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Some Aspects of Style in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*

Some Aspects of Style in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*

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Abstract of Dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to examine some facets of poetic technique in Wordsworth's The Prelude. Because Wordsworth emphasizes the importance of spoken communication in his relationship with Nature, and because that relationship is central to the growth of the poet's mind, the initial focus of the study is on the function of the vocal control as a consciously adopted means of structuring and modulating the monologue in the poem. Wordsworth adopts various voices which are recognizably Miltonic, Shakespearian and Augustan, and these are examined in chapter two. In the third chapter, his use of variations in the voice which are recognizably Wordsworthian is examined. The second area focused upon in the study is the use of particular techniques which substantiate Wordsworth's view that language is "the incarnation of thought" but that there are areas of experience which cannot be reached by language. This view is linked to his conscious use of understatement, his careful use of repetition as a means of probing and clarifying experience and perception, and his control of syntactic and linear structure to demonstrate and to probe the validity of his views on language, expression and experience. These aspects of poetic technique are considered in chapter four. The final chapter attempts to place the various aspects of style examined in the dissertation in context, by observing them as they function in one passage.

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Chapter One

Introduction

> Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not. . . an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve. [1]

The importance of words, of the unfathomable power of language to express, to explain, and to create, is central to Wordsworth's understanding of the function of the imagination in the world. The scope of The Prelude, to some extent, distracts attention from the strength and power of the minute detail of the language Wordsworth uses in the poem to narrate and to probe the experiences which made him "a dedicated spirit." The degree to which the language, and the style it creates, do in fact allow the reader to proceed without being unduly conscious of its technicalities is an indication of the effectiveness of the language as an embodiment of the thought. The unobtrusive structures which the language creates are manifestations of the "structures. . . the mind/Builds for itself" (VII, 624-625)[2] and, as such,

parallel that integral unity Wordsworth discovers between the mind and the universe:

> my voice proclaims
> How exquisitely the individual Mind. . .
> . . . to the external world
> Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too—
> Theme this but little heard of among men—
> The external World is fitted to the Mind. 3

The integration of poetic structure and the thought it communicates, because of its unobtrusiveness, is what makes The Prelude a unified poem. It therefore seems important to attempt to isolate some aspects of that style and examine them in order to understand the workings of the mind of the poet as it examines its own growth. The aim of this dissertation is to identify some of the techniques Wordsworth has relied upon in the poem and to examine the way they function.

Throughout The Prelude Wordsworth emphasizes the communication which existed between himself and the natural world. That intercourse was conducted, as the poem repeatedly insists, by the poet speaking to Nature and Nature speaking to him. The importance of this communication is reflected in the poem by the recurrent reference to voices and communicating, intelligible sounds emanating from the natural world and shaping the poet's mind. Since the poet stresses the unity both of the world and the mind, and of language and thought, it seems appropriate to look in the poem for evidence, beyond mere identification, of the influence of such voices upon the fabric of the poem. It emerges, from close scrutiny of the poem, that this emphasis

on the vocal is in fact embodied in the structure of the poem. The premise on which the poem rests is that Wordsworth is directly and personally addressing Coleridge. This orientation towards spoken communication is significant as part of the poem's epic structure: the original epics were spoken and the oral tradition was very much part of Wordsworth's awareness of poetry, as the Lyrical Ballads indicate. The vocal, oral attributes of poetry play a large part in the composition of The Prelude, and my second and third chapters will focus on this aspect of the poem.

Wordsworth, I hope to demonstrate, controls the monologue of The Prelude by adopting a wide range of vocal modulations which, at one level, give to the poem variety necessary to sustain such a long work, and at another level, recreate in the poetic structure the vocal emphasis which the poet proclaims is central to his communion with Nature and to his vocation as a poet. Wordsworth's vocation as a poet, which The Prelude probes, manifests itself in the special relationship Nature established between herself and the poet from his infancy. That chosenness, which confirmed his sense of vocation, allowed him to see and feel the power of "the breath of God" (Prelude, V, 222) in the natural world, but also gave him a share in the communion of poets. The Prelude very consciously asserts its position in the canon of English poetic tradition by insisting throughout upon its connection with Milton. The connection with Milton

is pre-eminent in Wordsworth's intention in the poem, and in his awareness of his own identity as a poet. This bond between Wordsworth and Milton[4] is an essential part of the poem as a whole, and it is recreated in the verse by the conspicuous adoption by Wordsworth of a voice clearly Miltonic. The adoption of this voice and the wide range of allusions to Milton, give variety to the monologue, but they also re-assert, within the structure of the poem, the epic intention of The Prelude. The pervasiveness of Milton in the poem amounts to a literal presence. That presence and the voice which articulates it, give to the poem an allusive complexity as well as a vocal range which contributes to the structuring of the poem as a consciously epic, and specifically Miltonic, undertaking.

Other voices are also used in The Prelude to modulate the monologue, giving it variety but also extending the significance of the poem. By my count there are approximately thirty references to Shakespeare, about six to Thomson and Pope, and perhaps three or four to Spenser and Coleridge. It seems to me that the references to Shakespeare in some cases involve the adoption of a voice which can be identified as Shakespearian. In the case of Pope the modulation of the voice using the connection with Pope cannot truly be said to be "Popean." But the reference brings a voice which is more generally Augustan than specifically Popean and with that voice comes a moralistic tone which asserts connections between

Wordsworth's subject matter and the world commonly associated with Pope's urbane satire.

I have not dealt with the references to Thomson, Spenser, or Coleridge because I think they function simply as allusions within the verse rather than involving any modulation of the monologue voice. As allusions, the references may convey other qualities to the poem but as the voice is not significantly altered, the allusion does not come within the range of my study. This is also true of some of the Miltonic allusions and some of the Shakespearian allusions, but I will deal with the different types of allusion in the next two chapters and focus on those references which seem to have an influence upon the vocal structure.

In the fourth chapter I will examine some specific aspects of poetic technique in The Prelude. The areas I concentrate on are those which seem to shed light upon Wordsworth's recognition of the power of language as an influence for good, and an influence for evil. The ambivalent nature of the word as a corrupting force and a creative force is made more complex by Wordsworth's recognition that some experiences lie "far hidden from the reach of words" (Prelude, III, 185). The implication of this awareness for his own poetic creation is probed in the poem thematically, but it is also probed structurally, and that structural sounding of the power and the limitation of language is what I shall examine. I will also consider facets of the

poetic techniques which recreate the remembering process of the mind, since that process is the basis of the poem, and the basis of Wordsworth's recognition of his chosenness, and his vocation as a poet. These foci will involve examining aspects of sentence structure, linear structure and linguistic patterns which recur in the poem and seem to belong to a larger pattern of coherent ordering which Wordsworth uses to probe and shape his experience.

In the concluding chapter I will deal briefly with the effect of a number of the aspects of style delineated in the body of the dissertation as they combine to produce the finished work of art. This will, hopefully, help to place the various aspects of poetic technique in the context to which they belong and counteract the imbalance which is inevitably created when individual facets of style are examined in isolation. It is only in conjunction with all the other devices that any technique functions, and so in the final chapter, the merging of the various facets of technique in one short passage may indicate to some degree the effectiveness of Wordsworth's poetic discipline as he composed the record of the growth of his own mind.

Chapter Two

Borrowed Voices in The Prelude

It is a remarkable characteristic of Wordsworth's understanding of his own childhood that the natural world communicated directly with his inmost self and guided him through salutary experiences to nurture and discipline his soul. The Derwent "lov'd/To blend his murmurs with my Nurse's song, . . ./And. . . sent a voice/That flow'd along my dreams" (Prelude, I, 272-276). When, as a child, he stole a bird from a snare he "heard. . . low breathings coming after me," (I, 329-30) and when he hung "on the perilous ridge. . . With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind/Blow through my ears!" (I, 347-49). "The voice/Of mountain-echoes" (I, 389-90) accompanied the boat-stealing incident and the noise made by the children skating echoed among the hills: "the precipices rang aloud, . . . while the distant hills/Into the tumult sent an alien sound/ Of melancholy, not unnoticed," (I, 467-471). In winter "the splitting ice,/. . . sent,/. . . its long/And dismal yellings," (I, 566-69) and

> The Sands of Westmoreland, the Creeks and Bays
> Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
> How when the Sea threw off his evening shade
> And to the Shepherd's huts beneath the crags
> Did send sweet notice of the rising moon,
> How I have stood. . .
> . . . gathering, as it seem'd
> Through every hair-breadth of that field of light,
> New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers. (I, 594-608)

This evidence of direct communication culminates in his summing up: "the earth/And common face of Nature spake to me/ Rememberable things (I, 614-15). Later he listened to "The ghostly language of the ancient earth," (II, 328). He perceived in the natural world "the shades of difference/As they lie hid in all exterior forms" (III, 158-59) and could find in Nature

> . . . no surface where its power might sleep,
> Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
> And by an unrelenting agency
> Did bind my feelings, even as in a chain. (III, 164-67)

The recurrences of references to Nature's communication by voice, words, speech, and sounds with "a favor'd Being" (I, 164) attest to the importance of such verbal contact. Not only is the "favor'd Being" guided by this direct intervention in his life, but the repeated emphasis on language between the human being and the natural universe accords the natural world a specifically human, anthropomorphic life which allows the human being to speak to the world, as well as the world to speak to the man. It is this two-way communication, evident in Wordsworth's "Coercing all things into sympathy" (II, 409), that permitted him to converse "With things that really are" (II, 413). It is this area of communication, of an emphatically verbal kind, that will be examined in this chapter.

By using the first person singular throughout The Prelude Wordsworth constantly reiterates the fact that there is one voice in the poem—the poet's own. The personal nature of the voice

speaking is emphasized by the repeated addresses to Coleridge at one end of the scale, and the invocations of, or addresses to, the universe, Nature, Man, London, Helvellyn and many others, at the opposite end of the vocal scale. These addresses to Coleridge and to the external world establish a motif to which the poet returns from the journey through the process of the growth of his own mind. They provide an axis which itself reinforces the personal spoken nature of the poem and gives the digressions in the narrative a formal base from which bearings can be determined in the poem.

The contrast in tone between the repeated addresses to Coleridge and those to the external world is indicative of the kind of control Wordsworth is using in the poem. In bringing attention back again and again to the "Friend" or "most beloved friend", Wordsworth brings into play the tone of intimacy. Such a tone provides an indication of the volume of the speaking voice: the volume of private conversation. But it provides more than simply the implied conversational tone of voice: it focuses the direction of the speaking voice towards one individual and in doing so, modulates the voice to the level of private intimate converse. In contrast, the addresses to the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!" (I, 428), "What sounds are those, Helvellyn, which are heard/Up to thy summit?" (VIII, 1-2), "therefore did I turn/To you, ye Pathways, and ye lonely Roads" (XII, 123-4) suggest that the speaker's

voice, directed to the external world, no longer uses the volume of direct private conversation. The rhetorical device not only indicates the tone of the convention of such rhetoric; it brings to the poetic technique an indication of the volume of the voice speaking: one does not presumably use the same verbal pitch in addressing a friend at close range as one does addressing a mountain. By using this facet of verbal control, Wordsworth gives force to the sense that the poem is a personal address and also gives an added means of manipulating the tone of voice to give variety to the poem.

In a poem of such length, variety in tone is essential to sustain the unwieldly materials. Within the specific area of the implied volume and direction of the speaking voice Wordsworth imposes considerable control over the poem's movement. The voice addressing Coleridge is quite distinct from that narrating the incidents in Cambridge, or France or London. The narrative voice of these sections is distinct from those points where the poet makes general observations about himself or his surroundings: "We were a noisy crew" (I, 505), "I love a public road: few sights there are/That please me more" (XII, 145-6). Here the impression created is of a tone between the personal addresses to Coleridge and the prevalent narrative tone. There is a ring in these observations which suggests that a confiding tone is being set up with an assumed larger audience—an intimate story-telling voice which adds to the

vocal range the poet has at his disposal within the poem.

There are many other slight and subtle modulations of the vocal tone which serve to give variety to the poem and to give credence to its being the authentic record of the poet's own mind. The variety this provides is used by Wordsworth in conjunction with many other tonal, verbal and rhetorical artifices to probe and express the self-scrutiny the poem sets out to achieve. The fact that the implied vocal range of the speaking poet is itself used within the poetic construct contributes to the substratum of dramatic shifting of perspective within the poem, which is a further device the poet uses to vary the monologue. In the remainder of this chapter I hope to examine the other ways in which Wordsworth adapts and modulates the voice within the poem to provide variety and to express "liveliest thoughts in lively words" and also to use the voice as an instrument to push forward his own investigation of the self and the nature of the imaginative function.

Reminiscences of Milton abound in The Prelude. Herbert Lindenberger points out that for Wordsworth "being formal means being more or less Miltonic."[1] The Miltonic tone is characteristic of high-toned eighteenth-century blank verse and in many instances Wordsworth uses Miltonic style or phrasing in exactly that way. The address to Coleridge at the end of

Book X comes to mind as an illustration of Wordsworth's using the Miltonic grand manner purely for the stylized resonances a resemblance to Milton might carry with it. However, there are many other functions in the poem which the Miltonic echoes serve. In using these Wordsworth brings to the poem not only the stamp of approval of tradition, but an active force within the poem constructing the fabric of his own epic, and providing the variety and diversity necessary to the poem's sustaining its own weight.

R.D. Havens[2] and, more recently, Lionel Stevenson,[3] note that Wordsworth's use of Milton involves more than simply the imitation of the established poet by the disciple: Wordsworth resembled Milton in many ways and he seems consciously to have identified himself with the earlier poet. It is this area of Wordsworth's self-identification with Milton in The Prelude that I will examine, because it appears that the identification allows Wordsworth to make use of Milton's authority, tradition and voice without losing his own identity or authenticity.

Much of what can be generally regarded as "Miltonic"[4] in The Prelude derives from the conventions associated with the use of blank verse which developed during the eighteenth century. Havens comments that Wordsworth probably considered "Inversion. . . not as a trait peculiar to Paradise Lost but as a characteristic of all good blank verse."[5] The use of

latinisms and sequences of verbs, adjectives or proper nouns may have undergone a similar merging into the convention by the time Wordsworth was using them. When Wordsworth appears to be conforming to such eighteenth-century conventions, as in Book IX, 396 to 435, the absorption of the tradition, with its strong Miltonic overtones, serves to establish the importance and gravity of the subject. Characteristic[6] of such conventions is the use of slightly unfamiliar words and constructions, archaisms; proper nouns which bring remote or exotic associations with them, so that the sweep of a vast, rich and varied world is brought to the poem; constant reference to natural and sensory elements and what C.S. Lewis calls "an air of magnanimous austerity." The overall effect of these conventions is to bring to the work in which they are used an elevated style which, by its association with the Miltonic grand manner, brings to the verse some of the stature of the venerated model. In this part of Book IX the references to Dion and Plato, Eudemus and Timonides connect Wordsworth's poem with the classical worlds to which these figures belonged. They give to Wordsworth's discussions with Beaupuy some of the grandeur associated with those theoretical and moral classical debates to which he alludes. They also establish Wordsworth's discussions, and his poem, within a literary tradition which has been sanctioned by the most notable of his literary predecessors: Milton, too, turned to the writers of Greece and

Rome for authoritative reinforcement. The tradition Wordsworth is following in such passages, then, draws not only upon authoritative echoes of Milton but, in emulating Milton's own practice, reinforces Wordsworth's method.

The purpose of seeking such sanction from established authority is to place the new work within the tradition and to give it, in a sense, shelter or support—indirectly, to justify its existence or legitimacy, by pointing to previously accepted norms. The implied connection with an earlier work, particularly one so widely acclaimed in the eighteenth century as Paradise Lost, not only acknowledges the earlier writer as being a worthwhile mentor, but it brings to the new work the strength of an allusive range which can extend its own relevance. When Wordsworth uses Milton in this traditional way he brings to that part of the poem a sense of the importance and seriousness of his subject: his own subject takes on some of the gravity of Paradise Lost as well as forging the other connections with a larger tradition. So pervasive is this kind of use of Milton in The Prelude that it is virtually impossible to isolate each point where Wordsworth is, or is not, being Miltonic. The overall effect of this "organ tone"[7] within The Prelude is to insist upon the serious intent of the poem and to allow Wordsworth to use a tone of voice which is recognizably Miltonic, and consequently solemn, as an extension of the range of his own voice. As a consistent undercurrent in the

poem the Miltonic tone of voice gives the poet a further means of controlling his subject and that undercurrent provides the opportunity for the poet to bring the Miltonic tone to the surface for specific effects. It is these uses of Milton in The Prelude that provide some of the clearest evidence of Wordsworth's reliance upon different voices to impose order upon his subject.

It is frequently impossible to determine precisely when Wordsworth is speaking in "Wordsworth's" voice and when he is using Milton's. Conspicuous Miltonic passages—IX, 396-435 and VI, 426-445, and many others—serve the purpose of carrying on the continous undercurrent of the formal, serious tone created by the overt references to Milton and allusions to his work. The Miltonic resonances distinguish such passages from the specifically narrative passages where the dominant voice is conspicuously Wordsworth's own as, for example, the discharged soldier episode (IV, 400-504), or the story of the shepherd and his son (VIII, 222-311). The undercurrent created by the repeated incorporation of the Miltonic tone of voice into the poem is essential to the variety and range of the dominant voice, and its significance is emphasized by Wordsworth within the poem by direct assertion of the links between his poetic aspirations and Milton's, between his experience and Milton's, and by the demonstration of the affinities between Milton and himself which appear when the voices of the

two poets merge in a thematic and stylistic fusion.

In Book I Wordsworth asserts a connection with Milton by speculating on the subject for his epic as "some British theme, some old/Romantic tale, by Milton left unsung" (I, 179-80). Not only is he linking himself with Milton's epic ambitions and contemplating taking up what Milton had left undone; he is, in fact, also projecting themes for an epic in the same way as Milton did in the "Epitaphium Damonis." The assertion of Wordsworth's relationship with Milton is repeated when he recognizes that the theme he had undertaken, the story of his life, "rather at this time, than work/Of ampler or more varied argument" (I, 670-71) contained the "heroic argument" (III, 182) he had originally sought. The allusion to Paradise Lost IX, 13 to 29 links Wordsworth's task with Milton's as he undertook the "sad task" of changing his theme from the friendship between God and man to the tragic one of man's disobedience and the "world of woe" which that brought into being. For Milton the "Argument/Heroic", the "argument/Not less but more Heroic than the wrath/Of stern Achilles" (Paradise Lost, IX, 13-15) is the story of Man's fall. For Wordsworth, on the other hand, the "heroic argument" belongs to the period of early youth "while yet/The yoke of earth is new" (III, 179-80). This discrepancy in the relevance of the allusion at this point in the poem and the poet's history raises the question of how Wordsworth was actually using Milton. It seems here

that the echo of Milton's phrase is operating quite simply to attest to the validity of Wordsworth's claim to a place in the epic tradition. The fact that the "heroic argument" he refers to here is almost the inverse of Milton's does not make the allusion inept. What Wordsworth is seeking is not the allusive range and expression which some other echoes of Milton bring to the poem, but a simple assertion that his theme, though different from Milton's, has the same poetic status and is as serious and profound as the renowned theme the Milton reference recalls. The allusion in both these cases does not correspond to the kind of expanding allusive force Earl Wasserman[8] delineates in "The Limits of Allusion in The Rape of the Lock". For Pope, as Wasserman makes clear, a knowledge of the implications of the source and its confrontation with its new environment in Pope's poem, is essential to the understanding of the poem and its ironic connotations. The allusion, with all its implications, is an active part of the poem. For Wordsworth, in these two instances (although this is not true of all Miltonic allusions in The Prelude) it is sufficient that the reader recognizes the context and notes that the reference to Milton is drawing attention to the common bond existing between the two poets. That Wordsworth is aware that he is undertaking the same kind of tasks as his predecessors, is using similar methods and is confronting comparable problems, is an indication of his descent from

Milton in poetic inheritance. In both these cases, the Miltonic echo retains Wordsworth's own voice. The allusion is operating simply as an assertion of Wordsworth's claim that his theme is of epic stature comparable to that of Milton, and that his poetic intention is to produce a work which will carry on the vast project begun by Milton.

In a similar way the reference to Milton in the final book of The Prelude does not demand significant contextual import from Paradise Lost. Wordsworth claims he had "too exclusively esteem'd that love,/And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings,/Hath terror in it." (XIII, 224-26). The Miltonic reference is to Book IX of Paradise Lost, where Satan recognizes the opportunity to tempt Eve:

> Shee fair, divinely fair, fit Love for Gods,
> Not terrible, though terror be in Love
> And beauty, not approacht by stronger hate,
> Hate stronger, under show of Love well feign'd,
> The way which to her ruin now I tend. (Paradise Lost, IX, 489-493)

It seems improbable that Wordsworth was identifying himself with Satan; the reference seems simply to indicate that Wordsworth tended to appreciate and savour the Burkean sublime rather than the beautiful and it was Dorothy Wordsworth's influence which made him conscious of the latter.[9] The connection with Milton seems to operate only as a 'literary' allusion indicating Wordsworth's recognition that his emphasis on the terror in love and beauty was something that Milton had recognized, and may perhaps include a hint that his love for Milton

was in keeping with that tendency, or even, that his love for Milton fostered it. However we view the allusion, to bring the allusive context to The Prelude would seem inappropriate, and yet, the fact that Milton is mentioned, and that allusion is brought into the poem does not in itself seem inept. Once more the importance of the connection with Milton is to establish the existence of a real and active bond within the poem between Wordsworth and Milton.

In each of the cases mentioned so far, the Miltonic reference serves as reinforcement for Wordsworth's claim that there is an affinity between himself and Milton. The voice making the claim is Wordsworth's, as an informed poet, citing a venerable source. Such influences help to establish the context for the effectiveness of more elaborate Miltonic allusions. They support the epic stature Wordsworth seeks by placing the poem in the tradition epitomized by Paradise Lost and they underline the consciousness of Wordsworth's pursuit of that epic tradition at the same time as he was consciously attempting "a thing unprecedented in Literary history."[10] A sustained, subtle and elaborate use of the Miltonic connection shapes the structure and the meaning of Book XI.

> Long time hath Man's unhappiness and guilt
> Detain'd us; with what dismal sights beset
> For the outward view, and inwardly oppress'd
> With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
> Confusion of opinion, zeal decay'd,
> And lastly, utter loss of hope itself,
> And things to hope for. (XI, 1-7)

Although Wordsworth is using the same reviewing technique that Milton used at the beginning of Books VII and IX of Paradise Lost, these opening lines contain no specific allusion to Milton, but the sequence of nouns, or noun phrases, is characteristically Miltonic. The theme of "Man's unhappiness and guilt" is a consequence of the theme of Paradise Lost: "Man's first Disobedience" which "Brought Death into the World, and all our woe " (Paradise Lost, I, 1-3). The condition of hopelessness Wordsworth mentions is akin to Satan's state in Paradise Lost and although there is, at this point, no specific allusion to Milton's epic, the theme and the style both bring to mind its theme and majestic tone. The pose of the speaker is that of the Miltonic grand manner and the ensuing lines—7 to 41—sustain that tone and reinforce it with more overt allusions to Milton. "Man's perverseness" (XI, 23) clearly relates to the theme of Paradise Lost while

> . . . Spring returns,
> I saw the Spring return, when I was dead
> To deeper hope, yet I had joy for her,
> And welcomed her benevolence, (XI, 23-26)

echoes, with significant changes, Milton's plea to the "holy Light" that he "may see and tell/Of things invisible to mortal sight" (Paradise Lost, III, 54-55). It seems worthwhile to examine the passage in Paradise Lost that Wordsworth alludes to here:

> Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird
> Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid

> Tunes her nocturnal Note. Thus with the Year
> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or Summer's Rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
> (Paradise Lost, III, 37-44)

Milton begs that his loss of the physical sense of sight may be recompensed by interior vision which will permit him to see and express "things invisible to mortal sight." In contrast to Milton, who could not see the seasons return, Wordsworth not only sees the spring return, but gives particular emphasis to the fact that he did see it. The Miltonic echo, like the earlier ones mentioned, asserts an affinity between the two poets, but the important difference, that one poet could see and the other could not, indicates Wordsworth's consciousness of a fundamental difference in poetic perception between them. It is, as Wordsworth reiterates again and again throughout the poem, through the physical senses that perception of the natural world is gained and it is through that perception that the imaginative faculty grows to produce the mature mind of a poet. Milton's blindness was a significant influence on his poetry; seeing, Wordsworth insists, is an equally significant influence on his.

The fact that the passage in Paradise Lost Wordsworth alludes to registers Milton's sense of loss in his blindness, and that the things he regrets are those aspects of the natural world so important to Wordsworth's development, indicates both the similarity in the love of nature shared by the two men,

and the dissimilarity in their actual experience of it. Wordsworth's use of Milton now assumes new dimensions and many other echoes can be detected, indicating that Wordsworth intends that the allusion should be active within his verse.

In the light of the conspicuous allusive significances of the Miltonic passage, it emerges that from the opening of the book Wordsworth has not simply been using a Miltonic tone: he has been drawing upon the beginning of Book III of Paradise Lost to a much greater extent than was at first apparent. Milton's phrase "long detain'd" (Paradise Lost, III, 14) supplies Wordsworth's first clause: "Long time. . . Detain'd us." Milton, despite his blindness, still wanders

> where the Muses haunt
> Clear Spring, or shady Grove, or Sunny Hill,
> Smit with the love of sacred Song; but chief
> Thee Sion and the flow'ry Brooks beneath
> That. . . warbling flow,
> Nightly I visit: . . . (Paradise Lost, III, 27-32)

He refers to "Harmonious numbers" (Paradise Lost, III, 38) and "shadiest Covert" (Paradise Lost, III, 39). Wordsworth refers to his poem as "our Song" (XI, 8) and apostrophizes:

> Ye Brooks
> Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
> By day, a quiet one by silent night,
> And you, ye Groves, whose ministry it is
> To interpose the covert of your shades. . .
> Oh! that I had a music and a voice,
> Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
> What ye have done for me. (XI, 12-22)

These obvious verbal echoes extend to the thematic content of the two passages. Milton's "vernal bloom, or Summer's Rose,/Or

flocks, or herds, or human face divine" (Paradise Lost, III, 43-44) corresponds fairly closely to Wordsworth's "Plants, insects, beasts in field, and birds in bower." (XI, 28) Milton was "Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down/The dark descent, and up to reascend,/Though hard and rare:" (Paradise Lost, III, 19-21). Wordsworth's title establishes the theme of Book XI as "Imagination, How Impaired and Restored"—a descent and ascent comparable to Milton's, and while Milton's blindness was a more dramatic and obvious change to have occurred, it bears some resemblance to the change Wordsworth's "passion. . . suffer'd" (XI, 37-38). In the light of these correspondences it appears that the experiences Wordsworth described in Books IX and X, summarized here in the first seven lines of this Book, correspond to the journey from which Milton has just emerged:

> Escap't the Stygian Pool, though long detain'd
> In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
> Through utter and through middle darkness borne
> With other notes than to th' Orphean Lyre
> I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night. (Paradise Lost, III, 14-18)

Wordsworth, too, has been through "utter and. . . middle darkness" and promises in this passage to begin the reascent Milton has completed.

A consideration of some of the themes developed in Book XI of The Prelude may give a clearer indication of how, and to what extent, Wordsworth is making use of Milton in this instance. In this Book Wordsworth delineates his reaching

the nadir of imaginative degradation: his "intellectual power" had advanced "hand in hand with love and joy" until it "Gave way to over-pressure of the times/And their disastrous issues." (XI, 43-48) Under this pressure he lost faith in his own responses, in history and in literature—those things in which he had hitherto had every confidence: "Thus strangely did I war against myself" (XI, 74). The only support that remained to him "in such eclipse" was

> The laws of things which lie
> Beyond the reach of human will or power;
> The life of nature, by the God of love
> Inspired, celestial presence ever pure; . . .
> (XI, 96-100)

Still able to respond to the natural world, he was rich. But, descending further, even nature "fell/Beneath the domination of a taste/Less elevated," (XI, 116-118). He subjected the natural world to judgement

> . . . through presumption, even in pleasure pleased
> Unworthily, disliking here, and there,
> Liking, by rules of mimic art transferr'd
> To things above all art. (XI, 152-155)

The fault lay in permitting "the eye" to be "master of the heart" and that "most despotic of our senses"—the sight—"gain'd/Such strength in me as often held my mind/In absolute dominion" (XI, 172-175). The result of this was that he sought gratification "of the outward sense,/Not of the mind, vivid but not profound:" (XI, 188-189); he "rejoiced/To lay the inner faculties asleep" (XI, 194-195). At this point—the depths of the abysm—he depicts "a Maid/Who. . . conversed

with things/In higher style" (XI, 199-201). The maid's response to nature is as it should be, and as Wordsworth's was before he "was call'd forth/From the retirement of my native hills"(XI, 224-225). The major quality the maid displayed was that

> Whatever scene was present to her eyes,
> That was the best, . . .
> For she was Nature's inmate. . . .
> . . . for her common thoughts
> Are piety, her life is blessedness. (XI, 208-223)

This portrayal of the ideal relationship with the natural world is the turning point, the beginning of Wordsworth's ascent, but it is worth noting the pervasiveness of Milton in this process of descent and renewal.

The lowest point Wordsworth reached in his imaginative degeneration was to misuse his sense of sight by gratifying it, to the exclusion of the "inner faculties." This treachery was the more invidious because he was abusing the one support that had been accorded to him when he lost faith in the human props of history and poetry. When he "was dead/To deeper hope" (XI, 24-25) nature "Maintain'd for me a secret happiness," (XI, 34) by one means: he was able to see that "Spring returns" (XI, 23). His perfidy to nature, the senses and the "inner faculties" is more glaring when this conscious echo of Paradise Lost draws attention to the loss of sight Milton suffered. It was his inability to see the things Wordsworth was still able to see that Milton lamented. The allusive web, however,

does not stop here: in condemning his conduct at the first marked stage in his decline where "a taste/Less elevated" (XI, 117-118) was allowed to influence his response to the natural world, Wordsworth gives particular emphasis to the visible. It is the "pure forms and colours, pomp of clouds/ Rivers and Mountains, objects" which are mentioned—all those aspects of "the visible universe" (XI, 110-115) that Milton was unable to enjoy. The irony is an added indictment of Wordsworth's misuse of the power and solace that was left to him. This indictment is intensified at the next stage of his decline. Nature had rejoiced with him in his childhood

> . . . before the winds
> And powerful waters, and in lights and shades
> That march'd and countermarch'd about the hills
> In glorious apparition, now all eye
> And now all ear; . . . (XI, 140-144)

His dishonesty now provokes the cri de coeur: "how feeble have I been/When thou wert in thy strength!" (XI, 148-149) He cannot even turn to any sort of justification for his action:

> Nor this through stroke
> Of human suffering, such as justifies
> Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
> But through presumption, . . . (XI, 149-152)

So far in the Book the only one who did suffer such a "stroke/ Of human suffering" was, of course, Milton. He, the web of allusion reminds us, responded to that stroke of suffering, not by "Remissness and inaptitude of mind" but by asking that the deprivation of physical sight might be compensated for by an increase of "inward" light which would allow him to "see and

tell/Of things invisible to mortal sight" (Paradise Lost, III, 54-55). Wordsworth's rejoicing "To lay the inner faculties asleep" becomes all the more degraded and ironic.

Not only does this personal allusion to Milton operate within Wordsworth's journey through the "war against myself". When the initial link with Milton is observed, an intricate web of other references comes into play. The loss of "natural graciousness of mind" (XI, 46) left Wordsworth "upon the barren sea," (XI, 55) and nothing could steer him to more productive terrain: in other words, once he was disillusioned with the things he had had faith in, it was inevitable that the course he took had to be followed to its logical conclusion. Wordsworth makes this point by an image taken from Paradise Lost:

> As when to them who sail
> Beyond the Cape of Hope. . .
> . . . winds blow
> Sabean Odours from the spicy shore
> Of Araby the blest, with such delay
> Well pleas'd they slack thir course, and many a League
> Cheer'd with the grateful smell old Ocean smiles.
> (Paradise Lost, IV, 159-165)

The "fragrance" which came to Wordsworth could not break the "Spells" binding him to his course: his knowledge of Milton, and the moral to be drawn from his conduct, could not guide him either. In fact, his scrutiny of life led him to see flaws in the "Sage, Patriot, Lover, Hero" whom he had previously venerated. His veneration for Milton had already been established in Book III of The Prelude, at the biographical level, and the

recurrent references to him, and to his work, throughout the poem attest to the sincerity of that awesome respect, but now Milton was subject to adverse scrutiny.

What Wordsworth hoped to gain from the voyage on "the barren sea" was that he would see "The Man to come parted as by a gulph,/From him who had been" (XI, 59-60). The image is the archetypal biblical and Miltonic one for the "gulph" separating Heaven and Hell, Good and Evil (Luke 16:26; Paradise Lost, II, 1027, and III, 70). The "sentence" which Wordsworth now thought was "pronounc'd" on "the Historian's Page, and. . . that/Of Poets" (XI, 91-94) that they were "mortal" was the sentence pronounced by God on Adam and Eve if they disobeyed, in Paradise Lost, III, ll. 145 and 209. The things which Wordsworth rejoiced in, in Nature—the winds and waters, the lights and shades—correspond to the order of events in the Creation in Genesis and Paradise Lost. Wordsworth interposes the remark

> Gladly here,
> Would I endeavour to unfold the means
> Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
> This tyranny, summons all the senses. . .
> . . .
> And makes them all, . . .
> . . . subservient in their turn
> To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
> But this is matter for another Song; (XI, 176-185)

It is significant that these themes are discussed and agonized over in both Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Finally the image of the ideal response to the natural world, ll. 199-240, is

strongly reminiscent of the depiction of Eden before the Fall in Paradise Lost.

The convening of all the threads of allusion to Milton and Paradise Lost, in this section of Book XI of The Prelude, is integral to the commencement of Wordsworth's ascent which begins with the Edenic portrayal. Remembering the maid and his own early ideal rapport with Nature, Wordsworth can apply judgement where it should be applied: to his own conduct and not to the "visible universe". He can evaluate his judgements and see where he is wrong. The power of Nature inherent in his true self is too strong to allow that power to be utterly destroyed and so,

> I shook the habit off
> Entirely and for ever, and again
> In Nature's presence stood, as I stand now,
> A sensitive, and a creative soul. (XI, 254-257)

He then goes on to elaborate those "spots of time," those moments of intense vision and perception which are the stages through which the curative process moves. It is not accidental that the maturity Wordsworth achieves as a poet places human nature at the heart of his love of nature; he achieves, in that, one of the features of the visible universe Milton lamented having lost: the "human face divine." Through Wordsworth's descent into, and ascent from, "the Stygian Pool", he has gained an appreciation of the true value of those things that did not return to Milton. His priorities are now those of the mature poet, able to examine "Man, Nature and Society."

It emerges then that the Miltonic posture opening Book XI is considerably more than appeared at first glance. The "breath of Paradise" (XI, 11) is, actively, both biblical and Miltonic and is, very actively, in both these senses, the "mild creative breeze" which opened The Prelude. The initial impression created in Book XI by the Miltonic tone alerts the reader's receptivity to the nuances of the very conspicuous Miltonic allusions which follow. Those conspicuous allusions, in turn, vivify those words from Milton which, in another context, could be passed over as non-allusive, or in fact, as recognizably Wordsworthian. In this way the voice in the poem involves Milton, but by the range of productive allusion operating retroactively on the Miltonic context in Book XI, it allows the resonant Miltonic tones to generate a wholly new and significant context which, in biographical terms, was instrumental in bringing about Wordsworth's renewal and in poetic terms, is the central nerve in the structure and imagery of this Book.

The assertion of the contrast between Wordsworth's "seeing" and Milton's blindness has ironic implications and the rather self-congratulating tone of lines 23 and 24 of Book XI emphasizes that irony. But as the importance of the contrast between the two poets is recognized by Wordsworth, that smug tone is exploded into a tone of burning self-accusing shame. It is through the significance of Milton's blindness that

Wordsworth gains the insight to his own true self recognizing his own blindness to truth; as a result the phase is merely an "Eclipse" and not the total inner blindness he had acquired in his anguish nor the "total Eclipse" Samson suffered in Samson Agonistes (line 81). As Wordsworth recognized in the course of his regenerative experience initiated by the contrast between the reality of his current state and the Miltonic Edenic ideal, the "light/To guide or chear" (XI, 96-97) him was Nature, but not only the Nature "Of elements and organs, storm and sunshine," (XI, 109) but the inspired and inspiring human nature of the blind Milton.

In this elaborate use of Milton and the Miltonic voice, there is, in biographical terms, an explanation of the prevalence of Milton in The Prelude. It also demonstrates how tightly wrought and non-accidental Wordsworth's poetic technique was and how important the range of the speaker's voice was in controlling the poetic construct. One illustration of this will, I think, suffice to reinforce the point. In XI, 138-155, a reading of the passage without recognition of the significance of the "stroke/Of human suffering" suggests that the voice is grandiose eighteenth-century Miltonic in a rather melodramatic vein. When the allusion is caught, that voice changes to a much less presumptuous, much more searing self-accusation which brings with it hints of association with the theme of repentance, mercy and renewal of Paradise Lost.

The true Miltonic voice, then, brings sincerity to the incidents being narrated and it is the acquisition of that mature, experienced sincerity that makes the poem possible. The authenticity deriving from self-knowledge, which is a prerequisite for the true functioning of the mature imagination, is demonstrated by the specific incidents of the "spots of time" which follow. Both have at their core an awareness of "lostness"—literally the five year old was lost when he got separated from his guide; being orphaned at the age of thirteen was also an experience of being "lost", but the visual portrayal of the child anxiously watching for the horses belongs also to that desperate and insecure sense of being lost. The rebuke the boy regarded his father's death as being was very much in keeping with Paradise Lost's theme of separation from God and of God's just and merciful anger without which the child acknowledges the likelihood of eternal loss of Paradise.

Book XI provides one of the most sustained examples of Wordsworth's integration of the Miltonic voice and allusions into the texture of the creative act. In a similar, if less elaborate, way the description of the "dwarf man" in Book V, 291-349, harnesses the Miltonic tone to convey the horror the poet feels at the evidence of such perverse destruction of natural childhood. The tone of the passage has all the sententiousness of the child's unchildish "worldly seemliness" (V, 298). It conforms to the eighteenth-century adaptation

of the Miltonic grand manner with the lengthy sequence of examples of the child's grotesque perfection, the balances and the inversions in syntax. As a satirical resumé of the eighteenth-century educational notions, typified by the theories of Tristram Shandy's father, the oratorical tone is appropriate to the satirical intention. The hint of connection with the pastoral elegiac convention[11] in lines 346-349, with its switch of Miltonic voices from the declamatory to the elegiac, holds the Miltonic presence in the underpinning of the poem. The next two verse paragraphs have a much more discursive Wordsworthian tone where "the air of common sense" (V, 352) is contrasted with the stuffy grandiloquence of the previous paragraph; yet both these paragraphs begin with a significant Miltonic allusion: "t'is a life of lies/From the beginning, and in lies must end" (V, 350-51) echoes Christ's words to Satan in Paradise Regained: "compos'd of lies/From the beginning, and in lies wilt end" (Paradise Regained I 407/8). The next paragraph contrasts the educationalist's theories with nature's teaching and guiding functions which is "A wiser Spirit. . . more prodigal/Of blessings" (V, 385-387) and this is followed, in the ensuing paragraphs, with the example of the child—the boy of Winander—who was brought up under nature's tutelage, in contrast to the "dwarf man" whose joy is petrified by over-education. The image opening the paragraph,

> These mighty workmen of our later age
> Who with a broad highway have overbridged

> The froward chaos of futurity,
> Tam'd to their bidding; (V, 370-73)

relates to the bridge built by Sin and Death over Chaos to join "Hell to that new World/Where Satan now prevails" in Paradise Lost, X, 229-324. Milton comments that

> With Pins of Adamant
> And Chains they made all fast, too fast they made
> And durable; (Paradise Lost, X, 318-20)

It is the inflexibility of the educational theories Wordsworth opposed, which would drive the child back "Within the pinfold of his own conceit" (V, 362) and "would controul/All accidents" and "confine us down" (V, 380-382)[12] that is so abhorrent to Wordsworth's ideas of a natural education. The allusions to Milton in these instances contribute, in a delicately tangential way, to align the over-education with paralysis, death, sterility and perversion of the natural order characterised by Milton's Satan, Sin and Death. By contrast, the liberation, life and joy fostered by "old Grandame Earth", epitomised in the lyric expansiveness of the "boy of Winander" sequence, is seen to be the antithesis of that corruption conveyed by the conflict between the grand declamatory style of the paragraph dealing with the false education of the child, and the fact that it is a child who is the subject of the paragraph. The function of the manipulation of the Miltonic voice can be seen then to be a contribution to the satire by providing a tone which "common sense" knows is clashing with the fact that a child is the subject. The elegiac Miltonic voice of the

"old Grandame Earth" passage is caught up again in the enthusiastic Wordsworthian narrative and elegiac tone of the "There was a boy" passage. The allusions to Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained serve as objective correlatives, establishing the "true" Miltonic standard which abhors the governance by Satan, Sin and Death, and which Wordsworth, too, abhors. The disregard of Nature's provisions, by the interaction of the Miltonic voice, which, by its pedantic tone, exposes pedantry, with the common-sense Wordsworthian voice which cites Milton, is seen to create a perverted, deceitful and self-deceived being at odds with nature and having more in common with anti-natural Satan.

This use of Milton's voice as part of the satirical fabric of the poem is perhaps most conspicuous in Wordsworth's self-deflating comic moments. Obvious examples of this can be seen particularly in Books III and IV where the naive pretensions of the impressionable young undergraduate are seen as laughable when the adult looks back on the gaucheness and disproportion his behaviour exposed. The Miltonic voice of "And at the Hoop we landed, famous Inn" (III, 15) with its consciously literary rhetoric totally at variance with the phenomenon it describes, is perfectly in keeping with the confused disposition of the young man. It captures the sense of the new boy's self-conscious self-esteem on going to Cambridge on which in his "Schoolboy's dreaming, [he] had rais'd a pile"(III, 435). In such a frame of mind, it is appropriate that the young boy would attempt to talk

in the high-toned literary manner which his daydreams about Cambridge suggested was the right way to talk in such an auspicious environment. The self-mockery involved in his adopting a Miltonic voice at this point, helps to establish the primacy of Milton in the young poet's formation. Here, that Miltonic influence manifests itself in gauche disconnections, but eventually it can be seen to mature into a truly integrated creative force. The tone of self-mockery helps to establish a sense of the artificial and pretentious environment in Cambridge into which the young Wordsworth was initially absorbed, but from which he detached himself when he perceived its superficiality. The comic mode intimated in this flamboyant use of what, in real terms, is an inept use of Milton, contributes to the "charm"[13] of the book which in turn is appropriate to the general atmosphere of Cambridge and Wordsworth's experience there.

The inappropriate voice enacts the interior disconnectedness which displays itself in the comic rituals the country boy initially adopts on reaching the centre of sophistication. This underlying influence of Milton on the poem, and on the poet's life, is sustained in the style of the various lists in the opening paragraphs of Book III—lines 21, 24 to 27, 30 to 31, and 41—with many other characteristics of the eighteenth-century adaptation of Miltonic blank verse. Wordsworth's use of the Miltonic voice and style here, as it was used in much eighteenth-century "high-toned" verse,

indicates his self-mockery. It also suggests the pretentiousness of Cambridge. Such pretentiousness is a further element of discord in Wordsworth's experience of Cambridge since it clashed with his ideal of the university, and with his idealized notion of Milton as a student there "with his rosy cheeks/ Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,/And conscious step of purity and pride" (III, 291-293). The reverberations of the clash between the Miltonic voice and the trivial world it is used to describe, echo the similar conflict between what Wordsworth expected in Cambridge and what he found; between the authenticity Wordsworth identified with Milton and the empty, pompous ritual he witnessed in the university; and between the Wordsworth who realized that he "was not for that hour,/Nor for that place" (III, 80-81), and the undergraduate who with "ostentatious carelessness. . . clove in pride through the inferior throng/Of the plain Burghers" (III, 317-320). Milton is used repeatedly to emphasize these clashes in Book III, and the comic resonances of the conflict gives a levity to the Book in keeping with the naiveté of the behaviour described. In this it contrasts with the agonized Miltonic voice of Book X, 308-346 or X, 850-901 where the stylistic echoes of Milton accentuate the Miltonic voice and draw attention to the resemblances in theme between Wordsworth's suffering and the loss of paradise—Milton's archetypal theme.

The voice in the description of Wordsworth and the

dog in Book IV, 84-120 is distinctly the high-toned Miltonic grandeur of eighteenth-century blank verse. The youth's efforts at poetic composition were, in his own estimation at the time, worthy of Miltonic correspondences, so at that level the Miltonic voice conveys a sense of the Boy's poetic aspirations. It may also indicate the boy's respect for Milton. Its main effect, however, is to expose by contrast the posturing of the young boy conducting himself according to his own notion of how a "poet" behaves. When the dog forewarned him that there was someone approaching he "hush'd/My voice, composed my gait, and shap'd myself/To give and take a greeting" (IV, 116-118). His ambition to be a poet involved being like a poet, which, in his juvenile mind, was to behave in an eccentric, dramatic way. However, his desire to "be" that poet did not extend to risking the possibility of being thought odd by his neighbours, so having "shap'd" himself as a poet for his own entertainment, he quickly "shap'd" himself back when the danger of being seen arose. The solemn description of the dog now becomes a tongue-in-cheek mockery of Wordsworth's early poeticizing and poetical posturing. As an adult he can see that his "being" a poet at that time was a game, but a game which he undertook with the utmost solemnity. The solemn, high-toned voice is exactly appropriate to indicate the attitude the boy had towards poetry, particularly his own. The Miltonic voice is thus facetious and deflates its own

high tone by exposing the petty posturing the boy performed. The deflation is directed against Wordsworth himself and as such sustains the amused tone of much of Books III and IV.

These various instances indicate some of the ways in which Wordsworth uses Milton's voice in The Prelude. The overall effect of this voice is to introduce into the poem a diversity of vocal range which allows the poet wider scope than would be derived simply from Miltonic allusions. The use of Miltonic allusions reinforces the voice and helps to integrate it into the fabric of the poetic structure. Other voices can be heard at work in the poem, and a consideration of these will demonstrate the multiplicity of diverse resonances Wordsworth brings to The Prelude, and an examination of the way in which he draws upon the various voices will clarify this aspect of his poetic technique.

Allusions to Milton far outnumber those to Shakespeare or Pope and so references to these poets, and the modulations of the voice which they give rise to, must inevitably seem relatively feeble by comparison with the pervasive "organ tone" created by the Miltonic voice. However, these voices do function within the poem and contribute to the creation of the "variegated" (I, 223) oral fabric on which the poem depends.

Perhaps the most significant references to Shakespeare[14] in The Prelude occur in the parts dealing with the French

Revolution. In Book VI when Wordsworth visited France and was caught up in the euphoria of the celebrations of the Revolution he described the times as "a time when Europe was rejoiced,/France standing on the top of golden hours,/And human nature seeming born again" (VI, 352-354). As de Selincourt[15] points out, this is a reminiscence of Sonnet XVI, "Now stand you on the top of happy hours," and the substitution of "golden" for "happy" makes it no less Shakespearian since "golden" is one of Shakespeare's favorite epithets. The mood in France, and Wordsworth's response to it, makes such a connection appropriately joyful but in Book X most of the references to Shakespeare are to the tragedies.

The overt reference to Lear—"As Lear reproach'd the winds" (X, 463)—is the last of a series of references to Shakespearian tragedies which suggest that Wordsworth saw and felt there to be elements in the French situation which bore a resemblance to the terror and inevitability of such tragedy. He saw himself as separated from the September Massacres "by a little month" echoing Hamlet's lament at his mother's re-marriage: "A little month, or ere those shoes were old/With which she followed my poor father's body,/Like Niobe, all tears" (Hamlet, I, ii, 147-149). Again, "blasts/From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven" (X, 314-315) echoes Hamlet's cry when he first saw the ghost:

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!

> Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
> Bring with thee airs from Heaven or blasts from Hell,
> Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
> Thou comest in such a questionable shape
> That I will speak to thee. (Hamlet, I, iv, 39-44)

These allusions do not amount to a modulation of the voice but they do establish a context in which Wordsworth's critical experience in Paris on his way back to England forms a connection with the Shakespearian hero's tone of anguish which is an active part of the verse.

As Wordsworth spent that night in Paris he had an almost prophetic recognition of the terror and fear surrounding him in the city which had so recently been the site of the September Massacres. In his vivid perception of the meaning of the events of the Revolution in Paris, and his own commitment to the cause of liberty, he was filled with a sense of turmoil: a replica, in his own mind, of the confusion in the external political world. In this anxious disposition an echo of As You Like It comes into his mind: "His horses are bred better, for besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage" (As You Like It, I, i, 11-13). Significantly this is Orlando's complaint against his brother's ill treatment and failure to comply their father's will. Orlando feels he is treated worse than Oliver's horses. The theme of internal strife is obviously relevant to the conditions Wordsworth saw and heard about in France but the real Shakespearian voice comes when he had "wrought

upon" himself "in such a way. . . Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,/To the whole City, 'Sleep no more '" (X, 75-77). The voice is not simply Shakespearian: it is specifically the terror-stricken voice of Macbeth after he has murdered Duncan. His guilt and sense of horror echo and re-echo in the repetition of "'Sleep no more!/Macbeth does murder sleep'" and again "Still it [the voice] cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house./ 'Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor/Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more.'" (Macbeth, II, ii, 41-43). The terror Wordsworth experienced on this night in Paris in the "high and lonely" room where "With unextinguish'd taper [he] kept watch" (X, 57, 61) is so intense as to bring Macbeth's cry vividly into his mind, not simply as a literary reminiscence, as is perhaps the one from As You Like It, but as a real voice accusing and threatening Paris. The implications of the voice Wordsworth "seem'd to hear" include the ambivalence of his feelings about the political affairs in France. But more than that, they give a dramatic representation of the confrontations going on within his own mind which are, in a sense, a foreboding of the turmoil he was later to suffer as a consequence of his disillusionment with the French Revolution. The eeriness of the atmosphere of his room obviously impressed the young man to such an extent that he kept his taper burning all night and was reminded of the haunted, terror-stricken atmosphere of Macbeth. The sense of foreboding which gripped Wordsworth is consistent with the play he recalled, and the relevance of

Macbeth's panic-stricken crisis to his own situation, and to that of France, emphasizes the sense of Macbeth's voice being "real" in Wordsworth's mind, and in the poem.

The use of such a voice in The Prelude in this particular context is an effective and powerful way of communicating the sense Wordsworth had of the dramatic terror of his situation. It may also suggest, perhaps, his suspicions about the complete sincerity of his own commitment to the French Revolution. The theatrical vividness and the fact that his room, his sleepless night, and perhaps his crisis was not "wholly. . . without pleasure then" (X, 60), suggest that as a mature adult writing the poem, Wordsworth recognized in this vividly remembered incident elements of the sensationalist misuse of the imagination as he "wrought upon" himself to produce this Macbeth-like terror.

Wordsworth clearly intended that the card games described in Book I, 541-562 would bring to mind the card game in The Rape of the Lock. J.R. Watson[16] points out that Wordsworth is not trying to emulate Pope, but the tenor of the description and the specific echoes of The Rape of the Lock[17] indicate that he does invite comparison with the famous card game Belinda played. The overt echoes of Pope are "plebeian cards" (I, 549) echoing Pope's "one Plebeian Card" (The Rape of the Lock, III, 54); the military parallels drawn in both poems; the emphasis on the rank of the cards while the

"echoes on the Board" (I, 553) recalls the echo of the nymph's triumphant shout when Belinda wins the game (The Rape of the Lock, III, 99-100). These similarities to The Rape of the Lock recall that poem, but they serve more as foci of contrast than correspond nce. The world depicted in Pope's poem is the sophisticated beau-monde of Hampton Court. The world Wordsworth depicts is dramatically opposed to that world in factual, practical detail, and in spirit. The makeshift grubbiness of the cards the children use contrasts with the stately luxuriance implied in The Rape of the Lock. The cottage and "the naked table" (I, 541) contrast with Hampton Court and "the Velvet Plain" (The Rape of the Lock, III, 44) and "the level Green" (The Rape of the Lock, III, 80).

The implications of the contrast between the two card games involve some central themes in The Prelude. Wordsworth is emphasizing the simplicity of the rural world in which he was raised as opposed to the sophistication of the world to which Belinda belonged. Unlike her, the children make do with what they have—they value and take care of the old tawdry cards. Like Belinda, however, they play cards and they give to the game an importance similar to that attributed to it by Belinda. But here lies the greatest contrast between the two card games: Wordsworth describes children playing a game and childishly giving it much more importance than it warrants; Pope describes adults playing a game which represents

sexual conflict and human love and they play with these important matters in an immature and childish way, inverting priorities by trivializing real human relationships and giving disproportionate importance to the game. The contrast here seems to give to the Pope allusion a significance beyond a mere literary context. By bringing into The Prelude the contrast with the world of The Rape of the Lock Wordsworth subscribes to the condemnation of that world implicit in Pope's satire. The contrast between that world and the one in which Wordsworth, as a child, played cards, emphasizes the simplicity, warmth and love of his world as opposed to the distortion of human relationships rebuked in The Rape of the Lock.

The voice in the card game remains Wordsworth's but it is the tongue-in-cheek voice of the adult writing the poem, looking back on the childish aggrandisement of the trivial amusements and seeing not only the comic element in that, but seeing also that the world which permitted the children so much enjoyment was radically different from the world of the famous card game which is brought to mind. By alluding to Pope and enforcing the contrast between the two card games, while refraining from the satirical voice of Pope, Wordsworth may also be indicating that the sharp satire of the world Pope depicted had no place in the world of Wordsworth's childhood in the Lake District. The "boyish wit" and "scoffs and taunts"

(I, 556, 558) belong to the intimacy of domestic warmth and affection. They only relate to the satirical wit and scoffing of Pope's world by contrast—by their radical difference from such a world. The discrepancy between the grandiose description of the cards and their actual condition, between the literary context of the allusion and the childish game in a domestic setting, between the amusement of the adult remembering and the seriousness of the children playing, all point to the fundamental incongruity of the allusion. That incongruity is sustained in the voice of the poet speaking and allows the world he describes and the one to which he alludes, to be held in dramatic contrast so that the simplicity of the one can be celebrated by comparison with the sophisticated, witty satire of the other. Thus, although Wordsworth does not use what could be termed a "Popean voice", he does bring to the poem more than the immediate allusive context of Pope's card game. He brings the context of the satirical mode characterized by Pope and in doing so establishes the significant contrast between that mode and his own childhood environment. The incongruity of the allusion is not a defect in Wordsworth's composition: it is a consciously adopted element in the verse functioning as a pointer to emphasize the contrast between both worlds and to give dramatic counterpoint to the innocent and affectionate amusements which contributed to the formation of his own mind.

The connection with Pope's characteristic world is used on a number of occasions in The Prelude. In Book III, Wordsworth's condemnation of life in Cambridge derives some of its force from the marginal allusions to The Rape of the Lock. "Feuds, Factions, Flatteries, Enmity, and Guile" (III, 636) are the characteristics of the Cambridge world which Wordsworth saw and from which he felt so alien. The line is reminiscent of the "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux" (The Rape of the Lock, I, 138), and, as such, it brings to mind the artifice and disproportion satirized in Pope's poem. The allusion's relevance is sustained by the reference to the "mock fight,/A Tournament of blows," "mortal combat", "this pageant" (III, 617-620) and the inversion and corruption of values which made Cambridge as idolatrous of appearances as Belinda was. The allusion and the larger context it imports to The Prelude, reinforce the contempt Wordsworth expresses towards the distortion of truth and sincerity in the university. The connection here with Pope is marginal and fleeting but it contributes some measure of force to Wordsworth's criticism by placing Cambridge in a recognizable context which had previously borne the attacks of another poet renowned for his satirical wit.

At perhaps an even more marginal level, Wordsworth's condemnation of his own laxity in Cambridge draws upon an echo of Pope which brings a context, rather than the specific allusion, to the poem. In describing his life as "an amphibious

thing" (III, 340) Wordsworth uses the phrase Pope had applied to Sporus in the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" (l. 326). In Pope's case the insult has specific sexual overtones which do not apply in The Prelude, but what does operate there is the sense that the contempt Wordsworth applies to himself is akin to that Pope had for the figure he satirized. It is, once more, not simply the direct allusion which influences the new context in which it is placed. It is the literary context of contemptuous attack which is brought to the poem and, at least marginally, suggests that in his own eyes, Wordsworth was a figure worthy of the savage contempt Pope hurled upon Sporus.

When Wordsworth echoes Pope's line "That lock up all the Functions of my soul" ("Imitations of Horace: Epistle I, i, l. 40), he brings the immediate context of Pope's line into play in his own poem. Having listed the various subjects on which he might write, he escapes from the obligations that his speculations raise:

> But from this awful burthen I full soon
> Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust
> That mellower years will bring a riper mind
> And clearer insight. Thus from day to day
> I live, a mockery of the brotherhood
> Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part
> Vague longing that is bred by want of power
> From paramount impulse not to be withstood,
> A timorous capacity from prudence;
> From circumspection, infinite delay.
> Humility and modest awe themselves
> Betray me, serving often for a cloak
> To a more subtle selfishness, that now
> Doth lock my functions up in blank reserve,
> Now dupes me by an over-anxious eye

> That with a false activity beats off
> Simplicity and self-presented truth. (I, 235-251)

Wordsworth's "functions" are locked up because he is unwilling, or feels unable, to undertake the duties which his vocation as a writer demands. Pope, responding to the advice of Reason, is giving up the vocation of an honest writer and is going to "win my way by yielding to the tyde" ("Imitations of Horace", Ep. I, i, 34) and so will avoid the conflict and unpleasantness he has suffered as a result of his previous acceptance of the duty of a writer. He finds, however, that he cannot simply do that:

> So slow th' unprofitable Moments roll,
> That lock up all the Functions of my soul;
> That keep me from myself; and still delay
> Life's instant business to a future day: . . .
> ("Imitations of Horace", Epistle I, i, 39-42)

Wordsworth was trying to "delay/Life's instant business to a future day" when he found all the various obstacles preventing him from writing. The function of the allusion here, then, is to draw the similarity between Pope's experience and Wordsworth's, and also to reinforce the rebuke he levels at himself by alluding to the recognition Pope expresses that the attempt to escape the true vocation keeps "me from Myself": it is a subversion of the self that is involved in Wordsworth's failure to write.

It appears, then, that while Wordsworth does not use Pope's voice in the way that he uses Milton's, he includes Pope in his verse in a way that is more than simply an

authoritative allusion. The references to Pope's poems bring with them a moralistic and satirical convention associated with Pope and the Augustan tradition. It is not merely an allusion to Pope, then, that is functioning in the poem; an attitude, recognizably Augustan, is brought to the poem and thereby the poet gains a further extension of the vocal range permitting added variation in the speaking voice. The slightness of the actual allusion is frequently a contribution to the sense of a larger mass which is being brought, by inference, to the poem. And, although Wordsworth is generally not using Pope's biting satire, the hint of allusion brings that satire to mind, and recalls the political abuse of language Pope deplored and satirized not only in The Rape of the Lock but in the moral epistles, The Dunciad, and elsewhere. The vocal texture Wordsworth draws upon is thus enlarged and enriched by his being able to evoke the context which gave rise to Pope's satirical wit.

Chapter Three

Wordsworthian Voices in *The Prelude*

The voices Wordsworth uses in *The Prelude* to extend his own voice's range give the poem the variety necessary to sustain the monologue. These voices, however, are modulated and balanced by variations in the poet's use of what can be recognized as his own voice. The control given by the manipulation of the direction of the speaking voice was mentioned in the preceding chapter, but many other variations can be seen as Wordsworth moves from personal addresses to philosophical generalization, to painful or joyful introspection, to documentary narration, to storytelling, to lyrical realization of his deepest imaginative experiences. All of these shifts involve shifts in tone and in perspective, and depend upon a whole range of poetic techniques, one of which is meticulous control of the voice in the monologue. Just as the voice of Milton, or Shakespeare, or Pope can be detected in the poem, so the voice of the *Lyrical Ballads* and Wordsworth's other poems can also be identified as a functioning part of the poetic structure.

Since *The Prelude* is the account of the growth of the poet's mind and that growth follows the course of Wordsworth's early life, it is appropriate that two related voices should

predominate in the poem: a documentary voice and a generalizing or "philosophical" voice. The documentary voice carries the narrative along through the sequence of biographical events. The philosophical voice comments on those events and their implications in relation to the external world and the growth of the mind of the poet. Each voice is used so frequently in each Book that it would be impossible here to detail each shift as it occurs; but it may indicate how far Wordsworth does, in fact, control these shifts as an active part of the poetic structure, to examine some examples of these dominant voices and their modulations in the poem.

Wordsworth's typical documentary voice can be heard throughout the poem:

> When the third summer brought its liberty
> A Fellow Student and myself, he, too,
> A Mountaineer, together sallied forth
> And, Staff in hand, on foot pursu'd our way
> Towards the distant Alps. (VI, 338-342)

The facts, surrounded with qualifying or amplifying detail, are reported clearly: the language is the "language of prose" as Wordsworth identified that in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads.[1] The constant qualification of information, insisting upon specific and minute detail, is characteristic of Wordsworth's documentary voice. It reinforces the trustworthiness of the speaker remembering his past and so contributes to the sense of the authenticity of the memory. The characteristic philosophical voice is also to a large extent in the "language of

prose" but, as in so much of Wordsworth's verse, it is the subject matter[2] of the passage that dictates the vocal emphasis. Again, this philosophical voice is apparent throughout the poem:

> There are who think that strong affections, love
> Known by whatever name, is falsely deem'd
> A gift, to use a term which they would use,
> Of vulgar Nature, that its growth requires
> Retirement, leisure, language purified
> By manners thoughtful and elaborate,
> That whoso feels such passion in excess
> Must live within the very light and air
> Of elegances that are made by man.
> True is it, where oppression worse than death
> Salutes the Being at his birth, where grace
> Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
> And labour in excess and poverty
> From day to day pre-occupy the ground
> Of the affections, and to Nature's self
> Oppose a deeper nature, there indeed,
> Love cannot be; nor does it easily thrive
> In cities, where the human heart is sick,
> And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed:
> Thus far, no further, is that inference good.
> (XII, 185-204)

Here the reviewing, generalising voice, recording the poet's thoughts, at the time of writing the poem, gives to the documentary element in the poem a context which contributes both variety and authenticity to the history being recorded. Both voices share the discursive characteristics which mark "Tintern Abbey", "Michael" and the Lyrical Ballads but their subject matter, lacking the intensity of the more high-powered passages of The Prelude, generates a sense of the more low-pitched, ongoing experiences and observations which they depict.

One marked modulation of the documentary voice is evident in the characteristic voice of some of the "spots of time" passages. The prosaic openings of the "spots of time" sections has been noted by Herbert Lindenberger,[3] amongst other critics. The voice communicating these moments of intensity operates with the "prosaic", minute detail of language to re-create in the reader the intensity of the experience the writer recalls. The voice here is much more a "narrative" voice, distinct from the documentary flow of the intervening passages. The story-telling voice alters the atmosphere of the poem just as these highly significant and intense incidents altered the mind of the poet. In the gibbet scene the mundane introduction establishing the situation which gave rise to the incident sets the narrative tone which is sustained throughout the narration of the incident and is continued in the subsequent one relating the young boy's watch for his father's horses.

> We had not travell'd long, ere some mischance
> Disjoin'd me from my Comrade, and, through fear
> Dismounting, down the rough and stony Moor
> I led my Horse, and stumbling on, at length
> Came to a bottom, where in former times
> A Murderer had been hung in iron chains.
> The Gibbet-mast was moulder'd down, the bones
> And iron case were gone; but on the turf,
> Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought
> Some unknown hand had carved the Murderer's name.
> (XI, 285-294)

The voice functions more than simply to record a series of events. It evokes an atmosphere, which the scene itself impressed upon the child, and which draws the reader into the

eerie, haunting situation which awed him. The sense of awe which marked the "spots of time" is captured in the voice relating the incidents. As in any poem it is the combination of subject matter, language, rhythm, syntax, imagery and metre which creates both the atmosphere and the voice which conveys that atmosphere. In The Prelude, however, the emphasis on speaking and communication draws attention to the importance of the vocal qualities of the poem, and the atmosphere of passages such as this one depends to a large extent on the supposed voice of the speaker recalling the incident.

In a comparable way the commentating, or "philosophical" voice is modulated to generate a sense of the importance and intensity of the insights derived from the various "spots of time". In the experiences in childhood which can be regarded as "spots of time", it is appropriate and significant that the effects of these intense experiences are not expressed analytically. The consequence of the boat-stealing incident was that the child's

> brain
> Work'd with a dim and undetermin'd sense
> Of unknown modes of being; in my thoughts
> There was a darkness, call it solitude,
> Or blank desertion, 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, 418-427)

Here the voice is the documentary voice relating the facts of

the effect of the experience as it occurred. As he matured, the experiences of heightened intensity, produced general observations which analysed and perceived the full significance of those experiences. This analytic documentary voice can be heard in Book XIII when the vision on Snowdon gives way to the "meditation" that what he had seen was

> The perfect image of a mighty Mind,
> Of one that feeds upon infinity,
> That is exalted by an under-presence,
> The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim
> Or vast in its own being. . . (XIII, 69-73)

The analytical documentary voice clarifies the analysis it produces by amplifying the commentary by a series of qualifications of "a mighty Mind". The voice here is the Wordsworthian documentary voice, but by introducing the series of clarifications it adopts a kind of probing tone which seeks clarification by sifting through all the characteristics of such "a mighty mind". The voice then is not simply a documentary one; it is a voice which almost "harrasses" the evidence to extract meaning from it. In this, the analytic voice has biographical consistency since it is in keeping with the growth of the mind, and manifests the assurance gained by the questioning mind of the poet as he gains the maturity to evaluate his own experience. It is this same analytic voice which the poet, speaking in the present, uses throughout the poem to comment on the memories which come to mind and on the relevance of those memories to the social, political, and natural environment

in which the incidents remembered occurred.

These dominant voices occur in every part of the poem. The variety they provide gives to the poem a continuous ebb and flow, as incident gives way to commentary and it, in turn, gives way to further incident. Within this ebb and flow there are a multitude of other major and minor modulations in the voice which contributes further to the variety and internal energy of the poem. Perhaps the most conspicuous variation of the Wordsworthian voice is evident in those passages reminiscent of the Lyrical Ballads, such as the story of the shepherd and his son in Book VIII where the subject-matter and the narrative style recall the narratives of the Lyrical Ballads. In a similar way the reference to Mary of Buttermere in Book VII and the description of the beautiful child who reminded Wordsworth "of those who walked with hair unsinged/Amid the fiery furnace", (VII, 397-8) recall the kind of strengths those ballads celebrated. By bringing to mind the "human passions, human characters and human incidents"[4] typical of the Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth brings to the poem some nuances characteristic of his admiration for the rustic life and the dignity inherent in the will to survive which many of those poems celebrate. The subject matter once more establishes the link with the Lyrical Ballads; that link recalls the voice of those ballads, and so the monologue in The Prelude adopts a modulation which seems to be characteristic of those poems.

Obviously there are a number of different voices that are typical of the Lyrical Ballads but the one that seems most common in The Prelude recalls the voice in "Michael". It seems to be a detached voice which objectively records what the observer sees, and even when that voice makes comments it retains what Lindenberger calls a "subdued, almost impersonal tone".[5]

In Book VII Wordsworth records the effect produced upon him by the multiplicity and confusion of sights in London: "the shapes before my eyes became/A second-sight procession" (VII, 600-601). In this state of mind he was "Abruptly. . . smitten with the view/Of a blind beggar" (VII, 610-611). The voice changes here from the rather animated documentary voice which predominates in Book VII to the objective, almost clinically factual voice reminiscent of the Lyrical Ballads. The vocal connection with the Lyrical Ballads derives from the fact that the subject-matter recalls the figures which people those ballads. Rather than recalling any particular person in the Lyrical Ballads, the beggar relates to that quality of tenacious survival characterised by the people Wordsworth celebrates in such poems as "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and "Old Man Travelling". The beggar is depicted:

> with upright face,
> Stood propp'd against a Wall, upon his Chest
> Wearing a written paper, to explain
> The story of the Man, and who he was.
> My mind did at this spectacle turn round
> As with the might of waters, and it seem'd

> To me that in this Label was a type,
> Or emblem, of the utmost that we know,
> Both of ourselves and of the universe;
> And on the shape of the unmoving man,
> His fixèd face and sightless eyes, I look'd
> As if admonish'd from another world. (VII, 612-22)

The effect of the subject matter and the objective voice serves to recall the Lyrical Ballads, but it is the contrast with the figures in those poems that operates most vividly; and in order to perceive what use Wordsworth is making of the reminiscence in The Prelude, it may be worthwhile to consider its context in the poem, and in Wordsworth's experience.

Raymond Williams points out that in Book VII of The Prelude Wordsworth describes what was to become a "new kind of anonymous social relationship, and the crowded street. . . is an epitome of it." Williams goes on:

> The conscious individual formulates his relationship with other men as with an undifferentiated mass. . . What the individual then sees, in the crowd of others, is not men but social types—images of men—and these are exactly characterised in the "advertisements of giant size", the "allegoric shapes, female or male" which serve, in this crowded anonymity, to give back to men who have no direct knowledge of each other a generalized image. . . Yet within the massing, there is a new kind of display of the self: no longer individuality, of the kind that is socially sustained, but singularity—the extravagance of display within the public emptiness. 6

Awareness of this dehumanization is exactly what the sight of the blind beggar (VII, 611-622) brings to Wordsworth. Not only is the presence of the man an awesome rebuke, it brings to mind those other figures of awesome survival which people the Lyrical Ballads. The difference between this man and the

other rural figures, however, is enormous and it is this difference which admonishes Wordsworth from another world.

In the characteristic lyrical ballad the figure of human suffering and endurance derives some sort of solace from the natural or social environment: Martha Ray is part of the natural landscape just as the thorn is; Simon Lee belongs in the social and natural world which gave him relief—the speaker unearthed the root of a tree for him. Even if the only sympathy for the suffering human being is that registered by the poet, it is nevertheless more than is accorded to the beggar. In "The Last of the Flock" the weeping man is a figure of dire distress, isolation and pity, and these characteristics, while evoking pity, also evoke a certain awe and admiration which the poet experiences and conveys to the reader. The poet's response to the beggar is one of petrifaction. The other figures of human suffering generate some insight into the individuality and humanity of that suffering, but the beggar produces a quite different effect. He suggests to the observer, not the depths and variety of strengths manifested by the afflicted, but the utter unknowable quality of human life. The awe he inspires, is not like that inspired by Martha Ray; it is the awe of recognizing the surface of life as the totality of life—essentially, it is the awe of nihilism. It is this recognition which admonishes Wordsworth. The other world from which he is admonished is not exclusively

the orthodox hereafter. It is, perhaps more significantly, the world of the Lyrical Ballads: the rural world in which human individuality could survive in a way that the blind beggar's could not. The image of the natural world which Wordsworth uses to initiate the change that seeing the beggar brought about in him, is indicative of his recognition that it is the lack of such a natural environment which makes him paralyzed rather than sympathetic in the face of the beggar's affliction. Whereas, in other poems of affliction, the poet-observer is seen to provide some sort of communion between the sufferer and society, if only by silent sympathy and awe, the beggar and the observer here remain isolated and alien from one another. The other world which admonished Wordsworth here was the world of his own childhood in which even the tattered playing cards were not discarded: London demonstrates that world in which things and people are "Neglected and ungratefully thrown by/Even for the very service they had wrought," (I, 545-6).

It is significant that the sight of the blind beggar produces in Wordsworth more of an awareness of his own condition—the condition of emotional paralysis—than awareness of the beggar's condition. This is a further indication of the anonymity and lack of social contact characteristic of the city. The blind man and the observer are equally types of the city's isolating, alienating power. It is both the

spectacle of the beggar, and the perception of himself which that spectacle produced, that shatter the "second-sight procession" and force Wordsworth to make the comparisons between his native environment and London. In a similar way, the connection between the beggar and those figures of affliction common in the Lyrical Ballads compels the reader to acknowledge the contrasts involved both in the man's affliction and the poet's response. In this way the link with the Lyrical Ballads brings to the poem the natural and social environment of those poems and actively enforces the contrast between them. The contrast is like the "turn(ing) round. . . of waters."

Without the reminiscence, in subject and voice of the Lyrical Ballads, and the sympathy, or empathy accorded affliction there, the depiction of the beggar would remain what it initially was: proof of man's total disconnection from man and the natural world. The reference to "another world" would remain a trite moral pietism. The hint of allusion, and the change in voice which that brings to the poem, changes the nihilism of the image and the experience to something much more positive: a rebuke and a rejection of the world which creates that nihilism as well as a corresponding growth in the poet's mind. He is forced to reject the hallucinatory world of infinite variety and face the down-to-earth fact of human suffering which the city life conspires to obscure and ignore. The beggar's tenacious hold on life, his silent acceptance of his condition

becomes all the more awe-inspiring in the light of the discrepancy between that condition and the luxuriant variety which surrounds him in the city. The reminiscence of the Lyrical Ballads' world emphasizes the contrast between the luxuriance of London and the simplicity of the rustic world. This contrast, and the judgment cast on London by the fact of the beggar's condition, condemns the inhumanity of the city and places the beggar in a relationship with those figures in the Lyrical Ballads whose survival is seen as proof of indomitable human tenacity.

The voice here is dictated by the resemblance in subject matter between the passage in The Prelude and recurrent themes in the Lyrical Ballads. The same effect is created by the description of the "Artificer" who brought his baby "For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air." (VIII, 851). The reminiscence is marginal and only hints at a connection between the simplicity lauded in the world of the Lyrical Ballads and the manifestation of simple human love which impressed Wordsworth. The hint, however, is sufficient to draw into the poem some of the basic premises on which the poems in the Lyrical Ballads rely and, as such, demands a variation in the voice which reinforces the recollection of the simplicity celebrated in those poems.

The specifically lyrical tone and voice of the Lucy poems can be detected at various points throughout The Prelude:

> that single Wren
> Which one day sang so sweetly in the Nave
> Of the old Church, that, though from recent showers
> The earth was comfortless, and, touch'd by faint
> Internal breezes, sobbings of the place,
> And respirations, from the roofless walls
> The shuddering ivy dripp'd large drops, yet still,
> So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible Bird
> Sang to itself, that there I could have made
> My dwelling-place, and liv'd for ever there
> To hear such music. (II, 125-135)

The strangely mystical beauty of the bird's singing together with the setting call to mind the mystical quality of the Lucy poems. The bird's song produces in the boy a surreal aura similar to that produced in the reader by Lucy's mysteriousness. This hint of connection strengthens the lyric voice which reinforces the magical quality of the experience being depicted. In a similarly fleeting way, the vision on Mount Snowdon, touches a chord which is present also in the Lucy poems. While it would be over-stating the case to claim that the voice relating that vision is the same as the one in the Lucy poems, there is that hint of connection which allows the voice to retain vibrations of those lyrics and so vary the narrative voice as it creates the intensity of the experience on Snowdon.

It is apparent from this examination of Wordsworth's use of voices in The Prelude that he varies his own voice, and incorporates the voices of other poets as a conscious part of the poetic structure. He directs the poem to Coleridge, to the vast natural world and to various intermediate addressees

reinforcing the importance of the spoken quality of the poem. He makes very conspicuous use of the oral in the poem to provide variety within the monologue and, it emerges, he makes use of the voices he controls to further the probing of the growth of the poet's mind. From this is appears that, being aware of the significance of poetry as something to be heard, Wordsworth exploited that facet of poetic technique to augment the means at his disposal for writing this epic recording the growth of his own mind.

The importance of the voice is more than a convenient convention of pathetic fallacy. In a world where "the individual Mind. . . to the external World/Is fitted" and "The external world is fitted to the Mind " (Prospectus to The Recluse 63-68) the power of the word to communicate truth assumes religious significance: the communicating universe becomes the Word and, as such, ordains the poet as priest and prophet. The committed vocation which Wordsworth discovers through experience, and through the recall of experience, demands that, as poet, he is compelled by duty to probe and to speak "On Man, on Nature and on Human life" (Prospectus to The Recluse 1. 1), and responding to "Nature's self, which is the breath of God" (V, 222) communicates the unity of being in the universe which God and Nature have spoken to him.

Chapter Four

Some Stylistic Techniques in The Prelude

Wordsworth claimed that by the age of thirteen, or even earlier, he was already "open to the charm/Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet/For their own sakes." (V, 577-579). This sensitivity to the beauty of language and its sound is apparent in the musical flow of The Prelude and parallels the beauty he perceived and experienced in his communion with the natural world. Recognizing the "charm/Of words", however, led to the recognition, as he matured, of the power of that charm to be "a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve". Unless language is "the incarnation of the thought" it is a danger: "Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with".[1] Wordsworth's awareness of this potential in language must be borne in mind in any examination of his work. The scope and narrative range of The Prelude tends to militate against close scrutiny of the language the poet used, but such scrutiny is essential if the poem's character as "the incarnation of the thought" is to be perceived as an intrinsic element in the artistic reconstruction of the growth of the poet's mind.

Wordsworth's awareness of the power of language for "good and evil" is central to the emphasis he places on communication in the process of the growth of his own mind. Alert to "the ghostly language of the ancient earth" (II, 328) and guided through his childhood and youth by "Rememberable things" (I, 616) which Nature spoke to him, he was alert also to the limitation of language as a means of communication: the "heroic argument" (III, 182) which he wished to develop in his poetry "in the main. . . lies far hidden from the reach of words" (III, 185). The perceptions he gained when he came upon the "ordinary sight" of the girl near the gibbet were such that he

> should need
> Colours and words that are unknown to man
> To paint the visionary dreariness
> Which, while I look'd all round for my lost Guide,
> Did at that time invest the naked Pool,
> The Beacon on the lonely Eminence,
> The Woman, and her garments vex'd and toss'd
> By the strong wind. (XI, 309-316)

Like so many of his most profound experiences, this one intimated to him that there were areas of experience which could not be communicated by language: they are further evidence of the "incommunicable powers" (III, 188) which both tantalize and frustrate the poet in his effort to express the perception Nature impresses upon his growing mind. The poet's consciousness of the limitations of the medium he uses to express his experience and his poetic vision is itself embodied in

the structure the language builds. The deceptively simple surface which so often characterizes Wordsworth's most intense moments is itself an assertion of the unreachable depths of complexity, in the experience and in the vision, which lie beneath the surface of the words. Just as Wordsworth celebrated those "men for contemplation framed" (XII, 266), for whom "Words are but the under-agents of their souls" (XII, 272), so it seems in The Prelude that the words are, in a sense, the "under-agents" of the ultimate unity between "the individual Mind" and "the external World" (Prospectus to The Excursion, 63-65). The power of words, then, is being used not simply as expression, but to intimate those depths which cannot be reached by language and, as such, they warrant close attention.

In an essay on the opening section of The Prelude, W. J. Harvey points out the function of the syntax in the lines:

> Thus occupied in mind, I linger'd here
> Contented, nor rose up until the sun
> Had almost touch'd the horizon, bidding then
> A farewell to the City left behind,
> Even with the chance equipment of that hour
> I journey'd towards the Vale that I had chosen.
> (I, 95-100)

He comments "The rising of the man and the setting of the sun have almost equal status; both seem equally natural events. Although. . . it is clear that 'bidding. . . farewell' belongs to the human traveller, the syntax is so fluid that the sense of the Sun "bidding. . . farewell" to the city is also allowed

into the passage, at least as a collateral possibility. The syntax thus enacts one of the great themes of the poem, the interaction of internal and external, of nature and the human mind".[2] The function of the syntax here is to suggest "the unity and interdependence of things" and is achieved "by making things share in a common activity".[3] This manipulation of syntax is characteristic of Wordsworth's compelling the language to do more than simply document information. By straining the syntactical function of "Bidding. . . farewell" to include both the man and the sun, he is forcing the structure of the language to bear the weight of the wider thematic implications of the poem. The syntactical structure embodies the theme of union between man and nature, as Harvey suggests, but it is also an embodiment of the diffuseness of language itself. The moment of hesitation created by the ambiguity is essential to the sense of the poem: the union of man and nature cannot so easily be realized in the language of the poem. The equality of the man and the sun is only momentarily sustained. The literal sense of the sentence demands that its structure must be re-assessed: it is not the sun, but the man who is "bidding. . . farewell to the city". The clause "until the sun/Had almost touch'd the horizon" becomes an interruption of the literal sense because the clause immediately following it, makes the "bidding" applicable to the sun as well as to the man. In this way, the fusion of man and nature is

given momentary existence by the structure of the sentence, but when that momentary existence is dismissed by the literal sense, the structure is seen to be enacting and exposing the transience of the linguistic structure which is changing, we are forced to notice, even in the moment of its being made. Language and the syntactical structure it builds, Wordsworth is intimating, do not have the absoluteness of nature's communications with "a chosen son". The momentary nature of the union which the syntax enacts here is perhaps as close as language can get to embodying such a union.

Straining the syntax in this way is characteristic of Wordsworth's technique in The Prelude. Long sentences, listing the accumulated details of the sights of London, or Cambridge or Revolutionary France, generate a tension which parallels the confusion the poet observes as being characteristic of the life he witnesses. The fact that, so often, all these details are contained within one sentence creates the sense that the world being described is in an explosive state, just as the confines of the syntactic unit are being pressured to the point of disintegration by the weight of accumulated detail contained within them. Wordsworth's manipulation of the syntactical form in order to reinforce the sense that language is a recalcitrant force which cannot fully depict the complexities and depths of experience can be seen in the "spots of time" passage in Book XI. A close examination of the first

sentence of that passage will demonstrate one way in which the structure of the language corresponds with the theme and is an integral part of the perception expressed in the verse.

> There are in our existence spots of time,
> Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
> A vivifying Virtue, whence, depress'd
> By false opinion and contentious thought,
> Or aught of heavier and more deadly weight,
> In trivial occupations, and the round
> Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
> Are nourish'd and invisibly repair'd,
> A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced
> That penetrates, enables us to mount
> When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
> (XI, 258-268)

Herbert Lindenberger[4] has pointed out the customary casualness of the opening of the various "spots of time" in The Prelude. The bluntly declarative assertion, "There are in our existence spots of time", is characteristic of that casualness. The "spots of time" are then made more specific by the relative clause immediately following: "Which with distinct pre-eminence retain/A vivifying Virtue". Until this point the syntax is simple. The next clause is "whence. . . our minds/Are nourished", but into that clause is inserted a series of amplifying participial phrases which bring to the sentence concepts totally at variance with the ideas that the first two clauses expressed. The remainder of the sentence consists of the following clauses: "and invisibly repaired"—where the subject of the verb—"our minds"—is shared with the preceding clause; "A virtue. . ./That penetrates"; (that) "enables us to mount/

When high, more high"; "and (that) lifts us up when fallen". Into the second of this series of clauses is inserted the other relative clause amplifying "virtue": "by which pleasure is enhanced."

The assertion that this sentence makes is that the "spots of time" which exist in our lives are sufficiently strong to counteract the adverse effects of the destructive power of the anguish of mundane life. The power of the "spots of time" is celebrated in the verse, but the strength of the destructive forces, with which that power contends, is also acknowledged. By interrupting the flow of the sentence with the accumulated evidence of destructive influences, the structure itself is made to attest to the power of those influences. The weight of those participial phrases pulls down the upward flight of the verse, just as the experiences those phrases depict drag down the life of the mind. The severing of the flow of the clause, "whence. . . our minds/Are nourished", parallels the division created in the individual mind by the contending influences of the downward pull of mundane experience, and the upward, vivifying pull of the "spots of time". It is significant that these participial phrases, taken as part of the clause they interrupt, make that clause the longest of the whole sentence. They create a plodding centre which weighs down the sentence and in doing so they parallel the effect on the mind of the kind of mundane experience they portray.

In a sense, then, the structure of this sentence is "an incarnation of the thought"; but it is more than that. The disruption of the flow of the sentence, distancing the assertion that "spots of time" exist from the effect of such "spots of time", actively contributes to our understanding of the claim being made. The "spots of time" do not operate as some sort of independent mode of existence; they contend with the banality of ordinary life. Their vivifying force derives from the tension between these intense moments and the mundane. The dislocation of the flow of the sentence, distancing the cause from the effect by an intervening passage which is alien to both the cause and the effect, indicates the process by which the "spots of time" function. They do not function as an automatic reflex. Their power is felt in the flash of insight which they produce. But that power works gradually through time, and through mundane experience, to produce fuller insight. The flash, at the time, is a still point from which the continuously growing mind draws sustenance, but as that mind grows, the insight deriving from the "spot of time" grows also: it is only in the writing of the poem that the fulness of the various "spots" is realized. The structure of the sentence, then, parallels and probes the way in which "spots of time" function. The fact that this process is contained within one sentence generates a pressure within the verse which is akin to the pressure of the conflict between the banal

and these moments of exultation. The accumulation of evidence of adverse influences, dividing the sentence and weighing down its centre, slows the movement of the verse. That slowing is reinforced by the qualifications which the sentence introduces: almost every noun is qualified by an adjective. That emphasis on repeated qualification not only slows the movement, but actively forces the verse to turn back upon itself, and so creates a momentary hesitation in the flow that demands that the claims being made are re-assessed. In reading the passage we are forced back to the beginning of the clause once we reach "our minds"; and this is not accidental. It is an essential part of the process of discovering the full force of the "spots of time". It is, appropriately, also parallel to the way in which the mind itself returns for nourishment to those moments of insight and exultation.

It is noteworthy that in the depiction of the "spots of time" themselves, Wordsworth uses structures which are very different from this backward movement. In the Gibbet episode (XI, 279-316) the sentences are constructed of clauses each of which moves directly forward from the previous clause. The sequence of events described is presented in chronological order and the sentence structures parallel that order. The effect of this, with its marked lack of retroactive qualification, is to depict experience stripped of all extraneous detail. Adjectives in this passage are purely descriptive: "the rough

and stony Moor", "former times", "iron chains", "unknown hand", "monumental writing", "fresh and visible", "green sod", "bare Common", "naked Pool", "difficult steps", "lost Guide", "naked Pool", "lonely Eminence" and "strong wind". Only "fell deed", perhaps "ordinary sight" and "visionary dreariness" (XI, 287-310) have any of the evaluative weight of the adjectives in the first sentence of the paragraph. The purpose of the passage is not to make judgments about the experience, but to attempt to recreate the experience in words in such a way that its impact on the mind of the child can be indicated. The adjectives, giving literal and necessary description, draw attention to the documentary quality of the passage. The emphasis on the bare facts and the singleness of direction of the syntactic units, contribute to the sense of bareness and isolation the child perceived. The lack of elaboration gives a sense of the starkness which is appropriate to the experience described, but is appropriate also as an indication that, even at its most sinuous and incisive, the language cannot fully "paint the visionary dreariness" of the scene and the child's apprehension of it.

The simplicity of construction contrasts with the opening sentence of the paragraph. The thrust of the syntax is always forward and the language is simple. In itself, this simplicity contrasts with the complexity of the responses evoked by the experience. The structure creates a surface, which, by its declarative plainness, suggests "An ordinary

sight," (XI, 309) but the poet's assertion that he "should need/ Colours and words that are unknown to man," (XI, 309-10) indicates that the words and structures he has used are inadequate to his real intention. The structure then is undercut by the poet's own assertion. The tension created by the contrast between the impression created by the structure, and the poet's assertion, generates a new component in the verse: a dynamic friction which suggests, more clearly than the language alone can, the complexities beneath the surface of experience and language. The effect of this friction within the verse is to indicate the presence of similar complexities in the mind of the poet. In this way, Wordsworth uses the structures, which he claims are insufficient, as a form of understatement functioning within the verse to strain and extend the power of the language. Understatement becomes an integral part of the poem: in the most profound experiences no statement is adequate to communicate the mind's experience. The most accurate reflection of such experience, therefore, is understatement. Perhaps Wordsworth's most emphatic poetic technique in The Prelude is such understatement—in language, in structure and in technical devices, and an examination of this facet of his style may help to clarify the degree to which he is composing "toilsome Songs (X, 515) as opposed to reacting automatically to the fact that "poetic numbers came/Spontaneously" (I, 60-61).

C. S. Lewis[5] points out, referring to Paradise Lost, that the epic depends upon "the subordination of the line to the paragraph and the paragraph to the Book and even of the Book to the whole" and on "grand sweeping effects." This is equally true of The Prelude. In isolating individual aspects of the technique, emphasis is being placed upon details which, in fact, are only effective because, in context, they are submerged and subserve the design of the whole. The success of the poem depends upon individual aspects of style being inconspicuous, and operating in a delicate balance with other facets of the poetic craft to produce the whole. By stressing specific aspects of style it is inevitable that an imbalance is being created, but, hopefully, that temporary imbalance may lead to a clearer perception of the meaning of The Prelude and the balance can be restored by considering the particular points in the larger context where their functioning creates the subtle structure which is the form of the poem.

The "grand sweeping effects" C.S. Lewis mentions can be seen clearly in the movement of The Prelude through the literal journeys Wordsworth describes. The epic journey, in fact and in metaphor, provides the framework for the poem's record of the growth of the poet's mind. Within those vast sweeps there are many other large patterns which contribute to the unity and coherence of the whole. M.H. Abrams[6] claims that The Prelude "is an involuted poem which is about its own

genesis—a prelude to itself. Its structural end is its own beginning; and its temporal beginning. . . is Wordsworth's entrance upon the stage of his life at which it ends." He draws attention to the fact that in Book XIII Wordsworth very consciously recalls the beginning of the poem: "Call back to mind/The mood in which this Poem was begun" (XIII, 370-371). The circular movement so conspicuously emphasized here is apparent also in the opening of Book VII:

> Five years are vanish'd since I first pour'd out
> Saluted by that animating breeze
> Which met me issuing from the City's Walls,
> A glad preamble to this Verse: I sang
> Aloud, in Dythyrambic fervour, deep
> But short-liv'd uproar, like a torrent sent
> Out of the bowels of a bursting cloud
> Down Scafell or Blencathra's rugged sides
> A water-spout from Heaven. (VII, 1-9)

The recalling of the exuberant opening of Book I at this point serves to draw attention to the progress of the circular movement of the whole. The importance of the journeys with which Books III, IV, and VI opened are more clearly placed in the context of the larger journey which the poem delineates and with which it opened. Structurally, this mid-journey recall of the opening of Book I, at Book VII, stresses the repetitive structure in which each of these Books repeats the opening journey. In biographical, or temporal terms, of course, it is Book I's journey which repeats all these journeys which, historically, took place prior to the poet's escape from the city. The fact that the journey through the

poem is not a simple chronological one, is dramatized by this overt recurrence to the opening of the poem. The opening movements of the subsequent Books take up this same theme of the journey or a review of the progress so far, again establishing the structural pattern but emphasizing also the specifically circular movement of the poem: "Not with these began/Our Song, and not with these our Song must end" (XI, 7-8). The unity of the beginning and the end is more than chronological or biographical consistency: it is a conscious structural assertion of the divine breath which inspired the poem—the voice of God who is the Alpha and the Omega. The circularity of the poem's structure is a representation in words of the god-like nature of the poet as creator in whose soul

> 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, 233-237)

The circularity of the structure is a demonstration of the fact that the poet was "else sinning greatly,/A dedicated Spirit" (IV, 343-344) and "as an agent of the one great mind," (II, 272) had a mission to "speak/A lasting inspiration, sanctified/By reason and by truth;" (XIII, 442-444) and instruct men

> . . . how the mind of man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
> On which he dwells, above this frame of things
> (Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
> And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
> In beauty exalted, as it is itself
> Of substance and of fabric more divine. (XIII, 446-452)

The specifically biblical and religious connotations of the creative obligation are confirmed by the references throughout the poem to Nature and God, to the divine spirit and the "dependency sublime" (VIII, 640) of man, to the communion of Man, Nature and God and to the divine and mysterious nature of the word. All of these are supported by the organizational pattern, to which Lindenberger[7] draws attention, of paradise, fall and redemption and by the pervasive influence of Milton, particularly of Paradise Lost, which was examined in the previous chapter. The overall circular structure and the pattern of repeated religious references establish the biblical theme of the poem. The pattern of repetition which this shapes is apparent also in the functioning of the memory recalling the past; in the repeated moments of exultation which are the "spots of time," as well as incidents of the narrative which are alluded to several times. This pattern establishes repetition as a central theme of the religious quest for truth, and that theme is reinforced by repetition within the structure of the verse to embody the mind's activity within the phenomenal expression of the mind which is the poem. Repetition in the verbal structures enacts "in dwarf proportions" (III, 615) the larger sweep of the circular movement of the poem and continuously re-asserts the fact that the poem is a constant going-over of the past as a means of building meaning out of that past and communicating it in language which paradoxically is acknowledged to be insufficient.

There are many examples in The Prelude of Wordsworth's use of repetition:

> There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
> No languor, no dejection, no dismay,
> No absence. . . . (VI, 253-255)

Clearly the repetition here is a rhetorical device with no particular significance as a reflection of the larger movement of the poem. However, the repetition which seems to reinforce the overall circularity of the poem, in theme and structure, is a subtle, diffuse and understated recurrence serving to create a delicate web of repetition which fosters the overall repetitive form and asserts, by its understatement, the fact that the areas of experience he is probing frequently lie "far hidden from the reach of words" (III, 185). This dual emphasis can be seen in Book VII where images of hell provide not only a narrative coherence to the theme of the lost paradise, but also provide a context in which the active corruption of language can be witnessed.

The theme of loss of paradise and loss of innocence is central to Wordsworth's experience of London.[8] That theme, which extends throughout Book VII can be seen to be epitomized in two sequences of images in the Book. The first sequence concerns the progressive loss of innocence in Woman; the second is a more involuted exposure of the distortion of language which characterizes the infernal condition of city life. Mary of Buttermere (VII, 314-359) is presented as the ideal

of womanhood. She is uncorrupted by the baseness of the world although she was deeply injured by it. It is indicative of the corruption of the world that the story of her marriage to "the Spoiler" (VII, 322) who married her "in cruel mockery/Of love and marriage bonds," (VII, 325-326) should become the subject of theatrical entertainment and "doubtless treated with irreverence" (VII, 318). Mary of Buttermere's stature, however, is undiminished by the experience and by the sensational popularity of the dramatization of her tragedy. The recurrence of the figure of womanhood exposes different characteristics which must be seen in the implicit comparison between Mary of Buttermere and the second image of woman. Here the woman is the mother of the beautiful little boy who so impressed Wordsworth. The woman is contrasted with Mary of Buttermere, in the first instance, by the environment in which she permits her little boy to hear "oaths, indecent speech, and ribaldry" (VII, 389). There is little direct attention paid to the woman but the contrast between Mary of Buttermere's "female modesty. . . and retiredness of mind" (VII, 336-337) and the woman's company of "dissolute men/And shameless women;" (VII, 386-387) and the fact that "on the Mother's cheek the tints were false,/A painted bloom" (VII, 372-373) all suggest that she represented to Wordsworth an image of woman already far removed from the ideal—a woman, and a society, far down the descent into hell. This idea is

reinforced by the further contrast between the woman, her environment, and her son who was "Like one of those who walk'd with hair unsinged/Amid the fiery furnace" (VII, 397-398). The third image of woman marks the complete descent into hell: Wordsworth heard "The voice of Woman utter blasphemy;/Saw Woman as she is to open shame/Abandon'd and the pride of public vice" (VII, 417-419). The three stages here depicted, from the ideal to the infernal, are characteristic of Wordsworth's repetitive movement. Each image of woman derives some of its significance from the previous one. However, the progressive descent from the ideal is structured so that each image of woman is not simply in contrast with the previous one. Each image recalls the previous one in such a way that the earlier image is altered: Mary of Buttermere seems much more clearly the ideal woman by comparison with the woman who blasphemed than she did in the initial description. The movement of the repetitive process is consciously retroactive, demanding a review of the earlier images. The series of images of woman, then, is not simply a series of instances of Wordsworth's perception of women: it is an actively repetitive structure forcing the consciousness of the reader to go back, at each stage, to the previous stages, and adjust the earlier images according to the subsequent ones.

This repetitive mode is apparent also in the three images of men using words in Book VII. The depiction of

the orator's brilliant performance in manipulating words conveys the impression that this created in Wordsworth's mind. Initially he found it enchanting and magnificent but gradually it became "tedious even in a young Man's ear" (VII, 542). The disenchantment with political oratory is linked to a recognition that language is being used in a corrupt or distorted way: "Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense" (VII, 539). The image of the orator provides the first in a series of men whose use of words exposes the corruption of language. The second image is of the "comely Bachelor" (VII, 546) whose artificiality and sensationalist performance as a preacher turns language from a means of communication into a means of displaying himself. The paradox that the man is a clergyman, supposedly intent on preaching the Word but in fact only using his pulpit as a stage on which to demonstrate his theatrical talents to his captive audience, renders the image savage beneath its comic surface. The indictment of the clergyman's corruption of the word, as language, and the Word, as divine revelation, invites a comparison with the image of the orator. The comparison reinforces the contempt for the clergyman; the orator was not so concerned about how he appeared to his public, as intent upon convincing others of the validity of his arguments. On these grounds the orator seems a more admirable figure than the clergyman. The third man in the sequence is the Blind Beggar. His use of language

was limited to silence: he wore "upon his Chest. . . a written paper, to explain/The story of the Man, and who he was" (VII, 612-614). The minimal use of language and the monstrous indignity to human life which the beggar's need highlighted throws into question the two preceding images. The behaviour of the clergyman is a more appalling indictment of his rôle as a churchman. The stark contrast between the beggar's "upright face" (VII, 611) and the clergyman's

> . . . winding up his mouth,
> From time to time into an orifice
> Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small
> And only not invisible, again
> Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
> Of rapt irradiation exquisite. . . (VII, 551-556)

emphasizes the grossness of the dishonesty and empty vanity of the clergyman but operates also to intensify the injustice and the simplicity of the Beggar's position. Instead of the orator being a relatively acceptable, if tedious, figure, he now, in comparison with the beggar, becomes worthy of contempt almost as savage as that of the clergyman. Both men are manipulating language in public to gratify their own self-esteem; both are using language and gesture as ornamentation; both are performers of a form of entertainment which is removed from reality, and removed too from the apparent intention of the langauge and the situation they are exploiting. Paradoxically it is the Beggar's silence, his stark label which produced an effect: Wordsworth's "mind did at this spectacle turn round/As with the might of waters," (VII, 615-616).

The awful figure of the blind man, and the awful implications of the notice on his chest, articulated more clearly the meaning of the man's life, Wordsworth's life, society in London, and by implicit contrast, the significance of the language manipulated by the orator and the clergyman, than all the eloquence of either of these professional speakers.

Like the retroactive movement of the images of the three women, the images of the three men each cast a shadow upon the other. The Beggar's effectiveness condemns the abuse of language, but the minimal starkness of the written paper, and all that it signifies, throws into question the very basis of human communication: "it seem'd. . . a type,/Or emblem, of the utmost that we know,/Both of ourselves and of the universe" (VII, 616-619). Language, on the written paper, is giving certain minimum information about the man; but what overwhelms Wordsworth is not what is written on the paper. It is the spectacle of the man wearing that paper. Language is not what creates the effect; it is the visible phenomenon and the indictments that that asserts, which make the impression on the observer. The simplicity of Wordsworth's language and syntax in depicting this man contrasts with the two fairly long, intricate sentences depicting and emulating the clergyman's performance. It contrasts, too, with the rhetorical counterpointing in the depiction of the orator which, again, emulates the windings of "his never-ending horn" (VII, 538).

Complex language structures here produce a number of effects. They expose the tedium and the falsity of the performances they emulate. They also work effectively to create the figures Wordsworth wanted to impress upon the reader: the image of the ora tor reproduces the kind of effect upon the reader which his public performance produced on his audience. Similarly the satirical portrait of the clergyman, using the verbal techniques he himself used, produces a convincing comic effect. Language, then, can communicate. It is an effective means of ordering reality. But in the face of the subsequent image of the blind man this effectiveness is cast under the same contempt as the men it portrays. The simplicity of the order and language communicates an effective and vivid impression of the man, but as in other "spots of time," language is inadequate to convey the full impact of the effect on Wordsworth. "My mind did . . turn round/As with the might of waters" (VII, 615-616) relates the effect to vast, awesome natural phenomena and intimates by that analogy the tremendous reaction the sight produced in the poet; but it does not reproduce that effect in the way the language and style reproduce the effects created by the orator and the clergyman. The implication underlying that is that language is an adequate means of coping with superficial, trivial and corrupt behaviour, but it is insufficient as a means of coping with and communicating the profound ineluctable realities which the immovable fact of the blind Beggar forces upon the consciousness. The repetitive structure then makes a very severe judgement upon not only the

orator and the clergyman, but upon the power of language which is the poet's own means of public performance. The poet, as the fourth user of words in the sequence, is overwhelmed by the unspeakable silent fact of the blind man. He, too, is thus exposed as having manipulated language effectively to convey the superficial triviality of life but can only assert the bald fact in the face of the stark, literal, physical presence of the blind man begging.

The depiction of the blind man relies upon that oblique statement[9] so characteristic of Wordsworth's verse. The oblique, understated quality of the simplicity of the portrayal depends upon the simplicity of the language and syntax but more than anything it depends upon the subject matter:[10] the simplicity of the man's behaviour, embodying a resignation which is an indictment of the world that occasions such resigned acceptance of misery, is what affected Wordsworth and the language he uses to communicate that is secondary to the fact. It is the subject matter itself, rather than the poetic structure, that conveys the significance of the man's begging and its effect upon Wordsworth. However, the fact that that simplicity of style and dependence upon subject matter is used as the final instance of men using language in the sequence raises a number of questions about Wordsworth's style. The sequence, as with the sequence of the three women, is not simply a series of three things Wordsworth remarked in

London. They interrelate with each other in such a way that each one is altered by the influence of the other two. This is equally true of the structures of each: in the light of the final simplicity, the two earlier structures become ironically ornamental. The repetition of subject matter—three examples of men using language—operates with the structures in which that recurrence is ordered, to generate an awareness in Wordsworth of, and a commentary in the poem upon, the power of language to reinforce the superficiality of life, and also of the insufficiency of language to embody the awesomeness of the stricken simplicity of the Beggar. The repetition of similar types of subject matter, combined with the particular significance of the subject matter as the poetic essence of the portrayal of the blind man, demands that the significance of the subject matter of the earlier portraits should be re-examined. It also demands that the inter-relation of subject and structure should, in each case, be scrutinized. It is this retroactive scrutiny that brings the poet, as the overall subject of the poem, into the sequence, and the self-criticism implicit in that revaluation of the structures he had already built is itself making an unstated statement about the nature of language. Significantly, in the larger pattern of the paradise, fall, and redemption structure which recurs throughout the poem, it is the self-criticism and self-knowledge thus generated that contributes to the positive growth of the poet's

mind in the large movement. In the context of the particular experience it brings into focus the specific significance of language as a power "to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve,"[11] and this awareness is essential to Wordsworth's growth as a poet.

Like so many other stylistic characteristics of The Prelude, it is very easy to overstate the function of the repetition here. The repeated configuration of men who use language, at one level, can be seen simply as two examples of the public use of language which can be dismissed merely as "entertainments" (VII, 516) although they have pretensions to greater significance, followed by the image of the Beggar whose use of language is an agonizing rebuke to the poet and casts a slight ironic shadow back upon the two preceding figures. As such the "repetitive" function is insignificant. But the fact that Wordsworth enters into the exuberant style of his first two subjects and contrasts that with the starkness of the style depicting the Beggar; the fact that, in both style and content, each image brings added significance to the others, and the fact that Wordsworth too, through the interaction of each on the other, is brought into the configuration, all lend credence to the argument that the images are more than a casual, or biographically accurate, sequence. The repetitive structure is hinted rather than asserted. It fuses with other structures in the poem to intimate the process by which the

poet's own consciousness of a gradually growing or "wider creeping" (III, 114) awareness was shaped by these experiences and nurtured Wordsworth's developing mind.

Repetitive structuring, as a delicate web of influence within the verse, can be seen frequently in the poem. It is inevitable that certain thematic words will recur, but it appears that there are other recurrences which are not dictated by the subject matter and are used for specifically stylistic effects to create an undercurrent of consistency within the fabric of the poem. Words concerned with the landscape, the physical universe, the mind and its processes, Nature and God recur frequently throughout the poem generally as essential parts of the theme. "Love", "hope", "fear", "power", "things", "forms" and other words denoting shape, "beauty" and words denoting the senses, are only a few of the words which are repeated again and again throughout the poem. In Book I, "thought" occurs twelve times; "mind" occurs fourteen times; "joy" or "joyous" recurs on thirteen occasions while references to time—hours, days, months, years—recur repeatedly as they do throughout the poem. In itself this diffuse recurrence barely constitutes a repetitive style. But these widely scattered recurrences are brought into focus by more conspicuously structured repetitions, and so the vague echoes which pervade the poem are linked to the repetitive pattern and become significant contributants to the poem's overall

structure.

The repetitive structure of the boat-stealing episode in Book I is characteristic of Wordsworth's technique. The nature of the incident meant that the repetition of "boat" and "skiff" could not be avoided and so the recurrence of these terms is not really significant as part of the repetitive structure but the prevalence of repetition in I, 372 to 427 renders the technique more than simply thematic. The boy's sense of "troubled pleasure" (I, 389) is suggested by the rather urgent calm as he starts rowing: "I push'd, and struck the oars and struck again/In cadence" (I, 385-386). The rhythmical movement of rowing is echoed in the line, but the confusion of fear, guilt and enjoyment is fused in the rather obstinate assertiveness of the repeated word "struck". The repetition of the phrase "I struck and struck again" (I, 408) renders a sinister quality in the expression as it indicates the awe and alarm the child experienced in recognizing that there was an accusing power in the vast natural landscape. In a similar way "the Cavern of the Willow tree" (I, 395) functions as a simple identification when it is first used, but when the same phrase is repeated (I, 414) it assumes a sinister aura. The boy returns to the "Cavern of the Willow tree" with an awareness very different from his frame of mind on setting out. The repetition of the phrase, changing its implications, parallels the function and process of Wordsworth's memory as it recog-

nizes the power and true significance of the experience. The repetition of "The bound of the horizon" (I, 399 and 406) also assumes a sinister hint. Initially it was merely identification, but the second use indicates the change in the knowledge and awareness of the world the child has acquired as a vast natural landscape he had thought immovable changes before his eyes.

The repetitive structure is sustained by the recurrence of individual words: "alone" (I, 373 and 379), "the moon" (I, 383 and 392), "the Lake" (I, 383 and 402), "mountains" (I, 384 and 390), "steep" (I, 394 and 405), "craggy" (I, 398 and 405), "silent" (I, 402 and 413), "huge cliff" (I, 406 and 409), "stars" (I, 400 and 410), "rocky" (I, 375 and 394), "mov'd on" (I, 386) and "move on" (I, 390), and finally "thoughts" (I, 417 and 420). Within this passage these recurrences operate with the repetitions of complete phrases to form a very consciously shaped repetitive structure. The process of the repetition, paralleling the process of the mind repeating the past through remembering it, imposes upon the passage a structure consistent with the "structures. . . the mind/Builds for itself" (VII, 624-625). It also contributes to the eerie, sinister atmosphere the child recognized in the awesome natural world. The repetition here, then, is an essential part of the communication of the experience; it is also a re-creation of the way his mind functions, but in addition it provides a centre for the magnetic field of widely scattered recurrences

throughout the Book, and as such gives structural coherence to those repetitions. Once more, as in the repetitive structures referred to in Book VII, the repetition here is unobtrusive. It is not the overt rhetorical repetition that is apparent in the opening paragraph of the poem where exclamations, questions and an almost incantatory repetitive pattern recreate the ecstatic exuberance of the poet as he celebrates his escape "from a house/Of bondage" (I, 6-7). It is a submerged form of recurrence which, by its subordination to the larger sweeps of the Book and the poem as a whole, provides an on-going undercurrent in the poem. The fact that such an undercurrent exists and is an integral part of the poetic structure is an indication of the importance Wordsworth acknowledges as existing in the underpinnings of experience and of language. The repetitive structure, then, besides serving as a re-enactment of the experience, and establishing the underlying fabric of the poem, acts as a demonstration of one of the larger premises underlying the poem—that the deeper reaches of the landscape of the mind need a corresponding linguistic structure to probe their depths and that linguistic structure, here, is the pervasive repetitive mode which permits the language to echo the transformations which take place in the mind and the external world.

In Wordsworth's notes on his Conversations with Klop-

stock he comments that Klopstock "agreed with me that the true harmony of blank verse consisted in the periods and not in a succession of musical lines."[12] This is undoubtedly true of The Prelude: it is the large sweeps of the theme and the structural patterns which are the poem's greatest achievement. However, there are aspects of the linear structure which play an important part at certain points in the poem, and a few examples of this will help to provide a more precise indication of the degree to which Wordsworth was consciously composing the poem and using the techniques at his disposal.

Christopher Ricks has drawn attention to some aspects of the linear structure of The Prelude in his essay "Wordsworth: 'A Pure Organic Pleasure From the Lines.'"[13] He notes the particular significance of the position of the words "hung" and "pause" in the lines:

> . . . when a lengthened pause
> Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
> Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
> Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
> Has carried far into his heart the voice
> Of mountain torrents; . . . (V, 379-384: 1850 version)

The pause at the end of the line becomes an integral part of the momentum of the experience. The hesitation which the end of the line indicates subliminally, is brought to the surface because the words denote a substantial hesitation. The disjunction of the "pause" and "Of silence", by the division of the lines, gives dramatic impetus to the experience being described. The silence becomes a presence in the verse, just as it was

a real presence in the experience and central to it. Similarly, distancing "hung" from "listening" across the line break recreates in the verse the essential suspension of time and activity which made the experience and perception possible. A similar effect of the linear structure can be seen in the positioning of "hung" and "hung alone" in

> Oh! when I have hung
> Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
> And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
> But ill sustain'd, and almost, as it seem'd,
> Suspended by the blast which blew amain,
> Shouldering the naked crag; Oh! at that time,
> While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
> Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky
> Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds!
> (I, 341-350)

The suspension involved in hanging is again recreated in the linear structure where a momentary halt is enforced by the end of the line. The position of "Suspended" at the beginning of the line, preceded by the tentative "almost" and "as it seem'd" has a similar, slightly mimetic quality. The contradiction "the sky seem'd not a sky" is given dramatic force by its position at the end of the line. The statement, and the perception it emerged from, indicate the degree to which the experience seemed to the child to belong to another world: commonplace things seemed to contradict themselves as the language does. The following line, completing the phrase, "the sky seem'd not a sky/Of earth" indicates the strangeness of the world the child perceived but, for the moment before the

phrase is concluded the clear inversion has substantial existence: "the sky seem'd not a sky".

The significance of the linear structure in the composition of the whole has already been examined in the previous chapter in relation to the position and emphasis given to "I saw" in "Spring returned/I saw the Spring return" (XI, 23-24). A comparable emphasis is engendered by the position of "eye" in the following passage:

> . . . for I had an eye
> Which in my strongest workings, evermore
> Was looking for the shades of difference
> As they lie hid in all exterior forms,
> Near or remote, minute or vast, an eye
> Which from a stone, a tree, a wither'd leaf,
> To the broad ocean and the azure heavens,
> Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
> Could find no surface where its power might sleep,
> Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
> And by an unrelenting agency
> Did bind my feelings, even as in a chain. (III, 156-167)

The position of "eye" at the end of line 156 and repeated at the end of line 160 gives the word a prominence which is consistent with the importance it had in shaping the poet's mind. Its grammatical centrality to the movement of the long sentence reinforces the importance Wordsworth claims it had in his development.

In the first paragraph of Book I the mood is ecstatic and the elation of the language echoes that ecstasy. The soaring of the lyric flow—"Trances of thought and mountings of the mind"—is controlled by carefully imposed rhetorical structures of series of exclamations, questions and recurrent words and

the linear structure functions, too, within those rhetorical movements to contain the exuberance of the poem's outpourings.

> What dwelling shall receive me? In what Vale
> Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
> Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
> Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
> (I, 11-14)

The series of questions generates a sense of the plethora of choices available to the poet. The accumulation gives a sense of limitlessness but the order imposed by "Shall" at the beginning of three consecutive lines brings that limitlessness within bounds. The lines are enforcing an order across the grain of the sweeping flow of the rhetoric and in so doing are imposing a stringent order on the poem. The vibrations created by the counter-currents of the larger movement of the rhetoric and the haltings of the lines contribute to the wider sense of the energy involved in and generated by Wordsworth's sense of liberation which is being recreated in the verse. The linear structure here, then, is essential both to the imposition of order on the subject matter and to the creation of the friction which communicates the vibrant energy and elation which the experience produced in the poet.

It may be of marginal significance that, by my count, the word "alone" has the position as the final word in the line on nineteen occasions in the poem and all but one of those occurs in the first half of The Prelude—Books I to VII. "Love" is the final word in fifty-two lines with eight of those

occ ing in Book XIII. Only Book X, with more than twice the number of lines, has as many recurrences of "love" in this position. "All" is also noticeable in the final place in the line: it appears last in twenty-seven places. There are certainly many other words which recur as the final or the initial word in the line, but it seems remarkable and appropriate that in a poem delineating the growth of an individual poet's mind towards a recognition of the unity of all life and towards the love of man, these particular words are given such prominence, not merely by being repeated—which the subject matter would demand—but by being repeated in a way which draws attention to the structural composition of the subject matter of the poem.

In general, as the preceding examples demonstrate, it is in run-on lines that the positioning of particular words has structural significance. Wordsworth's use of end-stopped lines is equally important in the composition of the poem. The boldly declarative lines which open so many paragraphs are generally end-stopped: "Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze" (I, 1); "It was a beautiful and silent day" (X, 1); "Strange rendezvous my mind was at that time" (IV, 346); "A meditation rose in me that night" (XIII, 66). This declarative directness is so pervasive in The Prelude—and not only opening lines of paragraphs—that it would be impossible here to detail each instance. The directness of the end-stopped lines pro-

vides the background against which the run-on lines can create that "gentle shock of mild surprise" through which the structure of the poem mirrors, in the verse, the effect that "spots of time" have in phenomenal experience. These two facets of linear structure operate within the more circuitous structures of the long sentences to create the discursive mode which is so characteristic of Wordsworth's style.[14]

The bareness of the declarative mode is frequently used for dramatic effect in the poem. In the discharged soldier episode the narrative technique conforms to that used in the Gibbet scene and other "spots of time": syntax is fairly simple and direct; all the detail provided is essential, and the narrative and syntactical order is chronological. The picture of the man and of the scene has the vivid specificity of a photograph but that meticulous exactness is imbued with a deep sense of eeriness, mystery and awe by the paradoxically simple: "and at his feet/His shadow lay and mov'd not." (IV, 424-425). The starkness of the whole scene and Wordsworth's response to it is somehow incarnated in the uncanny lucidity of that statement. The impact of the statement is immeasurably greater and more complex than its simple brevity seems to suggest. Once more the observation, and the form in which it is expressed, belong to that pervasive understatement which is an integral part of Wordsworth's perception of ex-

pression: the full significance of the experience "lies far hidden from the reach of words" (III, 185). The bareness of the statement contributes to the desolation being depicted, but, simultaneously, it generates a sense that language itself cannot attain a level of desolation appropriate to the circumstances. It is the power of the subject matter to intimate obliquely[15] the depths of the experience that carries the weight of the dramatic impact of the verse; the language itself remains almost clinically sterilized in its effort to probe and to communicate the awesomeness which is central to the experience. Here, and this seems typical of Wordsworth's most successful uses of such understated technique, the language and the structures it builds establish a moment of calm where the astonished mind of the poet and the astonishingly inscrutable phenomena can meet, and if the full wonder cannot be re-created in the language, at least the existence of that wonder can be intimated. Neither the banality of pedestrian experience nor the insufficiency of language to recreate the ecstacy of the elevated communion of the fullness of life can destroy the poetic, ordering impulse. The poet survives with "All genuine admiration unimpair'd" (III, 275) and is attentive to the influx of impressions and the "shades of difference" (III, 158) which give him the faith in his own vocation as poet, despite the obstacles that his own primary means of expression present.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this study of aspects of style in The Prelude the attempt has been to obtain some indication of the degree to which the poem was meticulously composed. In Book XIII Wordsworth points out that

> . . . this history is brought
> To its appointed close: the discipline
> And consummation of the Poet's mind
> In everything that stood most prominent
> Have faithfully been pictured; we have reach'd
> The time (which was our object from the first)
> When we may not presumptuously, I hope,
> Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
> My knowledge, as to make me capable
> Of building up a work that should endure.
> (XIII, 269-278)

The discipline and the confirmation of the poet's powers are evident not simply in the narrative of the growth of his mind. They are manifested in the delicate and subtle control that has been imposed upon the narrative subject matter. It was in writing the poem that Wordsworth gained not only the self-knowledge which might enable him "to construct a literary work that might live,"[1] but the experience of poetic composition on such a large scale to overcome his uncertainty about his own poetic powers.[2]

In the Preface of 1815, Wordsworth points out that "Epic Poets, in order that their mode of composition may

accord with the elevation of their subject, represent themselves as singing from the inspiration of the Muse." Although he goes on to claim that "this is a fiction, in modern times, of slight value,"[3] he himself has consistently represented his epic as a song. The vocal emphasis is reiterated by the recurrent addresses to Coleridge and to the natural environment, and is given further prominence by the importance nature's communications had in shaping the development of the poet's mind. Because of this emphasis upon the oral within the subject matter, it seemed profitable to approach the poem with a view to finding out how far its vocal oral characteristics were being used by the poet to impose order upon his materials. It emerged from that study that the control of the voice of the narrator was an integral part of the poetic construct. By manipulating the voice, the monologue could be varied so that the poet had at his disposal an added means of ensuring that the monologue itself would avoid tedium.

In the study of voices in The Prelude two distinct modes became apparent: Wordsworth's adoption of voices and styles which were characteristic of other poets, and the modulation of the voice in various ways which were characteristically Wordsworthian. By analyzing the effect of these shifts in the narrating voice it became apparent that Wordsworth was consciously involving the tones and voices of other poets and his own changing voice, as significant elements in the

power of the poem to communicate. It is appropriate that in recording the history of his own mind a poet should make use of those poets whose works influenced that mind. Similarly it is apt that he should absorb into that history his own earlier writings. It appears from this study that Wordsworth has done both of these. He has made use of other poets, and of his own characteristic modes, in such a way that they reinforce the biographical authenticity, but they also form an integral part of the poetic structure varying and enlivening the monologue so that the fabric of the poem is able to sustain the weight of the subject matter.

The vocal structure which is created by Wordsworth's control of the voices in The Prelude is only one element in the total structure of the poem. It operates with the subject matter, the metre, and a whole range of poetic devices to create the total work of art. In the fourth chapter attention has been focused on some of the poetic devices which contribute to establishing the unity and coherence of the poem. Some facets of Wordsworth's use of syntax, his use of repetition, his control of the linear structure, and the language which is the vehicle for these, are scrutinized. From the examination of these techniques and the controlled use of voices, it becomes abundantly clear that the structure of The Prelude is neither accidental nor ornamental. It is an intrinsic part of the process of self-discovery which the delineation of the history

of the growth of his own mind produced. Clearly, the poem is the product of "a man [who] has written with thought"[4] and, as such, warrants close analysis of the techniques the poet has used, only a few of which have been touched on in this study.

It is inevitable in the examination of individual aspects of poetic technique in any poem, that the stress placed upon that facet of style creates a certain disproportion in the overall view of the work. A brief glance at one passage in The Prelude may help to restore some balance by looking at the way in which a number of the individual stylistic elements combine to produce the variety and unity of the whole.

Francis Christensen[5] makes the point that each passage in The Prelude is to be read "in the light of its context, or rather an expanding series of contexts, from the immediate paragraph and book to the poem as a whole, and beyond that to the whole of Wordsworth's effort." The passage which illustrates a number of the poetic techniques already examined in this dissertation, and which also concurs with Christensen's proviso, is Book I, 452-570. There are innumerable passages which would serve as illustration equally well, but in this relatively short passage a large number of the points under discussion can be seen clearly. The passage moves its focus from one child, Wordsworth, to the immediate

context of "cottage windows", the "village clock" and the friends with whom he was skating, to the huge external world of "precipices", "icy crag", "distant hils", "the stars" and "The orange sky of evening" (I, 452-473). The focus then shifts back to the single child separating himself from "the tumultuous throng/To cut across the image of a star/That gleam'd upon the ice" (I, 476-478): the huge external universe is contracted to the reflection of a star on the ice. But once more the frame expands to focus upon "the solitary Cliffs" emphasizing the visual contrast between the one small boy and the massive natural environment. Such sweeping movements are characteristic of the grand and involuted epic mode. A similar grand sweep of expansion and contraction can be seen in the movement of the focus from the activities of the child in the Lake District through the various seasons of the year, to the confines of the cottage and its cosy domesticity, and out again into the vast natural, and awesome world "of wolves/When they are howling round the Bothnic Main." (569-570).

The involuted expansions and contractions in the movement of the poem are reinforced by the variety in the direction, tone and volume of the narrating voice. The voice in lines 452 to 473 is characteristically Wordsworthian narrative. In the following verse paragraph—lines 474 to 489—the voice alters to a more intense and lyrical one.

The intensity is supported by the slightly mimetic quality of the structure: the single sentence paragraph, in its uninterrupted flow, parallels the comparable movement of the skating which it depicts. The mimetic quality is brought fully into play as the trochaic line "Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watch'd" (I, 488) reproduces the motion being described as the skater halts and the world around him continues to move, gradually slowing to a halt also—"Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep" (I, 489).

The tranquility of the scene and the experience recreated in the verse in this paragraph is abruptly dispelled by the grand oratorical voice beginning the next paragraph. The volume of the speaking voice implied by the address

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

contrasts dramatically with the almost magical, silent stillness of the end of the preceding paragraph. The passion of the voice in lines 490 to 501 is intensified by the rhetorical mode of the elaborate structure of the question ending at line 501. The candour of the voice in the next, very short paragraph enacts another switch, implying a totally different volume of the voice making a simple comment which interrupts the remembering process by making that comment in the present as the poet writes the poem.

The voice of the speaker, speaking in the present, remembering his childhood and commenting on it in the following

paragraph, is the intimate, almost confiding voice of the raconteur establishing a relationship with his audience. The implied volume is louder than that in the recurrent addresses to Coleridge, but it is quieter and more intimate than the volume implied in the address at line 490. The mimetic change in rhythm in "Dash'd headlong; and rejected by the storm" (I, 524), depicting the abrupt deflation of momentum as the kite line breaks, makes the hiatus at the end of the preceding line a significant pause essential to the sense of the experience. The exhilaration of the experience is embodied in the syntactic structure as the flow of the sentence catches the upward movement of the kite. At a very marginal level, the recurrence of "l", "h", and "t" sounds in "heart", "almost", "felt", "hill-top", "kite", and "high" tends to recreate the airy freedom and the tension which were in the thrill of kiting. The position of "Pull" at the beginning of line 520 contributes to the sense of the thrill, but the halt at the end of the line, dramatized by "then suddenly", recreates, with the subsequent change of rhythm, the shock of the sudden halting of that exhilaration.

The address to "Ye lowly Cottages" (I, 525) takes up a more declamatory tone contrasting with the deflation of the soaring lyrical voice at the end of the preceding paragraph. The rhetoric of the repeated questions addressed to the cottages establishes the voice as one of oratorical nostalgia but

at line 534 that voice gives way to the more directly narrating voice recalling customary childhood activities. The "home amusements" (I, 535) that the children enjoyed are described in terms which recall Milton and Pope. The Pope allusion has already been examined in some detail. It functions, as has already been seen, as a comic deflation of the importance the children imputed to their card game. The incongruity of the allusion and the subject matter brings comic nuances to the depiction of Wordsworth's rustic childhood. It also serves to call to mind the contrast between the world of Pope's The Rape of the Lock and the innocent pretensions of the children playing card games. The echo of Milton's "With Centric and Eccentric scribbl'd o'er" (Paradise Lost, VIII, 83) has a similar effect. Milton's line refers to Raphael's explanation of the attempts man will make to explain the universe. The connection between the children's game which is "too humble to be named in Verse" (I, 540) and the context in Paradise Lost is comic. The disparity between the childish game "With crosses and cyphers scribbl'd o'er" (I, 538) and the elevated subject and context in Paradise Lost once more amusingly deflates the high seriousness with which the children undertook their games. But just as the Pope allusion carries a hint of other non-comic connotations, so here there is a fleeting hint that the more sophisticated, philosophical mind attempting to ex-

plain the universe scientifically, may be no more than playing a childish game, "perhaps to move/ [God's] laughter at thir quaint Opinions wide/Hereafter" (Paradise Lost, VIII, 77-79)

The voice in both the Milton and Pope allusions only marginally adopts the voice of either poet. Rather than identifying the voice as being characteristic of either poet, it seems more accurate to hear it simply as an eighteenth-century elevated voice in keeping with the auspicious sources from which the allusions come. That voice indicates the gravity with which the children regarded their games. By sustaining a voice consistent with their naive pretensions, the poet creates a tension between the voice and the actual subject matter. The comic effect of this is central to Wordsworth's memory of this part of his childhood. The context of each allusion, however, brings to the poem nuances which put those contexts in a new perspective: an implicit question is being posed and the unstated answer to the question suggests that while it is amusing that the children were over-serious about their games, the adult world that the children were trying to emulate is, in fact, childishly pretentious about things that really do matter.

The intrusion of the real natural world into the "impassion'd game" (I, 564) acts as a reminder that the awesome universe is unremittingly present in the children's world just as it is in the adult world where values are inverted, as in the case of Belinda; or where man tries to tame the

world and reduce it to scientific formulae, as in the case of the Paradise Lost reference. The voice in this description of the outside world—lines 562 to 570—is the characteristic Wordsworthian descriptive voice which absorbs every detail of the visible scene. The allusion to the "wolves. . . howling round the Bothnic Main" (I, 570) is an appropriate reference since it recalls the kind of mysterious, strange, adventurous world of children's stories. As such it is an unpretentious allusion, in keeping with the awesome natural phenomena being described. It serves as a contrast with the preceding allusions which, because of the subject matter of the passage, are preposterously elevated. At another level this hint of a reference to children's stories serves as a reminder of the importance that books—whether Milton, Pope or schoolboys' adventure stories—had on the growing mind of the poet. The allusions to Pope and Milton thus assume an amusing retroactive aptness because they indicate the naive ambitious affinities the young boy sought with his great predecessors. The incongruous allusions, in the light of the subsequent apt reference, act as an indication of the gauche use of literary sources. Like many of the literary allusions in Books III and IV, the gaucheness was due to the immaturity of the poet, and as the mind of the poet grows under the guidance of Nature and literature, that gaucheness disappeared, giving way to a genuine affinity with the English literary tradition, which the writing

of the poem discovers and displays.

This movement is characteristic of the overall movement within individual Books and the poem as a whole. The interaction of structures, voices, language, and images with those that have preceded allows new significance to be seen in the earlier ones, without completely eliminating the original implications those structures intimated. This fluidity within the poetic structure is a replica of the way the mind recalls the past so that "at this hour/The heart is almost mine with which I felt" (I, 117-118). Although the significance of experiences cannot be understood fully by the child as he experiences them, the adult mind can both remember accurately, and interpret past experience. This duality of the adult mind is what makes the poem possible and it is one of the aspects of the growing mind which is examined as the poet records the history of the growth of his own mind.

In conclusion, it appears from this brief glance at Book I, lines 453 to 570, that where those characteristics of style detailed in the earlier chapters of this study are in evidence, they are functioning in conjunction with other facets of poetic technique to produce the pattern which itself mirrors the processes of the poet's mind. Because language is frequently inadequate to cope with the depths of experience, it is through meticulously struggling with a wide range of means of communi-

cation in the poetic structure, that those depths can be obliquely hinted at, and perhaps reproduced in the fluid structure which mirrors the poet's mind as it records its own transformation. By probing language and the structures it builds, within a poem which is intended to record the growth of a poet's mind, Wordsworth is not only being biographically consistent; he is also reinforcing the ever-recurring circularity of experience, and of the poem, and this in turn both creates and justifies the circular fluidity of the language and the poem as a whole. Recurrence of images, themes and individual words becomes an essential and authentic part of the historical record, as well as a means of creating a structure which is capable of containing and communicating that record. By using language in this circular way the poet exposes the potential insufficiency of his own means of communication and creation. But by rigorously imposing order upon the language in a way which reflects the mind's process, the poet, who has also demonstrated that that mind was itself formed by Nature, creates the "enduring language" framed by "tones of learned Art and Nature mix'd" (VI, 604-605) which allows him to hope that he might build "a work that should endure " (XIII, 278).

Notes

Chapter One

[1] William Wordsworth, "Essays Upon Epitaphs III," The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. by W.J.B. Owen & Jane Worthington Smyser, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), pp. 84-85.

[2] William Wordsworth, The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd ed. rev. by Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959). All further references will be to the 1805 version unless otherwise indicated, and shall be contained in the text.

[3] William Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, New edition ed. Ernest de Selincourt (1936; rpt. London: Oxford, 1967), p. 590. All references to poems other than The Prelude will be to this edition and will be indicated by title and line number within the text.

[4] It is significant that Wordsworth was not the only Romantic poet to claim affinity with Milton: Blake's Milton indicates the same kind of venerationand affinity which amounts to complete identification. The presence of Milton in The Prelude is as much a literal presence as Blake's graphic "But Milton entering my Foot, I saw the nether/Regions of the Imagination. . . But I knew not that it was Milton, for man cannot know/What passes in his members" (Milton I, 21, 4-9). Quotation is from Blake: Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (1957; rpt. Oxford: Oxford Standard Authors, 1966), p. 503.

Chapter Two

[1] Herbert Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's "Prelude" (Princeton: Princeton University, 1963), p. 304.

[2] R.D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard, 1922).

[3] Lionel Stevenson, "The Unfinished Gothic Cathedral," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXXII (1963), pp. 170-183.

[4] All quotations from Milton are taken from John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey, 1957).

[5] Havens, Influence of Milton, p. 199.

[6] C.S. Lewis, A Preface to "Paradise Lost" (1942; rpt. London: Oxford Paperbacks, 1960), pp. 40-41.

[7] Havens, Influence of Milton, p. 199.

[8] Earl R. Wasserman, "The Limits of Allusion in The Rape of the Lock," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LXV (1966), 425-444.

[9] W.J.B. Owen, "Wordsworth's Aesthetics of Landscape," The Wordsworth Circle, VII (1976), pp. 70-82.

[10] Ernest de Selincourt, ed., The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805, 2nd edition rev. by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 586.

[11] W.J.B. Owen, "Literary Echoes in The Prelude," The Wordsworth Circle, III (Winter 1972), p. 9.

[12] Wordsworth may also have had "Confin'd and pester'd in this pinfold here" (Comus, 7) in mind when he wrote this passage.

[13] R.D. Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1941), p. 338.

[14] All quotations from Shakespeare are from Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1948).

[15] The Prelude, p. 555.

[16] J.R. Watson, "Wordsworth's Card Games," The Wordsworth Circle, VI (1975), pp. 299-302.

[17] All quotations from Pope are taken from The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt (1963; rpt. London: Methuen, 1965).

Chapter Three

[1] Prose Works, I, pp. 133-134.

[2] W.J.B. Owen, Wordsworth As Critic (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1969), p. 24.

[3] Lindenberger, p. 147 ff.

[4] "Advertisement to Lyrical Ballads," Prose Works, I, p. 116.

[5] Lindenberger, p. 217.

[6] Raymond Williams, "Prelude to Alienation," Dissent XI, No. 3 (1964), p. 309.

Chapter Four

[1] "Essays Upon Epitaphs III," Prose Works, II, pp. 84-85.

[2] W.J. Harvey, "Vision and Medium in The Prelude," (1966) in W.J. Harvey & Richard Gravil, eds., Wordsworth "The Prelude": A Casebook (London: MacMillan, 1972), pp. 200-201.

[3] Harvey, p. 201.

[4] Lindenberger, p. 147.

[5] C.S. Lewis, p. 2.

[6] M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 79.

[7] Lindenberger, p. 190.

[8] Lindenberger, p. 235.

[9] Owen, Wordsworth As Critic, p. 22.

[10] Owen, Wordsworth As Critic, p. 24.

[11] Prose Works, II, p. 85.

[12] Prose Works, I, p. 91.

[13] Christopher Ricks, Essays in Criticism, XXI (1971), pp. 1-32.

[14] Josephine Miles, Eras and Modes in English Poetry (Berkeley: University of California, 1957), pp. 130-132.

[15] Owen, Wordsworth As Critic, pp. 22-24.

Chapter Five

[1] Prose Works, III, p. 5.

[2] Letter to Sir George Beaumont, May 1st, 1805, in The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years 1787-1805, p. 586.

[3] Prose Works, III, p. 27.

[4] Letters: Early Years, p. 587.

[5] Francis Christensen, "Intellectual Love: The Second of The Prelude," PMLA, LXXX (1965), p. 69.

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