WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF THE CHILD'S UNCONSCIOUS RESPONSE TO NATURE IN THE PRELUDE

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ABSTRACT

Many critics have emphasized the fact that Wordsworth, as a child, is "unconscious" of his communion with nature. Few, however, attempt to explore the details of this unconscious attitude. Many of those who do study the relationship in depth equate this unconsciousness with passivity.

Wordsworth is "unconscious" in two senses of the word. Firstly, he is simply unaware of the fact that he is communing with nature, and that nature is influencing and affecting him in a profound manner. Secondly, he does not realize the part he plays in the relationship. Critics have pointed out the projection of Wordsworth's fear and guilt, of which he is unaware, in the boat-stealing episode, and I believe that this unconscious participation extends to the other childhood incidents described in Books I and II of The Prelude. Thus Wordsworth, as a child, is not passive.

This unconscious attitude continues throughout childhood and boyhood until the years of youth, at which time a significant change in Wordsworth's perception takes place. In this thesis I will study this unconscious aspect of Wordsworth's relationship with nature and the important modifications which occur during youth.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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Throughout his poetry Wordsworth stresses the importance of childhood as the critical period during which the imagination is actually formed. In Books I and II of The Prelude he concentrates on his own childhood and attempts to identify and study the genesis of his poetic imagination which, he feels, originated in his early communion with nature.[1] It is important to remember, however, that the composition of The Prelude is dependent upon memory and retrospection and that Wordsworth, the adult, rather than Wordsworth, the child, emphasizes the importance of the influence of nature on the young mind. The distinction between the actual emotions and reactions of the child and those which have been formulated by the mature and retrospective mind is often difficult for the reader to distinguish as the two are integrated; the poet describes a specific childhood incident and subsequently comments on its effect on his general growth and personal development. The child, however, is obviously unaware of the contribution of specific experiences to his overall development.

This retrospective method of composition in which the point of view of the adult is interpolated into the childhood incidents seems at times to suggest that the child is more aware and conscious of the details and essence of his interactions with nature than he actually is. When the specific incidents are isolated and studied as childhood experiences,

it becomes apparent that the child is virtually unaware and unconscious of the significance of nature's influence on him, not only in his general process of maturation (of which his state is the initial stage), but also in the realm of his immediate experience. Wordsworth's early communions with nature involve an unconscious absorption of the natural world, and it is only in youth that he becomes conscious of the fact that he is receiving impressions from nature and investing nature with the powers of his own imagination.

Wordsworth refers to the different stages of his personal development in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" and in Book VIII of The Prelude. In "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" he identifies childhood as a period of activity during which nature is extraneous. In speaking of his close relationship with nature during youth he contrasts this conscious intercourse[2] with the more casual attitude of childhood:

> For nature then [during youth]
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all.[3]

Similarly, in Book VIII of The Prelude Wordsworth stresses the fact that nature was not prominent in his childhood, but gradually gained importance in his youth:

> Nature herself was at this unripe time,
> But secondary to my own pursuits
> And animal activities, and all
> Their trivial pleasures; and long afterwards
> When those had died away, and Nature did
> For her own sake become my joy, ...[4]

Thus Wordsworth seems to associate his childhood with sport and physical activity in which nature is present, but not of primary importance. Childhood involves "animal" movements and activities. The

word "animal" seems to suggest physical activity, devoid of mental stimulation or spiritual involvement. An animal acts instinctively, responding to that which stimulates his physical senses. Similarly, the child bases his experiences and knowledge on what he perceives and derives from the use of his senses. His experience is basic in that he does not employ the sophisticated faculty of reason, but responds as his body directs him. Also, the word "coarser" suggests physical rather than mental satisfaction and pleasure--coarse referring to the lower and unrefined physical senses as opposed to a more complicated reaction involving thoughts and emotions. Strangely enough, Wordsworth seems to minimize his experiences of childhood, referring to them as "trivial pleasures." Perhaps he minimizes them in order to emphasize his much deeper and more meaningful relationship with nature during youth, when he is actually devoted to the landscape and the elements of the natural world. Also he seems to be attempting to convey the idea that on a conscious level his childhood activities were superficial. Yet the emphasis he places on his intercourse with nature during his early years definitely implies that it is of central importance to his development. Despite the fact that his activities on a conscious level are "coarse" and "trivial," on an unconscious level his experience is profound and significant in that nature affects and influences him, forming his character and temperament.

Although Wordsworth's sports and activities are, in themselves, "trivial," they are instrumental in leading the child to respond with his senses to the surrounding environment, and thus eventually establish a rapport between nature and himself. Because he is concerned with his own

activity and the satisfaction of his senses, he is unaware of his absorption of those aspects of nature which do not relate directly to his senses:

> A Child, I held unconscious intercourse
> With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
> A pure organic pleasure from the lines
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters colour'd by the steady clouds. (I, 589 - 593)

This meaningful communion with nature is secondary to, and submerged by, his complete immersion in experiences which stimulate and satisfy his senses. Childhood is, in Wordsworth's opinion, an "age of sensation."

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The movement in the latter half of the eighteenth century which expressed an interest in emotion rather than reason was instrumental in initiating an interest in the child as an individual rather than a miniature adult. The theories of eighteenth-century philosophers, who stressed the importance of emotion, are crucial to the emergence of the cult of the Romantic child. The relationship between these philosophers and Wordsworth has been studied in detail by Melvin Rader (Wordsworth: A Philosophic Approach), A. Charles Babenroth (English Childhood), Peter Coveney (The Image of Childhood) and Arthur Beatty (William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historic Relation). I do not propose to study in detail the influence of these thinkers on Wordsworth, but will simply point out the relevance of their philosophies to Wordsworth's view of childhood as the "age of sensation."

It is important to remember, however, that Wordsworth did not consciously adopt the philosopies of these thinkers, fitting his own

thoughts into a fixed and complete system, but was merely influenced by certain ideas in the formulation of his own theories. As is apparent in the first two books of The Prelude, Wordsworth bases his philosophy on personal experience rather than an abstract philosophical system. Wordsworth does not consciously follow one school or specific philosopher; he develops his own view of childhood using, in certain cases when applicable, the philosophical traditions of the eighteenth century of which he is aware through reading and discussions.

Wordsworth was familiar, to some extent, with Rousseau's philosophy which was well known in England during his lifetime:

> The world into which Wordsworth was born
> was one deeply influenced by Rousseau; and
> that the young poet should have been
> influenced deeply by Rousseauistic influences
> was absolutely inevitable.[5]

The Rydal Mount library included copies of Emile and The Confessions,[6] and Wordsworth refers to a passage from Emile in The Preface to The Borderers.[7] Beatty and Rader emphasize in their studies, however, that although Wordsworth was deeply influenced by Rousseau, he was not a dedicated disciple.

Peter Coveney's assertion in The Image of Childhood that Rousseau's "influence lies behind the whole progressive concentration of interest on the child in the second half of the [eighteenth] century"[8] is basically true in that Rousseau succeeded in creating an atmosphere in which the child was valued for his own sake as an individual experiencing a unique stage of life. Rousseau's view of childhood is based on the assumption that "Manhood has its place in the sequence of things; childhood has its place in the sequence of human life; the man must be treated as a man,

and the child as a child."[9] Wordsworth's obvious debt to Rousseau lies in the general acceptance and realization of the worth and value of childhood. Writing under the assumption that his readers appreciated childhood as a unique and valuable period of life, Wordsworth was able to develop his own philosophy concerning the child without having to defend to any great extent the attention accorded to this early stage of life.

Many of Rousseau's basic premises are adopted, consciously or unconsciously, by Wordsworth. Wordsworth's personal experience prompts him to accept Rousseau's view of the infant:

> In the dawn of life, when memory and imagination have not begun to function, the child only attends to what affects its senses.[10]

As we shall see in the portrait of the infant presented in Book II of The Prelude, however, Wordsworth credits the infant with greater faculties and abilities than does Rousseau, who says that the infant "had neither feeling nor thought, he was barely capable of sensation; he was unconscious of his own existence."[11] One of Rousseau's basic ideas which, I would argue, is central to Wordsworth's philosophy is that children receive images rather than ideas due to the fact that they have not yet developed their memory and reason.[12] This theory obviously arises from the assumption that children respond to situations and objects which affect their physical senses. Rousseau's statement--"The senses are the first of our faculties to mature"[13]--could easily be attributed to Wordsworth, and Rousseau's justification for this statement seems reasonable:

> Since everything that comes into the human mind enters through the gates of sense, man's first reason is a reason of sense-experience.[14]

Emile, similar to Wordsworth as depicted in the first two books of The Prelude, is virtually unconscious of the significance of the impressions he receives in that he responds with his senses rather than integrating or synthesizing the impressions in his mind: "They [children] retain sounds, form, sensation, but rarely ideas, and still more rarely relations."[15] Thus Wordsworth seems to follow Rousseau's idea that childhood is an age of sensation, and although he would take exception to Rousseau's methods of education, he basically seems to agree with his view of the nature and characteristics of the child.

Rousseau was obviously influenced by the ideas of John Locke, whom he singled out as one of his teachers.[16] In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Locke propounds a theory concerning childhood which is similar to Rousseau's:

> Children, when they first come into it [the world], are surrounded with a world of new things which, by a constant solicitation of their senses, draw the mind constantly to them.[17]

Locke extends this idea into a progression or development: "In time, the mind comes to reflect on its own operations about the ideas got by sensation and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflection."[18] The process becomes involved and convoluted, but the element to be stressed as far as a study of Wordsworth is concerned is this emphasis on sensation as the origin of ideas:

> These two, I say, viz. external material things as the objects of SENSATION, and the operations of our own minds within as the objects of REFLECTION, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings.[19]

Locke, like Rousseau, believes that the senses must be developed in the child as they are his principal means of communicating with the world.

Coleridge, at one point in his life, was immersed in the philosophy of Hartley, and Wordsworth was no doubt exposed to Hartley's ideas through discussions with Coleridge if not through his own reading. Hartley was influenced by Locke, as was Rousseau, and again sensations are viewed as the basic element from which thoughts and ideas develop. Hartley defines sensations as "those internal Feelings of the Mind, which arise from the Impressions made by external Objects upon the several Parts of our Bodies."[20] Arthur Beatty, in his book, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art In Their Historic Relation, summarizes Hartley's hierarchy of sensations and ideas, the three categories being sensations, simple ideas of sensation or sensible ideas, and complex ideas. Sensations "arise from impressions from external objects,"[21] sensible ideas are those "ideas surviving sensations after the objects which caused them have been removed"[22] and complex ideas are "intellectual ideas, compounded from the simpler ideas under the power of association."[23] Hartley identifies a stage above intellectual ideas--that of moral ideas.

Beatty sees in these three categories--sensible, intellectual and moral--a depiction of the three ages of man: childhood, youth and adulthood. A. E. Powell, however, in The Romantic Theory of Poetry maintains that Hartley is describing the stages of the general mental process.[24] While Powell's statement is basically true, I would argue that there is in Hartley's philosophy some sense of the development stressed so urgently by Beatty.

A similar development is evident in Wordsworth's concept of the three ages of man, and it is this similarity which prompts Beatty to associate Hartley's categories with Wordsworth's view of the child, youth

and adult. Beatty's identification of these three classes with Wordsworth's three ages is much too simple, as A. E. Powell points out:

> Wordsworth was not an adherent of a system, but a poet trying to understand his own experience: he had lived his philosophy long before he formulated it. Certain forms of experience had been important in his life: if a philosophy provided an interpretation of these, he credited it; where it failed to interpret them he pursued his own way, content that his theory should contain many inconsistencies, as are all human beings except professional philosophers.[25]

Neither Hartley nor Wordsworth suggests the abrupt break between the ages advocated by Beatty and they do not assign a specific and limited way of viewing the world to each of those ages. Sensation is obviously basic to the child's vision and necessarily precedes intellectual ideas, but sensation, intellectual ideas and moral ideas cannot be separated and isolated to different stages of life as they are integrally connected in any thought process, regardless of age.

As far as a study of Wordsworth is concerned, Hartley's philosophy is relevant insofar as it stresses the basic importance of sensation and the development of intellectual ideas from the association of simple ideas of sensation. Wordsworth's theory of association--"the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement"[26]--is not exclusively derived from Hartley, but is based upon his own personal experience.

iii

The literature of the eighteenth century revealed a growing interest in the child. A. Charles Babenroth, in his book, English Childhood, states: "The great movements in thought and emotion which stirred the century tended more and more to direct interest to the child."[27]

Thus the intense concentration on the child, apparent in such works as Blake's Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, does not indicate an abrupt break from eighteenth-century poetry, but merely develops more fully an interest and area touched upon by Thomson, Crabbe, Bruce and Cowper, among others. Coveney emphasizes, however, the rapidity of this movement expressing an interest in the child:

> But the fact remains that within the course of a few decades the child emerges from comparative unimportance to become the focus of an unprecedented literary interest, and, in time, the central figure of an increasingly significant proportion of our literature.[28]

Mary Moorman, in her biography of Wordsworth, maintains that "the strongest contemporary influence on the young Wordsworth was Beattie."[29] Certainly the portrait of young Edwin in The Minstrel (apparently a favourite poem of Wordsworth's)[30] is similar in many respects to the young Wordsworth of Books I and II of The Prelude. The most striking similarity is the child's response to both the beautiful and sublime aspects of nature:

> In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
> Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.
> In darkness, and in storm he found delight;
> Nor less, than when an ocean-wave serene
> The southern Sun diffused his dazzling shene.[31]

Edwin, however, seems to have missed that period of childhood which is so central to Wordsworth's experience--the time when one is involved in sports and group activities. For unlike Wordsworth, Edwin fled "Concourse, and noise and toil . . . ./Nor cared to mingle in the clamourous fray/Of squabbling imps."[32] Beattie depicts Edwin as being attuned to nature from his earliest years, displaying an attitude much more conscious it would seem than is demonstrated in Wordsworth's early

intercourse with the natural world. Wordsworth, as a young child, is affected by nature indirectly in that it provides the environment in which his activities take place and thus he is unable to escape its influence. Edwin, on the other hand, is conscious of nature in a manner which Wordsworth does not acquire until his youth. He seems to search out nature for its own sake, whereas Wordsworth is unexpectedly affected by the environment while pursuing an activity or enjoying a group sport. Edwin's temperament is such that he is unable to participate in childhood activities, especially those which destroy the peace and harmony of nature:

> His heart, from cruel sport estranged, would bleed
> To work the woe of any living thing,
> By trap or net.[33]

Wordsworth, however, must learn the attitude which has been engrained in Edwin from his very early years:

> Would Edwin this majestic scene resign
> For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies?
> Ah! no: he better knows great nature's charms to prize.[34]

Thus the important distinction between childhood and youth, central to the second book of The Prelude, is not present in The Minstrel. The development from an unconscious reaction to sense impressions to a more conscious appreciation of nature does not exist in Beattie's portrayal of Edwin. Wordsworth is taught and admonished by nature before he feels at one with the natural world, whereas Edwin appears to possess an innate affinity with nature only achieved by Wordsworth after his experiences of childhood. When Wordsworth's childhood sports are removed, his affinity with nature is tested and his relationship with nature necessarily alters.

The concept of childhood is critical not only to the poetry of Wordsworth, but also to the works of various other Romantic writers. Blake, a precursor of the Romantic movement, emphasizes the innocence of the childhood state. The use of the child as a symbol of innocence had as its socially utilitarian end the condemnation of the industrial and materialistic society which emerged during his lifetime. Blake's view of childhood as a period of perfect innocence, which provides a contrast to the corrupt society of man, reveals the developing cultural ideas and interests of his age which became the central focus of the works of Romantic philosophers and writers. This positive view of childhood as the time when man is closest to God--"I a child & thou a lamb,/We are called by his name"[35]--reflects the importance being assigned to the child during this age. Blake's social consciousness induced him to view the child as a symbol, whereas Wordsworth's interest in the development of the imagination led him to study the actual child, rather than use him as a symbol of a certain state of mind or human condition. The fact that Blake's philosophy, however, includes the child in such an integral manner reveals this new awareness of his age as far as childhood is concerned, and reflects the atmosphere which immediately preceded that in which Wordsworth wrote.

Coleridge, like Wordsworth, wrote at a time when the importance of childhood had been virtually established. In "Frost at Midnight" he does not stress the characteristics and nature of the child, as does Blake, but discusses the importance of early influences on the child's mind. He rejoices in the fact that his son, Hartley, will be brought up in a rural rather than urban environment. Through the use of the verbs "see" and

"hear," Coleridge emphasizes the sensuous response of the child to his surrounding environment:

> But thou, my babe! Shalt wander like a breeze
> By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
> Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
> Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
> And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy God
> Utters, who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all, and all things in himself.
> Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
> Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.[36]

Coleridge seems to feel that nature is an active force working on the child in that it moulds and gives to him, subsequently inspiring a response--"by giving make it [the child's spirit] ask"--only after the initial influence of nature. Coleridge's belief in the ability and power of nature to influence and affect the child in a profound and permanent manner is very similar to Wordsworth's own view.

In "Dejection: An Ode," however, Coleridge maintains that the child is born with the power of the creative imagination, and that the problem involves the nurturing and retaining of that power:

> But oh! each visitation
> Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
> My shaping power of Imagination.[37]

This idea is similar in some respects to that propounded by Wordsworth in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." In The Prelude, however, Wordsworth proposes that the seeds of the imagination are present in early childhood, but that the actual faculty is only developed as a result of nature working upon the child. In Coleridge's ode the process seems to be dependent upon the imagination--nature does not have the power attributed to it by Wordsworth in The Prelude or by Coleridge in "Frost at Midnight."

Wordsworth maintains that the earliest and most basic form of the imagination--simple perception--is present in all infants and small children, but that the creative imagination is only nurtured and developed in a chosen few, and he feels that his own imagination was strengthened and augmented because of his close relationship with the elements of nature.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]Nature, in the context of this thesis, simply refers to the external landscape, the elements of which are discernible by the physical senses.

[2]Wordsworth often uses the word "intercourse" to describe his interaction with nature in all stages of his development. The word implies that both partners, Wordsworth and nature, are active participants in a relationship which involves a mutual exchange. He also uses the word "communion" in his descriptions of the connection between nature and himself. This word also implies a mutual sharing and participation. The significance of the word "intercourse" will be studied in detail later in the thesis and special attention will be accorded to the curious phrase, "unconscious intercourse."

[3]William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt (2nd edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), ll. 72-75.

[4]William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt. 2nd edition revised by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), VIII, 476-481. All other quotations of The Prelude are from the 1805 text of this edition unless otherwise indicated. Quotations from the 1850 text of this edition will be indicated within the body of the thesis.

[5]Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historic Relation (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), p. 18.

[6]Chester L. Shaver and Alice C. Shaver, Wordsworth's Library: A Catalogue (New York: Garland, 1979), p. 220.

[7]William Wordsworth, "The Preface to The Borderers," The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 76.

[8]Peter Coveney, The Image of Childhood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 41.

[9]Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Dent, 1911), p. 44.

[10]Ibid., p. 31.

[11]Ibid., p. 40. The view of the infant presented in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" both supports and contradicts the infant described in Book II of The Prelude. This difference arises from the fact that in the ode Wordsworth employs the doctrine of pre-existence in order to explain the loss of the poetic imagination, and thus the image of the infant is necessarily unique in this poem. The ode will be studied in detail in the next chapter.

[12]Ibid., p. 71.

[13]Ibid., p. 97.

[14]Ibid., p. 90.

[15]Ibid., p. 72.

[16]Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historic Relation, p. 135.

[17]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. John W. Yolton (London: Dent, 1961), I, 80.

[18]Ibid., p. 89.

[19]Ibid., p. 78.

[20]David Hartley, Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty and His Expectations (London: S. Richardson, 1749), I, ii. Facsimile (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971). Spelling has been modernized.

[21]Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historic Relation, p. 110.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.

[24]A. E. Powell, The Romantic Theory of Poetry (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1926), p. 128.

[25]Ibid.

[26]William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1850)," The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, I, 123 and 125.

[27]A. Charles Babenroth, English Childhood (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), p. 14.

[28]Peter Coveney, The Image of Childhood, p. 29.

[29]Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: A Biography. The Early Years, 1770-1803 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 60.

[30]Ibid.

[31]James Beattie, "The Minstrel," The Minstrel: or, The Progress of Genius: and Other Poems (London: C. Whittingham, 1817), I, XXII, 1-5.

[32]Ibid., I, XVII, 2-4.

[33]Ibid., I, XVIII, 3-5.

[34]Ibid., I, XIX, 7-9.

[35]William Blake, "The Lamb," in Vol. I of William Blake's Writings, ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 11. 17-18. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Wordsworth was familiar with Blake's work, but Blake's idea of the child being innocent and "heavenly" is certainly similar to Wordsworth's depiction of the infant in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Wordsworth did own a copy of Songs of Innocence (Chester L. Shaver and Alice C. Shaver, Wordsworth's Library: A Catalogue, p. 28) and could thus have been influenced to some degree by Blake's work.

[36]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 11. 54-64.

[37]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode," Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 11. 84-86. The difference between the ideas of Wordsworth and Coleridge with respect to the child and nature will be studied further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

WORDSWORTH'S VIEW OF CHILDHOOD IN POEMS OTHER THAN THE PRELUDE

Wordsworth's classification of his poems in Poems, Including Lyrical Ballads, published in March 1815, includes a category entitled "Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood." Several of these poems identify characteristics and traits of the child which are integral to Wordsworth's view of childhood and are incorporated into his general philosophy of childhood as presented in The Prelude. In "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold" Wordsworth stresses the importance of childhood as the state determining the development and nature of man. Wordsworth's statement in this poem--"The Child is father of the Man"[1]--could easily be applied to The Prelude, in which he traces the development of his poetic imagination, finding its origin in the experiences of childhood.

In "Anecdote For Fathers" Wordsworth characterizes the emotional and intuitive response of the child. Edward is unable to account for his preference for Kilve because his impulsive response is based on emotion and intuition rather than logic and reason. When forced to provide a reason for his decision, he attempts to satisfy the inquisitive and rational adult mind by referring to the first object on which his eyes rest: "'At Kilve there was no weather-cock;/And that's the reason why.'"[2] This ridiculous answer to the rather pointless questions posed by the adult--"And three times to the child I said,/'Why, Edward, tell me why?'"[3]--emphasizes the absurdity of attempting to rationalize human emotions. The child is basically irrational and cannot logically account

for his feelings because he responds to the world with his senses and emotions. As well as depicting the disparate attitudes of the child and adult, this poem proposes that rationality is acquired rather than inherent, and is often applied to situations and experiences which cannot be explained in rational and logical terms.

In Book II of The Prelude Wordsworth points out the futility and artificiality of applying, in an exclusive manner, rationality and scientific methods of interpretation to a study of humanity. Addressing Coleridge, he says:

> Thou art no slave
> Of that false secondary power, by which,
> In weakness, we create distinctions, then
> Deem that our puny boundaries are things
> Which we perceive, and not which we have made. (II, 220-224)

Wordsworth realizes that rationality alone is a limited way in which to view experience because there is not always a logical origin for the development of thoughts and ideas:

> Hard task to analyse a soul, in which,
> Not only general habits and desires,
> But each most obvious and particular thought,
> Not in a mystical and idle sense,
> But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd,
> Hath no beginning. (II, 232-237)

One of the basic advantages of the child's mind is that it is not yet exposed to a rational way of thinking. The young Wordsworth does not question or try to provide explanations for his reactions to nature. He simply values the intense, emotional moments when, through a communion with the sublime or beautiful, he feels an affinity with the natural world. He does not attempt to explore or explain their mysterious quality; any desire to discover the origin and essence of these moments is expressed by Wordsworth the adult, rather than Wordsworth the child: "How shall I

trace the history, where seek/The origin of what I then have felt?" (II, 365-366). Such an attempt is futile, for these intense moments cannot be dissected in order to be explained or understood in rational terms.

In the poem, "We Are Seven," Wordsworth again depicts a child who is unable to think in rational terms. The child cannot understand the adult's insistent argument: "If two are in the church-yard laid,/ Then ye are only five."[4] She does not differentiate between those who are dead and those who are alive because all are still present in her mind: "And there upon the ground I sit,/And sing a song to them."[5] The literal-minded adult is obtuse enough to insist upon his argument, but the fact that the child will not agree reveals the strong will and confidence of the young mind. The child is unable to follow the rational thinking of the adult because she views mortality in a different manner than does the mature mind. She does not see death as evil--"Till God released her of her pain;/And then she went away"[6]--or final: "'Their graves are green, they may be seen.'"[7]

In "We Are Seven" Wordsworth emphasizes the fact that certain values and ways of viewing experience are acquired rather than innate. The lack of fear and terror in the young Wordsworth when the drowned man is taken from the lake (V, 450-481) is due to the fact that, through his imagination, he has been in contact with similar sights. He is not devoid of emotion and pity, but simply idealizes and romanticizes the actual situation:

> Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
> With decoration and ideal grace;
> A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
> Of Grecian Art, and purest Poesy. (V, 478-481)

Neither Wordsworth nor the young girl would have been able to accept these deaths with such ease had they viewed mortality in the negative terms imposed by the adult.

Wordsworth explains the difficulty he experienced, as a child, in comprehending death and mortality:

> Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere [in "We Are Seven"]--
>
> 'A simple child
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death!'--
>
> But it was not so much from [feelings] of animal vivacity that my difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me.[8]

He maintains that most children share "an indisposition to bend to the law of death as applying to our own particular case."[9] The disparity in the attitudes of the child and the adult, resulting from their essentially unique and different natures, is aptly illustrated through this single example in "We Are Seven" of how each views death.

In the shorter poems Wordsworth often refers to his energy and activity during boyhood. He did not appreciate the delicate beauty of the landscape, but had to be intensely moved by nature before he felt the urge to respond, and thus the relationship seemed to put the onus on the external world rather than the internal mind. Wordsworth's concern for activity overpowered his perception of, and appreciation for, nature. In "To A Butterfly," for example, he is more concerned with the actual chase than with the beauty and delicacy of the creature:

A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:-with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.[10]

Dorothy, like Edwin in The Minstrel, values the beauty and harmony of nature even as a young child, and helps the more active Wordsworth view nature with gentler and more appreciative eyes:

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.[11]

Similarly, the incidents in the first two books of The Prelude do not delineate a child who is conscious of the beauty and harmony of nature. Rather, they portray a child who is surprised at unexpected moments by certain combinations of elements within the natural world:

even then [in childhood] I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield; the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things. (I, 613-616)

Nature speaks to Wordsworth; he does not voluntarily seek out its beauties and grandeur as do Dorothy and Edwin. He must be moved in these mystical moments before he is inspired to respond. Thus nature "works" on him and induces or demands a reaction. He perceives in the natural world a life and vitality to which his young mind must respond. Wordsworth often identifies animate spirits within nature in order to emphasize the immediacy of the vitality which he apprehends within the natural world:

Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky
Or on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! (I, 490-492)

Coleridge describes a very different relationship between mind and nature in "Dejection: An Ode." He maintains that the world is cold

and inanimate, and can only be invested with life by the human soul:

> Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
> A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
> Enveloping the Earth-
> And from the soul itself must there be sent
> A sweet and potent voice of its own birth,
> Of all sweet sounds the life and element.[12]

The relationship is completely dependent upon the individual--no responsibility or power is allocated to the external world: "I may not hope from outward forms to win/The passion and the life, whose fountains are within."[13] For the young Wordsworth, however, nature is a vital and animate force, moving and admonishing him when he least expects it. The oldef Wordsworth says of the process in retrospect:

> But I believe
> That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame
> A favour'd Being, from his earliest dawn
> Of infancy doth open out the clouds,
> As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
> With gentlest visitation; not the less,
> Though haply aiming at the self-same end,
> Does it delight her sometimes to employ
> Severer interventions, ministry
> More palpable, and so she dealt with me. (I, 362-371)

Various other shorter poems, not included in the classification, "Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood," deal with the characteristics and nature of the child. Some of these poems are inspired by Wordsworth's daughter, Dora, but most seem to be based on personal reminiscences. The happiness and innocence of children within nature pervade and dominate some of these poems:

> And thou [River Duddon] hast also tempted here to rise,
> 'Mid sheltering pines, this Cottage rude and grey;
> Whose ruddy children, by the mother's eyes
> Carelessly watched, sport through the summer day,
> Thy pleased associates:-light as endless May
> On infant bosoms lonely Nature lies.[14]

Others, such as "Nutting," concentrate on the close relationship between the child and nature. After describing his destruction of the trees, Wordsworth says:

> unless I now
> Confound my present feelings with the past,
> Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
> Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
> I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
> The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.[15]

More complicated than these portraits of children interacting with nature, however, is the image of the child created in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."

The poem, "To H.C., Six Years Old," is similar in some respects to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Wordsworth sees six-year old Hartley Coleridge as one possessing an enviable and necessarily transient state of innocence and joy:

> O blessèd vision! happy child!
> Thou art so exquisitely wild,
> I think of thee with many fears
> For what may be thy lot in future years.[16]

He implies that Hartley's world is separate and different from the world inhabited by the adult, and intimates that the child's world is somehow associated with a spiritual or heavenly sphere:

> O THOU! whose fancies from afar are brought;
> Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
> And fittest to unutterable thought
> The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;
> Thou faery voyager! thou dost float
> In such clear water, that thy boat
> May rather seem
> To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
> Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
> Where earth and heaven do make one imagery.[17]

The incongruity of the young and innocent Hartley being forced eventually to face the grief and pain of adult life distresses Wordsworth, causing him to hope that nature will preserve for Hartley "A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks."[18]

This idealized vision of childhood as a state affiliated with heaven is expanded and intensified in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." It is important to remember that the ode was written in a situation of crisis and was an attempt to confront the loss of poetic joy and imagination. Thus Wordsworth searches for a reason for his diminished awareness and sensitivity, employing the doctrine of pre-existence in order to explain the change in his perception. Although this concept is effective in delineating the radiance inherent in childhood, it distorts the image of the child in that it tends to exaggerate his abilities and faculties.[19]

Because of the unique situation of the poem, the image of the child presented in the ode is different in many respects from that portrayed in The Prelude.[20] The application of the doctrine of pre-existence leads to what appear to be hyperbolic and absurd statements:

> Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
> Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
> That, deaf and blind, read'st the eternal deep,
> Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,-
> Mighty Prophet! Seer blest![21]

Wordsworth is deliberately exaggerating in order to emphasize the superiority of the child's soul to the adult's, and the passage only becomes implausible if the words are taken at the most basic literal level.

Because of its critical importance in the process of maturation, childhood in The Prelude is also viewed as the supreme state, superior to youth and adulthood: "our childhood sits,/Our simple childhood sits upon a throne/That hath more power than all the elements" (V, 531-533). In The Prelude childhood is not idealized as it is in the ode, but is seen as a realistic experience rather than a mystical and mysterious state, associated with heaven. The difference is the result of the fact that in The Prelude Wordsworth is describing the development of his poetic imagination, whereas in the ode he is studying the decline and loss of that imagination. Thus in both poems childhood is seen as the basis and origin of the imagination, but in the ode Wordsworth attributes more power and perceptive qualities to the child in order to account for his personal loss of vision and perception.

In both poems Wordsworth associates radiance and vision with childhood. In the ode he says that in childhood and youth the world "did seem/Apparelled in celestial light,/The glory and the freshness of a dream."[22] In The Prelude he justifies his concentration on his early years by maintaining that the recollection of them recalls "visionary things," "lovely forms" and "sweet sensations." (I, 660-661). The decline of this powerful vision and sensitive receptivity is common to both poems. In the ode Wordsworth admits: "But yet I know, where'er I go,/That there hath passed away a glory from the earth,"[23] and he asks in despair: "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?/Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"[24] In describing the infant in The Prelude Wordsworth says:

> Such, verily, is the first
> Poetic spirit of our human life;
> By uniform controul of after years
> In most abated and suppress'd, in some,
> Through every change of growth or of decay,
> Pre-eminent till death. (II, 275-280)

Wordsworth says of his own youth:

> But let this, at least
> Be not forgotten, that I still retain'd
> My first creative sensibility,
> That by the regular action of the world
> My soul was unsubdu'd. (II, 377-381)

Yet he does seem to lose this gift when he confronts Cambridge, London and the French Revolution--experiences which evoke disillusionment and despair. In Books XI and XII he maintains that his imagination is restored and that he "seem'd about this period to have sight/Of a new world" (XII, 370-371). Yet he never recaptures the vision and glory of childhood; he seems to regard it as a unique state which is constantly present in his mind, but can never be re-experienced:

> so wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days,
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
> That, sometimes, when I think of them, I seem
> Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
> And of some other Being. (II, 28-33)

Similarly, in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" Wordsworth finds consolation and compensation in the growth of a new perception--"the philosophic mind"[25]--and accepts the fact that "Another race hath been, and other palms are won."[26] Although the ode is much more negative than The Prelude, both poems emphasize the vision and glory of childhood which is necessarily deadened by the experiences and occurrences of everyday life. The ode simply portrays this degeneration, whereas The Prelude studies the various stages of development, stressing how the experiences to which Wordsworth was exposed as a child help him to confront and overcome the disillusionment which necessarily accompanies the years of adulthood. Childhood in The Prelude is a force which sustains the adult in that it has dictated and directed his development, whereas in the ode

it is a mysterious and elusive state which the adult is only able to recapture through vague and infrequent glimpses. The child's mind and the adult's mind are separate in the ode--the latter seems to replace the former without progression or continuity, whereas the continuity of the development from childhood to youth to adulthood is stressed in The Prelude.

These different emphases in the two poems necessarily demand different views of the child. I would argue that The Prelude presents childhood as Wordsworth actually viewed it, and that the ode is to some extent contrived and artificial in order to come to terms with a personal crisis. In the ode Wordsworth claims that the child is born with certain gifts and powers. The memory of, and affinity with, heaven invests the world with radiance:

> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home.[27]

The innate nature of the child results in his being able to perceive the radiance and glory of the world. He is born with the ability to appreciate the vitality and beauty of nature because he remembers and is immersed in the heaven from which he came.

In The Prelude, however, there is no mention made of an inherent spirit in the child. The child is profoundly affected by his environment which nurtures him and determines his development. The first influence is the mother who, through her emotion and love, seems to inspire the unifying power of perception (II, 239-250). The most important influence, of course, is nature, which nurtures and affects Wordsworth after the initial influence of the mother: "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up/Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear" (I, 305-306). Nature is the

force which inspires the perception and awareness which, in the ode, seem to have been derived from the previous heavenly existence.

Nature is not given the same emphasis in the ode because the application of the philosophy of pre-existence renders all children equal in that each comes from heaven and over each "Immortality/Broods like the Day."[28] The extent and period of time over which this sense of heaven and immortality fades--"Shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing Boy"[29]--depends upon circumstances, but the process is universal: "At length the Man perceives it [the light of heaven] die away, /And fade into the light of common day."[30] The utilization of this generalized philosophy not only explains the radiance of childhood, but renders inevitable and irrevocable the loss of that glory and vision. Thus Wordsworth is able to accept the degeneration of his poetic imagination as part of a general and universal process.

The child as depicted in the ode appreciates nature, but is not necessarily conscious of his own perception. His consciousness is not of this world, but is spiritual in that it is aligned with heaven. He instinctively perceives meanings and truths denied to the adult. The adult looking back realizes that the child had an intense and unusual affinity with nature, but it is not apparent whether the child himself is aware of this special gift.

The young Wordsworth as portrayed in the early books of The Prelude does not, I would argue, possess the close relationship with nature which Wordsworth claims for the child in the ode. Childhood is portrayed as the supreme state in the ode and the glory of that state declines regularly with the passing years. The youth is less capable of

perception and vision than the child, although he has not yet lost the glory of his previous existence:

> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended.[31]

In The Prelude, however, childhood is the formative period, culminating in a deep devotion to nature during youth. Wordsworth terms childhood the "unripe time" (VIII, 476), and says that in youth "Nature did/For her own sake become my joy" (VIII, 480-481). Nature's subtle and powerful effects on the unconscious child involved in physical activity prepare him for the closer communion with nature which arises in his youth.

Wordsworth is not inherently attuned to nature from his birth as the philosophy of the ode seems to suggest. Rather, he is influenced and affected by his environment in such a way that a close and intense relationship with nature is established. The importance of childhood is found in its influence on subsequent personal development and attitudes.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]William Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold," in Vol. I of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), l. 7.

[2]William Wordsworth, "Anecdote For Fathers," in Vol. I of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 55-56.

[3]Ibid., ll. 47-48.

[4]William Wordsworth, "We Are Seven," in Vol. I of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 35-36.

[5]Ibid., ll. 43-44.

[6]Ibid., ll. 51-52.

[7]Ibid., l. 37.

[8]I.F. Note to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 463.

[9]William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The Middle Years: August 1811-1820, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 619.

[10]William Wordsworth, "To A Butterfly," in Vol. I of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 14-18.

[11]William Wordsworth, "The Sparrow's Nest," in Vol. I of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 17-20.

[12]Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode," in Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, ll. 53-58.

[13]Ibid., ll. 45-46.

[14]William Wordsworth, "River Duddon," in Vol. III of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (2nd edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), V, 9-14.

[15]William Wordsworth, "Nutting," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 48-53. This feeling of disrupting nature is found in several incidents in The Prelude (boat stealing and bird snaring episodes) and will be studied in detail later in the thesis.

[16]William Wordsworth, "To H.C., Six Years Old," in Vol. I of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 11-14.

[17]Ibid., ll. 1-10.

[18]Ibid., l. 24.

[19]In Isabella Fenwick's note to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" it becomes apparent that Wordsworth did not actually believe in pre-existence, but was affected by it and made use of it in order to express effectively his ideas:

> I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet.

See I. F. Note to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, p. 464.

[20]This difference could arise, to a certain extent, from the fact that the first two books of The Prelude and the ode were written a few years apart, and Wordsworth's mind could have altered a great deal during the interval. The original text of the first two books of The Prelude was completed by 1799, during the creative period resulting in Lyrical Ballads, and the ode was begun in 1802, but not completed until 1804. It is quite possible that Wordsworth wrote the ode with a much more negative and pessimistic mind than the early books of The Prelude, and therefore viewed childhood in a different manner.

[21]Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, ll. 111-115. Coleridge vigorously objected to these lines, suggesting in Chapter XXII of Biographia Literaria that they are incomprehensible:

> . . . we will merely ask, what does all this mean? In what sense is a child of that age a philosopher? In what sense does he read 'the eternal deep'? In what sense is he declared to be 'for ever haunted' by the Supreme Being? or so inspired as to deserve the splendid titles of a mighty prophet, a blessed seer? By reflection? by knowledge? by conscious intuition? or by any form or modification of consciousness?

See S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson (London: Dent, 1956), p. 260.

[22]Ibid., ll. 3-5.

[23]Ibid., ll. 17-18.

[24]Ibid., ll. 56-57.

[25]Ibid., l. 186.

[26]Ibid., l. 200.

[27]Ibid., ll. 62-65.

[28]Ibid., ll. 119-120.

[29]Ibid., ll. 67-68.

[30]Ibid., ll. 76-77.

[31]Ibid., ll. 72-75.

CHAPTER III

A STUDY OF INFANCY AND THE TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD TO YOUTH

In Book VIII of The Prelude (VIII, 472-497) and in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth divides his development into three distinct stages: childhood, youth and adulthood. In addition to these three stages there is also the initial period of infancy discussed in Book II of The Prelude. The experiences of childhood are delineated extensively in Books I and II, and the transition from childhood to youth is presented in the second half of Book II. In "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth studies the change between youth and adulthood. The emphasis Wordsworth places on these different stages makes it clear that they are important and central to a study of his overall development or the understanding of any one of the specific periods. The transition from one stage to another involves a change of attitude and an altered perception, but Wordsworth stresses the continuity between each period and the ways in which a previous stage affects the one which follows.

Infancy seems to be defined as the time when the child is under the care of the mother, before he is independent enough to venture forth on his own. Childhood begins at least by the age of five when Wordsworth is involved in physical activity and sports, and continues until the time when sports are discarded--an event which does not take place until the approximate age of seventeen. The period of youth, which seems to

comprise the years seventeen to twenty-three, is characterized by a love for, and devotion to, nature. After the age of twenty-three an interest in man marks the passage from youth to adulthood.[1]

In order to study the relationship of the child with nature it is necessary to observe the stages which precede and follow that of childhood. The operation of the child's mind and imagination is based on that of the infant, and the transition from childhood to youth accentuates those qualities of the child which are altered or modified in the youth.

Wordsworth says that in the infant he "would trace/The progress of our being" (II, 238-239). The child's relationship with nature is rooted in, and similar to, the infant's relationship with the mother. The passion derived from the mother is similar to the inspiration received from nature in that the passion passes "into his [the infant's] torpid life/Like an awakening breeze" (II, 244-245). Thus the infant and the child are stimulated by the power exuded by the mother and nature. The absorption of the mother's love is obviously instinctive and unconscious--the infant "with his soul/Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye" (1850, II, 236-237).

Wordsworth maintains that the infant is "An inmate of this active universe" (II, 266) because "From nature largely he receives; nor so/Is satisfied, but largely gives again" (II, 267-268). This process continues and develops throughout childhood. For the child the inspiration and power of the mother is replaced by that of nature--the natural world becomes a maternal figure because it performs the same function as the mother. The initial stimulus comes from nature to the child, and the child, being open and receptive, invests the scene with his own emotions, with the result that the beauty is heightened or the sublimity

intensified until the physical scene is transformed into an abstraction of the child's own emotional state.

The "first/Poetic spirit of our human life" (II, 275-276) is different from that developed in childhood, however, in that it involves simple perception rather than a transformation of the physical scene. This perception entails the combination of separate and distinct sense impressions:

> hence his mind
> Even [in the first trial of its powers]
> 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, 245-250)[2]

The infant "receives" from the natural world diverse sense impressions, and he in turn "gives" to the world when he combines and joins those impressions in order to create a comprehensive and unified object.

The mother influences this perception through her love which instills in the infant a recognition and sense of virtue: "From this beloved Presence [the mother], there exists/A virtue which irradiates and exalts/All objects through all intercourse of sense" (II, 258-260). Thus the sensuous impressions are modified by the positive view of the world derived from the mother's love. The simple perception of an object, resulting from the attentiveness induced by a feeling of affinity with the mother (II, 242), has developed into a perception which is influenced by the attitude instilled by the mother's love. Thus the flower is not merely an object, but is associated with beauty:

> Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
> Too weak to gather it, already love
> Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
> Hath beautified that flower. (1850, II, 245-248)

The very young child interprets and transforms objects which were originally simply perceived by the senses. He begins to attach values and standards to his experience--values which are embraced as a result of his mother's love and care:

> already shades
> Of pity cast from inward tenderness
> Do fall around him upon aught that bears
> Unsightly marks of violence or harm. (1850, II, 248-251)

This transformation and interpretation of the external world are the basis of the process to which Wordsworth refers when he maintains that the child creates as well as receives:

> For feeling has to him imparted strength,
> And powerful in all sentiments of grief,
> Of exultation, fear, and joy, his mind,
> Even as an agent of the one great mind,
> Creates, creator and receiver both,
> Working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds.-- (II, 269-275)

This more complicated perception and, indeed, the imagination itself are both based on, and derived from, the simple perception instilled in the infant by the mother's love, for all the processes involve the combination and coalescence of diverse elements. At the basis of the imagination, therefore, is this "first poetic spirit":

> The mind of man is fram'd even like the breath
> And harmony of music. There is a dark
> Invisible workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, and makes them move
> In one society. (I, 351-355)

As an infant, Wordsworth projects the virtue derived from the maternal love onto the natural world as this is the only attitude he knows. As he begins to experience his own emotions in childhood, however, he projects these onto the natural objects rather than the single attitude

bestowed upon him by the constant and complete influence of the mother. Thus his reactions to the world are varied and unpredictable due to the change and range of his own moods. A single scene could ostensibly be seen in two entirely different ways depending on the child's condition at the time.

In both cases, however, the projection of internal emotions and values onto the natural world is an unconscious process. As far as the infant is concerned the simple perception of the external world and the value judgements placed on that world are an instinctive response, the origin and nature of which he is unaware. Similarly, the awe or terror which possess the child after he has projected his emotions onto the external scene, or associated that scene with his internal condition, illustrate that he is unaware of his active part in the relationship. The adult realizes that the child "gives" as well as "receives," but the child at the time sees nature as the active force and himself as the observer or recipient. Wordsworth only becomes aware of his part in the relationship during youth, the period in which he seeks nature and is conscious of the development and operation of his imagination.

I will study the transition from childhood to youth in terms of this growing awareness in the youth. I shall point out the instances in which Wordsworth suggests that the important development in the youth is a new understanding and acknowledgement of the power of his own mind and imagination. After establishing this important change we shall return to the child and study in detail the significance and implications of the "unconscious" aspect of the child's attitude with respect to his relationship with nature.

The qualities and characteristics of Wordsworth's youth are effectively portrayed in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth first visited Tintern Abbey during a walking tour through Wales in 1793 when he was twenty-three years of age.[3] On his subsequent visit five years later he contemplates his earlier reactions which are representative of a relationship with nature which has been modified and altered in the interim. Wordsworth emphasizes this modification when he admits that he is "changed, no doubt, from what I was when first/I came among these hills."[4] He identifies this earlier stage as youth--"For I have learned/To look on nature, not as in the hour/Of thoughtless youth"[5]--and thus until at least the age of twenty-three Wordsworth still regards himself as a youth.

During his youth Wordsworth is immersed in nature, which seems to nourish and satisfy him completely:

> For nature then [during youth]
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all.[6]

There is no indication of when the "coarser pleasures" ceased, but it would appear to have occurred several years before this period. During youth, nature "leads" Wordsworth and seems to initiate the relationship:

> like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Wherever nature led.[7]

As we shall see, a similar process is involved in childhood, but the child is unconscious of the fact that nature instigates his movements,[8] whereas the youth consciously seeks nature in that he pursues those objects and

situations which inspire him. Wordsworth comments on the paradoxical fact that his wild activity and enthusiasm during youth give the appearance that he fears nature when he actually seeks it, for in retrospect he says he seemed:

> more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads than one
> Who sought the thing he loved.[9]

He emphasizes this paradox in order to stress the fact that he loves and seeks nature at this time, despite the fact that his actions do not uphold or demonstrate this attitude.

Looking back on his relationship with nature during youth, Wordsworth accentuates his complete dedication to the natural elements, which is based on his love and need for their influence:

> 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.[10]

The word "appetite" suggests that the youth craves the influence of nature for spiritual and emotional nourishment and growth. Without this influence he is emotionally and spiritually deprived and starved. The words "feeling" and "love" imply the emotional attachment which Wordsworth feels for nature--the love is not intellectual or comprehensible, but is simply a feeling which he must seek to fulfill and satisfy. The word "appetite" also suggests that the interaction between the youth and the natural world is beyond his control--it is an actual need rather than a simple desire. Despite the fact that the youth consciously seeks nature, the feeling is a drive and instinctive need rather than a calculated and controlled desire. The child does not feel this need and thus does not seek nature, but allows nature to seek him.

Unlike the relationship between the child and nature, this more mature association functions completely on its own, without the interference of group activities and sports which render nature a peripheral influence. Intellectual thoughts and reason do not have a place in this intercourse between the youth and the natural world, for the love of nature is manifested in a direct and self-contained contact between the physical senses and the natural objects. The reaction to nature is:

> a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.[11]

The contact with nature does not inspire abstract contemplation or meditation as in adulthood when Wordsworth hears "the still, sad music of humanity,"[12] but instead stimulates the senses of the youth and inspires in him a spiritual love and devotion. The relationship is similar to that of childhood in that the child also responds to nature with his senses, but he does not experience this stage beyond the sensuous response in which he feels a conscious dedication to the natural world.

In the discussion in Book VIII of The Prelude in which Wordsworth explains how man rose in his affections, he examines his relationship with nature at various stages of his development. Of childhood he says:

> Nature herself was at this unripe time,
> But secondary to my own pursuits
> And animal activities, and all
> Their trivial pleasures. (VIII, 476-479)

In retrospect Wordsworth seems to associate childhood with that period of his life during which he was involved in physical activity. Youth is characterized by a close communion with nature and in Book VIII, as in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," youth extends to the late age of twenty-three:

> Nature did
> For her own sake become my joy, even then
> And upwards through late youth, until not less
> Than three and twenty summers had been told
> Was man in my affections and regards
> Subordinate to her; her awful forms
> And viewless agencies: a passion, she!
> A rapture often, and immediate joy,
> Ever at hand. (VIII, 480-488)[13]

The critical difference between childhood and youth is that during youth nature is a joy "for her own sake" rather than an element which intrudes at unexpected moments.

The word "passion,"[14] like appetite, suggests the insatiable need of the youth for the natural world, and his uncontrollable love for the environment. As in childhood, nature inspires awe as well as joy, but in youth the natural world is "ever at hand," whereas previously it was often unnoticed due to the constant attention centred on sports and childhood activities. During youth the landscape is an "immediate joy" with which Wordsworth is primarily concerned rather than a secondary element which, on certain occasions, makes its presence known to the child, who is only vaguely aware of its existence before these powerful confrontations.

As we have seen, the transition from childhood to youth is marked by the cessation of Wordsworth's involvement in sports. In Book II he says:

> I was left alone,
> Seeking the invisible world, nor knowing why.
> The props of my affections [sports] were remov'd,
> And yet the building [love of nature] stood, as if sustain'd
> By its own spirit! (II, 292-296)[15]

Although he gives no indication of the age at which this change occurs, it would appear to have taken place sometime before the age of seventeen, for the passage beginning "My seventeenth year was come" (II, 405) is

located soon after this statement.[16] Thus at some point close to the age of seventeen nature supersedes sports as the central focus of Wordsworth's attention:

> Those incidental charms [sports] which first attach'd
> My heart to rural objects, day by day
> Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
> How Nature, intervenient till this time,
> And secondary, now at length was sought
> For her own sake. (II, 203-208)

The relationship with the natural world during youth is characterized not only by Wordsworth's need to seek nature, but also by his desire to experience solitude. He makes an effort to be alone within the landscape in order to attain a mystical experience--"for I would walk alone,/In storm and tempest, or in star-light nights/Beneath the quiet Heavens" (II, 321-323)--whereas during childhood these experiences came unsought in the midst of activity, often among a group of friends. Critics such as Emile Legouis who say of the Hawkshead days: "But it is in his solitary adventures most of all that Wordsworth feels himself influenced by obscure yet powerful agencies"[17] do not note this change between the experiences of childhood and those of youth. Wordsworth relates how in youth he often walked around the lake with a friend,[18] but he also walked alone, prepared for and anticipating a close communion with the surrounding environment:

> Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
> Far earlier, and before the vernal thrush
> Was audible, among the hills I sate
> Alone, upon some jutting eminence
> At the first hour of morning, when the Vale
> Lay quiet in an utter solitude. (II, 359-364)

The child's mind is receptive to the influence of nature in that he is "wakeful" and his senses are constantly alert to stimulation, but

he is not consciously waiting for nature to make an impression on him. This open and yet "unaware" attitude often renders nature frightening and awe-inspiring because of its unexpected and sudden impact. The youth, on the other hand, is more familiar with the essence and characteristics of his relationship with the external world--"At least, I more directly recognised/My powers and habits" (III, 105-106)--and because nature is of primary rather than secondary importance, his receptivity is more conscious and planned than the child's. The youth seeks situations which enhance his receptivity, and he strives for circumstances which will induce him to respond to the environment and experience an interaction with the natural world.

At Cambridge, for example, he maintains that: "Oft did I leave/ My Comrades, and the Crowd, Buildings and Groves,/And walked along the fields" (III, 97-99). As a youth Wordsworth does not await the influence of nature or receive it in surprised unexpectedness, but seeks its impact even after he has achieved a potentially promising situation of solitude within the universe:

> now I felt
> The strength and consolation which were mine.
> As if awaken'd, summon'd, rous'd, constrain'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. (III, 107-114)

He reaches out to nature and strives for a situation in which his mind will interact with the natural elements. Because he is more aware of his mind and emotions, he extends a conscious effort to employ his own faculties to achieve a significant relationship with nature. The numerous verbs in this passage such as look, peruse, pore, watch, expect and

listen delineate this new awareness of the potential power of the mind and imagination. Yet the youth displays a "wise passiveness," for he depends upon the external universe to provide his initial inspiration:

> I was as wakeful, even, as waters are
> To the sky's motion, in a kindred sense
> Of passion was obedient as a lute
> That waits upon the touches of the wind. (III, 135-138)

This "wise passiveness," which will be studied in detail in the following chapter, is a continuation of the attitude displayed by the child.

Because Wordsworth is more consciously attuned to the natural world during youth he is able to communicate with the more detailed aspects of nature:

> All that I beheld
> Was dear to me, and from this cause it came,
> That now to Nature's finer influxes
> My mind lay open, to that more exact
> And intimate communion which our hearts
> Maintain with the minuter properties
> Of objects which already are belov'd,
> And of those only. (II, 296-303)

This "finer" communication with the environment results in an intensification of his love for nature, for the "difference/Perceived in things, where to the common eye,/No difference is" (II, 318-320) provides "Sublimer joy" (II, 321). Wordsworth's concern with the details and specifics of natural objects does not preclude the perception of a unified spirit diffused over, and exuded from, the entire natural world. Wordsworth maintains that at the age of seventeen he:

> felt the sentiment of Being spread
> O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
> O'er all, that, lost beyond the reach of thought
> And human knowledge, to the human eye
> Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,
> O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
> Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
> Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself
> And mighty depth of waters. (II, 420-428)

This reference to a specific age seems to mark the major change in perception which occurs at the beginning of youth when Wordsworth has become accustomed to the absence of sports and has learned to view nature in a different manner. The text of "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" and The Prelude have provided evidence to suggest that this stage continues until the age of twenty-two or twenty-three at which time man seems to intrude on the pure relationship between Wordsworth and nature. At no time is Wordsworth as completely immersed in nature as he is during youth when the single spirit of the natural world instills in him a deep joy and reverence: "for in all things/I saw one life, and felt that it was joy" (II, 429-430).

Although the circumstances leading to the mystical experience are different in childhood and youth, the actual moment when nature overpowers the observer involves a similar process. In youth, as in childhood, the physical senses are submerged:

> One song they [all things] sang, and it was audible,
> Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
> O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
> Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd.
> (II, 431-434)

Wordsworth at this point responds to the unity and harmony of the natural world, but he is reacting to an abstract idea rather than the physical properties of the landscape. The initial inspiration is derived from the actual sounds emitted from nature, but, when the physical senses are overpowered, Wordsworth experiences a positive and fulfilling communion with the spiritual harmony which the sounds seem to represent. The child also transcends the physical, but does not comprehend the significance or meaning of the abstract plane in which he finds himself--instead he

is perplexed and confused in moments of sublimity or calmed without understanding why in moments of beauty. The mysterious quality of nature which pervades the childhood episodes is now absent as the youth is expecting and indeed even instigating this communion. The retrospective poet maintains that the youth saw "one life" and was aware of the harmony and beauty of nature. Wordsworth seems to relate directly the feelings of the youth at that actual time, whereas in the discussions of the childhood incidents he attempts to interpret and explain what was, for the child, a mysterious and incomprehensible experience.

In this more mature stage Wordsworth does not consciously project his emotions and fears onto the elements of nature, instilling them with life; nor does he single out one aspect of the scene in order to identify himself with it because of a feeling of affinity. He seems to respond in a more general and all-encompassing manner, reacting to the overall spirit diffused by nature. The natural world is still a very animate universe; yet the more mature mind is not frightened by the apprehension of vitality, but benefits from it:

> From Nature and her overflowing soul
> I had receiv'd so much that all my thoughts
> Were steep'd in feeling. (II, 416-418)

The mature poet realizes that, like the child, the youth invests the landscape with life:

> An auxiliar light
> Came from my mind which on the setting sun
> Bestow'd new splendor, the melodious birds,
> The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on,
> Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obey'd
> A like dominion; and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eye.
> (II, 387-393)[19]

It is unlikely that Wordsworth was completely aware of, or understood this process during his youth, but he does seem to acknowledge the fact that he projects a life and vitality onto the external world: "To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,/Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,/I gave a moral life" (III, 124-126). Wordsworth says of himself at the age of seventeen: "To unorganic natures I transferr'd/My own enjoyments" (II, 410-411). Again we face the problem of whether the youth actually recognized this process or whether this is merely the observation of the retrospective poet. It would appear that the youth is at least more aware of his part in the relationship than the child, for in the earlier episodes there is no mention made of the fact that Wordsworth projects his emotions onto nature. For example, it is never stated in the poem that the child's guilt is transferred to the cliff in the boat-stealing episode in Book I of The Prelude. This projection of the child's feelings is merely implied, and the reader must deduce its existence from the evidence supplied.

The fact that this process is actually explained and recognized in these passages dealing with youth would seem to suggest a growing awareness in Wordsworth of his role in the communion with nature. In our study of childhood we shall see that the emphasis is on an independent animate universe, but in youth the universe is seen as being rendered animate by Wordsworth's mind and imagination. Furthermore, this animate universe exists only for Wordsworth because he created it, and it is not necessarily perceived by other men: "I 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, 142-144). The youth no longer feels mystified and terrorized

by the vitality of the external world, for he realizes that he is responsible for most of the life he perceives--he recognizes that the power is internal rather than external.

Whereas the child's own fears and emotions lend vitality to the world, the imagination seems to be this agent during youth:

> A plastic power
> Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
> Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
> A local spirit of its own, at war
> With general tendency, but for the most
> Subservient strictly to the external things
> With which it commun'd. (II, 381-387)

Again, as in childhood, the initial impulse comes from the external world in that this "plastic power" is, on the whole, subservient to the landscape, but the auxiliar light provides a response to this powerful impact of the external environment. The process is similar to that of childhood in that nature affects Wordsworth, demanding a response, but during youth he is fairly conscious of his response, whereas during childhood he attributes the power of the situation to nature.

As well as being more aware of his response to, and animation of, nature, Wordsworth also begins to understand why nature affects him so profoundly. The unexpected and haphazard effects of nature on the child have been replaced by a dedication and reverence which are constantly present:

> 'Twere long to tell
> What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
> And what the summer shade, what day and night,
> The evening and the morning, what my dreams
> And what my waking thoughts supplied, to nurse
> The spirit of religious love in which
> I walked with Nature. (II, 371-377)

During youth Wordsworth is able to identify that aspect of nature which affects him--he realizes that the unified and harmonious spirit of nature moves and inspires him: "I was only then/Contented when with bliss ineffable/I felt the sentiment of Being spread/O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still" (II, 418-420). Although the sensation is still abstract, the complete mystery and incomprehensible aspect of the childhood experiences is no longer present.

The rejected draft in Manuscript Y intended for Book VIII includes interesting thoughts on the transition from childhood to youth. The privileged child such as Wordsworth--that is one who is "by constitution of his frame,/And circumstances favoured from the first"[20]--does not eventually reject nature as a force common and dulled by familiarity as do most individuals.[21] In his early years this favoured child is selfish--"his own person, senses, faculties,/Centre and soul of all"[22]--and "Careless of Nature's presence,"[23] and yet he is "haunted oft/By what has been his life at every turn."[24] Although the obscurity of the passage does not make clear what exactly haunts him, it would seem to be the indirect, mysterious and intangible confrontations with nature.[25] Wordsworth's view of the child delineated in this passage is closely aligned with his portrayal of his boyhood in the first two books of the poem. Wordsworth, as a child, certainly places the highest priority on his senses and, although unconsciously, "he irradiates all without."[26] Confrontations with nature certainly haunt him as he cannot obliterate them from his mind--the effects of the experiences continue to permeate his world.

The next stage described in this draft--"Then will come/Another soul, spring, centre of his being,/And that is Nature"[27]--is, I would argue, that of youth, occurring approximately at the age of seventeen when nature is pursued "for its own sake." The youth observes nature in a detailed and concentrated manner:

> he looks nearer, calls
> The stars out of their silent retreats, and part(s)
> The milky stream into its separate forms,
> Loses and finds again, when baffled most
> Not least delighted.[28]

This process whereby the stars are scrutinized individually and distinctions made among them is similar to the communion with nature described in Book II in which the heart is aware of "the minuter properties/Of objects which already are belov'd" (II, 301-302). Youth seems to be characterized by this ability to break down unified and composite objects into parts and thus enjoy "Nature's finer influxes" (II, 298).

As we have seen, however, youth is also the time when man is able to perceive the unified and harmonious spirit of nature--"the sentiment of Being" (II, 420), the "one life" (II, 430). The passage referring to Galileo's telescope is obscure, but the idea of penetrating such a distant external sphere and unifying the diverse and obscure elements suggests the ability to perceive a single spirit emanating from separate objects. Nature no longer satisfies merely the physical senses, but also fulfills a spiritual need:

> finally he takes
> The optic tube of thought that patient men
> Have furnished with the toil of [ ],
> Without the glass of Galileo sees
> What Galileo saw; and as it were
> Resolving into one great faculty
> Of being bodily eye and spiritual need,
> The converse which he holds is limitless.[29]

The youth not only contemplates distant objects removed from his personal experience, "But nearer home he looks with the same eye/Through the entire abyss of things."[30] Thus, careful observation of details and a general apprehension of nature as a whole seem to characterize youth and early manhood.

This conscious communion with nature leads the youth to believe that:

> the universe in which
> He lives is equal to his mind, that each
> Is worthy of the other; if the one
> Be insatiable, the other is inexhaustible.[31]

This belief arises from the fact that the youth is more aware of the capabilities and powers of his own mind. Wordsworth claims that in his seventeenth year the vitality of nature results in the incitation of internal feelings: "From Nature and her overflowing soul/I had receiv'd so much that all my thoughts/Were steep'd in feeling" (II, 416-418). Again the initial impulse comes from the external world, for the "insatiable" mind is satisfied and nourished by the "inexhaustible" universe. Yet the mind is not dominated or overpowered as in childhood, but works in co-operation with nature because it feels equal to, and worthy of, the natural world.

During this stage when the youth is completely immersed in nature, he is unable to find any comfort or inspiration in his fellow men, for he sees only "sordid men,/And transient occupations, and desires/Ignoble and deprav'd."[32] This isolation from man induces him to embrace nature with even more dedication and enthusiasm:

> Therefore he cleaves
> Exclusively to Nature as in her
> Finding his image, what he has, what lacks,
> His rest and his perfection.[33]

Thus between the approximate ages of seventeen (II, 405) and twenty-three (VIII, 483) Wordsworth experiences his most intense communication with nature. Previous to the years of his youth he was concerned with sports and the satisfaction of his physical senses, and after youth he becomes involved with man and abstract ideals, such as the French Revolution. Although nature is always present as a formative influence and a powerful force, it is only during these few years that Wordsworth communicates directly and exclusively with nature.

As Wordsworth stresses extensively in Book VIII, the years of childhood and youth are important in their establishment of, and influence on, a growing love of mankind. Yet the child and youth are not conscious of this process; only the retrospective poet can identify and describe the development:

> first I look'd
> At Man through objects that were great and fair,
> First commun'd with him by their help. And thus
> Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
> Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
> Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in
> On all sides from the ordinary world
> In which we traffic. (VIII, 450-457)

Man is elevated in Wordworth's mind because he is initially viewed within the context of nature. Although the child and the youth are both unaware of the eventual result of the immediate impact of nature, the youth is conscious of his actual relationship and intercourse with the natural world, whereas the child is virtually unconscious of the characteristics and terms of the communion even at the actual moment of confrontation.

The youth works with nature in order to strive to achieve a mystical experience, but the child is unaware of his own part in the relationship and thus, from his point of view, nature "works" on him.

Although Legouis' statement identifying the crucial change at the age of seventeen--"He has told us how he had been moulded and fashioned by nature; he will be seen moulding and fashioning her in his turn"[34]--is true to a certain extent in that the youth is more conscious of the relationship than the child, it is important to remember that the youth and adult are also profoundly affected by the force of nature, necessitating even in them a "wise passiveness":

> "The eye--it cannot choose but see;
> We cannot bid the ear be still;
> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against or with our will.
>
> "Nor less I deem that there are Powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness."[35]

Communication with nature in all stages of life demands "a heart/That watches and receives."[36]

The description of the wanderer in The Excursion also establishes distinctions between childhood and youth. As a boy the wanderer projects his own emotions onto the natural world, thereby investing it with life, with the result that nature overpowers his senses:

> So the foundations of his mind were laid.
> In such communion, not from terror free,
> While yet a child, and long before his time,
> Had he perceived the presence and the power
> Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed
> So vividly great objects that they lay
> Upon his mind like substances, whose presence
> Perplexed the bodily sense.[37]

The youth, however, is not perplexed by nature, but responds spiritually with his soul to the overall scene, communing with the harmonious spirit diffused from the natural world:

> Such was the Boy--but for the growing Youth
> What soul was his, when, from the naked top
> Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
> Rise up, and bathe the world in light![38]

The complete integration and synthesis of nature and the youth is presented in the portrait of the wanderer:

> Sound needed none,
> Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
> The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,
> All melted into him; they swallowed up
> His animal being; in them did he live,
> And by them did he live, they were his life.[39]

The youth is both active and passive; he "drinks" in the scene, but also allows the spectacle to "melt" into him. He is completely dependent on nature during this stage of his life as he lives in, and by, the "sensations, soul, and form" derived from natural objects. Unlike the relationship in adulthood, this communion with nature does not involve an intellectual process--"Thought was not"[40]--and unlike childhood experiences the physical senses are not "perplexed" by the transcendence of the scene, but are submerged in favour of a spiritual communion. The youth is not troubled or confused by the fact that nature overpowers his physical senses; rather he takes advantage of this phenomenon in order to enjoy the spiritual level of experience beyond the physical. Wordsworth's comment that during youth the influences of nature "swallowed up/His [the wanderer's] animal being"[41] denotes this rejection or dismissal of sensuous responses in favour of a spiritual response. The child is an "animal being" in that his physical senses are the major vehicle through

which he communicates with the world, and when those senses are overpowered and dominated he is at a loss as to how to respond.

As in the history of his own life, Wordsworth places the wanderer's youth at age seventeen when the feelings of his heart match the power of nature, and the soul communes in a harmonious manner with the universe:

> And thus before his eighteenth year was told,
> Accumulated feelings pressed his heart
> With still increasing weight; he was o'erpowered
> By Nature; by the turbulence subdued
> Of his own mind; by mystery and hope,
> And the first virgin passion of a soul
> Communing with the glorious universe.[42]

In studying this transition from childhood to youth it becomes even clearer that childhood and boyhood (up to the age of seventeen) are ages involving sensuous responses to the landscape, of which the child is basically unaware. The increasing consciousness in the youth of his own power and abilities emphasizes this unconscious communion between the child and nature. Nature seeks the child, whereas the youth seeks nature; the child believes that the world is animate, but the youth realizes that, to a certain extent, he invests the universe with life. The child sees nature as "working" on, and dominating him, while the youth perceives a more equal relationship in which the mind is an active participant. Geoffrey Hartman stresses what I believe to be the critical characteristic of childhood as portrayed by Wordsworth--the fact that "the child is granted but a masked suspicion of the mind's power"[43]:

> It is quite clear that the child does not know that what he sees and feels is an effect of the power of his imagination. The impact of the scenes on him is inseparable from overwhelming sense-impressions. For the retrospective poet [and I would add the youth, to some extent], however, the power that belonged to the external world is now seen to have belonged to the mind.[44]

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]The fact that Wordsworth mentions specific ages seems to demonstrate that he wants to emphasize these important transitions and stages of his development. In the first childhood incident in Book I he specifies that he is a "five years' Child" (I, 291), and thus infancy must be completed by at least the age of five. In Book II he describes a significant change which took place when his "seventeenth year was come" (II, 405)--a change which marks the transition from childhood or boyhood to youth. In Book VIII Wordsworth maintains that man became important to him at the point when "not less/Than three and twenty summers had been told" (VIII, 482-483). This interest in man indicates the beginning of adulthood. These references to specific ages in a poem which is not concerned with dates and facts force the reader to notice them and the important transitions which they denote.

[2]The "first poetic spirit" is similar to Coleridge's primary imagination, for both seem to be concerned with simple perception:

> The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.

See S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson, p. 167.

[3]Mark Reed calculates that this tour through Wales took place from "Probably late July or early Aug.--between late Aug., perhaps after c. Sept. 15, and early Oct." He says of this tour:

> From Salisbury Plain W travels, mostly on foot, to North Wales, to the home of Robert Jones, Plas-yn-Llan, Llangynhafal. He proceeds via Bath to Bristol and thence (having crossed the Severn by water) up the Wye. He passes Tintern Abbey. (He refers to his journey in T A, esp. 66-85).

See Mark Reed, Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Early Years, 1770-1799 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 145.

[4]William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 66-67.

[5]Ibid., ll. 88-90.

[6]Ibid., ll. 72-75.

[7]Ibid., ll. 67-70.

[8]In the boat-stealing episode, for example, the poet speculates "surely I was led by her [nature]" (I, 372), but at the time the child obviously does not consider this possibility as he does not examine the reasons for his movements, but simply acts instinctively as his senses direct him.

[9]William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 70-72.

[10]Ibid., ll. 76-80.

[11]Ibid., ll. 80-83.

[12]Ibid., l. 91.

[13]In the 1850 text Wordsworth changes this age to twenty-two. J. C. Maxwell speculates that "The revision to 'two-and-twenty' shows that Wordsworth wanted to place the change before the summer of 1792; no doubt during the winter of 1791-2 when he was in the company both of Beaupuy and of Annette Vallon." See William Wordsworth, The Prelude, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 556. Maxwell's observation is based on de Selincourt's argument with Garrod which concludes: "If my interpretation is correct, this shifting of interest from Nature to Man could coincide with his plunge into humanitarian politics and the dawning of his love for Annette." See William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, p. 580.

[14]This word also occurs in the passage from "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey": "The sounding cataract/Haunted me like a passion." See William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 76-77.

[15]R. D. Havens points out that, for a variety of reasons, this passage cannot refer to the deaths of Wordsworth's parents as many critics believe. I agree with Havens that the word "props" refers to sports and "the building" is the love of nature. See R. D. Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1941), p. 325. Havens associates the word "trouble" (II, 291) with the problems of adolescence, which may be true to some extent. I believe, however, that the trouble is simply the adjustment which the youth must make when he finds himself in a pure and direct relationship with nature without the element of sports to aid and instigate the communication.

[16]Havens points out that this statement could refer to either Wordsworth's seventeenth year (April 7, 1786 - April 7, 1787) or the year during which he was seventeen years of age (April 7, 1787 - April 7, 1788), but also states that the latest point to which it could refer is October, 1787, the month in which Wordsworth enrolled at Cambridge. See R. D. Havens, The Mind of a Poet, pp. 331-332.

[17]Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, trans. J. W. Matthews (London: J. M. Dent, 1921), p. 43.

[18]De Selincourt identifies the friend as Rev. John Fleming of Rayrigg, Windermere. See William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of A Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, p. 524.

[19]This process whereby the external scene is modified by the observer is explained by Wordsworth in the Preface of 1815:

> Thus far of images independent of each other, and immediately endowed by the mind with properties that do not inhere in them, upon an incitement from properties and qualities the existence of which is inherent and obvious. These processes of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence.

See William Wordsworth, The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, III, 32.

[20]William Wordsworth, Rejected Draft for Book VIII in Manuscript Y, in The Prelude or Growth of A Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, p. 571, ll. 125-126.

[21]Ibid., ll. 139-144.

[22]Ibid., ll. 133-134.

[23]Ibid., l. 131.

[24]Ibid., ll. 134-135.

[25]Wordsworth often uses the word "haunt" in connection with the impact of nature on him. In "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" he writes: "The sounding cataract/Haunted me like a passion." See William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 76-77. Also, in Book I of The Prelude he maintains that the presence of nature had the effect of "Haunting me thus among my boyish sports" (I, 495).

[26]William Wordsworth, Rejected Draft for Book VIII in Manuscript Y, in The Prelude or Growth of A Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, l. 129.

[27]Ibid., ll. 137-139.

[28]Ibid., ll. 144-148.

[29]Ibid., ll. 148-155.

The idea of the youth being involved in "thought" seems to raise some problems in that Wordsworth often stresses the fact that the youth's intercourse with nature has "no need of a remoter charm,/By thought supplied." See William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 81-82. In The Prelude Wordsworth stresses the pure spiritual aspect of the relationship between the youth and nature. In the Reply to 'Mathetes,' however, Wordsworth associates the youth's response with reason and thought:

> Hitherto the Youth, I suppose, has been content, for the most part, to look at his own mind after the manner in which he ranges along the Stars in the firmament with naked unaided sight: Let him now apply the telescope of Art--to call the invisible Stars out of their hiding-places, and let him endeavor to look through the system of his Being, with the organ of Reason; summoned to penetrate, as far as it has power, in discovery of the impelling forces and the governing laws."

See William Wordsworth, "Reply to 'Mathetes,'" The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, II, p. 18. The similarity of this passage to the passage in the rejected draft is obvious due to the references to abstract telescopes and the process of calling forth the stars from their respective "hiding-places" or "shy retreats." Both of these passages, however, refer to later youth: the passage from the Reply to 'Mathetes' discusses the years "when Youth is passing into Manhood" (see William Wordsworth, "Reply to 'Mathetes,'" The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, II, 17) and the manuscript passage speaks of the "final" stage of youth. Thus the entrance of thought does not take place until later youth and it anticipates the attitude of the adult who hears the "still sad music of humanity." Early youth and youth proper, I would argue, are still characterized by this spiritual and emotional response to the world (initially inspired by sensuous impressions) stressed so urgently by Wordsworth in Book II of The Prelude and in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey."

[30]William Wordsworth, Rejected Draft for Book VIII in Manuscript Y, in The Prelude or Growth of A Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 157-158.

[31]Ibid., ll. 172-175.

[32]Ibid., ll. 197-199.

[33]Ibid., ll. 199-200.

[34]Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, p. 50.

[35]William Wordsworth, "Expostulation and Reply," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, ll. 17-24.

[36]William Wordsworth, "Tables Turned," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, ll. 31-32.

[37]William Wordsworth, "The Excursion," in Vol. V of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), I, 132-139.

[38]Ibid., I, 197-200.

[39]Ibid., I, 205-210.

[40]Ibid., I, 213.

[41]Ibid., I, 208-209.

[42]Ibid., I, 280-286.

[43]Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry 1787 - 1814 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 215.

[44]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHILD'S "UNCONSCIOUS" RESPONSE TO NATURE

Throughout the last chapter I have argued that the youth is more "conscious" and aware of his relationship with nature than the child. I do not mean to imply that the child is oblivious to the import of his experiences with nature, for he is obviously aware of their value in that he retains them in his mind and is moved intensely by their actual occurrence. He is "unconscious" in the sense that he is unaware of his own role in the relationship--his actions are involuntary and instinctive rather than the result of his own will. I use the word "unconscious" in the same way in which Wordsworth uses it: "I held unconscious intercourse/ With the eternal Beauty" (I, 589-590). The word "intercourse" implies a communion in which both parties, the child and nature, are active participants. Nature is the dominant partner in that it instigates the communion, but the child is not passive, for he responds to nature's impulses. The word "unconscious," however, applied to "intercourse," suggests that although the child is actively involved in the relationship, he is unaware of his own actions and participation. The child realizes the value of his communion with nature, but does not acknowledge his part in its fulfillment simply because he is unaware of the power and activity of his mind and imagination.

This "unconscious" aspect of the child's intercourse with nature is illustrated in the childhood incidents which Wordsworth defines as "spots of time" (XI, 258-389). Although he only specifically applies

this term to two incidents, many of Wordsworth's childhood experiences seem to display the characteristics of a "spot of time." A "spot of time" is a moment when the child is taken out of himself and placed in a realm beyond his physical existence. The entire event is miraculous and powerful because the child feels that he has no part in its operation--he sees himself as merely the passive recipient and an object worked upon by nature's forces. The term "spot of time" has rich and various connotations. The spot of time is literally a fleeting moment--a flash or gleam which passes immediately. Paradoxically, the spot of time is a spot of "timelessness," for everything freezes in that short moment, and the child senses the mystery of eternity and infinity. The word "spot" also denotes place and seems to suggest the external environment which induces and inspires this putting aside of the self and stepping out of the physical body, and, ultimately, the physical world.[1]

These experiences originate in a sense perception of the natural world which, through association, fear or awe, induces the child's mind to experience a communion with a spiritual plane beyond the physical scene. The physical scene is internalized and translated into emotions. The senses are initially the single mode of perception, but through the process involved in the "spot of time" they are subsequently subordinated to, and overpowered by, abstract thoughts and emotions: "We have the deepest feeling that the mind/Is lord and master, and that outward sense/ Is but the obedient servant of her will" (XI, 271-273). The experience lasts for only a minute and the child has no control over it. The distinctive characteristics of these moments are that the transcendence of the physical plane is, for the child, sudden, unexpected and unconscious.

It is this unconscious reaction of Wordsworth to his surrounding environment which characterizes the nature of his early relationship with the natural world.

R. D. Havens terms these "spots of time" mystic experiences because the physical world fades in order to be superseded by an abstract or spiritual realm.[2] The basic definition of the word mystical--"Having an unseen, unknown or mysterious origin, character, effect or influence"[3]--can definitely be applied to these childhood incidents. The spots of time do demonstrate the essence of a mystical experience--a "reliance on spiritual intuition or exalted feeling as the means of acquiring knowledge of mysteries inaccessible to intellectual apprehension."[4] The childhood incidents can thus be described as mystical or visionary in that a loss of sensuous awareness induced by a confrontation with the natural world results in a communion with an abstract sphere, which reveals "truths" and knowledge inaccessible to the intellect.

Wordsworth described to Isabella Fenwick the trance-like states which he experienced during childhood:

> I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.[5]

These moments of vision are similar to spots of time in the sense that Wordsworth involuntarily finds himself in an abstract and ideal world rather than reality.

As Havens points out, Wordsworth did not think of himself as a mystic, and perhaps was not even familiar with the nature of the mystical experience.[6] The term, mysticism, was not used by Wordsworth to describe his encounters with nature, but has been applied to these incidents by critics because they display many elements typical of, and peculiar to, the accepted notion of mysticism. One aspect characterizing this type of experience is the inability of the person involved to describe, explain or re-experience it:

> the soul,
> Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
> Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity. (II, 334-337)

Perhaps the most effective description of a "Wordsworthian mystical moment" occurs in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey":

> 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:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things.[7]

Although Wordsworth experiences these trance-like states in adulthood, they seem to occur more frequently during his early years.

The first example of a spot of time cited in Book XI is instigated by a confrontation with the site where a murderer had previously been hung. Wordsworth's condition at this moment--lost and isolated--is conducive to a mystical experience or spot of time. He is completely overpowered by the connotations associated with "those characters inscribed/ On the green sod" (XI, 301-302), and the overwhelming complexity of his

reactions causes fear to overpower all other emotions: "I fled,/ Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road" (1850, XII, 246-247).

The situation involves, to some extent, form, power and duration--the three components which Wordsworth identifies as being necessary for sublimity.[8] The "characters inscribed/On the green sod" (XI, 301-302) exude power, through association with the deed of the murder itself, form in that they are easily discerned by the senses, and duration because they have survived and will continue to survive:

> but on the turf,
> Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought
> Some unknown hand had carved the Murderer's name.
> The monumental writing was engraven
> In times long past, and still, from year to year,
> By superstition of the neighbourhood,
> The grass is clear'd away; and to this hour
> The letters are all fresh and visible. (XI, 292-299)

Thus the child is, in this situation, affected by a scene of sublimity, which inspires bewilderment and fear, but not in an extreme sense, for Wordsworth maintains that an individual is only "visited by a sense of sublimity, if personal fear & surprize or wonder have not been carried beyond certain bounds."[9] When Wordsworth flees from the scene, the sense of sublimity is lost: "if personal fear be strained beyond a certain point, this sensation is destroyed."[10]

The scene which subsequently meets Wordsworth's eye is composed of three elements: the pool, the beacon and the girl:

> A naked Pool that lay beneath the hills,
> The Beacon on the summit, and more near,
> A Girl who bore a Pitcher on her head
> And seem'd with difficult steps to force her way
> Against the blowing wind. (XI, 304-308)

Wordsworth allows the scene to pervade his senses, and seems to be impressed by the desolation and isolation of each of the three entities, perhaps because he unconsciously associates their condition with his own. The significant phrase in this passage--"It was, in truth,/An ordinary sight" (XI, 308-309)--conveys the idea that it is Wordsworth's state of mind at the time which incites the mystical experience rather than the nature of the scene itself. The child cannot explain why this ordinary sight has been invested with "dreariness," and has thus affected him in such a powerful manner. He experiences an abstract sensation inspired by the physical scene which confronts him, but is unconscious of the process whereby the physical world is transcended, resulting in the apprehension of "dreariness."

The child is responsible for this transcendence, as he projects his emotions onto the natural scene, investing the elements with his own loneliness and confusion. In his second description of the scene, after he perceives a "visionary dreariness," the "Beacon on the summit" (XI, 305) becomes the "Beacon on the lonely Eminence" (XI, 314), and the woman no longer forces "her way/Against the blowing wind" (XI, 307-308), but is "vex'd and toss'd/By the strong wind" (XI, 315-316). Wordsworth projects his own loneliness onto the beacon, and his own feelings of helplessness and frustration onto the woman struggling against the wind. The word "visionary" (XI, 311) is significant, for it denotes the fact that the dreariness is a creation of Wordsworth's imagination rather than an actuality. The physical scene becomes a catalyst for the emergence of Wordsworth's emotions which supersede his senses after he has allowed the natural objects to permeate them. In the same way in which the wind

vexes and tosses the girl, so the site of the hanging and the scene of the pool, beacon and girl work on and affect Wordsworth, resulting in a transcendence of the physical plane.

This particular spot of time involves an incitation of fear and loneliness due to certain circumstances: the child's isolation and the confrontation with the scene of the murder. In this state of mind the child is confronted by a striking combination of elements in the landscape which correspond to his own mental and emotional situation. The power of the scene affects him in such a way that he unconsciously invests it with his own emotions, and the sensuous response is overpowered by the personal emotions duplicated in the natural scene. The initial impulse comes from the external world. The child is not moved by nature until it commands his senses and overpowers his physical perception, resulting in this unconscious response which is inexplicable in that he is unaware of the fact that he is reacting and responding to the scene. He attributes the abstract feeling to the external world rather than recognizing it as a projection of his own mind and emotions.

The elements and characteristics of this spot of time are found in many of the incidents described in Books I and II of The Prelude. These childhood episodes seem to fall into two categories: those involving sublimity which incite fear or guilt in the child, and those involving beauty in which the child feels awe and inspiration. In both cases the child participates in the relationship with nature, thereby transcending the physical scene. His reactions and responses to beauty and sublimity are different, however, although they both have in common the fact that the child is not fully aware of the operation of his own mind and imagination.

The most obvious example of a scene of sublimity, inspiring fear and guilt, is found in the passage describing the stealing of the boat in Book I. The world takes on gigantic and unreal proportions when Wordsworth projects his guilt onto the landscape. As in the spot of time in Book XI, Wordsworth is alone at the time of the incident, and is obviously moved by the sublimity of the mountains:

> A rocky Steep uprose
> Above the Cavern of the Willow tree,
> And now, as suited one who proudly row'd
> With his best skill, I fix'd a steady view
> Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
> The bound of the horizon, for behind
> Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky. (I, 394-400)

In The Essay On the Sublime and Beautiful Wordsworth describes the sublimity derived from a mountain when one concentrates on it from a certain distance as he seems to be doing in this case:

> If these objects [mountains] be so distant that, while we look at them, they are only thought of as the crown of a comprehensive Landscape; if our minds be not perverted by false theories, unless these mountains be seen under some accident of nature, we shall receive from them a grand impression, and nothing more. But if they be looked at from a point which has brought us so near that the mountain is almost the sole object before our eyes, yet not so near but that the whole of it is visible, we shall be impressed with a sensation of sublimity.[11]

The environment within which Wordsworth is rowing is one of immense sublimity which overpowers and intimidates the young boy. Even before his guilt is transferred to the natural scene he seems to associate his act with the surrounding mountains: "It was an act of stealth/And troubled pleasure; not without the voice/Of mountain-echoes did my Boat move on" (I, 388-390). In this troubled state of mind, within the sublimity and grandeur of nature, the cliff intrudes into the young boy's vision:

> When from behind that craggy Steep, till then
> The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,
> As if with voluntary power instinct,
> Uprear'd its head. (I, 405-408)

To Wordsworth the cliff is "like a living thing" (I, 411) which strides after him, but he is unaware of the fact that this phenomenon is the result of his own projection of guilt. The cliff itself seems to move in that it uprears its head, grows in stature and rises up--the child, because of his fear and guilt, does not realize that it is his own movement in the boat which causes the cliff to change shape. Similarly, he does not realize that his own fear is responsible for the fact that the cliff, in its changing shapes, seems to threaten him. For the child, nature is a vital and animate force with the power to rebuke and threaten; if he realized that he himself invested nature with this life, the actual power of the natural objects would not be as frightening and immediate.

A unique feature of this incident is that it seems to endure for a substantial period of time:

> I struck, and struck again,
> And, growing still in stature, the huge Cliff
> Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
> With measur'd motion, like a living thing,
> Strode after me. (I, 408-412)

This duration is possibly due to the fact that the child is completely immersed in his guilt and realizes that he has committed a crime. Thus he unconsciously prolongs the sensation in order to punish himself. The effect of the spot of time is not lost when the mystical moment ceases, for the experience continues to modify the boy's vision and imbue his world with certain characteristics:

> no familiar shapes
> Of hourly objects, images of trees,
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
> But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
> Like living men mov'd slowly through my mind
> By day and were the trouble of my dreams.
> (I, 422-427)

The incident involving the snaring of the birds and the stealing of another's prey, like the boat-stealing episode, involves the projection of guilt onto the landscape, although the element of sublimity is not as apparent, if in fact it is present at all. Again Wordsworth is alone and is vaguely aware of the fact that he is disrupting the harmony of nature: "I was alone,/And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace/That was among them [the moon and stars] (I, 322-324). The child does not examine or explore his vague feeling that he is a "trouble," and does not fully comprehend that this sense of disruption arises from, and is a manifestation of, his guilt for the crime he has committed. He does not actually conceive of the snaring of birds as a crime, but within himself has a vague sense that his actions are wrong. The crime is not as blatant as the stealing of the boat, and thus the guilt at this point is even more obscure and submerged than in the boat-stealing episode. Wordsworth, the poet, is able to understand and delineate the emotions which, for the child, were vague feelings of which he could not trace the origin or cause. The retrospective and objective stance of the poet is apparent in his description of himself as a child; he observes himself in a removed and distant manner: "my shoulder all with springes hung,/I was a fell destroyer" (I, 317-318). The adult is placing values and interpretations on an experience which was mysterious and incomprehensible when it actually occurred.

The actual stealing of the bird results in the projection of the latent guilt which was present before this more obvious and serious crime:

> and, when the deed was done
> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathing coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod. (I, 328-332)

Wordsworth, the writer of the poem, is aware of the significance and cause of these sounds, but for the child the sounds actually emanate from nature and are separate from his own fear and guilt. The fact that they are "of undistinguishable motion" and "almost as silent as the turf" reveal their mysterious quality which haunts the child, as he intensely believes in their presence. Nature in this situation, as in the boat-stealing episode, is an agent, unconsciously established by the child's mind, for the enforcement of moral values.

Similar to these incidents is the plundering of the birds' nests. The child realizes that his project is "mean" and "inglorious," but instead of projecting his guilt onto the landscape he transcends his immediate emotions, with the result that nature takes on strange qualities:

> at that time,
> While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
> Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky
> Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds!
> (I, 346-350)

The setting is one of sublimity--"In the high places, on the lonesome peaks" (I, 337)--and the child's situation is daring and dangerous. The child cannot explain the incredible sensation which overcomes him, but the adult realizes and conveys in his description the idea that guilt, danger and sublimity combine to force the child to transcend unconsciously a situation which, in its extreme precariousness, is too intense to comprehend.

Thus the child transforms the physical scene into something abstract and mysterious, but is unaware of the process, attributing the strange properties to nature itself. As in previous examples already discussed, nature initially affects the child--he is "Suspended by the blast which blew amain,/Shouldering the naked crag" (I, 345-346)--but the subsequent mystical experience is the result of the projection of the child's mind and emotions of which he is unaware, with the result that he envisions a vital and animate spirit inherent in nature. The mind invests nature with life, but to the unconscious child that life is exclusively the product of the external world.

At certain moments the child is intensely moved by nature, but does not understand the essence of these experiences or their profound influence on his overall development. Moreover, he is oblivious to his participation in the relationship and does not realize that his own imagination is partially responsible for the power and vitality which he perceives in nature. In order to understand fully the characteristics of this relationship it is necessary to study the interaction between the very young child and nature. The very young child is even less aware of the effect of nature than the child involved in sports and activity, for he does not experience those moments when nature overpowers and dominates his mind. Wordsworth stresses the idea that nature, in a subtle and indirect manner, infiltrates the passive and unsuspecting mind of the young child. Nature seems to be nurturing and working on the young child before his mind is mature enough to be aware of this powerful influence. Thus he neither accepts nor rejects the power of nature, but absorbs it because he is incapable of perceiving or understanding its existence.

This unconscious attitude of the younger child is conveyed by the phrase "sent a voice/Which flow'd along my dreams" (I, 275-276):

> Was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all Rivers, 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 flow'd along my dreams? (I, 271-276)

The association of the river with music--"didst thou, beauteous Stream,/ Make ceaseless music through the night and day/Which with its steady cadence, . . . " (I, 278-280)--epitomizes the manner in which nature subtly and indirectly infiltrates the mind of the child. Nature does not directly confront Wordsworth, but surrounds him in this abstruse manner, touching his unconscious, flowing along his dreams. The idea of the river blending "his murmurs with my Nurse's song" (I, 273) also conveys the delicate and unobtrusive way in which nature affects the child, and adds an element implying that the natural world nurtures the young child, teaching and influencing him as does his nurse.

Wordsworth, the adult, realizes the important formative influence of nature on his younger self--he says that the Derwent:

> compos'd my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me,
> Among the fretfull dwellings of mankind,
> A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
> (I, 281-285)

The association of "breathing" with nature performs the same function as the reference to music in that in both cases nature seems to affect the child indirectly and delicately, so that he is unaware of the actual impact. Wordsworth maintains that the eye "is in every stage of life/ The most despotic of our senses" (XI, 173-174), and the fact that many

of Wordsworth's early communions with nature are associated with the sense of hearing demonstrates the indirect way in which nature influences him. The child is not as conscious or aware of these influences as he would be of the direct and obvious impact on his sense of sight.

The five-year-old child, coursing "Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves/Of yellow grunsel" (I, 297-298), is not attuned to nature, but is concerned with his own activity. The distanced narrator interpolates his own views into what, for the child, was simply a delightful swim or a quiet moment in the midst of activity. The child merely "stood alone/ Beneath the sky" (I, 300-301), and there is no indication that at that time he was particularly responsive to the landscape. It is the retrospective and distanced narrator who comments on the image created by the solitary child within nature:

> 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, 301-304)[12]

Nature plants seeds in the child--"Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up/Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear" (I, 305-306)--but the seeds do not develop or germinate until youth, for childhood is the "unripe time" (VIII, 476). The seeds are the influences of nature, and the plant which develops is a love for, and appreciation of, the natural world. During the period of germination the child is unconscious of the presence of the seeds--the potential life in them is nourished and subtly developed, but only in youth do they actually make their presence known and come to life. Childhood is a preparatory and formative period during which the influences of nature are buried so deeply within Wordsworth that he is unaware of their effect. Geoffrey Hartman observes:

> He [Wordsworth as a child] enjoys river, wood and field as objects of danger or desire, unthinkingly, without conscious love.[13]

When the seeds germinate, however, Wordsworth is obligated to acknowledge their presence, and this acknowledgement leads to a conscious appreciation of the natural world and a new attitude which involves a pursuit of nature in order to keep alive the now apparent and developing plant--namely, the conscious love of nature.

The childhood incidents involving beauty are different in many respects from those concerned with sublimity. The process in episodes dealing with sublimity is easy to discern as the guilt or fear is clearly transferred to the natural scene. The emotions inspired by beauty, however, are much more elusive and vague--the reactions are less forceful than the fear and guilt derived from sublimity and danger, and the interaction between the child and nature is difficult to discern. The actual impact of the natural world is more indirect and subtle, often affecting the sense of hearing or inspiring a vague and intangible feeling, whereas scenes of sublimity shock the child and confront him in a demanding and powerful manner.

The incident involving the flute player is similar to the confrontations with sublimity in that nature is secondary to the activity pursued by Wordsworth. Unlike the previous examples studied, however, Wordsworth is not alone in this instance, but is surrounded by, and involved with, his friends. During the day they have been immersed in activity within the natural environment--"through half an afternoon, we play'd/On the smooth platform, and the shouts we sent/Made all the mountains ring" (II, 168-170). The surroundings within which the activity took place are

important to the poet relating the incident because he realizes their subtle effect on the child--"beneath us stood/A grove; with gleams of water through the trees/And over the tree-tops" (II, 164-166)--but at the time Wordsworth was probably more concerned with the games and the "strawberries and mellow cream" (II, 167). Again it is difficult to differentiate between the child's observations and feelings and those which the adult deems important as he traces his development. It would appear, however, that the child is only dimly aware of the landscape which surrounds his activities.

Many of the childhood and boyhood incidents involve group activities in which, because of the sudden and unexpected effect of nature, Wordsworth finds himself alone, undergoing a solitary and mystical communion with the world. These numerous instances in which Wordsworth is drawn by nature from his friends to a solitary state render comments such as A. E. Powell's invalid:

> Loneliness is essential to such visions:
> the presence of a companion insensibly
> suggests the conventional way of seeing.[14]

In this particular situation the external element which incites Wordsworth's separation from his friends and subsequent communion with the natural world is the music played by one of the members of the group[15] who is left on an island where he plays his flute "Alone upon the rock" (II, 176). The beauty both of this music and the solitary figure on the isolated island induces Wordsworth to turn into himself and allow the natural scene to infiltrate and permeate his senses:

> Oh! then the calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky
> Never before so beautiful, sank down
> Into my heart, and held me like a dream. (II, 176-180)

The description of the experience makes it clear that Wordsworth does not consciously pursue nature and attempt to comprehend the natural world, but that nature impresses itself on his receptive mind. The emphasis on the individual elements pressing and weighing down on Wordsworth suggests that nature is the active agent, forcing itself on the child whose condition is receptive and open to such an influence. The child is not conscious or fully aware of what is actually taking place at this moment as the phrase "held me like a dream" (II, 180) makes clear. Nature does not affect the conscious mind of the child, but infiltrates the deeper, unconscious or "dream-like" level of perception.

The manner in which the natural world is completely integrated into the child's mind is conveyed by the words "sank down/Into my heart" (II, 179-180). The natural world presses down upon the child, forcing him to receive its influence, but it is important to remember that this integration can only take place because the child is receptive and open to such an influence.

John Danby says of this interaction between Wordsworth and nature: "Such nourishment, like grace, must come unsought."[16] Wordsworth, himself, in a general statement, maintains that during childhood:

> the passion [for nature] yet
> Was in its birth, sustain'd, as might befal,
> By nourishment that came unsought. (II, 5-7)

This statement implies that when the passion is fully developed (in youth and adulthood) this nourishment will be sought and pursued. Although the influence of nature comes "unsought" during childhood, the state of mind must be conducive to the acquisition of this nourishment. Danby describes the internal condition which invites this type of mystical experience:

> It is a condition of calm and attentiveness,
> a state of receptiveness that is also vividly
> alert.[17]

This alert and receptive state of mind is the "wise passiveness" to which Wordsworth refers in "Expostulation and Reply."[18] Thus nature, from the child's point of view, is the active agent--a concept stressed by Wordsworth throughout the first two books of The Prelude.

The numerous references to water and wind suggest this active aspect of nature. Wordsworth recalls how, as a child, he was fascinated by the effect of the wind on a kite:

> at this hour
> The heart is almost mine with which I felt
> From some hill-top, on sunny afternoons
> The Kite high up among the fleecy clouds
> Pull at its rein, like an impatient Courser
> Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
> Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
> Dash'd headlong; and rejected by the storm.
> (I, 517-524)

The power of the wind and its ability to buffet the kite are representative of Wordsworth's view of the interaction between nature and himself as a child; nature works on the child in the same way in which it controls the kite. As the kite is receptive to the force of the wind, so the child is receptive to the force of nature--both are at the mercy of the element which overpowers them.

Wordsworth emphasizes the control which he believes nature has over him; in speaking of the boat-stealing episode, for example, he says: "surely I was led by her [nature]" (I, 372). He maintains that nature seeks the "favour'd Being" (I, 364) "With gentlest visitation" (I, 367), and also employs "Severer interventions" (I, 370). The entire relationship is based on the concept that nature deals with the child--"so she

dealt with me" (I, 371)--rather than the child contending with nature. For example, Wordsworth does not see his early emotions and thoughts as rising internally, but, through the use of the word "infused," maintains that they were instilled by an external force:

> -Ah me! that all
> The terrors, all the early miseries
> Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, that all
> The thoughts and feelings which have been infus'd
> Into my mind, should ever have made up
> The calm existence that is mine when I
> Am worthy of myself! (I, 355-361)

A similar process is implied in the passage:

> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of Childhood didst Thou [Spirit of the universe]
> intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human Soul. (I, 432-434)

In confrontations with scenes of beauty, such as the flute-playing incident, nature does seem to work on the child in the same way in which the wind buffets the kite. The child does not project his emotions onto the landscape in these situations, and thus the confrontations with beauty lack the obvious interaction between the child and nature which is apparent in situations involving sublimity. In order for the child to be affected by beauty, however, he must be receptive and open to its influence. He initiates the overpowering of his mind by nature, for he identifies his own condition with the lone minstrel on the island, thereby preparing himself for a solitary communion with the natural world. In the actual communion nature is the animate force, overpowering the seemingly passive child, but the child does participate in that he invites this infiltration by responding to the solitary minstrel. The child, however, is unconscious of the part he plays in initiating the communion and thus he sees himself as passive and nature as active. As in scenes of sublimity, however, he

is partially responsible for the animated universe, not through the projection of his own emotions, but through a receptivity which is prepared to lend a spirit and life to inanimate objects.

The child actually believes that the universe is animate and active:

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul that art the Eternity of Thought!
> That giv'st to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion! (I, 428-431)

Because Wordsworth attempts to convey these moments as the child actually perceived them, he portrays nature as the active agent, but it is difficult to discern the extent to which the mature Wordsworth believed in an animate universe. He obviously perceived a unified and vitalized spirit in nature--"I felt the sentiment of Being spread/O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still" (II, 420-421)--but he also admits that he coerced "all things into sympathy,/To unorganic natures I transferr'd/My own enjoyments" (II, 409-411). He is aware of his own role in animating the universe:

> To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
> I gave a moral life, I saw them feel,
> Or link'd them to some feeling. (III, 124-127)

Wordsworth also realizes that as a poet he is "affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present."[19] As far as the child is concerned, however, the crucial factor is that he believes intensely in an animate universe and is unaware of his own contribution to that animation. The retrospective poet describes the relationship as the child perceived it:

> can I think
> A vulgar hope was yours when Ye [Presences of Nature]
> employ'd
> Such ministry, when Ye through many a year
> Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
> On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
> Impress'd upon all forms the characters
> Of danger or desire, and thus did make
> The surface of the universal earth
> With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,
> Work like a sea? (I, 492-501)[20]

The authorial comment concluding the relation of the flute-playing incident indicates the importance of this type of experience in preparing Wordsworth for a love of nature:

> Thus daily were my sympathies enlarged,
> And thus the common range of visible things
> Grew dear to me. (II, 181-183)

The actual experience itself does not denote Wordsworth's love of nature, for the child's role is basically passive, on a conscious level; there exists no apparent love or devotion to the landscape. The experience does not involve a great deal of effort on his part as he does not pursue or seek nature--nature merely overpowers his passive mind.

This mystical moment seems to have been inspired primarily by the intense impact of the music on the child's sense of hearing. The image of the lone figure on the island is also important as Wordsworth's mind is elevated and moved by the concept of solitude, aptly embodied in this scene. A similar incident is recounted in the description of Furness Abbey, in which Wordsworth responds to the song of the wren. Again the child is affected indirectly and subtly by sound rather than appearance. Central to the discussion of this incident is a description of the environment: "from recent showers/The earth was comfortless, and, touch'd by faint/Internal breezes" (II, 127-129). Although the child

was undoubtedly affected by the gloomy atmosphere, it is difficult to discern if he was actually conscious of the details of his surroundings, or if the narrator is stressing this aspect as he views the incident in retrospect, as part of his personal development.

A problem arises from the fact that the description of the tranquility of the area surrounding Furness Abbey is generalized through the use of the word "oftentimes." The description of the peace does not specifically apply to the childhood incident, and thus it is difficult to ascertain if the child actually encountered this atmosphere, or if the adult is interpreting this experience on the basis of subsequent visits and a retrospective viewpoint. The reader cannot necessarily assume that the child was aware of, or even came into contact with, this peace and tranquility:

> 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, 115-121)

In order to study accurately the child's reactions the reader must constantly be aware of the poetic voice which interrupts and comments at regular intervals.

In the previous example the solitude and isolation of the figure on the island as well as the beauty of the music seem to invite Wordsworth to associate himself with that figure and experience solitude and a communion with nature, despite the fact that he is with a group. In this instance, however, the incongruity of the beautiful bird song, the origin of which is undetectable, within the gloomy atmosphere, elicits

intense feelings for the surroundings and a simultaneous withdrawal from the group:

> yet still
> So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible Bird
> Sang to itself, that there I could have made
> My dwelling-place, and liv'd for ever there
> To hear such music. (II, 131-135)

The initial impulse comes from the external world in the music of the flute and the song of the wren, but the transcendence of the physical scene and the overpowering of the mind by nature is the result of the strong response of Wordsworth to the sound. As in the flute playing episode the result of the response to the music is an apprehension of the animated spirit within nature:

> Oh! ye Rocks and Streams,
> And that still Spirit of the evening air!
> Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
> Your presence. (II, 138-141)

The power of sound is delineated in the passage in Book II in which Wordsworth, describing his evening walks in storm and tranquility, says:

> and, at that time,
> [I] Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
> To breathe an elevated mood, by form
> Or image unprofaned. (II, 323-326)

The purity and intensity of sound, unmarred by distractions to senses other than hearing, have a powerful effect upon the child, intensified by the fact that, due to the darkness, the sound assumes a mysterious quality in that, similar to the bird song, its origin cannot be discerned:

> 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. (II, 326-329)

Wordsworth absorbs the music which surrounds him: "Thence did I drink the visionary power" (II, 330). He seems to be an empty receptacle, willing to receive the sound which emanates from nature and presses down upon him from all directions. The retrospective poet describes the process in such a way that the boy appears to be absorbing a "visionary power" inherent in nature (which is what the child believes to be true) when, in actual fact, he is absorbing a certain aspect of nature which results in the inception of an internal "visionary power." The "power" is not literally derived from the natural world, but is inspired internally by the influence of that world.

The passage in Book V describing the Boy of Winander is also concerned with sound, and demonstrates the interaction between the child and the natural world.[21] The response of the owls to the child's calls seems to be indicative of the strong communication between the child and the elements of nature. Nature eventually takes control of the relationship, however, and overpowers the child, inducing him to absorb the scene, specifically the sounds:

> sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
> Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
> Has carried far into his heart the voice
> Of mountain torrents. (V, 406-409)

The child is unconscious of the ascendency of the natural scene as it suddenly dominates his senses and, in its overpowering manner, enters his mind: "or the visible scene/Would enter unawares into his mind" (V, 409-410). Although grammatically the word "unawares" modifies "visible scene," the intended meaning seems to be that the child's mind is unaware of the entrance of the visible scene. Again the natural scene seems to be "heavy" and to weigh down upon the child, for as "its solemn imagery,

its rocks,/Its woods, and that uncertain Heaven" (V, 411-412) are incorporated into and "receiv'd/Into the bosom of the steady Lake" (V, 412-413), so they press down upon and infiltrate the mind of the child.

The incidents involving the flute music and Furness Abbey illustrate Wordsworth's ability to experience solitude even when he is part of a group. At times, Wordsworth, apparently realizing that he enjoys solitude, actually separates himself from his friends:

> Not seldom from the uproar I retired
> Into a silent bay, or sportively
> Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
> To cut across the image of a star
> That gleam'd upon the ice. (I, 474-478)

Yet the most amazing aspect of Wordsworth's early years is his ability to separate himself in mind and spirit from a group of which he is physically a part. In the skating episode, for instance, his friends fade from existence as he finds himself in the centre of a spinning universe:

> yet still the solitary Cliffs
> Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had roll'd
> With visible motion her diurnal round. (I, 484-486)

The transient and abstract nature of this phenomenon, which cannot be readily and easily absorbed by the senses, renders this experience enigmatic and inexplicable. Wordsworth instinctively responds to the movement, and again the impact seems to be indirect in that, despite the use of the word "watched," he feels rather than sees the motion: "I stood and watch'd/ Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep" (I, 488-489). The power of nature incites Wordsworth to withdraw and respond to it rather than remain with his friends. He does not initially withdraw in order to seek out the beauty and power of nature, but is moved by nature until he feels the overwhelming urge to retreat into solitude. Thus he participates

in these confrontations with beauty in a similar manner to which he participates in situations of sublimity. In both cases nature affects the child so that he either projects his emotions onto the landscape (sublimity) or withdraws into a receptive or solitary state (beauty). The result in both instances is the apprehension of a vital and animate universe which overpowers the child.

Wordsworth describes how the elements of nature, which provide the background for sports and activities, lead to a love of and need for solitude. He maintains that the rowing races on Windermere were not competitive because of the "tempering" effect of the elements of the landscape, such as the three islands:

> Thus the pride of strength,
> And the vain-glory of superior skill
> Were interfus'd with objects which subdu'd
> And temper'd them, and gradually produc'd
> A quiet independence of the heart. (II, 69-73)

The children are not necessarily aware of the influence of nature in subduing their pride and jealousy--the word "interfused" suggests that the blending of the natural elements with the childish emotions is so complete that the children are not conscious of their calming effect. This "independence of the heart" (II, 73), inspired by the supremacy of nature over the rivalry among friends, leads to an indulgence in solitude for Wordsworth:

> hence
> Ensu'd a diffidence and modesty,
> And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
> The self-sufficing power of Solitude. (II, 75-78)

Eventually in youth and adulthood this urge to experience solitude becomes a need and a habit, no longer necessarily inspired by a spectacular or unusual combination of natural elements or a scene of beauty, but

initiated by the internal mind. Hence a more self-conscious relationship with nature begins in which solitude and nature are pursued, and Wordsworth feels himself to be an active participant rather than a passive recipient. Although he sees himself as a passive recipient of nature's forces during childhood, a close study of the incidents in the poem reveals that he is not in fact passive--he is active in his responses and reactions, but appears passive and believes himself to be so because he is unaware of the action of his mind and imagination.

Most critics acknowledge the fact that Wordsworth's initial reactions to nature are, for the most part, unconscious. Some critics assume that an unconscious attitude necessarily implies passivity. Beatty, for example, in a rather extreme statement, maintains that the child "is wholly unconscious and passive."[22] Legouis proposes:

> Hitherto Wordsworth has revealed himself to us merely as absorbed in passive contemplation of nature's forms and in silent attention to her voices.[23]

This type of statement presents problems because it fails to take into account that Wordsworth as a child is not passive and silent--he reacts and responds, but is merely unaware of these actions. Hoxie Fairchild observes simply and clearly the process which occurs during childhood: "Without his knowing it, these influences [of nature] sank into his mind."[24] I would add that "without his knowing it" the child, through his reactions and responses to nature, aids and encourages this "sinking" of nature into his mind. Thus the child is "unconscious" in two senses--he is unconscious of the fact that nature is influencing him, although he senses its importance, and he is unconscious of his own participation in the relationship.

Many critics identify this unconscious aspect of Wordsworth's early intercourse with nature, but perceive a change between the childhood incidents presented in Book I and the boyhood experiences of the early part of Book II. Beatty states that at the age of ten a process begins whereby "the soul becomes active in its relationships with the world of sense,"[25] and Norman Lacey also notes a change between the child and the boy: "But as a boy he becomes conscious of Nature and begins to seek her for her own sake."[26]

These critical opinions seem to be based on the passage with which Wordsworth prefaces the incidents described in Book II:

> But the time approach'd
> That brought with it a regular desire
> For calmer pleasures, when the beauteous forms
> Of Nature were collaterally attach'd
> To every scheme of holiday delight,
> And every boyish sport, less grateful else,
> And languidly pursued. (II, 49-55)

This is the retrospective poet speaking, however, and the child is not necessarily aware of the fact that sports are enjoyable because of the environment in which they are pursued. Certainly the older child is more aware and appreciative of nature, but does not consciously pursue it, for he is still primarily concerned with sports and physical activities. The boyhood experiences described in the early part of Book II are not essentially different from the childhood experiences of Book I. The adult realizes that because nature is "collaterally attach'd" to these activities the result is a subsequent appreciation of nature when the child is finished with sports, but at the time when sports and nature are combined the child is concerned with sports and only vaguely aware of nature. He enjoys sports because they are associated with nature, but

this is more than likely an unconscious feeling rather than a fact which he understands and acknowledges.

The word "extrinsic" in the passage: "Nature by extrinsic passion first/Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand,/And made me love them" (I, 572-574), refers to the manner in which sports indirectly inspired a love of nature. R. D. Havens explains that the word extrinsic is used because:

> . . . the passion was not for nature, but sport: trapping, boating, skating . . . . Natural objects and natural phenomena which were associated with such sports as yet meant little to him but they were impressed upon his memory and, being connected with pleasant experiences, came in time, according to Hartley's principles, to be beloved.[27]

During boyhood nature is still secondary to sports and is only beloved and valued for itself when sports are removed at the beginning of youth. The relationship necessarily alters under these new conditions, but until this time, throughout childhood and boyhood, the interaction between the child and nature is characterized by Wordsworth's unconscious attitude.

Thus I disagree with the emphasis placed by some critics on a shift of perception between the years of childhood and boyhood. Geoffrey Hartman maintains that there is a difference between Wordsworth's relationship with nature during childhood and boyhood. He says that nature

> . . . used to enter the sphere of childhood passions incidentally, as a kind of backdrop, but now the young sports find they cannot do without it. At first it was nothing but a wild field where they were sown; now they take a conscious pleasure in it.[28]

In this statement Hartman exaggerates the appreciation of the boy for nature. Much more to the point is his observation:

> Though still wantoning through rough and smooth, and feeling their animal energies rather than nature, they occasionally become aware of the charm of a particular place or of the whole fabric's glory.[29]

This statement, however, is equally as applicable to childhood and the events described in Book I. When the details and elements of the actual events are studied, there is virtually no difference between childhood and boyhood. The boyhood experiences described in Book II are similar to those of Book I in that Wordsworth is basically unaware of the interaction between his mind and emotions and the natural landscape. He does not seek out nature for its own sake, but is affected by nature simply because he is in the right place at the right time. Although an appreciation of nature is imperceptibly developing during boyhood as Wordsworth is becoming attached to nature through its association with sport, he is not conscious of the change and it does not make itself evident until youth.

It is important to remember that it is the retrospective poet, not the boy, who observes:

> Thus daily were my sympathies enlarged,
> And thus the common range of invisible things
> Grew dear to me. (II, 181-183)

In viewing his overall development Wordsworth is aware of the importance of these experiences within nature, but the process has been operating since early childhood, and thus this "enlarged sympathy" is not something which suddenly occurs in boyhood as opposed to childhood. For the boy as well as the child, sports and activities are enjoyable because they take place within the natural environment, but neither the child nor the boy singles out nature as the element which makes sports enjoyable--only the retrospective poet does this.

Melvin Rader's statement describing the change in Wordsworth's perception is basically true:

> Although at first his 'intercourse with beauty' was 'unconscious,' he gradually became more aware of natural loveliness and less absorbed in mere 'animal movements.'[30]

He identifies this change, however, as occurring between childhood and boyhood, at ten years of age:

> In contrast to the self-awareness of the boy, the child's feelings are objectified--the inner brightness is attached to the external world . . . . In boyhood, on the contrary, Wordsworth awakened to a sense of the independence and creativeness of the mind.[31]

In my opinion, Wordsworth does not achieve "a sense of the independence and creativeness of the mind" until the years of youth. The relationship with nature in childhood and boyhood does not vary signficantly as can be clearly seen in the distinctions Wordsworth makes between the stages of his development in "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" and in Book VIII of The Prelude.

Norman Lacey maintains that "Even as a boy he [Wordsworth] obscurely understood that he must maintain his own 'creative sensibility,' must not allow himself to be 'subdued by the regular action of the world.'"[32] The passage to which Lacey refers (II, 377-382) is not concerned with the child, but with the youth as sports have already been abandoned and he is approaching the age of seventeen. Even so, the youth does not necessarily understand "that he must maintain his own 'creative sensibility'"--this observation is iterated by the mature poet who studies his development from a distanced point of view. This retention of sensibility is not something for which Wordsworth consciously strives; rather it occurs

because of his sensitive soul and the privileged circumstances of his childhood and youth--the fact that he is surrounded by lofty and enduring objects of nature. He begins to become aware of his special powers at Cambridge--"I was a chosen Son" (III, 82)--and realizes the importance of nurturing and retaining them, but to apply this awareness to childhood is to exaggerate the perception of the child and endow him with a consciousness which he does not possess.

David Perkins says of the relationship between the child and nature:

> The contact is intimate, complete, and passive in that it is not achieved by an act of will. On the contrary, it is either directly bestowed by nature or else it is the product of responses over which he has no control.[33]

I would add that he not only lacks control over these responses, but is also unconscious of them, rendering the final impact of nature mysterious and powerful because the child does not acknowledge or understand his own reactions. The important change during youth is that Wordsworth is vaguely aware of the operation of his developing imagination (II, 381-395) and he senses that his own mind is an active partner in the relationship:

> He feels that, be his mind however great
> In aspiration, the universe in which
> He lives is equal to his mind, that each
> Is worthy of the other.[34]

This increasing consciousness does not lessen the impact of nature, but does diminish the feeling that nature completely dominates and controls the mind.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]Wordsworth seems to be a pioneer in his attempts to articulate this type of experience. Modern writers continue to explore these mystical moments of childhood and boyhood, when a spiritual or abstract world supersedes the physical. Certain passages in Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man are reminiscent, in some respects, of Wordsworth's spots of time:

> How pale the light was at the window! But that was nice. The fire rose and fell on the wall. It was like waves. Someone had put coal on and he heard voices. They were talking. It was the noise of waves. Or the waves were talking among themselves as they rose and fell.

See James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p. 27.

Ernest Buckler, in The Mountain and the Valley, also portrays a child who experiences "visionary" or "mystical" moments:

> He fished by himself, a little upstream; so he could hear the others, but not see them. He looked at the bubble-coins on the surface of the water and let his mind not-think. He seemed to be floating along with the brook.

See Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 28.

It is interesting to note that Stephen Dedalus and David Canaan, like Wordsworth, are completely immersed in the stimulation and satisfaction of their physical senses. Passages involving the senses of smelling, hearing and touch are numerous in these two novels.

[2]R. D. Havens, The Mind of A Poet (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1941), pp. 155-156.

[3]The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), VI, 817.

[4]Ibid.

[5]I. F. Note to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, p. 463.

[6]R. D. Havens, The Mind of A Poet, p. 167.

[7]William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in Vol. II of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, ll. 41-49.

[8]William Wordsworth, "The Sublime and the Beautiful," The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, II, 351. The situation does not involve sublimity in the strict sense of the word, for Wordsworth associates sublimity with the landscape, specifically mountains. The experience, however, is very similar:

> . . . the body of this sensation would be found to resolve itself into three component parts: a sense of individual form or forms; a sense of duration; and a sense of power. The whole complex impression is made up of these elementary parts, & the effect depends upon their co-existence. For, if any one of them were abstracted, the others would be deprived of their power to affect.

[9]Ibid., p. 353.

[10]Ibid., p. 354.

[11]Ibid., p. 351. Wordsworth emphasizes the fact that a "Child or unpracticed person" is more easily affected by sublimity than others because:

> Familiarity with these objects tends very much to mitigate & to destroy the power which they have to produce the sensations of sublimity as dependent upon personal fear or upon wonder; a comprehensive awe takes the place of the one, and a religious admiration of the other, & the condition of the mind is exalted accordingly.

See William Wordsworth, "The Sublime and the Beautiful," The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, II, 353.

[12]This comment is similar to the passage alluding to the fell destroyer. In both cases Wordsworth is objective and distanced. He observes himself as a child and generalizes and elaborates on the image he creates, arriving at a conclusion which is completely removed from how the child actually views himself.

[13]Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814, p. 220.

[14]A. E. Powell, The Romantic Theory of Poetry, p. 140.

[15]De Selincourt identifies this companion as Robert Greenwood, who later became Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. See William Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of A Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, p. 521.

[16]John F. Danby, William Wordsworth: The Prelude and Other Poems (London: Edward Arnold, 1963), p. 57.

[17]John F. Danby, The Simple Wordsworth (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 100.

[18]William Wordsworth, "Expostulation and Reply," in Vol. IV of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, ll. 17-24.

[19]William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1850)," The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, I, 138.

[20]The word "vulgar" in this passage seems to have the meaning of common or popular. In viewing his development as a poet, Wordsworth stresses the fact that he is chosen and privileged from his earliest years. He sees himself as being singled out in the same way in which a prophet is chosen. Although this view seems rather egocentric, it is actually the opposite as Wordsworth emphasizes the fact that a higher power is at work, guiding and protecting him, and that his own poetic spirit is the result of the favourable circumstances dealt out to him by this power.

Thus the close communion with nature during childhood is preparing Wordsworth for his role as a poet, and is a privilege and favour bestowed upon him. Wordsworth seems to admire Coleridge (also a "chosen" individual) for maintaining and nurturing a poetic spirit in an urban environment, without the support of nature (VIII, 603-610). Wordsworth justifies this extensive concentration on his own life by intimating that he is a "chosen Son" (III, 82), who has been singled out for the vocation of a poet. Nature would not necessarily affect other individuals in the profound manner in which it affects Wordsworth--he is sensitive and receptive because he is a "chosen Son."

[21]The Boy of Winander passage was originally written in the first person in Manuscript JJ and thus seems to be closely aligned to Wordsworth's personal experience.

[22]Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historic Relation, p. 136.

[23]Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, trans. J. W. Mathews, p. 50.

[24]Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Romantic Quest (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 72.

[25]Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historic Relation, p. 137.

[26]Norman Lacey, Wordsworth's View of Nature (Hamden: Archon Books, 1965), p. 19.

[27]R. D. Havens, The Mind of A Poet, p. 306.

[28]Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814, p. 220.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Melvin Rader, Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 92-93.

[31]Ibid., p. 92.

[32]Norman Lacey, Wordsworth's View of Nature, p. 25.

[33]David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 67

[34]William Wordsworth, Rejected Draft for Book VIII in Manuscript Y, in The Prelude or Growth of A Poet's Mind, ed. E. de Selincourt, 11. 172-175.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The style of the first two books of The Prelude is greatly affected by the fact that the child is unconscious of the processes involved in his interactions with nature. Wordsworth attempts to describe these experiences from the child's point of view--a difficult task because the child is unable to articulate his feelings as he is unaware of their origin and significance. The composition is the result of the adult's attempting to express in words those vague and fleeting moments, while simultaneously commenting on their importance and significance with respect to his overall development. Thus the narrator is trying to portray the childhood experiences and, at the same time, view childhood as the initial and formative period of his life.

As we have seen, the poet is both retrospective and distanced. This point of view leads to strange delineations of the child; Wordsworth refers to himself as "A naked Savage" (I, 304) and "a fell destroyer" (I, 318). He is obviously creating exaggerated and dramatic portraits of himself as a child in order to present an effective image to the reader. The child does not see himself as a savage or a fell destroyer--the interpretation is exclusively the poet's. While describing, or after having discussed an experience, Wordsworth often employs a simile or metaphor in order to present a visual scene or portray more effectively the mood or emotion inspired by the incident. In the skating episode, for example, he likens himself to an "untired horse,/That cares not for its home" (I, 459-460). Rather than attempting to describe his energy and restlessness,

he provides a comparison which reflects this activity. This use of metaphors and similes epitomizes the distanced attitude of the narrator who is observing himself from an external point of view, and thus can compare himself with other entities. At the beginning of Book II Wordsworth comments on the distance between his adulthood and childhood (II, 28-33)--an intervention which is very apparent in the composition of the poem.

Wordsworth not only views himself in a removed manner, but also describes events from this distanced point of view. In the description of the boat-stealing episode, for example, the reader feels that as Wordsworth sets the scene he is looking down over the entire action. He is not in the boat as he describes its movement, but is observing it from an external point: "my little Boat mov'd on/Even like a Man who walks with stately step/Though bent on speed" (I, 386-388). Obviously this is not the child's observation, for he would not be able to view the boat's movement from an external point. This simile serves the purpose of reflecting the mood of the child. His guilt causes him to attempt to regain dignity and composure ("stately step"), but also forces him to feel as if he should flee ("bent on speed"). Wordsworth creates this atmosphere in an indirect manner in order to avoid being forced to express and explore the child's state of mind. Because the child is not fully aware of his emotions Wordsworth cannot state directly what the child thinks and feels, but must interpret the incident on the basis of his subsequent knowledge and experience.

The fact that the child is unaware of his reactions and responses to nature results in fairly vague and general descriptions of the inter-

actions between the child and nature. The discussions of the incidents themselves are quite comprehensible and clear, but the poet's philosophical comments which attempt to rationalize and explain these mystical moments are often confused and difficult to understand. Wordsworth realized that he was attempting to achieve the impossible, and is almost apologetic when he admits:

> Hard task to analyse a soul, in which,
> Not only general habits and desires,
> But each most obvious and particular thought,
> Not in a mystical and idle sense,
> But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd,
> Hath no beginning. (II, 232-237)

Although he realizes the difficulty of his goal, he continues to pursue it because it is the "task" he has set for himself:

> 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, 666-669)

The philosophical generalizations in the first two books and throughout the the entire poem, although vague and difficult, are probably the most interesting and effective portions of The Prelude because they attempt to express poetically and articulately deep and indistinct emotions and thoughts. The discussions of the child are complex in that Wordsworth is interpreting and illuminating experiences which were almost incomprehensible when they occurred. Thus the language in these passages is often vague and complicated.

One example of these attempts to describe mystical moments in a general manner occurs at lines 428 to 441 of Book I. Situated immediately after the description of the boat-stealing episode, the passage begins: "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!/Thou Soul that art the Eternity of

Thought!" (I, 428-429). In his attempt to identify the life force which the child perceives in nature Wordsworth applies three capitalized nouns to describe it: Wisdom, Spirit and Soul. The words in themselves are rather vague and meaningless in that their connotations are broad and undefined, and yet the overall effect is successful. The words "spirit" and "soul" convey the idea that the life which the child perceives in the natural world is insubstantial and elusive, while the capitalization of the words renders that life religious and sacred, suggesting that the child is very much in awe of this spirit which he respects, and yet finds mysterious and evasive. The capitalization also invests this spirit with a grandeur and power, obviously reflecting the child's awe and fear of its presence. The word "wisdom" imbues this force with the added dimension of being a formative influence which nurtures the child--an element to which he can look for guidance.

The phrase, "Eternity of Thought," is very obscure and vague as it is not clear whether the spirit itself actually experiences thought, whether it instigates thought in those whom it affects, or indeed whether it embodies what the mind conceives of as eternity. Any attempt to analyze the intended meaning of the phrase seems futile. Perhaps the important element to note is that the phrase is deliberately obscure and vague because the subject itself is so elusive. The capitalization, general words and exclamation marks denote the struggle and difficulty Wordsworth is experiencing in his attempt to articulate an abstract idea which defies expression.

Wordsworth has purposely described this animated spirit of nature in vague and general terms because this is the manner in which the child

apprehends it. The language of the poem matches the child's own conception of the life which emanates from nature. The child believes that this spirit "giv'st to forms and images a breath /And everlasting motion" (I, 430-431), and yet Wordsworth, the poet, obviously recognizes that the child is partially responsible for the animation of the external world. Although written by the retrospective adult, this portion of the passage is presented from the point of view of the child. At line 431, however, he steps back and views his childhood from a distance, commenting on its significance and contribution to his overall development. Although the concepts are still difficult and complicated, the language becomes more concrete because Wordsworth is describing a process rather than a feeling which he did not fully comprehend when he experienced it.

A very similar passage occurs at line 490 in Book I in which Wordsworth refers to:

> Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky
> Or on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
> And Souls of lonely places! (I, 490-492)

The word "presences" is a general and all-encompassing term which does not define or limit the nature of the spirit to which Wordsworth refers. He uses such a word in order to stress the extent and expanse of this vitality and life; it cannot be defined or forced into a single entity. The word "souls" again reinforces the spiritual and insubstantial aspect of this force emanating from nature. The use of the word "visions" is rather ambiguous in that Wordsworth is referring to that which he perceives rather than that which is emitted from the natural world. As in the previous passage studied, the words are deliberately vague and general in order to avoid limiting or defining this abstract spirit.

Wordsworth obviously evades references to a God or creator because the child does not conceive of this animate spirit as being related to an orthodox God even though it possesses a divine or religious element which he regards with reverence. This spirit seems to be similar to the wind which infiltrates the elements of nature with life and movement, effusing itself over all. As in the previous passage, the capitalization and exclamatory apostrophes reflect Wordsworth's struggle and effort to portray in words this elusive and powerful spirit inherent in nature.

Again the passage is written from the child's point of view, for Wordsworth maintains that these presences of nature

> Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
> On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
> Impress'd upon all forms the characters
> Of danger or desire, and thus did make
> The surface of the universal earth
> With triumph and delight, and hope, and fear,
> Work like a sea. (I, 495-501)

Surely the poet does not believe that the world was animated entirely by its own spirit, for he has just described the boat-stealing and skating episodes in which he subtly stresses that the earth is animated because of the projection of the child's guilt and his movement in the boat, and because of the child's own motion on his skates. In both cases the world is absolutely still, and it is the child's own emotions or sensuous responses which imbue that world with motion and life.

Why then does Wordsworth not acknowledge what he has illustrated so effectively in his descriptions of specific episodes? I would argue that in these philosophical passages he portrays nature as being animated by its own spirit because that is the way in which the child perceives it. When contemplating his overall development he realizes that he must portray nature as it actually affected him in each stage, and in childhood

nature is a vital and animate force due to the spirit found within it. The child, unlike the youth, does not acknowledge the activity of his own mind and imagination because he is virtually unconscious of their capabilities, and thus he genuinely believes that the life which he perceives in nature is the result of the powers of the natural world rather than a combination of his own imagination and the elements of nature interacting with one another.

Thus the vague and general phrases throughout the first two books of The Prelude have a purpose, and are an integral part of the poem, in that they reflect the confused and very unsure attitude of the child towards the power which emanates from the natural world, moving and admonishing him. Although some critics may regard these passages disparagingly as examples of Wordsworth's obscurity and redundancy, I view them as admirable attempts to express in words the child's relationship with nature, which is based on mystical and visionary experiences. Wordsworth is aware of the problems involved in trying to convey the relationship between the child and nature, and these problems chiefly arise, I would argue, from the fact that the child's intercourse with nature is virtually unconscious. The poet's references to the spirit of the natural world are obscure and vague because the child himself is confused and perplexed as to the nature of the power which emanates from the external world, moving him and demanding from him reactions and responses which denote an acknowledgement of its presence.

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