wordsworth says as much again a hundred or so lines later:

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such a glorious work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often cheering; for I neither seem
To lack, that first great gift! the vital soul,
Nor general truths . . .
.
Time, place, and manners; these I seek, and these
I find in plenteous store; but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice.

(I.157-71)

The knowledge that he possesses the vital soul, coupled with his failure to settle upon the proper form for his inspiration, eventually leads Wordsworth to the question which starts The Prelude proper: "Was it for this . . . ?" (I.271ff.).

Much has been written about how, and in what manner, the childhood episodes narrated in the remainder of Book I serve to re-invigorate the poet.³ I would like to draw attention here to one unremarked aspect of the episodes, to what might be called Wordsworth's figurative emptying

of the sky. That is, the moon and stars, presented as emblems of heavenly, inaccessible peace in the Woodcock Snaring episode, gradually disappear from the sky in subsequent episodes, as it were, to reappear on the earth in the form of reflections. The implication is that the peace which in the traditional Christian view remains transcendental and remote can be found on the green earth.

Wordsworth introduces moon and stars in his description of snaring woodcocks on the open heights:

moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,
And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace
That was among them.

(I.321-24)

They next appear in the Boat Stealing episode, during the course of which the image of moonlight on water supplants that of the moon in the sky:

The moon was up, the Lake was shining clear.

 my Boat move [d] on,
 Leaving behind her still on either side
 Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
 Until they melted all into one track
 Of sparkling light.

(I.383-94)

Only the stars remain in the part of the sky toward which the boy looks: "behind / Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky" (I.399-400); "the huge Cliff / Rose up between me and the stars" (I.409-10). In the final reference to moonlight towards the end of the book, the image is of moonlight reflected on water, in a passage evocative of a peace which is almost tangible:

when the Sea threw off his evening shade
 And to the Shepherd's huts beneath the crags
 Did send sweet notice of the rising moon,
 How I have stood, to fancies such as these,
 Engrafted in the tenderness of thought,
 A stranger, linking with the spectacle
 No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
 And bringing with me no peculiar sense
 Of quietness or peace yet I have stood,
 Even while mine eye has mov'd o'er three long leagues
 Of shining water, gathering, as it seem'd
 Through every hair-breadth of that field of light
 New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers.

(I.596-608)

The displacement of stars from sky to earth can be traced in the
 Skating Scene which, like the passage just cited, ends with a feeling
 of pervasive tranquillity. The stars appear in the sky about midway
 through Wordsworth's description--"the stars, / Eastward, were sparkling
 clear"--to become a reflection on ice, simultaneously with the boy's
 withdrawal to quieter activities:

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
 To cut across the image of a star
 That gleam'd upon the ice.

(I.471-78)

As the verse paragraph draws to its close, peace spreads visibly
 throughout the boy's world:

yet still the solitary Cliffs
 Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had roll'd
 With visible motion her diurnal round;
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watch'd
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

(I.484-89)

Not surprisingly this passage reminds one of the Boy of Winander.

The Winander lines, though finally placed in Book V, originated at the same time as Book I's episodes and reflect similar poetic values and metaphysical convictions. The juxtaposition, in Book V, of the Winander Boy and the model child underscores these shared values in a way that sheds further light on the movement from heaven to earth I have been tracing. The model child's knowledge is emphatically a knowledge "purchas'd with the loss of power" (V.449)--the power to imagine, to love, to wonder. His is the knowledge of so many discrete facts that are ultimately as insubstantial as "beads of dew / Upon a gossamer thread" (V.336-37). His is the knowledge that kills the spirit; the knowledge, Wordsworth implies, that gives rise to a vision of a mechanistic universe and an impersonal god, to deism. The model child, we are told, can "read the inside of the earth" and he can "spell the stars" (V.332-33). The Winander Boy, on the other hand, does not--probably cannot--decipher his world in this way. He feels the stars as presences that "move along the edges of the hills, / Rising or setting" as he stands by the "glimmering lake" (V.392-94). Here is the by now familiar shift from heavenly body to reflected light; a metaphysical re-orientation that finds beautiful expression in the lines which close the paragraph: "and that uncertain Heaven, receiv'd / Into the bosom of the steady Lake" (V.412-13).

Of particular interest to the present discussion are the changes from "glimmering lake" to "steady lake," and from the seemingly purposeful movement of stars rising and setting to "that uncertain Heaven." By the end of the verse paragraph, lake and heaven have exchanged values and functions; the certainty implicit in the movement of the stars now appertains to the lake in its steadiness, while heaven

has assumed the uncertainty imaged first in "glimmering." The implications of such an exchange become especially clear in the implicit contrast between an "uncertain heaven" and that heaven which belongs to the model child who can "spell the stars" with certainty. Heaven, with all things associated with it, is a dead, mechanistic thing to that child. For the Winander Boy, heaven, with all its suggestion of divinity, is safeguarded in the bosom of the lake--in earthly nature's bosom--and, the poetry suggests, in the heart of the Winander Boy (V.407-13). In an age when "knowledge" increasingly means factual knowledge--the knowledge of how and not why--heaven and divinity have to seek refuge in the world of here and now, and within the human heart. The very element of uncertainty in the Winander Boy's experience of heaven allows room for a faith to grow.⁴

To return to the question of what in the childhood episodes serves to re-invigorate the poet, we can see that, for one thing, the episodes justify, on metaphysical grounds, turning from Miltonic convention. To Milton, in Northrop Frye's words, heaven and hell exist "outside the cosmos, in a kind of absolute up and down."⁵ For Wordsworth, writing in a Newtonian world, such ups and downs cannot hold, even as metaphor. It will be remembered that poetic inspiration grew tempestuous and began to vex its own creation when Wordsworth located the source of the inspiring breeze in Heaven and evoked Milton as the presiding spirit of holy days of music and of verse. In the course of the poetry that follows the moment of vexation Wordsworth discovers (to adapt the words of one critic) the impossibility of inspiration coming from a vertical, hierarchical structure.⁶

ii

An examination of the representation of paradise in The Prelude can begin with Wordsworth's elaboration of his Miltonic source. The final four lines of Paradise Lost provide Wordsworth with almost twenty lines of verse. Milton's epic closes with:

The World was all before them, where to choose
Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took thir solitary way.

(XII.646-49)

Most commentators draw attention to the natural things--cloud or twig--that replace Providence as the guide in Wordsworth's poem,⁷ while Wordsworth's extensive metaphoric treatment of something Milton refers to in four simple words, "Thir place of rest," goes largely unnoticed. Wordsworth devotes fully five lines to the place of rest:

[I] May fix my habitation where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? In what Vale
Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?

(I.10-14)

We know, as do Milton's Adam and Eve, that they are leaving Eden only to find their place of rest in the paradise within: "then wilt thou not be loth to leave this Paradise, but shall possess / A paradise within thee, happier far" (PL, XII.586-87). One might suppose that Wordsworth has in mind a similar equivalence of resting place and paradise. The relationship between these lines from the start of The Prelude and Home at Grasmere in which, as M. H. Abrams observes,

"home . . . is also a recovered paradise" supports that assumption.⁸

But it is not necessary to adduce Home at Grasmere as evidence of such an identification; the overall tenor and tone of The Prelude's opening lines suggest as much. So too does the clear parallel between the anticipated "sweet stream / [That] with its murmurs [shall] lull me to my rest" (I.13-14), and the remembered Derwent, "the fairest of all rivers," that

lov'd
 To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
 And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
 And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
 That flowed along my dreams . . .

 [And made] ceaseless music through the night and day,
 Which with its steady cadence tempering
 Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
 To more than infant softness, giving me
 Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
 A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm
 Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

(I.272-85)

These lines convey a sense of contentment which in itself warrants the epithet, Edenic. More particularly, the unity of the infant's mind and outer nature (no barrier impedes the flow of the river's voice into the infant's dreams) signals a paradisiacal state of being. It is, of course, the river Derwent that in one very real sense becomes the "sweet stream" of The Prelude's preamble.

Wordsworth's emphasis on the "place of rest" in the opening passage (I.10-14) thus reflects the expectation that the chosen habitation will prove to be a recovered paradise. Each of the images for an Edenic place of rest (habitation, dwelling, vale, harbour, grove, home) incorporates ideas of refuge and shelter. While the poet seems

to present these images as synonymous, a progression of sorts appears as the sequence moves from the quite literal and objective "habitation" to the more obviously figurative and subjective imagery of "harbour" and murmuring stream. The poetry thus establishes an equivalence between the literal and the figurative; both bear equal weight in Wordsworth's present conception of paradise. Wordsworth's belief, here, in the possibility of an actual physical paradise marks a further distinction between the opening of his epic and the close of Milton's, where paradise can be only a figure of speech. But the question of balance between the literal and the figurative conception of paradise is worth keeping in mind throughout the course of The Prelude. For instance, Book II, to which I shall turn now, says a good deal about dwellings and shelters; in it the figurative and subjective assume predominance. On the other hand, in the books on revolutionary France, the poet often speaks of the return of a literal Golden Age.

Book II begins, in fact, by pointing to the necessity of possessing an inner refuge, or sanctum. Wordsworth refers to the path which led him "To love the woods and fields," adding that "the passion yet / Was in its birth, sustain'd . . . By nourishment that came unsought" (II.1-7). The note of confidence here is belied in the lines which follow where the cumulative effect of such words and phrases as "fail'd," "no chair," "empty," and "at last" conveys an under-sense of foreboding:

for still,

From week to week, from month to month, we liv'd
 A round of tumult: duly were our games
 Prolong'd in summer till the day-light fail'd:
 No chair remain'd before the doors, the bench
 And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
 The Labourer, and the Old Man who had sate,
 A later lingerer, yet the revelry
 Continued, and the loud uproar: at last,

When all the ground was dark, and the huge clouds
 Were edged with twinkling stars, to bed we went,
 With weary joints, and with a beating mind.

(II.7-18)

The passing of time makes itself felt as Wordsworth contemplates the
 "wide"

vacancy between me and those days,
 Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
 That, sometimes, when I think of it, I seem
 Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
 And of some other Being.

(II.28-33)

Wordsworth turns to an objectively verifiable fact to illustrate and
 to take the measure of this vacancy:

A grey Stone
 Of native rock, left midway in the Square
 Of our small market Village, was the home
 And centre of these joys, and when, return'd
 After a long absence, thither I repair'd
 I found that it was split, and gone to build
 A smart Assembly-room.

(II.33-39)

Time passing means change, and change can bring loss. Nourishment
 that once came unsought may not flow so abundantly as before; the home
 and centre of joys may be lost. From this point Book II explores what
 can be done in the face of such losses.

Wordsworth's concern in the second book lies primarily with facts
 of external change. Images of change, decay, and loss in the objective
 world fill the first half of the book: the stone, the Old Dame and
 her table are gone; an old table and a mouldered cave spell the passing
 of a Hermit; Furness Abbey's antique walls stand mouldered and fractured;
 a large, bold sign has usurped the old emblem above the door of an Inn,

and the rhymes which once inscribed the Inn's threshold are gone (II.33-47; 64-65; 110-12; 156-60). The depiction of a home or centre of joys which, unlike the stone in the village square, is inviolable because subjective, effectively counterbalances such images, however. While the Blest Babe passage, in which the infant is imaged as so very much at home in the world, furnishes the most comprehensive and sustained illustration of this point, the adolescent episodes recounted earlier equally reflect a desire to abide in a sheltered and sheltering home.

The Furness Abbey passage provides a particularly good example since each of the two verse paragraphs juxtaposes imagery of long decay and imagery of shelter. Thus, the first paragraph describes

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! along the smooth green turf
 Our horses grazed: 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;
 Such is the shelter that is there, and such
 The safeguard for repose and quietness.

(II.109-21)

The second verse paragraph intensifies the pathos of decay by anthropomorphizing the ruins; the Abbey seems to mourn its own decay: "touch'd by faint / Internal breezes, sobbings of the place, / And respirations, from the roofless walls / The shuddering ivy dripp'd large drops" (II.128-31). At the same time, and in contrast to the impersonal construction of "Such is the shelter that is there, and such / The safeguard," the desire for shelter is heightened to an

explicitly personal statement:

The shuddering ivy dripp'd 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 live'd for ever there
 To hear such music.

(II.131-35)

The shift from impersonal construction to the expression of a personal wish and the intensification of the pathos of decay, correspond to the increasingly inward tendency of the Furness Abbey passage as a whole. Imagistically, this tendency appears as a series of progressively smaller enclosures; the passage moves from the Vale of Nightshade through the fractured Arch and the Chantry to the Nave. On a more symbolic level, the invisibility of the wren betokens subjectivity. The inward movement shows itself, too, as a resistance, an unwillingness to leave Furness Abbey, as it were. The poet begins to recount the departure:

Our steeds ^{remounted} ~~mounted~~, and the summons given,
 With whip and spur we by the Chantry flew
 In uncouth race, and left the cross-legg'd Knight,
 And the stone-Abbot, and that single Wren.

(II.122-25)

But leave-taking is delayed as Wordsworth lingers to describe the wren's music and its effect on him.⁹ Once he has expressed his wish to live forever there, he leaves the Abbey: "Through the walls we flew" (II.135).

Almost incidentally, the second verse paragraph reveals why shelter must become inward, or subjective. The Abbey feels "comfortless" from "recent showers," the ivy drips, a feeling of "gloom" pervades the place. Such an atmosphere stands in subtle contradiction to the first paragraph's

assertion that this spot is "to more than inland peace / Left by the sea wind passing overhead / (Though wind of roughest temper)." Not an inviolable "safeguard for repose and quietness," the Abbey ruins, like other things in the external world, are subject still to the forces of decay. Inviolability can belong only to an inner sanctum.

The two scenes which follow the Abbey passage likewise have to do with dwellings; and again emphasis falls on subjectivity. In the first, Wordsworth recalls an Inn which in times past would have been a "dwelling . . . More worthy of a Poet's love, a Hut" (II.153-54). Even though simplicity has given way to pretentiousness, the Windermere Inn and the grounds over which it presides remain "dear" to the poet (II.156-62). And the dearness, the narrative sequence suggests, derives largely from the kind of experience which commonly crowned a day spent in and about the Inn. The paragraph, which begins on the level of objective description, ends with the delineation of a subjective state of mind, culminating in the image, "the sky / Never before so beautiful, sank down / Into my heart, and held me like a dream" (II.178-80). This most subjective of states, the day-dream or reverie, subsequently figures in lines which celebrate feelings of "at-homeness":

And from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I would dream away my purposes,
Standing to look upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew
No other region; but belong'd to thee,
Yea, appertain'd by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts, my darling Vale!

(II.194-202)

As noted above, the depiction of homes that are more a state of mind than an external reality serves to counterbalance the images of

change, loss, and decay scattered throughout the first part of Book II. The latter half of the book, beginning with the Blest Babe passage, goes beyond mere counterbalancing by stressing the creative power of a mind which experiences the world subjectively and sympathetically. Wordsworth calls such a power "the first Poetic spirit of our human life" and emphasizes particularly the possibility of its triumph "Through every change of growth or of decay" (II.275-80).

As sketched in the Blest Babe passage, the infant's world is Edenic in that it appears as a unified whole to a mind which "Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine / In one appearance, all the elements / And parts of the same object, else detach'd / And loth to coalesce" (II.247-50). A perception which knows no "puny boundaries" (II.223) between the perceiving subject and external nature also serves to re-create Eden. Indeed, the mind is imaged as boundlessly expansive:

his mind spreads,
Tenacious of the forms which it receives,
In one beloved presence, nay and more,
In that most apprehensive habitude
And those sensations which have been deriv'd
From this beloved Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
All objects through all intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewilder'd and depress'd.

(II.253-61)

The metaphor of the mind spreading governs much of what follows in the remainder of Book II as Wordsworth testifies to feelings of union and communion with the external world. No sense of division between the self and the world, for instance, informs those moments when

such a holy calm
Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
Appear'd like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in my mind.

(II.367-71)

Nor is there division when the poet "felt the sentiment of Being spread" over all things, when he "saw one life, and felt that it was joy / One song they sang." As with the "bodily eye" above, the "fleshly ear," which could perceive the world as an alien other, "Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd" (II.420-34).

The metaphor of the expanding mind also proves central to the following passage, in which the poet praises the soul's ability to recover, not the content of past experiences, but, in the words of one critic, "a mode of pure subjectivity":¹⁰

I would walk alone,
In storm and tempest, or in starlight nights
Beneath the quiet Heavens; and, at that time,
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power.
I deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity to which,
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they still
Have something to pursue.

(II.321-41)

If we set the present passage alongside the lines from the start of Book II which tell of the wide vacancy between Wordsworth and his adolescent days, we gain a clearer sense of just what Wordsworth achieves in this book. The vacancy now seems not so wide as at the start, the "two consciousnesses" are no longer so distinctly separate--Wordsworth

can speak now of his soul "remembering how she felt." The vacancy has been bridged by acts of memory and imagination which recover, to varying degrees of intensity, in the passages examined above, a mode of subjectivity. The "vacancy" lines, it will be recalled, were followed immediately by (and quite possibly were elicited by) objectively verifiable facts of change and loss in the external world. In a literal return to the village of his schooldays, the poet finds the physical home of early joys, the rock, displaced by a new town-hall and resents it as a usurpation of the ground of past being. Whether by coincidence or design, the present passage turns as well on an experience occurring "beneath some rock." Significantly, it is merely and indefinitely "some" rock; particularity of detail yields to unspecified dim and distant abodes and shadowy exultations. But the very indeterminateness allows for growth, for "possible sublimity." Moreover, the ground of this remembered experience remains sacred ("unprofaned"), invulnerable to usurpation.

Book II, then, holds forth the promise of a paradisiacal state of being in two directions. We have seen passages which describe union between the self and the external world; we now see a recovery of the unity of past and present selves, albeit a recovery hedged about by Wordsworthian "possibilities" and an indefinite "something." The book closes, as it opened, by demonstrating the need for an inner Eden, with an illustration drawn, not from personal history as at the first, but from the political and social arena. Wordsworth refers to "these times of fear, / This melancholy waste of hopes o'er thrown" (II.448-49). He decries an age of

indifference and apathy
And wicked exultation, when good men,

On every side fall off we know not how.
 To selfishness disguis'd in gentle names
 Of peace, and quiet, and domestic love.

(II.450-54)

That Book II's Edenic moments have much to do with peace, quiet, and domestic love, now strikes the reader as slightly ironic, in view of the disguises Wordsworth singles out here for special condemnation. The poet seems to be playing the self-conscious ironist who knows that Book II does not have the final word on Paradise. Nevertheless, Wordsworth does not succumb to "despair" though confronted on every side with signs of a fallen external world (II.456-62). He possesses the refuge, here imaged as "the quiet of a healthful mind," that he bestows upon Coleridge in the benediction of the closing lines (II.479-83).

Wordsworth's closing apostrophes focus on something that this discussion may seem to have slighted, namely Nature. In fact, the poet attributes his "more than Roman confidence," his "faith / That fails not," in this era of "dereliction and dismay" directly to Nature's ministry:

O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours I find
 A never-failing principle of joy,
 And purest passion.

(II.456-66)

And he praises Coleridge as "one / The most intense of Nature's worshippers" (II.476-77). But, while Nature acts as the agency, the subjective state of mind increasingly emerges as the locus of the Edenic refuge.

iii

The relevance of Book II to the idea of the paradise within carries beyond the boundaries of the book as we witness the testing of the poet's inner refuge throughout the next several books in the account of experiences in "the world beyond the vale."¹¹ As Harold Bloom observes, "The Prelude, until the eighth book, devotes itself largely to an inward world deeply affected only by external Nature."¹² Geoffrey Hartman would extend the period to include the ninth book, remarking, in terms especially appropriate to this discussion, that

VIII to IX, in particular, mark a period in Wordsworth's life that parallels the time between Fall and final loss of Paradise. The poet walks among dangers as if innocent. . . .¹³

We have seen that Book II closes with the acknowledgement both of the fallen state of the world outside the poet and the Edenic state of the inner world. Book III sustains the impression that, despite some rather minor lapses, Wordsworth leads a privileged existence in the midst of a fallen world.

At Cambridge the poet dwells mainly in a world apart from the typical student's world of "hopes" and "fears," "jealousies, and triumphs good or bad"; he remains indifferent to "important Days, / Examinations when the Man was weighed / As in the balance" (III.64-69). If the reader detects shades of the Judgment Day (a day rendered necessary by Man's Fall) in these lines, his suspicions shortly are confirmed when he reads, in language reminiscent of the doctrine of election, that Wordsworth felt himself to be

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.

(III.82-88)

To "apprehend" and to "impress" were presented, it will be remembered, as complementary powers of the Blest Babe's Edenic state of being.

The 1850 text shortly refers to the poet's perception, while at Cambridge, of an "Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace / Of that first Paradise whence man was driven" (III.108-09; 1850).

While the 1805 text does not name Eden specifically, it relates the sympathetic experience of the world and communion with external powers to subjectivity in a way that recalls Book II's delineation of a paradisiacal state of being. The following passage, for instance, borrows several metaphors from the Blest Babe lines:

As if awaken'd, summon'd, rous'd, contrain'd,
 I look'd for universal things; perused
 The common countenance of earth and heaven;
 And, turning the mind in upon itself,
 Pored, watch'd, expected, listen'd; spread my thoughts
 And spread them with a wider creeping . . .

 . . . I was ascending now
 To such community with highest truth.

(III.109-20)

Wordsworth once more signals the role of subjectivity--of "consciousness not to be subdued" (III.123)--as he goes on to speak in particular of the feelings of communion with the external world experienced when "To every natural form . . . [he] gave a moral life . . . and all / That [he] beheld respired with inward meaning" (III.124-29). This is private and secluded intercourse with Nature alone, though, and involves neither his fellow man nor dedicated study. In the poet's own words, he

had a world about me; 'twas my own,
 I made it; for it only liv'd to me,
 And to the God who look'd into my mind.

(III.142-44)

To be sure, Wordsworth can envision the kind of Cambridge in which, together with his fellow students, he could "frankly" offer "homage" to "written lore, acknowledg'd my liege Lord" (III.375-89). However, he indirectly justifies his failure to show due obeisance in language coloured, once again, by the idea of election:

Yet I could shape
 The image of a Place which, sooth'd and lull'd
 As I had been, train'd up in paradise
 Among sweet garlands and delightful sounds,
 Accustom'd 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.

(III.375-81)

In fact, more than mere election is suggested here; only the prelapsarian Adam could match this magisterial walk.

The air of unreality about the Cambridge that Wordsworth depicts strengthens the impression that Wordsworth's is a privileged existence. Cambridge variously affects the poet as a "Dream," a "novel show," and "an opening act" (III.28;203;259). And despite the subsequent disclaimer that this "spectacle" was in fact "no mimic show" but "a living part" of the world, Wordsworth's very anatomizing of Cambridge's resemblance to "the great world," with its uncharacteristic use of personified abstractions, emphasizes lifelessness (III.614-43). So too does his final image of the university as a "cabinet" or "wide Museum" (III.652-53). The differences between this image and Book III's

early metaphor for Cambridge as "dream," suggest that the time spent at Cambridge leaves Wordsworth less rather than more involved with what we might call social life. Moreover, the lines immediately preceding the museum metaphor intimate, once again, that the poet's sense of his own innocence acts as his insulation:

But delight,
That, in an easy temper lull'd asleep,
Is still with innocence its own reward,
This surely was not wanting.

(III.648-51)

Wordsworth's inner sanctum thus survives rather easily its first trials in the world beyond the vale; a fact which Book IV with its testimonies to gentle restoration and the natural growth of mind and soul subsequently verifies. Almost everything in his summer vacation confirms Wordsworth in his belief and trust in the ever-growing strength of his inner refuge: he feels new strength "where weakness was not known to be" and speaks of "restoration . . . knocking at the door of unacknowledged weariness" (IV.145-48). "I took the balance in my hand and weighed myself," says the poet (IV.148-49). We remember Cambridge's judgment scales and Wordsworth's self-proclaimed exemption from them. His own judgment now only affirms the rightness of that exemption as, "convers[ing] with promises," Wordsworth has

glimmering views
How Life pervades the undecaying mind,
How the immortal Soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
His being with a strength that cannot fail.

(IV.154-61)

Above all, change poses no threat to continuities in Book IV. Couched as it is in natural imagery of daily and seasonal renewal and growth, change, whether in Wordsworth's relationship with the objects of external nature (IV.222-33), or in human life (IV.181-99), is easily accommodated as regeneration.

Even Wordsworth's experience of an "inner falling-off" (IV.270) into "feast and dance and public revelry" (IV.274) proves not to be a fall. Indeed, one can scarcely even speak of lapse. The imagery of the Dedication passage traces a continuum between the night's revelry and the morning's vows: the gaiety and mirth of the dance find a counterpart in the laughing Sea (IV.320;333); glittering tapers grow into the glorious sunrise (IV.322;332), while the "din of instruments" modulates into the "melody of birds" (IV.321;338). Even dancing is mirrored to an extent by the solemn, ritual-like movement of "Labourers going forth into the fields" (IV.320;339).

Book IV concludes with the well-known episode of the Discharged Soldier. Wordsworth's encounter with the "ghastly" (IV.411) Soldier does little to disturb the tenor of Prelude IV. If Wordsworth finds a "strange half-absence" (IV.475) in the veteran's recounting of hardships endured and battles fought, the reader senses something of the same distance in the poet's rendering of the moonlit encounter. The reader feels that this proof of life's ills and evils touches the poet only superficially; Wordsworth is rather too easily "Assured that now my Comrade would repose in comfort" (IV.488-89). From another perspective, we can see in the soldier who has endured so well and so much the embodiment, and hence the validation, of Wordsworth's trust in what he earlier expressed as "a strength that cannot fail" (IV.161). Either

way, Wordsworth still has a securely "quiet heart" (IV.504) at the end of the encounter and the book.

The next excursion beyond the vale, the poet's journey to the Alps, coincides with

a time when Europe was rejoiced,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.

(VI.352-54)

The metaphor of rebirth, of regeneration, which makes revolutionary change seem like natural process, is telling. It reminds us of Prelude IV's accommodation of change as natural growth. Indeed, Book IV's image of the spring garden of social life (IV.181-99) reappears in the France of Book VI as

benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, like Spring
That leaves no corner of the Land untouch'd.

(VI.368-70)

France and Switzerland are, in fact, remarkably like both the home of Book IV and the home imaged at the start of The Prelude proper in Book I. Prelude IV's "sweet valley" (IV.11) and the mother's hut, surrounded by Indian Plains, of the first book (I.301-4) find counterparts in "Enticing Vallies" (VI.437) and

an aboriginal vale
Quiet, and lorded over and possess'd
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
Or Indian cabins.

(VI.448-51)

Such "sweet coverts" of pastoral life (VI.437) are, like the poet's homes, Edenic; only now Eden, instead of being merely a private refuge, is

seemingly available to all: the land through which the poet travels offers "Reach after reach, procession without end / Of deep and stately Vales" (VI.390-91).

However, Wordsworth's imagery in Book VI is deeply ambiguous. One might question, for instance, the poet's characterization of himself and his companion as "Keen Hunters," "birds of prey" (VI.434-35), especially since it prefaces his description of Europe's pastoral vales. One might wonder, too, at seeing images of hierarchy--indeed of monarchy --in lines devoted to revolutionary France. In two of the passages just cited, for example, the reader finds "larded over" (VI.449) and "stately" (VI.391). Several lines earlier "stately" refers to the roads of that "great Kingdom" (VI.372-73). It could be argued that Wordsworth intends to imply that only republicanism can offer man and nation the outward majesty that corresponds to inward and social dignity. But I find this not to be the case for two reasons.

First, the picture of towns "gaudy with reliques" of the Federal Day Festival and of "Flowers left to wither on triumphal Arcs" (VI.362-63; my emphasis) bodes of something less than a whole-hearted embrace of the republican cause. More significantly, Wordsworth's portrayal of a night of celebration passed with delegates returning from the Federation Festival bears striking resemblance to Milton's description of an Infernal Council held at Pandaemonium, where Satan summons the council to determine the truth of a report that a "new World and new kind of Creature are to be created, according to an ancient Prophecy" (PL, I.The Argument). Wordsworth's delegates have just witnessed the King swearing fidelity to a newly created constitution, to a new nation, in effect. Beyond this circumstantial parallel we find

quite precise verbal and imagistic echoes: both delegates and demons "swarm" like "bees" (VI.397; PL, I.768-76); Wordsworth's group is a "Throng," Milton's devils "throng" (VI.414; PL, I.780); and finally, Wordsworth and his companions rise at "signal given" to dance "round and round the Board" with open hearts and loudly gleeful tongues, while at Pandaemonium, the "signal giv'n" finds the devils thronging like elves at "midnight Revels," intent upon "mirth and dance" (VI.406-09; PL, I.776-87). One can only speculate, of course, about the extent to which Wordsworth consciously invites this comparison with Paradise Lost's Infernal Council. Here as throughout The Prelude, however, the Wordsworth who writes of the time of youthful, inordinate hopes in the possibility of secular redemption has survived the shattering of those hopes. The allusion which casts shadows on the republican celebration reflects the older Wordsworth's knowledge of the failures and atrocities of the French Revolution.

Book VI, then, introduces vistas of an imminent, literal return of the Golden Age while at the same time it just perceptibly darkens those vistas. That slight mismatching of manifest and latent intentions heralds the approach of a new and radically different stage in both the poet's history and the poem itself, as Books VII to IX make clear. The poet's inner refuge--that trust in strength that cannot fail--will be sorely tried and will in fact collapse from the "over-pressure of the times and their disastrous issues" (XI.47-48). The Prelude, no mere chronicle of events in Wordsworth's history, powerfully renders the feelings and experiences of those times. But more than this, the poem registers the inward struggle involved in the very act of thinking and writing, in the present, about a spiritual and moral crisis in the past. Some pages back I spoke of the Furness Abbey passage as revealing

a certain resistance in the poet's mind, an unwillingness to leave a particularly soothing memory and proceed with his poem. The reader encounters resistance again in Books VII and VIII, on a larger scale, and with a different motivation. The poet's unwillingness to move on now betokens the avoidance of a painful subject rather than the desire to prolong pleasing thoughts. Wordsworth's own figure of the river's meandering journey to a "devouring sea" (IX.1-7) captures the point but loses the force of the "motions retrograde" (IX.8) which characterize Books VII and VIII.

Wordsworth's London book begins apologetically: "we will now resume [the poet's task] / Nor check'd by aught of tamer argument / That lies before us, needful to be told" (VII.53-56). The "tamer argument" of the youthful poet's reaction to the city, enlivened by a lightly satirical tone, runs unbroken to about the midpoint of the book. Then, in the course of cataloguing London's various attractions and entertainments Wordsworth arrives at "dramas of living Men / And recent things yet warm with life . . . some domestic incident." He proceeds to discuss at length one incident in particular "Set forth, too holy theme for such a place" (VII.313-18), the Maid of Buttermere's story of ill-treatment at the hands of a liar and bigamist (VII.319-46). Having digressed thus briefly Wordsworth thinks to return to his argument; but something prevents him from doing so:

These last words utter'd, to my argument
I was returning, when, with sundry Forms
Mingled, that in the way which I must tread
Before me stand, thy image rose again,
Mary of Buttermere!

(VII.347-51)

It is as if the poet has omitted a crucial part of the Maid's story, and feels compelled to recount it before proceeding with his argument. The story takes a curious turn as Mary yields centre stage:

She lives in peace
Upon the ground where she was born and rear'd;
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,
To rest beneath the little rock-like Pile
When storms are blowing. Happy are they both
Mother and Child!

(VII.351-60)

The motif of Innocence finding refuge from the "storms" of Experience is certainly not new to The Prelude, but never before has it taken quite so startling a form. Perhaps fearing that he has presented Innocence as exacting rather too high a price than most would willingly pay, Wordsworth hastens to explain that

These feelings, in themselves
Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think
Of those ingenuous moments of our youth,
Ere yet by use we have learn'd to slight the crime
And sorrows of the world.

(VII.360-64)

"Those days are now my theme" continues Wordsworth (VII.364-65), able only now to return to his argument and the way which he must tread. It appears as though the poet needed first to present that vision of radical Innocence before he could confront what lies ahead. Foremost among the "sundry Forms" (VII.348) which meet him on his way stand another Mother and Child, and another version of the motif of Innocence in the fallen world. As fully a pastoral figure as the Maid

of Buttermere's "lamb," this "rosy Babe," "in face a Cottage rose / Just three parts blown," walks "Among the wretched and the falsely gay" (VII.368-97). But, secure in his innocence, he walks "with hair unsinged / Amid the fiery furnace" of Experience (VII.398-99). So Wordsworth remembers the child, and so he would have him always:

He hath since
Appear'd to me oft times as if embalm'd
By Nature; through some special privilege,
Stopp'd at the growth he had; destined to live,
To be, to have been, come and go, a Child
And nothing more, no partner in the years
That bear us forward to distress and guilt,
Pain and abasement.

(VII.399-406)

Wordsworth prefers to think this of the child, while fearing that

he perhaps
Mary! may now have liv'd till he could look
With envy on thy nameless Babe that sleeps
Beside the mountain Chapel, undisturb'd!

(VII.409-12)

Though Wordsworth does not add, "As I, Mary, look with envy on thy sleeping Babe," the poetry tends toward just that unspoken thought. In the larger context of the whole poem, Wordsworth is nearing the point at which he must consider the moral and spiritual crisis--the Fall into Experience--occasioned by the blasting of revolutionary hopes. His "argument" is moving, as his life did, inexorably "forward to distress and guilt and pain and abasement" and he resists the current's pull. The obviously strong appeal of thoughts of Innocence preserved provides the measure of his resistance. The poet's own disturbing metaphor, "embalm'd," gauges the strength of that appeal; death seems not too high a price to pay.

Book VII's two tales of innocent children find an interesting counterpart in a story narrated in Book VIII. Taken together the three tales form a significant progression in Wordsworth's approach to the painful subject of his Fall. The third tale is of a shepherd, his son, and a strayed sheep. While this is not unusual in a book which is strikingly pastoral, certain aspects of the story directly recall the pastoralism of the Buttermere tale. Specifically, Mary's "lamb" returning from an "unsheltered place . . . When storms are blowing" (VII.356-60) reappears as the lost sheep that, driven far astray and maimed by storms,

will return again
To his own hills, the spots where, when a Lamb,
He learn'd to pasture at his Mother's side.

(VIII.253-57)

A distinction must be made: Mary's is only figuratively a lamb while here the lamb is quite literal but charged with symbolic meanings. And death comes to this literal sheep, not to the boy who, on a sudden inspiration, searches the "ground which [he and his father] have searched before":

meanwhile the rain
Began to fall upon the mountain tops,
Thick storm and heavy which for three hours' space
Abated not; and all that time the Boy
Was busy in his search until at length
He spied the Sheep upon a plot of grass,
An Island in the Brook. It was a place
Remote and deep, piled round with rocks where foot
Of man or beast was seldom used to tread;
.
Before the Boy knew well what he had seen
He leapt upon the Island with proud heart
And with a Prophet's joy. Immediately
The Sheep sprang forward to the further Shore
And was borne headlong by the roaring flood.

(VIII.248-82)

The boy, subsequently rescued by his father, survives.

Set "At the first falling of autumnal snow" (VIII.222), the tale clearly represents a rite de passage. In seeking to escape from Experience and return to original Innocence, the sheep--symbol of the boy's childhood innocence--meets with the death which befalls Mary's child and which is deemed worthy of envy. That retreat from Experience now appears far less desirable than the passage to adulthood which, though fraught with dangers, ultimately offers security:

[the boy] stood
Right in the middle of the roaring Stream,
Now stronger every moment and more fierce.
The sight was such as no one could have seen
Without distress and fear. The Shepherd heard
The outcry of his Son, he stretch'd his Staff
Towards him, bade him leap, which word scarce said
The Boy was safe within his Father's arms.

(VIII.304-11)

The embrace with which this "passage" closes promises a good deal more in the way of warmth and comfort and joy than does the embrace of the grave in Book VII's two tales.

Insofar as it proffers a third resolution--one more desirable than either of those held forth earlier--to the problem of Innocence in the fallen world, Book VIII's story shows Wordsworth preparing to confront his own Fall. The story thus accomplishes in little what the book as a whole seems broadly designed to achieve. Entitled "Retrospect," the eighth book gives the poet some breathing space, as it were, preparatory to the books dealing directly with France and his crisis. Its subtitle, "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind," relates rather interestingly to those subsequent books with their burden of presenting Wordsworth's despair in and for Mankind: it is as if the

poet must articulate and affirm his love of Mankind to ^{reassure} ~~pressure~~ himself of this love in the face of what he knows to lie ahead. To the extent that this is so, Book VIII involves us in poetry of resistance once again. Certainly, Wordsworth's thoughts of the painful subject before him give shape to the argument of the book. Having drawn a somewhat idealized picture of Shepherds known to him in youth, Wordsworth responds to the anticipated objection that his view of Man is delusory:

blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so,
That Men did at the first present themselves
Before my untaught eyes thus purified,
Remov'd, and at a distance that was fit.
.....
 ... were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good
In our first years, or think that it is found,
How could the innocent heart bear up and live!

(VIII.428-46)

Delusion can be justified on the grounds that it strengthens the heart which must eventually meet with evil equal in kind if not in degree to that so violently unleashed by the failed French Revolution.

However, as I have indicated, Book VIII finds the poet preparing for, as well as resisting, the onset of the storms of Experience. Such preparation involves a curious admixture: on the one hand, Wordsworth de-mythologizes versions of pastoral; on the other, he indulges in a tragic vision which is scarcely less a fiction than those versions of pastoral.¹⁴

A pattern of alternation between descriptions of mythical, fictional, or exotic pastoral settings and sketches of life in England's Lake District effects the movement from pastoral to tragedy, a shift neatly subsumed in the book's subtitle. The description of the pleasure gardens

in distant Gehol, for instance (VIII.123-43), elicits the response, "But lovelier far than this the Paradise / Where I was rear'd" (VIII.144-45). Moreover, the language in the remainder of the latter passage points to a postlapsarian and hence potentially tragic paradise (VIII.146-58). Again, the poet places the Shepherds of Greek, Latin, and English pastoral poetry beside the shepherds known to him in his youth (VIII.178-221), and the appeal of the latter lies squarely in their tragic potential. The young Wordsworth had heard of what Spenser may have seen

Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
 Their Maybush . . .
 Had heard, from those who yet remember'd
 Tales of the May-pole Dance, and flowers that deck'd
 The Posts and the Kirk-pillars . . .;

but the mature poet confesses that "images of danger and distress, / And suffering," took "deepest hold" of him (VIII.191-212). He carried "tales" of "tragedies . . . Or hazards and escapes" with him in his walks (VIII.216-221). There follows the tale of the shepherd boy and the lost sheep with its pertinence to the passage into the tragic world of Experience.

As I said, Wordsworth's tragic vision seems as much a fiction as the pastoral settings and tales which he dismisses as merely fanciful. The section presently under consideration (VIII.181-221), develops just such an equivalence. As pastoral fiction begins to approach the realm of fact, tragic fact begins to recede into fiction. By admitting that Spenser "perhaps" saw those maids at sunrise, and by acknowledging that some people remembered the May-pole dance, Wordsworth refuses to deny absolutely the past existence of pastoral worlds. That is, he implies

that pastoral tales may possibly be founded upon objective truth. Fiction edges towards fact. Such a movement governs our response to Wordsworth's subsequent references to tales of the tragedies of former times. The poet has so effectively obscured the line between fiction and fact in the pastoral tales that the reader cannot accept the tragic tales as pure fact. Leslie Brisman aptly observes that Wordsworth "is as indifferent to the historicity of Arcadia as he [is] to the question of whether noble visions of rural life are fantasies or memories."¹⁵

Tragedy and fiction become linked explicitly later in the book when Wordsworth speaks of that time in his life when "wilfulness of fancy and conceit" moved among "shapes of human life" drawn from books (VIII.511-21). Such "fictions" both "beautified" and were "Burnished" by Nature to the extent that

common death was none, common mishap,
But matter for this humour every where,
The tragic super-tragic, else left short.

(VIII.524-32)

Although this juvenile taste for the "super-tragic" yields to a more "dignified" conception of Man (VIII.624-33), tragic stature remains important. At Cambridge, he says, human life at times seemed to him "a dim / Analogy to uproar and misrule, / Disquiet, danger, and obscurity"(VIII.658-64). Similarly, he recalls that London moved him with "a sense / Of what had been here done, and suffer'd here / Through ages, and was doing, suffering, still" (VIII.781-83). Thus, London was "throng'd with impregnation, like those wilds" of his childhood into which he had carried tales of tragedy (VIII.791).

"Thus here imagination also found" pleasure, and "the result was elevating thoughts / Of human Nature" (VIII.796-802). Far from pastoral, his elevated vision encompasses "guilt [and] vice, / Debasement of the body or the mind, / [and] all the misery forced upon my sight" (VIII.802-4). But the poet's is a tragic conception of Man which is yet more literary than proved upon the pulses. He is speaking here about a period in his life very near to the time of which, earlier in The Prelude, he says, "[I] lov'd / A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds, / The twilight more than dawn, Autumn than Spring" (VI.188-95). Such a disposition grew from "the mere / Redundancy of youth's contentedness" and led to "dreams and fictions pensively compos'd," to "Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake" (VI.197-98;481-82). Now Wordsworth deliberately calls attention to the untried nature of his conception of suffering Man by quoting almost verbatim from Paradise Lost as he describes how contemplation of suffering enhanced his outlook upon life:

When from that awful prospect overcast
 And in eclipse, my meditations turn'd,
 Lo! everything that was indeed divine
 Retain'd its purity inviolate
 And unencroach'd upon, nay, seem'd brighter far
 For this deep shade in counterview, that gloom
 Of opposition, such as shew'd itself
 To the eyes of Adam, yet in Paradise,
 Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw
 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 'O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught'.

(VIII.811-23)

Wordsworth thus leaves London for France with his inner refuge still secure; his own inner Eden retains, to use his words, its purity

inviolable. Despite being "in the midst of things" in London, Wordsworth looks "as from a distance on the world" (IX.23-3). Even upon arrival in France he maintains a distance. We still see a Wordsworth who wants his sufferers to wear a beautiful face, as it were. Walking about Paris "in the guise of an Enthusiast . . . Affecting more emotion than [he] felt," Wordsworth can be truly moved only by

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.66-80)

This "exquisitely wrought" sufferer is a far cry from the "hunger-bitten Girl" who subsequently claims the poet's attention as a living example of the all-too-real suffering of "the abject multitude" (IX.510-20).

First-hand knowledge of suffering, and of the evil in Man which causes suffering, finally violates the poet's inner sanctum. Unlike the excursions beyond the vale we have been looking at in this section, Wordsworth's physical, emotional, and intellectual excursion into revolutionary France does precipitate a fall into experience. The poet's fall strikes us as all the more devastating, of course, since it is presented against the backdrop of Wordsworth's earlier, safe, excursions. The Prelude is not without its dramatic devices. However, Books III through VIII serve as more than just a foil against which to measure the nature and extent of the poet's fall. These books capture, as we have seen, the feelings of a poet who knows, even as he presents the picture of early innocence and of youthful hopes and expectations, that evil and suffering lie ahead.

Wordsworth's presentation of his moral and spiritual crisis, and of the events leading up to it, is notoriously difficult to follow. The poet moves backward and forward in time at will, often covering the same ground more than once. Hartman, in pursuit of his thesis of the apocalyptic imagination, cites such "dilatatory tactics" as evidence of the "rhythm of [Wordsworth's] mind, which avoids the epochal."¹⁷ One can see something quite different at work in the recurrences of this portion of The Prelude, however; something more akin to what Charles Altieri, in his endeavour to supplant the conceptual model of apocalyptic imagination, calls "the poem's structural rhythm of enlargement through loss."¹⁸

Wordsworth's initial commitment to the French Revolution was grounded, as Hartman and others point out,¹⁹ in the belief that the Revolution occurred in the course of Nature:

If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
 Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seem'd nothing out of nature's certain course.

(IX.250-53)

In Book VI the reader encountered metaphors of regeneration and seasonal renewal which made revolutionary change seem as inherently good and unthreatening as natural process (VI.353-54;368-70). In light of the implications of such metaphors, Wordsworth's first response to the atrocities of the Revolution strikes us as optimistic:

The State . . .

 . . . had assumed with joy
 The body and the venerable name
 Of a Republic: lamentable crimes

'Tis true had gone before this hour, the work
 Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
 Was pray'd to as a judge; but these were past,
 Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,
 Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once;
 Things that could only shew themselves and die.

(X.24-37)

But a premonition of recurrence shakes Wordsworth's confidence that
 such monstrously unnatural evil can be so easily and so finally purged:

 the fear gone by
 Press'd on me almost like a fear to come;
 I thought of those September Massacres,
 Divided from me by a little month.

(X.62-65)

His own thoughts take on an almost obsessive quality as recurrence
 starts to seem demonic:

'The horse is taught his manage, and the wind
 Of heaven wheels round and treads in his ^{own} steps,
 Year follows year, the tide returns again,
 Day follows day, all things have second birth;
 The earthquake is not satisfied at once.'
 And in such way I wrought upon myself,
 Until I seem'd to hear a voice that cried,
 To the whole City, 'Sleep no more.'

(X.70-77)

"All things have second birth." The fearfulness here is far removed
 from the jubilation of "France standing on the top of golden hours, /
 And human nature seeming born again" (VI.353-54). Regeneration no
 longer seems simply and inherently good. Significantly, in the lines
 which follow, monstrous evil assumes the wholly natural form of a tiger:

 To this
 Add comments of a calmer mind, from which
 I could not gather full security,
 But at the best it seem'd a place of fear
 Unfit for the repose of night [],
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

(X.77-82)

The ambiguity of "a place of fear" (is the referent Paris or the poet's mind?) must be deliberate: the knowledge of evil begins to invade Wordsworth's calmer mind, his inner Eden, as acts of evil infiltrate Paris, the chief city of the country which was supposed to witness the return of the Golden Age.

Subsequent meditations upon the nature of the Revolution's "lamentable crimes" (X.31) carry the naturalization of evil--the transformation from ephemeral monster to tiger--a step further. Calling to mind common-place truths on the weakness of tyrannic power, Wordsworth, with restored confidence, asserts

That nothing hath a natural right to last
But equity and reason, that all else
Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
Doth live but by variety of disease.

(X.158-75)

Good is still natural, but, to the extent that "disease" recurs in organisms, evil is accommodated as part of natural process too. We see this accommodation again in Wordsworth's reasons for feeling detached from current political strife over the slave trade:

if France prosper'd, good Men would not long
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
And this most rotten branch of human shame,
Object, as seem'd, of a superfluous pains
Would fall together with its parent trees.

(X.218-26)

There is always the hope, it seems, that disease will destroy itself in the natural course of its own corrupt growth, as will the "rotten branch"; failing that, there remains the possibility of curing disease.

Thus, Wordsworth works through and accommodates as natural process the evil of the September Massacres. But still greater shocks await his

return to England. Britain declares war on France and Wordsworth feels "Change and subversion from this hour" (X.229). Yet, though Wordsworth refers to "The ravage of this most unnatural strife" (X.250), he still chooses a natural metaphor to image what then he felt:

I, who with the breeze
Had play'd, a green leaf on the blessed tree
Of my beloved Country; nor had wish'd
For happier fortune than to wither there,
Now from my pleasant station was cut off,
And toss'd about in whirlwinds.

(X.253-58)

Even the terrors unleashed by France's "tyrants," however extreme and violent, are as much within the pale of natural process as are the actions of a goaded, enraged beast (X.307-12).

To accommodate evil as natural process in no way lessens its horror or denies its far-reaching effects. Wordsworth goes out of his way to make this point by concluding his portrayal of the "domestic carnage" (X.329) in France with an analogy that, at the very least, surprises the reader:

Head after head, and never heads enough
For those who bade them fall: they found their joy,
They made it, ever thirsty as a Child,
If light desires of innocent little Ones
May with such heinous appetites be match'd,
Having a toy, a wind-mill, though the air
Do of itself blow fresh, and makes the vane
Spin in his eyesight, he is not content
But with the play-thing at arm's length he sets
His front against the blast, and runs amain,
To make it whirl the faster.

(X.335-45)

The ramifications of Wordsworth's simile are two-fold. First, it suggests, if only by association, that the "light" desires of the

innocent child and the "heinous" ones of the tyrannical men are not so different in kind as in degree.²⁰ The child's "desire" can grow into the man's "appetite." To the extent that the simile points specifically to the likeness between the child's spinning vane and the whirling guillotine which spins out "head after head," and to the extent the child's desire to make his toy "whirl the faster" resembles the thirst of the tyrants for more and more rolling heads, the possibility of heinousness is presented as inherent in the child. This is not to suggest that the poet intends his simile to imply that the light desires of children always, or inevitably, grow into heinous appetites; obviously a distortion of natural, human desires is involved. Nevertheless, the simile does present evil as a natural part of Man, rather than an unnatural force.

In its second ramification the simile signals the imminence of Wordsworth's personal Fall. Throughout The Prelude the state of childhood has figured as the prototype of the poet's private, inner Eden. The radical change here in his vision of childhood forebodes a change in his inner state. We have remarked, too, that throughout the poem, his inner refuge has been frequently associated with such subjective states as dream and reverie. Quite appropriately, then, the first stage of Wordsworth's Fall takes place less than fifty lines after the Child analogy and occurs as a nightmare. The poet, his soul "sick with pain of what would be / Hereafter brought in charge against mankind" as a result of the excesses of the Revolution, turns to address 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 private talk)

I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair
 And tyranny, and 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.366-80)

The 1850 version, more explicitly to our point, speaks of "treacherous desertion, felt / In the last place of refuge--my own soul" (X.414-15). Presumably, Wordsworth is pleading on behalf of Mankind. Private misgivings about man's nature, as well as the corruptness of the tribunal, hamper the poet's defense. Wordsworth's new knowledge of evil is the treacherous serpent in his private Eden; he no longer rests secure in a "faith / That fails not" (II.459-60),¹⁵ no longer able to trust in "a strength that cannot fail" (IV.161).

Significantly, Wordsworth declares that his nightmarish vision persisted for many years. His Fall, that is, was recurrent, a part of natural process. But recovery, too, seemed recurrent and equally an aspect of natural cycles, as we shall see. Wordsworth answers the "taunts" of the "scoffers" who would point to the excesses of the Revolution and so condemn and condemn its principles:

I saw that it was neither these, nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names
 By false philosophy, that caus'd the woe,
 But that it was a reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance, fill'd up from age to age,
 That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
 But burst and spread in deluge through the Land.

(X.433-39)

Even so slight an allusion to the biblical story of the flood as this suffices to bring the outcome of that story immediately to mind.

Wordsworth must intend that we think of the covenant, for a dozen lines later we come to the word "rainbow" (X.452). The poet recalls that during the "disastrous time" he had vivid memories of the "glad time when first I traversed France." "Above all" he remembered passing through the town of Robespierre's birth and seeing "an Arch . . . A rainbow made of garish ornaments, / Triumphal pomp for Liberty confirm'd" (X.440-53). "I could almost," he admits,

Have quarrel'd with that blameless spectacle
For being yet an image in my mind
To mock me under such a strange reverse.

(X.463-65)

But he proceeds to narrate an event which augurs well, if belatedly, for the promise held forth by the Arras rainbow--the death of Robespierre.

Wordsworth hears the news of Robespierre's death while walking by "a small / And rocky Island" on which

a fragment stood
(Itself like a sea rock) of what had been
A Romish Chapel, where in ancient times
Masses were said at the hour which suited those
Who cross'd the Sands with ebb of morning tide.
.....
..... the great Sea meanwhile
Was at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
Unwilling to proceed.

(X.515-30)

The reference to the tide--a perfect emblem for natural recurrence--is in several respects significant. The "far-retired" Sea recalls, most immediately, and by way of contrast, the "loathsome deluge" of the Reign of Terror (X.438-9). With Robespierre's death those Flood waters begin to recede. Good follows evil as ebb follows flow. The reader is reminded, too, of the earlier passage in which the tide and "all things"

have second birth (X.70-77). Again, the differences are meaningful. There recurrence boded of the resurgence of evil and so was feared; here the poet welcomes recurrence for its promises of renewal and restoration.

The scene in which Wordsworth learns of Robespierre's death is noteworthy, too, for its resemblance to the Furness Abbey episode of Book II, a relationship which the poet shortly makes explicit (X.559-60). The resemblance turns largely on the qualities of peace and seclusion, and on the presence of ruins. The reader will remember the role played by just those things in the establishment of the poet's inner refuge. The present setting discovers Wordsworth re-confirmed in his belief that the Revolution can effect a return of the Golden Age to the world, as naturally as day follows night:

'Come now ye golden times,'
Said I, forth-breathing on those open Sands
A Hymn of triumph, 'as the morning comes
Out of the bosom of the night, come Ye.

(X.541-44)

The reader can discern in these lines, and in the remainder of the paragraph, the wisdom of accommodating evil as natural process: if evil is not, to adapt for the moment one of Hartman's terms, "apocalyptic," good can re-emerge. Wordsworth clearly felt, at this time, that paradise could be recovered, and perhaps all the more securely now that evil had assumed a distinct and predictable form:

Their madness is declared and visible,
Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and Earth
March firmly towards righteousness and peace.
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
The madding Factions might be tranquillised,
And, though through hardships manifold and long,
The mighty renovation would proceed.

(X.550-56)

I prefaced this section by noting that Wordsworth complicates the presentation of this fall with a good deal of backtracking. To an extent he must be motivated in this complication by the desire to represent his state of mind as accurately as possible; to simplify overmuch would be to present a false picture. One could argue, in fact, that the very confusion in Book X captures perfectly a fall which, in Abrams's description, entails "the cumulative fragmentation and conflict of once integral elements."²¹

Book X is not without its structural patterns, however. It falls broadly into the two halves which later became Books X and XI (X.1-556; 567ff). These two movements parallel each other in significant ways, offering a double view of Wordsworth's fall; more precisely, the focus is first on one stage or aspect of the fall and then on the second. We have remarked the first stage of the crisis already: in a nightmare, Wordsworth, plagued by private misgivings, vainly defends Mankind in an unjust court (X.370-80). That "unjust Tribunal" finds a parallel image at the second stage of the poet's crisis when, having turned to abstract reason to bolster and justify his trust in the Revolution's principles, Wordsworth's heart grows "confounded more and more, / Misguided and misleading." "Thus I fared," recalls the poet,

Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously
Calling the mind to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours, now believing,
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplex'd
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of moral obligation, what the rule
And what the sanction, till, demanding proof,
And seeking it in everything, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

(X.887-900)

This second and graver aspect of Wordsworth's fall follows inevitably from the first stage. Once the knowledge of evil penetrated the poet's inner refuge and led to the feelings of treachery and desertion, "a way was opened" as the poet acknowledges, "for mistakes / And false conclusions of the intellect" (X.765-66).

But the two stages of the crisis follow quite different courses. We have traced the accommodation of evil as natural process in the first stage and observed how this allows for recurrent recovery. Wordsworth later implies that that process can go only so far, or, at least, that it sufficed for him only to a certain extent. Resurgent hope and renewed prospects of the return of the Golden Age accompanied Robespierre's death (X.535-66; 777-79); "But," Wordsworth resumes,

when events
Brought less encouragement, and unto these
The immediate proof of principles no more
Could be entrusted, . . .
.
. . . and sentiments
Could through my understanding's natural growth
No longer justify themselves through faith
Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
Its hand upon its object, evidence
Safer, of universal application, such
As could not be impeach'd, was sought elsewhere.

(X.779-90)
my emphasis

The forensic language here both looks back to the nightmarish "unjust Tribunal" and anticipates the "bar" and "culprits" to come. Further to this midway aspect, the passage finds the poet no longer the unjust Tribunal's impassioned defender of Mankind, nor yet wholly the zealous Judge "dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith / Like culprits to the bar." These lines also mark the professed limitations of accommodating evil as natural process since, as the poet admits,

"sentiments / Could through my understanding's natural growth / No longer justify themselves." This fact gains measurably in importance when the poet subsequently links the judgmental posture which contributed to his fall expressly to a "heart which had been turn'd aside / From nature by external accidents" (X.885-86).

Insofar as the second stage of the poet's crisis involves turning aside from the principles of natural process which had seemed to accommodate evil, it is appropriate that the subsequent recovery requires the intervention of more than natural forces. Wordsworth gives thanks first to the ministrations of Coleridge and Dorothy. Only "lastly" does the poet acknowledge the participation of "Nature's self, by human love / Assisted" (X.924-22).

Perhaps to illustrate the permanence of his recovery from the second stage of his crisis, Wordsworth offers the reader a contemporary example of the persistently recurrent nature of evil. He speaks indignantly of France's return to monarchy, of the "catastrophe,"

when finally, to close
And rivet up the gains of France, a Pope
Is summon'd in to crown an Emperor;
This last opprobrium, when we see the dog
Returning to his vomit, when the sun
That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
In exultation among living clouds
Hath put his function and his glory off,
And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
Sets like an opera phantom.

(X.930-40)

The repugnance of these images of recurrence--the vileness of the first, the contemptibility of the second--only points up the assuredness and strength of the poet's recovery. In spite of the existence of such evilness, "strength and knowledge full of peace" uphold him "at this day" (X.925-29).

Book X concludes with an address to Coleridge which further underscores, in several ways, the nature of Wordsworth's recovery. To begin with, not since Book VI has a book ended with a sustained address to Coleridge. And there Wordsworth spoke to him of his youthful belief in the imminence of secular redemption:

Oh! Most beloved Friend, a glorious time
 A happy time that was; triumphant looks
 Were then the common language of all eyes:

 and delight
 Was in all places spread around my steps
 As constant as the grass upon the fields.

(VI.681-705)

Now, Wordsworth chooses to focus on the role of the human mind in creating paradise. He bemoans the hopelessly fallen state of Sicily, Coleridge's present residence, but takes comfort in the thought that

indignation works where hope is not,
 And thou, O Friend! wilt be refresh'd. . . .

 . . . and Time
 And Nature shall before thee spread in store
 Imperishable thoughts, the Place itself
 Be conscious of thy presence, and the dull
 Sirocco air of its degeneracy
 Turn as thou mov'st into a healthful breeze
 To cherish and invigorate thy frame.

(X.966-76)

Coleridge himself must create his own sanctuary in a "Land / Strew'd with the wreck of loftiest years" (X.959-60). To adapt a phrase from a later book (XI.333-34), Coleridge must give from himself if he is to receive "motions strong and sanative" (X.977). Talk of strength and health of spirit takes the reader back to Book II and the only other closing apostrophe to Coleridge prior to Book X. There, the "quiet of a healthful mind" (II.480) similarly meant inner refuge in a fallen

world--something Wordsworth believed himself then to possess. The intervening books have testified to the collapse and recovery of that inner Eden; but recovery that, as Abrams points out so well, "is represented as a level higher than the initial [Eden], in that the mature mind possesses powers, together with an added range, depth, and sensitivity of awareness, which are the products of the critical experiences it has undergone."²²

As if to leave no doubt that his recovery involves a state of mind and that Eden, or the Golden Age, can be only a construct of the mind, Wordsworth, in the final lines of Book X, emphasizes the fictional element of pastoralism. He adjures the "Giant Woods / On Etna's sides" to "wrap [Coleridge] in your shades," and asks,

and thou, O flowery Vale
Of Enna! is there not some nook of thine,
From the first playtime of the infant earth
Kept sacred to restorative delight?

(X.1001-05)

In response, a "vital promise" wafts from a land that has known such philosophers and poets as Empedocles, Archimedes, and, most importantly, the great pastoral poet Theocritus. Wordsworth "loved / To dream of Sicily" as a boy; now he can "soothe / The pensive moments" and anxious thoughts of his friend by thinking of Theocritus' tale of Comates and of a "thousand fancied images." So cheered, he can envision Coleridge standing

by pastoral Arethuse
Of, if that fountain be indeed no more,
Then near some other Spring, which by the name
Thou gratest, willingly deceived,
Shalt linger as a gladsome Votary,
And not a Captive, pining for his home.

(X.1006-38)

Such fancied pastoral images and such willingly courted deception
stand in implicit contrast to the expectations that prevailed at the
height of revolutionary hopes when

the whole earth

The beauty wore of promise . . .

 . . . {and} The inert
 Were rous'd, and lively natures rapt away:
 They who had fed their childhood upon dreams.

 . . . {and} schemers more mild

 Were call'd upon to exercise their skill,
 Not in Utopia, subterraneous Fields,
 Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where,
 But in the very world which is the world
 Of all of us, the place on which, in the end,
 We find our happiness, or not at all.

(X.689-727)

Happiness still must be found in the world which is the world of all of
us; but as I said earlier, the poet now recognizes Eden as a construct
of the mind and the mind's perception of the world.

v

In Book XI, Wordsworth "returns," as Hartman notes, "as if
compulsively, to a third mention of the crisis, now followed by his
deepest retrograde movement in time, one that resurrects events from
the age of five and thirteen."²³ Hartman is referring, of course, to
the two episodes specifically called "spots of time" (XI.258), which
hold such prominence in the process of recovery.

The spots of time provide a source of "vivifying Virtue" (XI.260)
because, paradoxically, they mark the loss of paradise. One of the
first things that strikes us as curious about the spots of time is the

disjunction between the episodes and the theoretical passage which introduces them. The theoretical explanation of the efficacy of such memories, with its talk of vivification, nourishment, repair, and enhanced pleasure (XI.260-68), in no way prepares the reader for the dreariness--the darkness--in the poetry to follow. If, however, we read the episodes as moments in which the poet experienced a fall from a paradisiacal state of being, the darkness of the visions is accounted for. If then we see the vivifying virtue of the memory of such experiences as a function of the mature poet's recognition that such lost paradises were, and can be, recovered, though in a transformed state, the discrepancy between theory and illustration is accounted for.

Each of the spots of time revolves around an encounter with the fact of mortality: the five-year old Wordsworth meets with evidence of a murder, the thirteen-year old must confront the death of his father. Knowledge of mortality betokens the loss of paradise, in ways discussed at some length in Chapter II. Secondly, both spots of time involve movement away from and towards the boy's home respectively. The equivalence of home (and its synonyms) and paradise, which has been dwelt upon already in some detail, thus makes the two episodes representative of, respectively, an excursion away from an original paradise and an attempt to return to an Edenic state. Both movements result in the loss of Eden since both bring the boy face to face with death.

Certain aspects of Wordsworth's presentation of these childhood memories favour my admittedly schematic rendering of the spots of time. The obviously emblematic qualities of the episodes, for instance, evoke an atmosphere of almost mythic ritual.

In the first spot of time, the boy's pride and fear become emblematic poles of Human Nature by virtue of the parallel between "with proud hopes / I mounted, and we rode towards the hills" and "through fear / Dismounting, down the rough and stony Moor / I led my Horse" (XI.281-82;286-88). Then, too, the boy's loss of his Comrade and Guide through an unexplained "mischance" (XI.285) is not unexpected in a story which sees a child moving through a landscape which offers fewer and fewer vestiges of the human presence. Not even a human skeleton remains to testify to the violent deed; there is left only the murderer's name, in itself testimony to his absence, carved long ago by an unknown hand, and kept visible by an abstract force, "superstition" (XI.297). Every individual's confrontation with the fact of mortality occurs in as lonely a spot. Finally, the "Girl who bore a Pitcher on her head" (XI.306) is straight from some timeless realm; coming from nowhere, going nowhere, she is merely there, forever forcing her way against the blowing wind. No other figure in The Prelude remains so unconnected to the world, and to the poet. "It is unthinkable," writes Jonathan Wordsworth, "that she should befriend the child, put her pitcher down to give him a drink."²⁴ She exists as an emblem--perhaps of humanity which must perpetually struggle in the postlapsarian world.

And the world in which the child finds himself when he reascends from his encounter with death appears, by The Prelude's standards, markedly fallen. Denudation, isolation, and fragmentation are the salient aspects. The "bare Common" (XI.303), "naked Pool" (XI.304;313), and the "Beacon on the lonely Eminence" (XI.314) are, to adapt words from the Blest Babe passage, "detach'd / And loth to coalesce" (II.249-50). Moreover, the five-year old child does not show the Blest

Babe's "eager[ness] to combine / In one appearance, all the elements / And parts of the same object" (II.247-49). Rather, his eye fixes, in turn and discretely, upon pool, beacon, and girl.

The second spot of time is as richly suggestive as the first, and again emblematic overtones are strong, if elusive. The boy fittingly awaits his father's horses at a crossroads. Thirteen years old, he verges on the privileges and responsibilities of young manhood. Yet feverishly, impatiently, he wishes to return to his home, the place of his childhood. The choice of which road to take is made for him: returned home, he is now formally and unfamiliarly "A dweller in my Father's House" (XI.366). The death of his father makes impossible, of course, any return to childhood's Edenic innocence. The lines which relate the father's death seem to record not only his burial, but the burial of childhood innocence as well: "he died, / And I and my two Brothers, Orphans then, / Followed his Body to the Grave" (XI.366-68).

Perhaps nowhere else in The Prelude is Wordsworth quite so obscure as he is with respect to those "desires" which the adolescent believes God to be correcting (XI.375). As several commentators observe, the punishment meted out, the death of the father, is excessive, to say the least, if the desires are simply and straightforwardly the boy's wish to go home for the holidays.²⁵ In consequence, various interpretations of what those desires really, that is to say unconsciously, involve have been put forward. Not surprisingly, for example, the theory of the Oedipus complex has been offered in explanation.²⁶ And indeed the poetry invites speculation of this sort. Syntactically, for instance, the boy's return to his home seems to cause the father's death: "ere I had been ten days / A dweller in my Father's House, he died" (XI.365-66).

But on another level, it is possible to see something more generic at work in the second spot of time. The reader can discern, albeit just faintly, a certain emblematic significance in the configuration of boy, sheep, and hawthorn upon the "highest summit." Wordsworth is quite precise in his description of waiting for the horses:

'twas a day
Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
I sate, half-shelter'd by a naked wall;
Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
With those companions at my side, I watch'd.

(XI.355-61)

The 1850 version, even more interestingly for our purposes, reads: "Upon my right hand couched a single sheep, / Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood" (XII.300-01; my emphasis). The passage reminds us of what Wordsworth singles out several times in this book alone as contributing in large measure to his fall--a love of sitting in Judgment (XI.165;121-37;238). We remember, also, Book X's presentation of the second stage of the poet's fall as a tribunal to which the poet dragged all passions and ideas as if they were culprits (X.887-900). Now, in the second spot of time, we discover the adolescent Wordsworth in a wild, apocalyptic landscape, assuming the posture of the God of Judgment, with the blessed on his right hand and the damned on his left. Such Titanic, if unacknowledged, pride in self, and such presumption, which are not unusual in an adolescent boy bordering on manhood, testify to "desires" for the independence and privileges of adulthood. When, upon the death of his father, the boy suddenly must assume some of the responsibilities of adulthood, the event might indeed appear as a direct chastisement of wrong desires. But to return to the

broader patterns of significance, we find in the second spot of time (as, in fact, in the first) a version of the proverbial wisdom, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Since the pride emblemized in the episode is specifically pride in the capacity to judge of good and evil, we are back to the idea of the loss of paradise. Man's knowledge of good and evil was purchased, after all, by the loss of Eden.

Both spots of time, then, mark a fall from paradise. It is, as I stated at the outset, the mature poet's recognition that paradise can be recovered which makes these memories a source of nourishment and invisible repair to a mind

depress'd
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier and more deadly weight
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse.

(XI.260-65)

That, surely, constitutes the main point of the recollection of young love interposed between the two spots of time. Having rehearsed for a second time the features of what has become a fallen Penrith landscape, the poet turns, at the end of the first spot of time, to a memory from a later time in his life:

When, in a blessed season
With those two dear Ones, to my heart so dear,
When in the blessed time of early love,
Long afterwards, I roam'd about
In daily presence of this very scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy Beacon, fell
The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam.

(XI.316-23)

The five-year old's "visionary dreariness" (XI.311) becomes youth's "golden gleam," a fallen landscape becomes Edenic. Interposed as it is between the two spots of time, the remembrance of young love not only reflects upon the first spot of time in the way I have suggested, but it also functions as proleptic reassurance, in anticipation of the second spot's depiction of the loss of Eden. The memory of young love is especially qualified to fulfill this latter function since the experience of the golden gleam biographically postdates the death of Wordsworth's father. If, as the memory of youthful love suggests, paradise can be easily and simply recovered, or recreated, by virtue of a perception coloured by feelings of love, then the mind truly is "lord and master" and "outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will" as Wordsworth claims (XI.271-73). And thus Book XI, with its third recounting of fall and recovery, underscores still more firmly than did the conclusion of Book X that Eden is nothing more--and nothing less--than a construct of the human mind.

vi

With the spots of time, Wordsworth comes nearest to a private myth of fall and recovery. An evocative combination of particularized, personal history and emblematic patterns, the spots of time give us a typically Wordsworthian--that is, naturalistic and psychological--re-working of the idea of the Fortunate Fall, complete with overtones of transgression and consequent guilt. The theme of paradise lost and regained in The Prelude culminates in the spots of time passage; subsequent books treat the rest of the poet's history from the vantage point of restoration, as Abrams' discussion of the later books suggests.²⁷

Wordsworth does reserve for the final book, however, yet another spot of time, the Snowdon episode, which in several ways climactically re-affirms his belief that the mind constructs Eden. Wordsworth's vision upon Mount Snowdon (XIII.1-65) offers significant parallels to Book II's Blest Babe passage, one of The Prelude's earliest and most substantial delineations of an Edenic state of being. Both the Snowdon and the Blest Babe passages image a mind which creates, in addition to perceiving. In both passages Wordsworth presents the "spirit" in which "higher minds" send abroad "transformations" and "for themselves create" an existence (XIII.90-95). Abrams also remarks this parallel between the two passages while pointing out that

An essential alteration, however, is that the mature poetic mind, whose infant perception had been a state of undifferentiated consciousness, has acquired self-consciousness, and is able to sustain the sense of its own identity as an individuation-in-unison with the objects it perceives.²⁸

The self-conscious mind, the mind aware of its own transformational power, knows that Eden exists as an inner state.

While the Snowdon episode magnificently reiterates Wordsworth's trust in the power of the mind to create a paradise, affirmation here is not part of a pattern of fall and recovery. As I noted, the theme of paradise lost and regained essentially concludes with Book XI's spots of time. This final and almost mythic presentation of fall and recovery is, like all myth, ideal and extreme; Wordsworth does not imply that paradise can be always or ordinarily easily and simply recovered. Nor does my schematic rendering of the spots of time account entirely for the process of recovery as represented by the poet.

Wordsworth himself stresses the importance of feeling, of strong emotion. He refers to the two spots of time as "affecting incidents" (XI.344). Of the super-imposition of the experience of youthful love upon the Penrith landscape which years earlier reflected the five year old child's terror he writes:

Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy Beacon, fell
The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more divine
From those remembrances, and from the power
They left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.

(XI.321-38; my emphasis)

The "power" left behind by the earlier experience of "visionary dreariness" (XI.311) is the ability to feel strongly. Or to put it another way, the soul of the young man, "remembering how it felt, but what it felt remembering not, has retained the power of a sense of possible sublimity."²⁹ Such retention attests to continuity between present and past selves, and in that sense of continuity lies one source of the "vivifying Virtue" (XI.260) which nourishes and invisibly repairs a fallen, fragmented self (XI.265).

Wordsworth chooses also to emphasize explicitly the importance to recovery of knowing, or feeling, "that the mind / Is lord and master, and that outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will" (XI.271-73). One result of the poet's fall was a disorder among the faculties, in which the eye wielded tyrannical power over the mind:

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 gain'd

Such strength in me as often held my mind
In absolute dominion.

(XI.171-76)

The spots of time nourish the mind and repair such disorder, for, in Abrams' words, they "testify to earlier perceptual experiences in which the present master-servant relation between the physical senses and the mind had been reversed."³⁰ We recognize the mind as master, for example, when the poet says of the Penrith landscape that, though it was an ordinary sight, he "should need / Colours and words that are unknown to man / To paint the visionary dreariness" which invested the moor and its features (XI.308-16).

To conclude this discussion of the spots of time I shall consider the schematic and emblematic qualities of the episodes in the larger context of The Prelude as a whole. Insofar as the two episodes represent, respectively, an excursion away from an original paradise and an attempt to return to an original Edenic state, they participate in a centrifugal-centripetal rhythm which functions as a structural principle throughout The Prelude. For example, several of those episodes which are spots of time without being so called find the protagonist travelling either towards or away from a home. Such a rhythm, moreover, informs certain pairs of books: the poet leaves home for Cambridge in Book III and returns to his home in Book IV; Prelude VI chronicles an excursion to the Alps while Book VII finds the poet back home in England. Books I and II similarly constitute a pair. The episodes of the first book repeatedly describe the child's movement away from his home, while the adolescent episodes of the second book reflect, in ways discussed at length earlier, the boy's desire to abide in a home.

In Book I a telling relationship holds between the very first of the childhood memories to be narrated and subsequent episodes. Wordsworth first remembers how, as a five-year old child, he

cours'd
Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves
Of yellow grunsel, or when crag and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
Were bronz'd with a deep radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian Plains, and from my Mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
A naked Savage, in the thunder shower.

(I.296-304; my emphasis)

The child, here presented only figuratively as a savage running abroad, becomes rather more literally a savage roaming far from home in the next episode. Wordsworth recalls when, "transplanted" from his birthplace to another "beloved Vale,"

'twas my joy
To wander half the night among the Cliffs
And the smooth Hollows, where the woodcocks ran
Along the open turf. In thought and wish
That time, my shoulder all with springes hung,
I was a fell destroyer. On the heights
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
My anxious visitation, hurrying on,
Still hurrying, hurrying onward.

(I.305-21)

The nine-year old savage who actually runs abroad in wantonness feels an anxiety unknown to the five-year old who was just figuratively a savage. We can account for both the anxiety and the literalness of the second episode by observing, as Richard Onorato does, that between the time of the first recorded episode and the time of the second Wordsworth lost his mother and his first home. Of the nine-year old boy Onorato writes:

The self is . . . not merely a transplanted thing, but one unconsciously aware of a lost home, strangely pleased in the activities by which it maintains itself, yet troubled in its pleasures.³¹

To speak more specifically in terms of the present discussion, the boy is unconsciously aware of the loss of that Edenic state of being which the poet later images as the Blest Babe at home within the circle of his Mother's arms. The death of his mother results in the expulsion of the child Wordsworth from Eden into a wilderness. This reading of the episode gains added support from the boy's commission of a wrongful act--a crime of passion over reason--and his consequent fear of punishment:

Sometimes it befel
In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpower'd my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toils
Became my prey; and, when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me.

(I.324-30)

The motif of wrong-doing and punishment re-appears in the next two episodes, which find the boy, still quite literally a savage of sorts, plundering bird nests (I.333-50) and stealing a shepherd's boat (I.372-427). In the former episode, the idea of mother and home figures strongly, and in a curious way:

when the Vales
And woods were warm, [I was] a plunderer then
In the high places, on the lonesome peaks
Where'er, among the mountains and the winds,
The Mother Bird had built her lodge.

(I.335-39; my emphasis)

Such wilful violation of a home fashioned and maintained by a "Mother" suggests a child's retaliation against the mother who cast him out of his first, Edenic home by dying.

We can see, then, that on one level the childhood episodes narrated in Prelude I have to do with the loss of, or expulsion from, an Eden represented as an actual home presided over by the physical presence of a mother. Book II, as we have already seen, explores what may be done in the face of such a loss and suggests that one must possess an inviolable inner refuge--a paradise within. Books I and II thus present a pattern repeated in the poet's experience of hope and then disillusionment in the French Revolution. Wordsworth's initial commitment to revolutionary principles involved his belief that the French Revolution heralded the imminent return of a literal Golden Age. But just as the death of his mother entailed the loss of an actual Eden, so too did the shattering of revolutionary hopes preclude the possibility of a literal Eden. Forced to acknowledge that his times would not witness the return of the Golden Age, Wordsworth turned his focus from the establishment of a second earthly paradise once again to the creation of a paradise within.

It is particularly fitting, in light of the parallel just remarked, that the two "spots of time" should play so pre-eminent a role in the recovery which teaches that Eden is nothing more or less than a construct of the mind. For the "spots of time" were composed at the same time as the childhood and adolescent episodes of Books I and II, and, in fact, were originally incorporated with those episodes in an early two part version of The Prelude. One commentator complains of the removal of the spots of time, in 1805, to the eleventh book, saying that the shift occurs "with no particular appropriateness."³² Quite to the contrary,

however, removal to the eleventh book is both appropriate and purposive. Because of their affinity to the poetry of the first book of The Prelude, the spots of time bring to mind vividly those earlier representations of the loss of an Eden which existed actually--literally--as home. That the poet chooses to evoke again, and for a final time, memories of the loss of that actual Eden points to the comprehensiveness of his recognition that paradise ultimately has no physical location. Only now, that is, in his recovery from the fall precipitated by the Revolution's failure to restore a literal Eden, can the poet look back upon childhood experiences of loss and discover in them the first shadowy outlines of the truth which stands fully revealed to the mature poet--the knowledge that Eden can be restored only as a construct of the mind.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LATER LYRICS: FROM LEECH-GATHERER TO CASTLE

Wordsworth's belief that paradise exists as a construct of the mind finds expression again, in stronger and more firmly established forms, in four of his major lyrics subsequent to Lyrical Ballads. Three of these, "Resolution and Independence," the Intimations Ode, and "Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont," turn directly on a personal loss or fall of some sort, while "Ode to Duty" presupposes the Christian idea of the Fall. In each of the poems recovery becomes a matter strictly of and for the mind, achieved independently of nature and natural processes of renewal. Such independence offers the possibility of permanence of recovery, and there emerges in the poetry a strong desire for permanence and stability in the midst of flux. The poet's wish for permanence and stability modulates readily into a tendency to fortify and protect his inner self from both external and internal flux, as "Ode to Duty" and "Peele Castle" particularly demonstrate. The tendency to fortify the self leads to an inward state of recovery, a "paradise," which resembles an impenetrable fortress more than an Eden.

Certain changes in poetic practice accompany Wordsworth's trust that the mind constructs a paradise and effects recovery; changes which are discernible when, for instance, the later lyrics are compared with the poems from the start of the 1798-1807 decade, or with

The Prelude. For one thing, the poetry grows increasingly prospective. And while retrospective movement does not cease entirely, it becomes less a movement into the poet's personal past, and more an exploration of Man's state of childhood. Finally, as the poetry becomes both more prospective and more generalized, there is a marked increase in conscious symbol-making.

The four lyrics reveal, as well, adjustments and re-adjustments in the poet's relationship to nature. In both "Resolution and Independence" and the Intimations Ode, for example, nature plays virtually no role in the process of recovery, as compared to its role in an earlier poem such as "Tintern Abbey." However, the conclusion of the Intimations Ode involves a structural return to the poem's opening landscape, while the conclusion of "Resolution and Independence" sees no such return. The structural distinction reflects an adjustment in the poet's relationship to nature. The disinterest, evinced in the one poem, in a nature which no longer plays a part in recovery is supplanted, in the Ode, by interest in, even gratitude towards, a nature which was formerly vitally important to the poet. In contrast to both of these poems, "Peele Castle" finds the poet almost formally renouncing nature. "Ode to Duty" stands apart from the other three lyrics in that it does not involve the poet in any relationship with nature; nature does not enter this poem.

i

"Resolution and Independence" begins with a moment of renewal following a storm, and ends with a restoration within the poet following an inner storm of "fears and fancies . . . and blind thoughts" (27-28).

Hartman correctly observes that in "each case restoration is the opposite of cataclysmic." But his assertion that "the Leech-gatherer comes to save Wordsworth from dejection as gently and surely as that opening storm passes into a beautiful dawn" is not quite to the point.¹ The poem has little to do with the question of whether restoration occurs gently or not; it has almost everything to do with the question of the relative permanence or impermanence of restoration. In Alan Grob's words, "Resolution and Independence" speaks of "needs that require for satisfaction not the consciousness of renewal but the promise of permanence."² Of the three recountings of fall and recovery offered in Books X and XI of The Prelude the first, it will be remembered, turns on the consciousness of renewal while the permanence of recovery figures strongly in the second and third. The parallel movements in "Resolution and Independence," from natural storm to renewal and from inner storm to restoration, weigh the merits of a renewal that is nature's gift against those of a renewal that need not wait upon nature. The poem comes down strongly on the side of the latter. To be renewed independently of nature is to be released, according to the logic of the poem, from an endless cycle of loss and renewal.

The metaphor of the Flood loosely organizes each of the poem's two broad movements of storm and renewal. The underlying metaphor works in two quite different, if not opposing, ways. The poem opens with an admittedly slight allusion to the Flood: "There was a roaring in the wind all night; / The rain came heavily and fell in floods" (1-2); but the remainder of the poem justifies our finding the allusion here. Plenitude and vitality characterize the renewal which follows

upon storm and floods:

But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

(3-7)

The assurance is of continuity in the wake of potentially destructive floods. In fact, not only does this world seem unthreatened by possible destruction; it also seems Edenic, made in the image of the pristine world which evolved from the brooding of the Dove of the Holy Spirit. "The sky rejoices" in the "birth" of a "morning" which discovers a new freshness in the grass "bright with rain-drops" (9-10). More like gems than mere water drops, the rain-drops become a "glittering" mist which haloes innocently playful creatures (11-14).

Such qualities stand in striking contrast to the characteristics of the same landscape in its subsequent role of revealing the figure of the Leech-gatherer. A "lonely place," with "a pool bare to the eye of heaven" (52-54), the world now seems to have been all but destroyed by Flood waters. Plenitude and vitality are not here; one could expect to find only the most vestigial of life forms--a scarcely living sea-beast, for instance, or a man so old, so decrepit, that he is "a kind of fossil or relict . . . of the flood."³ Survival, not re-creation, strikes the keynote in this post-diluvian world.

These drastic changes in the landscape come about directly as the result of the poet's experience of an inner storm, the onset of which is as sudden as it is fortuitous:

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,

the responsibilities of a household, the poet confesses that

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;

and asks how he can realistically or morally

expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

(36-42)

The Leech-gatherer, who to all appearances has suffered the distress and poverty of Wordsworth's proleptic fears, but in whose "yet-vivid eyes" the spark of genial spirits remains unextinguished, speaks obviously and directly to this aspect of Wordsworth's anxiety:

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

(99-105)

The old Leech-gatherer's independence and his resolution in the face of a less than generous nature—"the leeches] have dwindled long by slow decay; / Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may" (125-26)—constitute one layer of meaning in the poem's title. In more than the literal sense of the line, and as a kind of emblem of the title, the Leech-gatherer "[props himself] limbs, body, and pale face" (71).

The sudden, admonitory appearance of the old man on the moor also speaks, though in a far more oblique way, to the second aspect of

Wordsworth's fears, his concerns about the emotional life of a poet. Wordsworth makes the first explicit reference to this special worry in the seventh stanza: "We Poets in our youth begin in gladness; / But thereof come in the end despondency and madness" (48-49). But, in some way, anxiety about his role and destiny as a poet has been hovering about the poem from the start. To the extent that the Poet is a speaker of words--a voice--the storm with which the poem opens seems somehow to threaten poetic voice specifically: "There was a roaring in the wind all night" (1). The roaring which fills the landscape leaves little room for human or poetic voice.

Commentators frequently remark upon the narrator's absence from the scene in the poem's first two stanzas, though customarily they observe that the "I" is "invisible at first, heard but not seen."⁴ In one very obvious way this is true, of course, for the poet's voice describes the scene. Yet, no less obviously, what we hear in the first stanza, after the roaring subsides, are the voices of nature and her blissful creatures:

The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

(4-7)

Such light and easy personifications strike us as more the work of Fancy than of Imagination, in terms of Wordsworth's distinction between the two faculties.⁵ One critic, who similarly draws attention to just this quality in the verse of the opening stanza, considers it "in tune with the poet's joy in nature."⁶ If this is the case, the poet's joy in nature must be of an extraordinarily unself-conscious

kind, insofar as it can receive full expression solely in the songs and voices of the birds. Hartman, alternatively, finds evidence in "the repeatedly end-stopped . . . lines" that "Wordsworth cannot entirely liberate himself from the fear of reversal even in the moment of recollection [of the morning renewal]." After all, "in the original incident the poet's extreme joy was followed by a reversal."⁷ If this is the case, as seems more likely, the poet's reliance on the faculty of fancy betokens his separation from joyful nature, his inability to participate fully in the morning's renewal. As further evidence that the poet does not join whole-heartedly in the natural renewal, it can be observed that the birds sing and speak only amongst themselves: the dove broods "over his own sweet voice" and the Jay "makes answer" to the chatter of the Magpie. The poet, so to speak, is excluded from the conversation.

No matter which of these two readings one accepts, poetic voice is in some respect absent in the poem's opening lines. For, on the one hand, too immediate an involvement in the external world silences poetic voice which emerges only when there exists a gap to be bridged between the self and the world. On the other hand, an unbridged rift between the self and external nature likewise signals the absence of poetic voice whose function it is to fashion a bridge. In a readily discernible way, the poet's experience of inner storm involves the fear of losing poetic voice: from both "despondency and madness" (49) must come silence. Because Wordsworth believes the Poet to be a man speaking to men,⁸ he could not consider either self-lament or raving as entailing poetic voice. We have seen already, in the first book of The Prelude, how despondency can subvert poetic enterprise. On the

other hand, the utterances of madness ultimately remain incommunicable to other men.

With the Leech-gatherer's appearance upon the moor a new quality enters the verse. The poet is taken out of himself, as it were, rescued from the seventh stanza's drift towards solipsism. The reader senses that the Leech-gatherer engages the poet's mind: beginning at stanza nine, the rhythm of the poem slows perceptibly as Wordsworth wonderingly approaches the figure of the old man by way of an extended simile (57-64). Wordsworth himself singled out this passage as the work of Imagination;⁹ on this level, it should be contrasted to the poem's opening stanzas in their dependence upon Fancy. Where there is poetry that is distinctly the creation of the Imagination, there is poetic voice.

The encounter with the Leech-gatherer has further bearing on the whole question of poetic voice, and in a way that seems to have gone unremarked. A great many of the lines devoted to the old man centre on his speech--the qualities of his speech, the nature of his utterance, and, indeed, the very fact that he speaks. Wordsworth introduces himself to the Leech-gatherer with words that take us back to the renewal imaged at the start of the poem: "'This morning gives us promise of a glorious day'" (84). His description of the response, "A gentle answer did the old man make" (85), echoes a phrase from the opening stanza, "The Jay makes answer" (6), and so establishes voice as an important link between the morning renewal and the restoration effected by the Leech-gatherer. The echo strengthens, too, the idea that the voices, and hence the renewal, of the opening stanza are somehow inadequate, that, for example, the "answer" of the Jay cannot suffice.

Wordsworth describes the Leech-gatherer's "courteous speech" which, although drawn forth "slowly" and "feebly, from a feeble chest," is dressed in "lofty utterance" and characterized by "choice word and measured phrase." His is "stately speech," "above the reach / Of ordinary men" (86-96). Wordsworth stresses the qualities of the old man's speech before giving us, in stanza fifteen, the content, an ordering which suggests that the fact that the Leech-gatherer speaks and the manner in which he speaks are at least as important as what he has to say. Two stanzas later Wordsworth relates his reaction to the tale of hardships endured in lines generally cited only to point to the poet's rudeness towards the stranger. But the lines also lend support to the argument that the fact of speech has at least as much significance for the poet as do the details of the Leech-gatherer's hard life:

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide.

(106-08)

Wordsworth goes on to say, in words that show the poet's mind returning into itself, that

the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

(109-12)

We remember the tendency towards solipsism in the seventh stanza that, manifesting itself as "despondency and madness," threatens to silence the poet's voice. The subjectivity evinced now carries far

different implications. We are to see the poet as internalizing, among other things, the possibility of speech which the Leech-gatherer embodies.

In light of this interpretation, the "human" in "human strength" (112) takes on particular meaning. For, in the first part of the poem, thoughts of the inescapable facts of the human condition--hardships, pain of heart, distress--fuel the poet's inner storm with its consequent threat to poetic voice. To encounter an aged man who has survived time's ravages upon man, and who has not been reduced thereby to resentful or despairing silence, would certainly be a strong admonishment to one who is also a poet. The effect of such an encounter must be all the more powerful on the poet who, having found himself unable to join sincerely in the songs of nature, fears that he will be rendered voiceless by the inevitable advent of human hardships. On one level, then, the "human strength" vouchsafed Wordsworth in his meeting with the old man upon the moor is the strength to speak, to engage in that most human of activities in spite of the heavy laws of man's mortal state.

The poem's remaining four stanzas (XVII-XX) witness the return of the poet's distressing thoughts in what amounts to a testing of the Leech-gatherer's power as a restorative agent. Emphasis again falls on the old man's speech. Wordsworth renews his questions, and the stranger, "with a smile," repeats his words (120). In the penultimate stanza especially, the very fact of speech rescues the poet from the brink of despair over the state of man. Still pressed by disturbing thoughts of man's hardships, Wordsworth momentarily yields to, or more precisely, rather wilfully creates, a vision of the Leech-gatherer as

emblematic of Man in eternal exile, forever, silently, wandering
about an earth from which all trace of Eden has vanished:

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech - all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.

(127-31)

The Leech-gatherer's speech and voice prevent the poet from surrendering
to the dark vision:

While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.

(132-38)

A note of "resolution" enters the voice of the poet who has been thus
admonished, rescued, and restored:

"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"

(139-40)

Independence is his too. He need no longer wait upon nature for
soothing and strengthening signs of continuity, of recovery after loss.
He has only to "think" of the Leech-gatherer when beset in future by
inner storms of doubts, fears, and despair, or confronted by a nature
that resembles a wasteland more than an Eden. Something of a paradox
is involved, of course; consciousness--the human capacity for
thought--which proves so burdensome to man, proves also to be the

source of recovery. The reader will recognize in this aspect of the poem a variation of the paradox implicated in the resolution of the "Lucy" cycle. But attention must be drawn to one very important difference between the two resolutions. Recovery in the Lucy cycle incorporates a return, in the final poem, to an Edenic nature; under Lucy's eye the landscape becomes a vital, precious, green world once again. Natural Eden does not re-emerge at the conclusion of "Resolution and Independence." The transformation of the pristine world of the opening stanzas into the wasteland of the "lonely place" (52) seems irrevocably final: the very last words of the poem are "lonely moor." Restoration in the 1802 poem is, far more than in the Lucy lyrics or "Tintern Abbey," where nature plays an important role, a matter purely of and for the mind. Wordsworth's strong emphasis on the Leech-gatherer's speech, on the importance of the Word, especially testifies to the independent working of the mind, since language is so obviously a creation of the mind. In light of the poem's use of the metaphor of the destructive flood, Wordsworth's stressing of the role of speech in recovery seems particularly apt. Of all human artifacts, language alone can survive destruction in the natural, physical world. The image with which the poem ends--Wordsworth speaking as he stands on the wasteland of the lonely moor--illustrates just this point.

Although restoration in "Resolution and Independence" is so very clearly a matter of and for the mind, no strong sense of nature's betrayal of man pervades the poem, as it does the middle poems of the "Lucy" cycle, for instance. Rather, a certain disinterest in nature informs "Resolution and Independence." In fact, nature seems not to

hold much importance at all, for the passages devoted to nature are largely the work of Fancy while the stirrings of Imagination are prompted by and directed towards the landscape's human figure.

A recovery effected independently of nature promises a measure of permanence to the poet who is both subject to wild swings in mood and confronted by a perpetual cycle of storm and sunshine in nature. Just a quick glance at the images used to characterize the Leech-gatherer gauges the strength of the poet's desire for permanence and stability. I have spoken already of the rhythmic slowing which attends the arrival of the Leech-gatherer. Imagistically, this new quality of weightiness in the verse appears in the simile of the "huge stone" and the massive "sea-beast" who crawls ponderously forth to repose in the sun (57-63). In his turn, the old man stands "Motionless as a cloud" (75); and as one reader points out, Wordsworth has in mind mountain clouds which "will lie around the hilltops for hours, almost as permanent in appearance as the peaks themselves."¹⁰ Even so inconspicuous a phrase as, "At length, himself unsettling" (78), divines the poet's sense of the Leech-gatherer as a stable, permanent, and weighty presence on the moor. The stranger's speech, too, with its "solemn order" and "measured phrase" (93;95), injects a stabilizing element into the world of the poem. By the end of the poem the Leech-gatherer's symbolic meaning resides largely in just such qualities as permanence and stability. The poet makes of the old man a private symbol to serve in future as a "stay secure" (139).

That Wordsworth treats the Leech-gatherer symbolically marks a further distinction between "Resolution and Independence" and the "Lucy" lyrics.¹¹ Lucy, however much a creature of the poet's fantasies and

howsoever elusive her origins, does not become a symbol. She resolves into a wholly human form rather than becoming, like the Leech-gatherer, symbolic of qualities or aspects of humanity.¹² Then, too, the "Lucy" cycle, as I have presented it, seems not to demand a symbolic resolution. For one thing, the poems are all backward looking: a loss in the past is accommodated in the present, and no prophetically anxious eye is cast towards the future. Since the future is not feared--indeed is not even implied except as a timeless prolongation of the present--no symbol need be created for future reference. Moreover, the "Lucy" poems grant us a glimpse into what is an exceedingly private world, and the relationship of the poet to Lucy is, finally, so intimate as to permit of no recognizable, overt symbolism. On the other hand, the reader of "Resolution and Independence" catches sight, for all the poet's self-centredness, of a public realm, through references to the world and ways of men, and in the occasional, almost imperceptible shifts from "I" to "we." In the fourth stanza, for instance, Wordsworth makes the sudden onset of despondency a typical experience: "As high as we have mounted in delight / In our dejection do we sink as low" (24-25; my emphasis). Conceived on a more than personal level, "Resolution and ^{Independence}~~Independence~~" contains an unmistakably didactic element which lends itself readily to--perhaps requires--symbolic treatment.

ii

Like "Resolution and Independence," the Intimations Ode works on a more than personal level. Although a sense of personal loss, expressed in the first stanza as "The things which I have seen I now can see no more," gives rise to the poem, the loss soon becomes

generalized (V). Moreover, while the search for recompense characteristically involves a regressive movement, the return is not to the poet's past; instead, the poem explores Man's state of childhood. Clearly, the poet assumes that his truths coincide with general truths. And so a didactic element enters this poem, as it does "Resolution and Independence"; we hear it, for instance, in lines such as, "We will grieve not, rather find / Strength in what remains behind" (183-84).

There are further ties to the poem on the Leech-gatherer; some critics even contend that "timely utterance" (23) refers specifically to "Resolution and Independence."¹³ The first line of the Ode's third stanza, "Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song," especially recalls the morning renewal of "Resolution and Independence," which is characterized above all by the voices and songs of birds. Beyond resemblances in setting, there are structural parallels; similar patterns of loss and renewal inform both poems. The sense of loss (1-22), the momentary renewal (23-50), and the sudden reversal (51-57) in the first four stanzas of the Ode correspond roughly to the night storm, morning renewal, and inner storm of "Resolution and Independence." Even that poem's "As high as we have mounted in delight / In our dejection do we sink as low" (24-25) finds a counterpart in the abrupt turnabout of the Ode's fourth stanza: "I hear, I hear, with joy I hear! / -But there's a Tree . . . A single Field . . . Both of them speak of something that is gone" (50-53). In both lyrics the poet later achieves successful renewal independently of nature. Finally, the Ode reveals a disjunction between the narrator and nature; again as in "Resolution and Independence," the rift exists because of the human capacity for thought, hence sorrow:

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound,
 To me alone there came a thought of grief.

(19-22)

In terms of this discussion, the poet is in a fallen state; he feels isolated from the world, from the "blessed Creatures" and the "Children" whose hearts "keep holiday" with the spirit of the May morning (32-49). As one critic observes, "the stylized pastoralism at the beginning of section IV . . . suggests an exile's idealization of the regions from which he is banned save for the briefest of visits."¹⁴

The opening movement of the Ode (I-IV) establishes the poet's interest in the relationship between the self and the world. The first stanza, for instance, turns on a problem of perception: "The things which I have seen I now can see no more"; the second introduces an epistemological concern: "But yet I know . . . That there hath past away a glory from the earth" (9;17-18). The "glory and the freshness of a dream" which in days "of yore" had enveloped the self and the world in visionary unity have vanished (5;7). When, at the close of the first movement, the poet again addresses himself explicitly to this disappearance, he directs his questions (which are really one) more towards the objects of perception than the perceiving subject: "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" (56-57). But the poem's second movement (V-VIII) re-casts the question precisely in terms of the perceiving subject; Wordsworth turns to an extended consideration of the Child, who exists, as the poet did "of yore," in a state of visionary unity with the world. If the poet can no longer feel, immediately and sensuously, a sense of

unity with the external world, if that component of an Edenic state of being cannot be recovered, perhaps he can affirm another component of the Edenic ideal, the continuity of self through time and growth.

The first of the stanzas devoted to the child (V) invokes a Christianized Platonic notion of pre-existence, explaining the loss of the gleam as the inevitable result of the child's growth away from godhead into humanity. The infant, whose home is God, enters the world of human existence "trailing" and spreading about himself "clouds of glory" (64). In turn, he unself-consciously perceives the glory as emanating from the world. "Shades of the prison-house" (67)--that is, awareness of human, mortal existence--soon "begin to close" upon the boy; Nevertheless, the growing boy still "beholds the light," for consciousness has not yet brought intimate knowledge of human sorrow; he sees the light "in his joy." It is the Man, with his consciousness of human hardships, who at length perceives the light die away (68-76).

The pattern of growth in stanza V represents the developing child as almost completely passive, a victim of the "forgetting"(58) which accompanies growth and leads to a diminishment of glory. The following stanza, VI, strengthens this suggestion by depicting a Mother Earth who actively endeavours to wean the infant from his previous existence. In the fifth stanza the growth is not really growth at all; it is a forgetting, a reduction, that sees the child fall into human existence rather than grow up. Organized around the idea of pre-existence, this tale of "growth" gains the status of mythic truth.

The seventh stanza offers a contrast to the fifth, in nearly every point, as one commentator observes.¹⁵ For one thing, stanza VII draws a realistic portrait of a literal child. The poet emphasizes the

child's humanness from the start; there is no hint of godhead in the little man of "pigmy size" (86) who so busily imitates the grown-ups in his life. Perhaps most importantly, this child is not as passive as the infant of the fifth stanza. In the earlier stanza "Heaven lies about (the child)" (66); in the later one, the "six years' Darling" lies "'mid work of his own hand" (86-87). In fact, nearly every line in the seventh stanza finds the child actively involved in the world of human affairs, if only on the level of make-believe:

See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;

.

And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part.

(190-199; my emphasis)

We should take special note of this eager willingness on the part of the child to fit himself to the human world. Because the portrait of the child here is a realistic one, the child's eagerness to assume human roles demands a measure of attention which it might not otherwise. Wordsworth must have a reason, after all, for shifting, in the seventh stanza, to a more realistic mode; I would suggest that he wants to draw attention to, and make as credible as possible, the child's eagerness. Certainly the poet believes beyond doubt that the child fits himself to the human world willingly, eagerly, deliberately. For in the eighth stanza, he juxtaposes this view of the child with that of stanza V, and asks,

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?

(127-29)

Immediately, in lines which many see as the darkest in the Ode,¹⁶ he laments,

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

(130-32)

Wordsworth clearly implies that the child (and, by extension, Mankind) is merely foolish to hasten the arrival of what will come all too soon. On the other hand, the child described in stanza VII obviously holds strong appeal for Wordsworth. As David Eggenchwiler observes, "the imperatives and exclamations show [Wordsworth's] enthusiasm for the domestic scene."¹⁷ Furthermore, stanza VII's presentation of the child hints at something not only good and right, but fulfilling too, about growth into humanity, in implicit contrast to the fifth stanza's portrayal of such growth as merely diminishment. With no suggestion of irony--indeed, with a touch of a fatherly kind of pride--the poet tells that the "little Actor" cons each successive part "with new joy and pride" (101).

The poet's ambivalent attitude towards the child of stanza VII parallels his profound sense of the incongruity, expressed in the eighth stanza, between the views of the child offered in stanzas V and VII respectively. One perspective highlights immortality, the other mortality; one focuses on the child's divinity, the other on his humanness. The differences seem irreconcilable. At the end of the

eighth stanza and the poem's second movement, the poet appears to have reached an impasse. How can he recover a sense of the continuity between child and man when his vision of childhood seems so hopelessly fragmented? A straight line of development can easily be traced, to be sure, between the child who foolishly acts out custom's roles and the adult who feels the weight of custom. But that is hardly the sort of continuity the poet seeks.

Given the apparent impasse at the end of the second movement, it is not surprising that virtually every commentator on the Ode wonders by what means the poet arrives at the triumphant recovery of the next stanza.¹⁸ In one of those seemingly illogical turns which so baffle Wordsworth's readers, the poet begins the ninth stanza on a high note:

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

(133-36)

Something akin to Christian conversion seems to have occurred in the moment between the close of the second movement and the opening of the third. I shall put aside, for the moment, consideration of the means by which Wordsworth arrives at affirmation and look instead at what he affirms.

The poet asserts that continuity exists between the child and the man, and declares that it is of a kind to "Uphold" and "cherish" man (157). Wordsworth's affirmation involves two particular experiences of childhood which seem peculiar to the child as presented in stanza V and alien to the child as presented in stanza VII. He raises a "song of thanks and praise" for

those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings;
 Blank misgivings of a Creature
 Moving about in worlds not realised,
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised,

(144-51)

and for,

those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

(153-56)

In his own gloss on the first of these two passages, Wordsworth tells us that the lines describe that childhood experience in which the external world has no objective existence, when the world is known subjectively, and only subjectively.¹⁹ The second passage, with its "first affections," bears an affinity, as Lionel Trilling observes, to the Blest Babe passage of Book II of The Prelude.²⁰ My discussion of the Prelude passage emphasized that the Babe's world is Edenic in that no boundaries are erected by a mind which seems boundlessly expansive. So, in alluding here to the period of childhood evoked in the Blest Babe lines, Wordsworth points to the power of the mind which experiences the world subjectively. Each of the experiences, then, on which the poet bases his affirmation specifically celebrates the power of the mind.

Thus, the poet's recovery, and the "Strength" (183) in which it issues, grow from the remembrance of the mind's subjectively sympathetic power. In the tenth stanza Wordsworth casts the basis for affirmation in just slightly different terms, with the sympathetic and subjective mind

of the child re-appearing as "primal sympathy" (185). The poet states explicitly here what the preceding stanza strongly implies: the adult shares with the child that "primal sympathy / Which having been must ever be" (184-85). The Ode, then, presents a recovery which turns on the sense of continuity within the self through time; the power of the subjective mind "remains behind" (184) after visionary gleam and glory have faded.²¹ Accordingly an Edenic state--one which derives from trust in inner continuity rather than on a continuum of inner and outer--is yet available to the poet.

It may seem to the reader that the poet bases his affirmation of the continuity of self through time, as I have just sketched it, entirely upon recollections of childhood experiences which have much to do with the child of stanza V, and little or nothing to do with the realistic child of VII. Were this the case, certain aspects of the poet's recovery would be puzzling indeed; they would seem imposed and in no way integrally related to the poem, as some critics have charged. Colin Clarke, for one, in his careful study of some of the discrepancies in the Ode, remarks that

we might suppose that the faith (189) and the philosophic mind (190) are clearly sources of strength which come with manhood, as a substitute for the sources of strength peculiar to the child, yet stanzas V-IX force us to deepen this interpretation. 'Philosophic' here is ambiguous in meaning. It has the old connotation of Stoic: man achieves serenity through suffering. But further, 'the philosophic mind' is the idealising mind . . . and points back to 'Thou best philosopher' of stanza VIII. . . .
 [But] [t]here is no real connection established between the philosophical, qua stoical, mind of the man and those strange experiences of the child, the 'Blank misgivings of a Creature Moving about in worlds not realised', and therefore no

real bridge between the nostalgia of the ninth stanza and the soothing sublimities of the eleventh.²²

Though he alludes to the presentation of the child in stanzas V-IX, Clarke clearly has in mind only the child of stanza V; the "best Philosopher" of VIII and the creature who moves in worlds not realized (IX) refer to the child who has known a previous existence. While there may be "no real connection" between the philosophical mind of the man and the "strange experiences" of that child, a connection does hold between the philosophical mind of the man and the activities of the child in stanza VII.

To begin with, we hear a precise verbal echo in Wordsworth's declaration that he finds strength "In years that bring the philosophic mind" (190); earlier in the poem he laments that the child, as presented in stanza VII, provokes "The years to bring the inevitable yoke" (128). The mind grows philosophic in learning why it must wear the inevitable yoke. Further ties can be discerned between the "soothing sublimities" and "lofty ethical sympathies" of the poem's concluding stanzas and the activities of the child represented in the seventh stanza.²³ The child who playfully, yet earnestly and joyfully, enacts some of man's most meaningful ceremonies--"A wedding or a festival, / A mourning ^{or} ~~of~~ a funeral" (93-94)--cultivates the feelings which give meaning to human ceremony and ritual. In one very real sense, then, he is, in accordance with the poem's epigraph, the "Father of the Man." For, though the child has no intimate knowledge of something like adult sexual love, or death and suffering, his playful rehearsal of the appropriate responses prepares the heart for just such occasions. The adult who, when touched by sorrowful events, feels "the soothing thoughts that spring / Out of

human suffering" (187-88), in some wise learned them in his childhood, and remembers them now in adulthood. In the final stanza of the poem, Wordsworth gives "Thanks to the human heart by which we live, / Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears" (204-05). There is unbroken continuity between the adult who rejoices in, and lives by, this "human heart" and the child who so eagerly gives his "heart" (95), "song" (96), and "tongue" (97), to human affairs. Continuity remains both unbroken, and, so to speak, circular. If the Child is the father of the Man in the way I have suggested, the Man is just as much the father of the Child--the "little Actor"(102)--who imitates, and hence learns from, the grown-ups in his world.

The child's enactment of the roles and ceremonies of human life derives much of its importance from its subjective nature. Wordsworth tells us that the child possesses a "dream of human life / Shaped by himself with newly-learned art" (91-92). Something of a poet, the child half-creates the world in which he moves. And although this world is a far cry from the "worlds not realised" (149) in which the child of divine origins move^s, the mind of the child predominates in each kind of world. Thus, the subjectively sympathetic mind is common to both the child of the fifth stanza and the child of stanza VII. The poet's vision of childhood, then, which had seemed so hopelessly fragmented at the close of the poem's second movement, coheres on this fundamental level. Thus ^{continuity}continuity essentially remains unbroken not only between the Man and the Child of stanza V, and the Man and the Child of VII, but between the two perspectives on the Child as well.

The connections and continuities I have attempted to trace run beneath the surface of the poem, and perhaps just beneath the threshold

of the poet's consciousness.²⁴ On its surface, the poem retains the kinds of imagistic and rhetorical paradoxes and ambiguities highlighted, and regretted, by Cleanth Brooks, Colin Clarke, and others. Brooks, for instance, concludes, with the present discussion, that "primal sympathy remains. It is the faculty by which we live. The continuity between child and man is actually unbroken." But he qualifies his statement: "I can make no . . . claim for . . . precision in Wordsworth's treatment of the 'resolution', the recovery." Only in a "general sense," he adds, "[do] we know what Wordsworth is doing here."²⁵

In just such a general sense, I think, we can account for the movement from the apparent impasse in stanza VIII to the joyful statement of recovery in stanza IX. The movement resembles a Christian conversion. More specifically, the sudden statement of recovery involves the ability of the mind of the poet to accept paradox, in something of the same way that a Christian must accept the paradoxes of his religion, the paradox of the Incarnation in particular. It can be observed, moreover, that the Incarnation of God in Christ offers an analogy to the tales of growth in stanzas V and VII. The fifth stanza's story of growth from godhead into humanity bears an obvious resemblance to the Christian story, while stanza VII's emphasis on the child's eager willingness to assume human roles parallels Christ's willingness to subdue his godhead to human, mortal form. Even more importantly, Christ combines in one person those attributes which are ascribed to the children of V and VII respectively: divinity and humanness, immortality and mortality. Ultimately, of course, the analogy suggests that man is as much, and in a similar way, a paradoxical being as is Christ. And although the Christian analogy does not become at all explicit in the Ode, it does

contribute an underlayer of meaning to the poem, and can help to account for the means by which the poet arrives at affirmation.

To conclude this discussion of the Ode, I shall return, as does the poem itself, to the question of the relationship between the self and the world. With stanzas X and XI, the external setting of the poem re-appears. In the opening stanzas Wordsworth had to acknowledge, unwillingly and sadly, the disjunction between himself and nature. Now he commands the birds to "sing, sing a joyous song!" (172), and exclaims that "Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves" do not "Forebode . . . any severing of our loves!" (191-92). But as Alan Grob observes, "this time distinctions between man and nature are more carefully maintained, participation is to be more restrained, more mature, more essentially human."²⁶ In illustration of his point, Grob cites Wordsworth's declaration that "in thought" man will

join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!

(175-78)

I would add to Grob's remarks that not only are distinctions between man and nature "carefully" maintained, they are also willingly, even happily, maintained. It is with exuberance almost that Wordsworth commands the birds to sing and "let[s] the young Lambs bound" (173-73) in spite of his inability any longer to feel, as immediately and sensuously as they can, the "gladness of the May."

Thus, the poem's conclusion establishes a new relationship between Wordsworth and nature. While the relationship firmly acknowledges the loss of immediacy, it does not, as the hint of exuberance indicates,

admit of any feelings of betrayal by nature. No sense of betrayal informs "Resolution and Independence" either, as we have seen. The Ode, however, goes a step further than "Resolution and Independence" in its working through of the relationship between man and nature. A certain disinterest in nature informs "Resolution and Independence"; nature does not hold much importance, and the poem's resolution makes no attempt to return to the pristine world of the opening stanzas. On this score, the Ode, with its return to the opening setting, strikes us as a more thorough treatment of the disjunction between man and nature.

The poet's turn towards nature in the final two stanzas does not in any way indicate that nature plays--or that the poet believes nature plays--an active role in the poet's present recovery. Rather, the poet's gesture expresses his sense of gratitude towards a nature with which he once felt an immediate and sensuous unity. The memory of that unity permits him to say:

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might.

(191-93)

Wordsworth's final attitude towards nature in the Ode reflects, as well, the extent to which he can accept, without resentment or despair, the fundamental and absolute disjunction between himself and nature. We have already remarked the note of exuberance in this connection. It can be also observed that Wordsworth speaks of his love for nature as having deepened as a result of the disjunction:

I love the Brook which down their channels fret,
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
 Is lovely yet.

(196-99)

That Wordsworth specifically images nature as childlike here--brooks fret and trip, the day is new-born--points to a final dimension of his attitude towards nature, as does the gaiety with which he commands birds to sing and lambs to bound. By these means Wordsworth indicates that the "philosophic mind" does not, and need not, destroy the innocent vision of unity with the external world which belongs to the state of childhood. Although the poet himself can no longer participate in that vision or world, he does not begrudge others the experience, or deny his own earlier experience of innocence.

iii

We have seen that in both the Intimations Ode and "Resolution and Independence" the poet achieves recovery independently of nature and the flux of natural cycle. Such independence brings with it at least the possibility of permanence of recovery, as "Resolution and Independence" particularly demonstrates. In these two lyrics, however, the desire to achieve recovery independently of natural process does not quite expand into a wish to quell permanently all the inner storms which can precipitate a fall, and so necessitate recovery. For example, the poet's creation, in "Resolution and Independence," of a symbol to act in future as a "stay secure" reflects his desire to feel assured that he can always escape from inner tumult, not a desire to avoid, entirely, wild swings in mood. "Ode to Duty" and "Peele Castle," on

the other hand, do express the poet's longing for permanent inward stability; in "Peele Castle," for instance, the poet creates a symbol which reflects precisely this desire.

Commentators on "Ode to Duty" often remark upon the regularity of its form and the sternness of its diction; Hartman specifically observes that "the regular form of the Ode . . . indicates [Wordsworth's] wish to escape the eternal flux of the inner life" (278).²⁷ Thematically, the Ode invokes the rigidity of the letter of the Law (41) to aid the poet who "feel[s] the weight of chance-desires" and who "long[s] for a repose that ever is the same" (38;40).

Eugene Stelzig probably echoes the sentiments of many when he writes of the poet's longing for repose: "There is something frightening and even chilling going on here: a repose that ever is the same can only be found in the silence of the grave."²⁸ The reader can certainly detect this dark undertone, especially when he recalls that Wordsworth speaks of humanity's "weary" strife in the opening stanza (8). Nevertheless, we should consider first what the poet intends "repose" to mean. Two stanzas earlier Wordsworth presents a glimpse of a future Edenic state when he prophesies that in the far distant future of a subsequent age of Man, or of an afterlife, Man's days will be "Serene" (17). The near synonymy of serenity and repose ("repose" seems slightly less ethereal), suggests that "a repose that ever is the same" constitutes an Edenic state of existence in the present, in the life of the here and now. If this is the case, the poet's supplication to Duty involves the expectation that he will thus realize such an Edenic ideal.

The poet clearly submits to Duty's control willingly and freely:

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control.

(33-35)

In fact, he presents service to Duty as something of a privilege: "Thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may" (32). Hartman obviously has this element of the poet's supplication to Duty in mind when he remarks that "the chief emotion expressed by [Wordsworth], and expressed movingly, is for a self-devoted dedication." His conclusion that this free gift of self "eliminates the possibility that Duty's compulsion could stem from authority or the dictate of external law"²⁹ finds reinforcement both specifically, in lines such as the ones just quoted, and generally, on the level of tone. Moreover, in a stanza which appears in the poem as originally written and published, Wordsworth states explicitly that his submission to Duty's role is voluntary:

not the less would I throughout
Still act according to the voice
Of my own wish; and feel past doubt
That my submissiveness was choice.

External moral form is so far from being imposed here that it is impossible to tell whether moral form grows from or shapes the poet's inner desires ("wish"). These lines thus point, as does the overall drift of the Ode, to the perfect coincidence of desires and moral law. Such a coincidence precludes even the possibility of any inward falling-off, and so holds forth the promise of permanent inward stability. The poet need no longer feel the weight of "chance-desires" (38), for his desires will assume a predictable and stable form; "unchartered"

freedom will no longer tire him (37), for Duty will map out a permanent course. The poet, in following this course, will find and maintain that Edenic "repose that ever is the same."

Earlier I suggested that "Resolution and Independence" implicates Wordsworth in a crisis of poetic voice and that, on one level, the resolution involves the poet's internalization of the ability to speak in the face of the sudden and imminent advent of human hardships. In "Ode to Duty," more so than in the earlier poem, the poet accepts the hard facts of the human condition as given; Wordsworth refers, in general terms, to "the weary strife of frail humanity" (8). Moreover, the poem presupposes the Christian idea of the Fall. Thus, there is not so much an immediate crisis of voice as a desire on Wordsworth's part to strengthen his poetic voice against the ever-present threat of despair about man's lot, and, to strengthen it not only for his personal well-being, but for the benefit of his audience as well. As Hartman remarks, the poet of the Ode wants to "propagate his knowledge. . . . (T)here is a self-conscious attempt to assume that his truths are also general truths."³⁰ Both the form of the poem, in its regularity, and the diction, in its generality, testify to a deliberate effort to fortify poetic voice. Finally, insofar as the alignment of the poet's desires and external moral form precludes the very possibility of an inward falling-off--of an inner storm which might silence poetic voice--it prevents even the threat of a loss of poetic voice.

Like "Ode to Duty," "Peele Castle" invites consideration of the precise nature of the speaker's voice; largely because the voice in "Peele Castle," like that in the Ode, differs markedly from Wordsworth's

lyrical and meditative voices in other poems of the great decade. But if in "Ode to Duty" the poet's voice sounds strong in the face of Man's lot in this world, in "Peele Castle," the poet's voice speaks of the absolute, personal loss represented by the death of Wordsworth's brother.

Colin Clarke, in his discussion of "Peele Castle," touches upon the issue of the strength of Wordsworth's voice when he refers generally to a tone of "serene detachment" and specifically to the poet's "self-conscious detachment" in the line, "This which I know, I speak with mind serene" (40).³¹ What Wordsworth knows here is that the feeling of loss upon the death of his brother "will ne'er be old" (39). Given these circumstances, the voice which speaks with serene detachment is indeed a strong one. Another and more striking aspect of "Peele Castle"--the presence of irony--contributes to the sense of poetic voice as strong in spite of personal and absolute loss. Wordsworth uses irony to an uncharacteristically large degree in the poem, painstakingly presenting in the first three stanzas a vision of Elysian nature which is to be remorselessly undercut in the remainder of the poem. To cite just one example, Wordsworth presents the image of the "mighty Deep" as "even the gentlest of all gentle Things" (11-12). As we know from biographical sources, Wordsworth's brother died at sea. Thus, far from being the gentlest of things, the "mighty Deep" proves to be the cause of the poet's "deep distress" (36). To the extent that the presence of irony points to the accommodation of conflicts and losses, the poetic voice which speaks ironically is one of strength.

The strength of Wordsworth's voice in "Peele Castle" reflects and reinforces on one level what the poem's major symbol, the castle,

represents on another--a state of permanent inward stability. Two-thirds of the way through the poem Wordsworth describes the angry sea, "dismal shore" (44), "deadly swell" (47), and "rueful sky" (48) of Beaumont's picture, commending the work for its well-chosen spirit (46), presumably the spirit in which the sea overcame his brother. He then turns to Peele Castle itself:

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

(49-52)

Immovable, "unfeeling," the castle stands fortified against the buffets of time and nature in its uncaringly destructive aspect. Wordsworth's "love" for the castle's strong, defiant stance points, of course, to his desire similarly to withstand the storms of experience. His wish becomes explicit in the final stanza when he bids "welcome" to "fortitude and patient cheer" (57). Perhaps the best indication that the poet has achieved a permanent state of inward stability, or at least firmly believes that he has, comes in the lines which follow. For in addition to "fortitude and patient cheer," Wordsworth welcomes--indeed invites--as a perpetual trial or test of inner stability,

frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.

(58-59)

In Hartman's words, the poet "faces only to future in the assured consciousness that . . . he can sustain the human sorrows to come."³² Like "Resolution and Independence," the Intimations Ode, and "Ode to Duty," "Peele Castle" is thus a prospective rather than retrospective

poem. However, the poet's eagerness, expressed in the lines just cited, to submit to a constant testing of his inner strength represents a new element, one not shared by the other three lyrics.

"Peele Castle" remains unique among the lyrics I have looked at in still another respect--its treatment of the relationship between the poet and nature. We can observe immediately that "Peele Castle" neither ignores nature as, ultimately, "Resolution and Independence" does, ^{nor} ~~not~~ establishes, like the Intimations Ode, a new relationship, founded upon the poet's gratitude towards nature. Critical opinion on the precise character of Wordsworth's relationship to nature at the end of "Peele Castle" falls broadly into two camps, of which Bloom and Hartman are representative. Bloom states unequivocally that the poem represents "Wordsworth's palinode on his gospel of Nature."³³ Hartman, on the other hand, insists that the poet has not lost "his faith in nature," arguing that

It is quite true that nature led him on, to
a conception that proved false; but it is
clearly his own soul which betrayed him
through the "fond delusion" that nature is
more than it can be. A distinction between
the roles played respectively by nature and
the soul in this betrayal may seem niggling,
but the contrast is, after all, between a
past and present conception (picture).³⁴

Several considerations weaken Hartman's argument. To begin with, the poet deliberately calls forth Elysian nature in order that he may solemnly renounce it. The poet remembers when he would have painted Peele Castle and its setting as "A Picture" of

lasting ease,
Elysian without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

(25-58)

But he acknowledges that

Not for a moment could I now behold
The smiling sea, and be what I have been.

(37-38)

As Hartman himself points out, the "sea from now on could smile and smile and still be thought a villain" by the poet.³⁵ Hartman's basic contention, that it is Wordsworth's own soul, not nature, which betrays him, certainly seems true of "Peele Castle." Nevertheless, this fact does not rule out the idea that Wordsworth will no longer place his faith in nature. For much the same point can be made with respect to the question of betrayal in the "Lucy" cycle, in which the poet, his consciousness fixated on nature, permits himself to be seduced by nature. The last poem of the "Lucy" cycle, however, sees the poet return to an image of Edenic nature. That Wordsworth makes no such return in "Peele Castle" suggests that, regardless of whether or not nature is innocent of betrayal, he is bidding a farewell to nature.

Finally a brief comparison of "Peele Castle" and "Tintern Abbey" gives some indication that, in fact, the poet of "Peele Castle" does find nature guilty of betrayal. That both poems look back to almost the same stage of life warrants such a comparison. Each poem gives the poet ample grounds on which to feel that nature has betrayed him: in "Tintern Abbey" the aching joys and dizzy raptures once experienced in nature are gone, and in "Peele Castle" nature's steadfastness proves illusory. But whereas in "Tintern Abbey" the poet takes pains to declare that "nature never did betray the heart that loved her," in the later poem his "confidence falters," to use Bloom's words.³⁶ Wordsworth remembers when he found in nature "A steadfast peace that might not be

betrayed" (32; my emphasis). Such a conception of nature, he now says, grew only from "the fond illusion of my heart" (29).

v

In the four lyrics we have looked at, we have seen the poet move ever closer to a state of permanent inward stability in the midst of natural flux and the storms of experience. The difference between the Leech-gatherer as a symbol of permanence and stability in "Resolution and Independence" and the castle as a symbol of the same ideals in "Peele Castle" provides one measure of the distance travelled by the poet. The Leech-gatherer is a human figure created out of the stony landscape while the castle is literally stone. And although the Leech-gatherer has endured hardships for many long years, he remains, capable of strong feeling; his eyes are "yet-vivid." On the other hand, the storms of time have encased the castle in "unfeeling" armour.

The nature of the symbol created in "Peele Castle" inevitably leads one to ask at what price the poet purchases inward stability. Not surprisingly, many readers answer that the cost is too high, that Wordsworth maintains inner stability at the expense of feeling. David Perkins, for one, speaks of Wordsworth's "retreat into stoicism," of the withdrawal "from all feeling whatsoever" on the part of a poet who "seems finally to have felt that for the sake of peace he would sacrifice all."³⁷ Of course, most such discussions of this aspect of Wordsworth's poetic development rely upon evidence from the poetry which follows the 1798-1807 decade. Thus, the question of the price exacted for the sake of stability lies beyond the scope of the present discussion. Nevertheless, the undeniably chilling quality of a line

such as "I long for a repose that ever is the same," and the equally frightening image of a stonified soul forebode the death of a poetry which took its impetus from the poet's struggle to recover from a fall.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ Ernest Bernbaum, James V. Logan, Jr., and Ford T. Swetnam, Jr. (The English Romantic Poets: A Review of Research and Criticism, ed. Frank Jordan (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1972)), p. 86, cite Leslie Stephen's essay on "Wordsworth's Ethics" (Cornhill Magazine, 1876; rpt. Hours in a Library) and Matthew Arnold's introduction to his Poems of Wordsworth (1879) in this connection.

² Alan Grob in The Philosophic Mind (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1973), p. x, speaks of the "rival claims of empiricism and transcendentalism, first set forth in detail almost fifty years ago by Arthur Beatty and Melvin Rader . . . beyond which . . . we have never seemed able to advance."

³ A. C. Bradley, "Wordsworth," in Oxford Lectures on Poetry (1909; rpt. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1950), pp. 101, 130.

⁴ M. H. Abrams, "Introduction: Two Roads to Wordsworth," in Wordsworth: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed., M. H. Abrams (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), pp. 1-11.

⁵ "Two Roads," p. 4.

⁶ For a comprehensive study of the religious and philosophical tradition within which Wordsworth works see M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1971).

⁷ Prospectus ll. 47-55, in Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), p. 590. Quotations from the poems other than The Prelude (Text of 1805) are from this text. Quotations from the 1850 version of The Prelude are from the same text and will be indicated by book and line numbers and the year immediately following the quotation. My discussion of The Prelude is based almost entirely upon the 1805 version. Quotations are from The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805), ed. Ernest de Selincourt, revised by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970).

⁸ Natural Supernaturalism, p. 278.

CHAPTER ONE

¹ Colin Clarke, "Loss and Consolation in the Poetry of Wordsworth (1798-1805)," ES, 31 (1950), 81-97. Clarke feels that Wordsworth "has juggled away from the anxiety that disturbed him. In lines 72-93 he implies that . . . he was faced with a genuine loss But now in lines 123-28 . . . he writes as though there had never been any real problem at all. There is no evolution here from loss to an achieved recompense but from "joy to joy" (p. 96).

² The Philosophic Mind, pp. 16-17.

³ Nearly every critic on the poem comments upon the importance of the opening landscape description. For example, Grob, in The Philosophic Mind, p. 13, speaks of "the hidden premises contained in [the] opening presentation of landscape." Albert Gérard, in English Romantic Poetry (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 96,

observes that "there is little in the whole poem that cannot be brought back to something in the landscape as Wordsworth viewed it." My own reading of the section differs from most others in its emphasis on the intimations of disjunction between the poet and the landscape before him.

⁴ English Romantic Poetry, p. 100.

⁵ James Benziger discusses the harmonious interconnections between the natural, the human and the divine at some length in "Tintern Abbey Revisited," PMLA, 65 (1950), 154-62.

⁶ Gérard in English Romantic Poetry, pp. 96, 97, refers to the first stanza's "impression of organic unity" and its presentation of a "correspondence between man's inwardness and the outwardness of nature." John R. Nabholz in "The Integrity of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'," JEGP, 73 (1974), p. 230, speaks of "the unity within the scene and between the observer and the scene."

⁷ The Visionary Company (Ithica: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), p. 132.

⁸ Critics remain divided on the question of whether "this" refers to the visionary experience itself or to the belief that nature's forms led to the moment of sublime insight. For instance, Gérard in English Romantic Poetry, p. 106, finds that "'This' in line 49 refers to what immediately precedes, that is, the suggestion that 'we see into the life of things': it is the interpretation of the mood, which Wordsworth concedes may be 'but a vain belief!'" My own reading agrees with those of critics such as Nabholz in "The Integrity of 'Tintern'," p. 232. Nabholz contends that although critics such as Gérard "are following

the closest grammatical tie . . . It is more consistent to refer 'this' to the only earlier confession of uncertainty: 'Nor less, I trust, / To them I may have owed another gift, / Of aspect more sublime'" (Nabholtz's emphasis).

⁹ Most commentators reach a similar conclusion. Bloom, The Visionary Company, p. 136, writes that "Within both Nature and Wordsworth is something that moves and breathes, and that blends subject and object as it animates them." And Nabholtz, "The Integrity of 'Tintern'," p. 235, speaks of "a principle or power whose activity and residence are found both in nature and in the mind."

¹⁰ "The Integrity of 'Tintern'," p. 229.

¹¹ "The Integrity of "'Tintern'," pp. 237-38.

¹² "The Integrity of "'Tintern'," p. 236.

¹³ Wordsworth states explicitly that Dorothy's present corresponds directly to his past:

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.

(116-20)

It is further implied that Dorothy's "after years," when her "wild ecstasies shall be matured / Into a sober pleasure" (137-38), parallel the poet's present state of sober pleasure in which he is chastened and subdued.

CHAPTER TWO

¹ Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p. 158.

- 2 Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 198.
- 3 Hartman, "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness'," Romanticism and Consciousness, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 47, 49.
- 4 Hartman, "Romanticism," pp. 48-49.
- 5 Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 52.
- 6 Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 53.
- 7 Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 54.
- 8 Hegel, Logic, as quoted in Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 49.
- 9 Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 24.
- 10 Wordsworth: A Re-Interpretation (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1954), p. 33.
- 11 Hartman, Wordsworth, p. 199. Emphasis mine.
- 12 The Landscape of Memory (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 110.
- 13 Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 50.
- 14 Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 50.
- 15 The Landscape of Memory, p. 110.
- 16 Hartman, "Romanticism," p. 54.
- 17 The Prelude, VI.525-35.

CHAPTER THREE

- 1 Wordsworth's line echoes Milton's in Paradise Lost, XII.646.

This and subsequent quotations from PL are from John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press-The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957). All subsequent references to PL will be indicated by book and line numbers immediately following the quotation.

² Whereas the end of PL finds Adam and Eve just embarking upon the journey that will lead to the paradise within (XII.646-49), Wordsworth believes he is just about to enter his paradise. Elizabeth Sewall speaks for many, in The Orphic Voice (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), p. 342, when she observes that it is as if "Wordsworth meant to dovetail his epic directly into the very place where the Miltonic epic ends." See also, for example, W. J. Harvey, "Vision and Medium in The Prelude," in Wordsworth: The Prelude, A Casebook, ed. W. J. Harvey and Richard Gravil (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1972), pp. 195-98.

³ See, for instance, Herbert Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's "Prelude" (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 143-44; Grob, The Philosophic Mind, pp. 53-58; Charles Altieri, "Wordsworth's Wavering Balance: The Thematic Rhythm of The Prelude," TWC, 4 (1973), pp. 234-37; Bloom, Visionary Company, p. 147; Hartman, "A Poet's Progress: Wordsworth and the Via Naturaliter Negativa," MP, 59 (Feb. 1962), 214-24; rpt. in The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), pp. 598-603.

⁴ In Book VIII.436-47, Wordsworth again praises an education which is not prompt to place "facts" before the eyes of a child.

- 5 "The Drunken Boat," in Romanticism Reconsidered, ed. Northrop Frye (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), p. 5.
- 6 Altieri, "Wordsworth's Wavering Balance," p. 236.
- 7 See, for instance, Bloom, Visionary Company, p. 142.
- 8 Natural Supernaturalism, pp. 287-89.
- 9 Hartman in "Nature and the Humanization of the Self in Wordsworth," in English Romantic Poets, ed. M. H. Abrams, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 127, makes a similar point: "The memory Wordsworth set out to record yields as if spontaneously to a second memory (125-35) continuous with the first but more inward. . . . He dwells on that event to the point of slowing the narrative movement to a halt. . . ." This essay is a revision by the author of his "Introduction" to William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry and Prose (New York: New American Library, 1970).
- 10 Albert O. Wlecke, Wordsworth and the Sublime (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), p. 122.
- 11 I take the phrase, "the world beyond the vale," from Richard J. Onorato, The Character of the Poet (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 220.
- 12 Visionary Company, p. 149.
- 13 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 235.
- 14 For a discussion of Book VIII's pastoralism see Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's "Prelude," pp. 243-52. Lindenberger believes that Wordsworth attempts to substitute a sincere pastoral for that of literary artifice, and fails. What Lindenberger regards as an attempt at

"sincere pastoral," I read as an attempt at tragic vision.

- 15 Romantic Origins, (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978),
p. 306.
- 16 Wordsworth's passage echoes PL, XI.203-08.
- 17 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 242.
- 18 "Wordsworth's Wavering Balance," p. 229.
- 19 In Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 243, Hartman writes: "Wordsworth at first considered the French Revolution as a fulfillment rather than abrogation of natural law."
- 20 Onorato, The Character of the Poet, pp. 349-50, also remarks upon the "incongruity" of the child analogy, and writes that "the child, seemingly mindless in its play, is made by the force of association to seem possessed by destructive rather than innocent passion." And John Beer in Wordsworth in Time (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 42, cites this passage in illustration of Wordsworth's "sense that the nightmarish vortical conclusion to what had begun in such hope [i.e. the French Revolution] was endemic in human nature, resulting from a tendency to press experience to extremes which could be traced even in small children. . . ."
- 21 Natural Supernaturalism, p. 283.
- 22 Natural Supernaturalism, p. 77.
- 23 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 248.
- 24 "The Two-Part Prelude of 1799," The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, p. 579. This essay is a revised and extended version of a lecture delivered at

Cornell University on April 7, 1979, and printed as "The Growth of a Poet's Mind" in The Cornell Library Journal, XI (Spring, 1970), 3-24.

²⁵ For example, Brisman, Romantic Origins, p. 314, refers to the "triviality of the imputed crime" and observes, interestingly for the purposes of my discussion, that the "very triviality . . . has about it the nagging overtones of first motion or original sin." And Thomas Weiskell, The Romantic Sublime, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), p. 182, remarks that "If the 'desires' corrected by God were simply the boy's eagerness to go home, it is at least odd that his father's death should be felt as a chastisement of that most natural and filial wish."

²⁶ Jonathan Bishop, "Wordsworth and the 'Spots of Time'," ELH, 26 (1959), 45-65; rpt. in Wordsworth: The Prelude, ed. W. J. Harvey and Richard Gravil, pp. 134-53. Bishop pointedly asks, "Is it an accident that these two 'spots' should be linked together, and that the first should appear to deal with the child's fantasies about his mother, the other about the death of a father? Does the presence of a gibbet in the first memory suggest that, in fantasy though not in fact, the later event preceded the earlier?" (146). See also Brisman, Romantic Origins, pp. 314-18; and Weiskell, The Romantic Sublime, pp. 181-83. It should be added that both Brisman and Weiskell go beyond a simple oedipal explanation.

²⁷ Natural Supernaturalism, pp. 109-13.

²⁸ Natural Supernaturalism, p. 287.

²⁹ Bloom, Visionary Company, p. 161. Bloom is paraphrasing Prelude II.335-36.

³⁰ Natural Supernaturalism, p. 370.

- 31 The Character of the Poet, p. 165.
- 32 Jonathan Wordsworth, "The Two-Part Prelude of 1799," p. 568.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 202.
- 2 The Philosophic Mind, p. 218.
- 3 Eugene L. Stelzig, All Shades of Consciousness, Studies in English Literature, Vol. 102 (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 124.
- 4 William Heath, Wordsworth and Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 127.
- 5 See Wordsworth's Preface to the 1815 edition of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth: Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest de Selincourt, pp. 753-56. Although this Preface postdates the poetry with which we are concerned here, Wordsworth clearly began to distinguish between Fancy and Imagination long before 1815, as James A. W. Heffernan, Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 181-83, observes.
- 6 J. Robert Barth, The Symbolic Imagination (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 61.
- 7 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 272.
- 8 See Wordsworth's Preface to the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth: Poetical Works, ed. Hutchinson, rev. by de Selincourt, p. 737.
- 9 Preface to the 1815 edition of Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth: Poetical Works, ed. Hutchinson, rev. by de Selincourt, p. 754.

¹⁰ Anthony E. M. Conran, "The Dealectic of Experience: A Study of Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence'," PMLA, 75 (1960), p. 73.

¹¹ A comparison between the Leech-gatherer and his ancestor, the Discharged Soldier of Prelude IV.400-504, clearly demonstrates that Wordsworth does treat the Leech-gatherer symbolically. While the Soldier may be representative of the "strength that cannot fail" (161), a major theme in Book IV, he remains a human being, with a life of his own, an existence that has nothing to do with the poet. We understand this, for example, when the poet makes two surmises about the soldier which subsequently prove unfounded: the poet states that the soldier is completely unattended, that he does not even have a staff (415-16) only to discover later that the soldier has a traveller's staff (459-63); further, the poet assumes that the old man is in pain (421-22), and later expresses surprise when the old man appears to travel without pain (465-66). The existence of the Leech-gatherer, on the other hand, seems to have everything to do with the poet, as stanza VIII especially makes clear. There is a further difference between the two presentations. We see the poet in Prelude IV arrange for food and shelter for the old man he meets on the road. We see no such arrangement for the Leech-gatherer on the moor, who, taken literally, is no better off materially than the soldier; a symbol does not need to be fed and housed.

¹² Many commentators do in fact treat Lucy as a symbol. In some cases, Lucy is rather off-handedly called a symbol. For instance, Carl Woodring, in Wordsworth, Riverdale Studies in Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 44, says "Lucy may be . . . a symbol

of everything in England the speaker longs for." And Eugene Stelzig in All Shades of Consciousness, Studies in English literature, Vol. 102 (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 97, implies that Lucy is generally symbolic when he writes that Lucy "stands primarily for aspects of Wordsworth's own experience of growing up." Other critics present a more systematic treatment of Lucy as symbol. For example, David Ferry in The Limits of Mortality (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 73-80, presents Lucy as one of those "girls" in Wordsworth's poetry who are "his chief, or perhaps his most successful, symbols for the relation with the eternal he is always seeking" (79). Ferry can reach this conclusion because he feels that "Eternal nature is [Lucy's] true lover, and the poet's first idealization of her was right after all, for she had nothing to do with humanity or mortality, and her true relation was to the world of eternity, from which he is excluded" (78). As my treatment, in Chapter II, of the resolution of the "Lucy" cycle would indicate, I do not agree with Ferry's understanding of the cycle; hence I cannot accept his view of Lucy as symbolic. Jonathan Wordsworth in "Wordsworth's 'Borderers'," English Romantic Poets, ed. M. H. Abrams (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 170-78, places Lucy in the context of "the fully symbolic figures" he calls borderers, and finds that the Lucy poems reflect the poet's "move into a world of symbols." As my earlier discussion of the imagery, metaphors, and similes of the "Lucy" poems indicates, I do not consider the world of the "Lucy" cycle a world of symbols.

¹³ See, for instance, Lionel Trilling, "The Immortality Ode," English Institute Annual 1941 (1942), pp. 1-28; rpt. in English Romantic Poets, ed. M. H. Abrams, pp. 149-69. Trilling bases his conclusion

largely on the occurrence in line 42 of the Ode of the world "sullen."
 For, "there is one poem in which Wordsworth says that he was sullen;
 it is 'Resolution and Independence'" (156).

¹⁴ Stelzig, All Shades, p. 108.

¹⁵ David Eggenchwiler, "Wordsworth's Discordia Discora," SIR,
 8 (1968), pp. 92-93.

¹⁶ E. D. Hirsch in Wordsworth and Schelling, Yale Studies in
 English, vol. 145 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960), p. 169, calls
 these lines the "darkest point in the Ode and the only unqualified
 assertion of life's diminishment." Grob, The Philosophic Mind, p. 254,
 agrees with this assessment.

¹⁷ "Wordsworth's Discordia Discora," pp. 93-94.

¹⁸ For instance, Grob, The Philosophic Mind, p. 254, speaks of
 "what seems [to be] the poem's most disturbing contradiction: the abrupt
 transition from the closing lines of stanza VIII . . . to the statement
 of recovery, made in apparent disregard of the poem's harsher realities,
 in the lines that immediately follow." And Bloom, The Visionary Company,
 p. 171, writes that "Discursive logic can demonstrate an adequate
 relationship between the poem's first and second movements, and a more
 complicated one between the first and third, but nothing to link together
the second and the third" (my emphasis).

¹⁹ See Wordsworth's note to Isabella Fenwick reprinted in Selected
Poems and Prefaces by William Wordsworth, ed. Jack Stillinger, Riverside
 Editions, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), pp. 536-37.

²⁰ "The Immortality Ode," p. 162.

²¹ Clarke in "Loss and Consolation," p. 84, reaches much the same
 conclusion. He writes: "Because of these early experiences [the poet]

will continue as he grows older to conceive of Mind as the ultimate reality, and of Nature as Mind-dependent."

22 "Loss and Consolation," pp. 84-85.

23 The phrase "lofty ethical sympathies" is David Perkins' in The Quest for Permanence (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), p. 80. Like Clarke, Perkins finds no real connection between the final two stanzas of the poem and the rest of the poem.

24 Cleanth Brooks, "Wordsworth and the Paradox of the Imagination," The Well Wrought Urn (New York: Harvest Books-Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947), pp. 125-26, is tempted to say "that Wordsworth wrote the "Ode" with the 'dark' side of his mind--that the poem welled up from his unconscious and that his conscious tinkering . . . was, in this case, held to a minimum."

25 Well Wrought Urn, p. 148.

26 The Philosophic Mind, p. 258.

27 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 278. Bloom, Visionary Company, p. 187, also refers to the Ode's "stern diction."

28 All Shades, p. 189.

29 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 278.

30 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 283.

31 "Loss and Consolation," pp. 86-87.

32 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 286.

33 Visionary Company, p. 32.

34 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 284.

- 35 Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 285.
- 36 Visionary Company, p. 186.
- 37 Quest for Permanence, pp. 84,86.

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