

WORDSWORTH AND
THE SUBLIME:

AN ESSAY ON
WORDSWORTH'S
IMAGINATION

Thesis for the Degree of PH. D

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ABSTRACT

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by Albert O. Wlecke

Body of Abstract

The thesis of this essay is that central to Wordsworth's act of imagination is an act of self-consciousness in which the mind directly intuits its own activity as the ground of the phenomenal world. The statement of this thesis is developed out of an analysis of that passage in "Tintern Abbey" where Wordsworth claims to have felt a "sense sublime" of "something far more deeply interfused." Various critical identifications of this visionary "something" are examined and shown to be inadequate, and the hypothesis is offered that this "something" can be best understood as the activity of Wordsworth's own consciousness as this activity is implicit or "interfused" in every act of perception. Thus, the thesis is advanced that at the heart of Wordsworth's so-called visionary moments is a dramatic act of self-consciousness in which the mind apperceives its own agency as the transcendent and unifying principle of the world of perception.

The argument in support of this thesis proceeds by placing the initial analysis of Wordsworth's "sense sublime" within a variety of contexts. The first of these contexts is the entirety of the poem "Tintern Abbey." The poem is read as a meditation which consistently

describes Wordsworth's imaginative act as involving the introspective exploration by the poet of his sense of the immanence of things--the sense that the "life of things" is to be found deep "within" both the surface of the landscape and his own mind. This sense of immanence is characterized phenomenologically: as a projection of the fusion of the underworld of apocalyptic self-consciousness with the world of perception and memory.

The central portion of the essay contextualizes the description of Wordsworth's imaginative act with reference to certain English theorists of the sublime, including Coleridge. There is an examination of the phenomenological implications of the eighteenth-century habit of discussing the mind in the experience of the sublime as if it were a kind of expanding space. It is argued that if we assume the experience of the sublime to be a distinguishable type of conscious experience, notes toward a phenomenology of the sublime can be written. These notes, in turn, can be shown to be illuminating in understanding both Wordsworth's preoccupation with the landscape and his habit of using the landscape as a paradigm for consciousness--of indeed using the "language of the sense," the "beauteous forms" of nature, as a way of stating and exploring the mysteries of a visionary self-consciousness. It is finally argued that what is now referred to in the essay as "sublime self-consciousness" is the ultimate source of imaginative activity for Wordsworth, and that imagination itself is the power whereby the mind sustains a creative tension between the ego intuited in its "metaphysical Sublimity" (Coleridge's phrase) and the world of nature.

The essay concludes with an extension of this description of

Wordsworth's imaginative act to a consideration of the following problems: 1) the form of Wordsworthian space; 2) the nature of Wordsworthian time and the relationship between the act of memory and the act of creation; 3) the relationship between the structure of Wordsworth's imaginative act and his declared poetic program: to extend the kingdom of the sublime, to take the humblest phenomenon of nature, such as the "meanest flower that blows," and use it as a vehicle for visionary poetic statement.

WORDSWORTH AND THE SUBLIME:
AN ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH'S IMAGINATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When readers of William Wordsworth speak of his "natural mysticism" or of his "pantheism," they almost invariably have in mind, as the principal support of these impressions, that famous passage from Wordsworth's meditation "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey":

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
And rolls through all things.¹

That these lines are conducive to an impression on even a wary reader of "natural mysticism" is evident enough.² If by mysticism we simply understand an experience of direct contact with some kind of transcendent "spirit," then we have here Wordsworth's unmistakable testimony to his mysticism. There is also a suggestion in the first two lines of the passage that Wordsworth is susceptible to recurring transcendent encounters: the shift in tense from "have felt" to "disturbs" intimates a mental action rising out of the past and flowing into the present, almost as if Wordsworth, remembering his previous contacts with the "presence," is re-experiencing that "presence" and the accompanying "joy/ Of elevated thought" in the very act of composing these lines.

That this mysticism is "natural"--and one way of taking "natural" is to understand "not supernatural"--can be seen if, first of all, we observe that Wordsworth's transcendent "something" is clearly not the supernatural and highly personal God of the Old and New Testaments, nor any other personal God of whatever tradition. Second, this blank but existent "something" is ubiquitous within nature; not a word is given of its having any existence "outside of," "beyond," or "above" nature--three usual prepositional ways of paraphrasing some sense out of the word "supernatural." Wordsworth's insistence that the "presence" is universally "interfused" and his catalogue of its dwelling-places, albeit none of them especially confining, suggest that he wishes to keep the location of the ubiquitous "presence" thoroughly within the natural world--despite the flight of elevated thoughts. He makes no claim of having been rapt away to a seventh heaven or having been Beatrice-led to a culminating vision of an unfolding celestial rose. In addition, this "sense sublime," as other passages in "Tintern Abbey" make quite clear, is one of the "gifts" (line 86) nature herself provides to compensate Wordsworth for the sadness he experiences as he recognizes the encroachments of his mortality. And, without at this point questioning this theme of compensation, we might wonder how nature can bestow something unless it is hers to bestow. As the schoolmen used to phrase it: nemo dat quod non habet.

The use of this passage to support an assertion of Wordsworth's "pantheism" is far less tenable.³ The four, insistently climactic "all's" of the last two lines might suggest a Spinozistic vision of the Single Substance. But if we look more closely, we see that

Wordsworth's language, even as it surges toward a statement of absolute cosmic oneness, is still capable of making kinds of distinctions inimical to a thorough-going pantheism. The interfused "something" may be an activity which is ubiquitous--"rolls through all things"--but its relationship to the specific objects of the universe Wordsworth names in this passage--"light of setting suns," "round ocean," "living air," "blue sky," "mind of man"--is one of neither identity nor that lesser degree of identity, consubstantiality. The relationship is rather one of dweller to dwelling-place. The metaphor whereby Wordsworth prevents his "something" from being located in a supernatural dimension also preserves distinctions within the natural. The dweller, we remind ourselves, is not the same thing as the dwelling-place. And a reader seeking to make Wordsworth appear vaguely orthodox (and certainly, therefore, not pantheistic) might claim that the relationship remotely resembles the old scholastic notion of God's immanence "within" creation as a Power continuously sustaining all things in being.⁴ This notion prompted another nineteenth-century poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, to some of his finest poems.⁵ Or this same reader, focusing upon this transcendent something's activity within the mind of man, might be reminded of the Augustinian discipline of searching for an awareness of God within the depths of the soul.⁶ But of course Wordsworth is neither a scholastic nor an Augustinian. Nor is he a doctrinaire pantheist. A meditation like "Tintern Abbey," wrestling as it does with the reality of change and with the necessity of finding succor beneath the riddling weight of mortality, hardly can have as its doctrinal base the premise of the Single Substance. For from the per-

spective of such a premise real change is, in the last analysis, illusory. And such a premise, extrapolated from this single passage by a reader anxious for recognizable doctrine, would make the rest of this brooding poem irrelevant.

There is still another way in which the characterization of this passage as an expression of "natural mysticism" can be seen as superior to the characterization "pantheism." The latter term fails, not only because of the reasons already given, but also because of the approach its use implies. Its use takes an expression of a certain kind of experience as an expression of a commitment to a certain philosophical or, if you will, theological position. This kind of critical "taking" or reductio ad doctrinam tends to ignore that major characteristic of Wordsworth's best introspective verse: an almost Adamite empiricism before the rich ambiguities of experience, a desire to be so strictly honest in recording the full and often contradictory range of these experiences that no amount of position-naming or doctrinal labeling by the critic can provide an adequate account of the basis of his poetry, least of all these lines.⁷

For this reason an interpretation of these lines as an expression of a purported belief in an anima mundi also fails.⁸ Whether Wordsworth entertained such a belief at times in his poetry, or whether indeed this belief is in some way involved here in his testimony of an encounter with a transcendent "presence," is a question that finally misses the point. Such a belief did not produce the experience for Wordsworth. Nor would, I imagine, the most passionate intellectual commitment to the notion of the existence of an anima mundi ever

necessarily put anyone into direct, feeling contact with an ubiquitous "something." If anything, such a notion might have provided Wordsworth with a conveniently traditional myth--certainly not explicit in "Tintern Abbey"--useful for expressive purposes. But expressive of what? The quality of his own experience of the world. We are reminded of his use of the myth of pre-existence in the "Immortality Ode." Wordsworth explicitly tells us in the Fenwick note to the poem that he does not recommend the myth for our belief but uses it, as a poet is presumably entitled to, to provide a structure for his investigation into the mysteries of his changing perception of the world as he passes from youth to maturity.⁹

The moral, it seems to me, is this: for Wordsworth experience, mystical or otherwise, tends to precede doctrine. And therefore we best approach his testimony to a "presence" by taking it as the result, quite simply, of the fact that he has indeed "felt" this presence--and perhaps is feeling it again at the very moment of composition. We might, if we choose to, characterize this way of feeling as "natural mysticism." But we must remember that Wordsworth's testimony is not the result of obeisance to any intellectual position or commitment but emerges out of an empirical act; out of, as he tells us in lines 108 and 109 immediately following the passage under scrutiny, "nature and the language of the sense" which for him is the "anchor" of his "purest thoughts." And his awareness of "something far more deeply interfused" is a function of a "sense sublime." Surely if this awareness were related to, and perhaps determined by, a previously held and articulated doctrine, Wordsworth might have supplied us with an epithet more inform-

ative than the groping "something."

--2--

My primary purpose in this study is to investigate that structure of Wordsworth's experience which he refers to in "Tintern Abbey" as a "sense sublime." I take this "sense sublime" as a certain mode of consciousness or, to borrow a word from the phenomenologists, as an "intentionality." "Intentionality" has been described by Franz Brentano as an essential characteristic of any psychic phenomenon (as opposed to physical phenomenon). This characteristic is, quite simply, the fact that consciousness in any of its acts always exhibits "direction towards an object."¹⁰ There is never merely consciousness but always consciousness of. Now the intended object of Wordsworth's "sense sublime" is, as he tells us, "something far more deeply inter-fused." To what extent, by investigating the nature of the intentionality characterized in the phrase "sense sublime," can we come to an understanding of that "direction" of Wordsworth's consciousness which puts him into contact with his transcendent "something"? To what extent, also, can such an investigation put us in a position to clarify and deepen our understanding of the poet's terribly empty yet terribly provocative term "something"?

One of the first things to notice is that the poet's description of his intended object supplies us with clues as to the nature of his intentionality. The fact that his consciousness is directed for the moment toward nothing more explicit than a "something"--not toward a traditional and therefore namable God, not toward the Single Substance of Spinoza, not toward the mythic anima mundi--suggests an intention-

ality which has moved beyond the possibility of discovering a precise name for its object. The poet, attempting to describe this kind of consciousness, cannot specify it with reference to an explicit object. It is not that Wordsworth here is engaging in a cheap rhetorical gesture, a gesture seeking to provoke through the cultivation of inexplicability. Nor is it that Wordsworth himself feels any doubt about the reality of his intended object. Indeed, the fact that the poet, instead of refining this awareness of "something" into a specific x or y, chooses to express himself as encountering simply a "something" intimates that his consciousness is caught up in the act of recognizing the sheer existence, the sheer "presence," of its intended object--to the extent perhaps of finally making it impossible for the mind to confine and control its activity of recognition through the imposition of a single characterizing name. Whatever the "something" is, it most especially is. And consciousness, at this groping moment in the meditation, principally intends that act of existence.¹¹

Next we note that this "something" is "interfused," a word which I take in its root sense, "to be poured between" (L. interfusus, p.p. of interfundere, to pour between).¹² The something's activity of interfusion, as the rest of the passage makes clear and as has already been indicated, is ubiquitous throughout the cosmos. It is, like a universal ether, both poured out between all things and, since its "dwelling" is everywhere including the "mind of man," poured out within all things. The catalogue of dwellings suggests an activity of consciousness in which the mind can find no solid purchase upon the visible cosmos. The dwellings of the interfused "something" are vari-

ously transparent ("living air," "blue sky") or suggestive of depths ("round ocean") or in the process of dissolving away ("light of setting suns"). Even the "mind of man," the last mentioned dwelling-place, becomes, through its partnership in this grammatically parallel list, suggestively transparent, dissolving, full of depths. The action of consciousness, therefore, which intends this universally interfused "something" is an action whereby the mind itself moves beyond a fixed attachment to a specific location, pours and spreads itself throughout the space of the visible cosmos (and finds expressive form for this action through a catalogue of dwellings, the terms of which, first of all, do not really localize and, secondly, tend to become interchangeable). We might say then that one of the characteristics of the "sense sublime" is that its "direction" is paradoxically to wander, to move always beyond, to move toward an encompassing vision of the totality of things. The mind itself becomes universally interfused with the ubiquitous "something," almost as if the mind had totally identified with the "motion" and the "spirit" dwelling within itself as well as throughout the cosmos. Another, perhaps more precise way of putting this is to say that that intentionality which Wordsworth refers to as a "sense sublime" tends to become indistinguishable from its intended object: we note that almost at the conclusion of this passage the poet describes the "something" as that which "impels" (L. impellere, to drive on) "all objects of all thoughts." In our terminology, the intended object is identified with its own intentionality, the very activity wherein Wordsworth's consciousness exhibits "direction towards an object." It would not seem amiss, there-

fore, to say that the poet's "sense sublime" refers to a very special form of self-consciousness.

--3--

We are now in a position to expand our earlier statement about the scope of this essay. If it is indeed true that the phrase "sense sublime" refers to a structure of Wordsworth's consciousness in which the act of intention and the intended object tend to become indistinguishable, then cannot we say, shifting into a Coleridgean idiom, that a "sense sublime" indicates a fusion of "subject" and "object"?¹³ In other words, that the "sense sublime" refers to an activity of the esemplastic power of the imagination during which consciousness becomes reflexively aware of itself as an interfusing energy dwelling within the phenomena of nature? That this is the case is the general thesis of this essay, a thesis which I hope to show has relevance far beyond "Tintern Abbey." To supply a preliminary indication that Wordsworth himself was not unaware, in theory as well as in practice, of the relationship between imagination and self-consciousness, I point to a sentence from his "Preface to Poems (1815)" where the poet, in discussing the "dissolving" and "separating" functions of the imagination, observes that these "alterations" proceed from, and are "governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers."¹⁴

But to develop convincing answers to these questions, that is, to argue my thesis in detail, I obviously cannot depend upon a single sentence from Wordsworth's prose; nor upon a limited reading of the phrase "sense sublime" as it appears within a context already selected

out of a much larger context, the entirety of the meditation "Tintern Abbey." Thus, without abandoning my initial understanding of the phrase and using the phrase as the still point of these turning speculations, I shall proceed centrifugally around it and progressively exchange and extend the contexts within which we might examine its import. Since William Empson has already delivered the news with regard to the word "sense" in Wordsworth and has concluded, with somewhat of a sad perplexity, that the word is used by the poet to refer to everything from the simplest act of sense perception to the most visionary of experiences,¹⁵ I shall cast my emphasis upon the word "sublime"--or, to be more precise, upon those structures of Wordsworth's consciousness which might be characterized as "sublime." I do not mean to confine myself to an elaborate gloss on a few lines from a single poem by Wordsworth; that would be a purgatory blind indeed. Rather, I hope to so extend the question of what exactly is the place of the "sublime," sense or otherwise, in Wordsworth's work that I shall be writing, as I have already suggested, an essay on Wordsworth's theory and practice of the imagination. If my thesis is correct, then this larger discussion should in addition corroborate my reading of the phrase "sense sublime" as it appears in "Tintern Abbey."¹⁶

That poem will be the first larger context to be investigated, and in the next chapter the principal question explored will be: to what extent can we see reflected in "Tintern Abbey," examining its theme, its imagery, its meditative progressions, that activity of imaginative consciousness in which the object of the mind's "direction"

tends to become indistinguishable from the very act of the mind's "direction"; and in which, therefore, the mind discovers itself in the position of reflecting upon its own operations--though perhaps without acknowledging that discovery? Insofar as we can trace echoes of such a tendency throughout the poem, then of course we have opened up a perspective whereby to view, in a different and distinctly phenomenological light, the organic unity of the poem. But note that the principle of organic unity which this kind of approach postulates is a certain activity of consciousness reflected throughout the poem, an activity which, in my judgment, surfaces most explicitly in Wordsworth's encounter with the transcendent "something." Some of the theoretical implications of reading a poem in this fashion I shall consider subsequently. At this point I am content to rest on a passing implication of Coleridge's provocative observation that the creation of a poem brings the full soul of man into activity.¹⁷ Why not, therefore, explore a poem for traces of this activity, this imaginative consciousness, even when it is not, properly speaking, the overt subject of the poem?

In the next two chapters I shall turn to certain theories about the nature of the "sublime," and shall attempt to evolve a context in terms of which the general relationship between Wordsworth and the "sublime" might be examined.¹⁸ It is well known that the sublime was one of the primary categories of eighteenth-century aesthetics and was deeply involved in the evolution of certain characteristics of that century's taste in natural scenery; I mean its cultivated fondness for "awful prospects": large mountains, angry

oceans, apocalyptic storms, stupifying chasms, horrid rocks, and so sublimely on.¹⁹ I shall first of all examine, in a highly selective way, a number of the period's speculations about the experience of the sublime (I exclude discussion of the "literary sublime"). Then I shall turn to Coleridge's speculations upon the subject and shall try to suggest their relevance to Wordsworth. My purpose throughout these two chapters will not be to write a history of the aesthetics of the sublime--that work has already been nobly accomplished by Professor Monk²⁰--nor even directly to suggest that Wordsworth can be seen in any way emerging from this critical tradition. I am not concerned with the history of ideas, and am certainly not concerned with ferreting out "sources" of the Wordsworthian sensibility, always a dubious pursuit with so original a poet. Instead, I hope, by sifting some of these theories, to come up with notes toward what I call a "phenomenology of the sublime." I assume, along with Burke and Kant, that the sublime is a distinguishable category of conscious experience; and to try and evolve my own descriptive generalities about the nature of this special experience will be useful in advancing my thesis. Though it may at times appear so, I shall not in these chapters be writing an essay in formal aesthetics. Rather, the generalities or the "phenomenological notes" should be taken as nothing more than the results, occasionally idiosyncratic, of an attempt to provide for myself more sophisticated perspectives upon the import of my thesis. In other words, my assumption that the sublime is a distinguishable category of conscious experience is a useful fiction I employ to mediate between the implications of certain historically given theo-

ries of the sublime and my own exploration of Wordsworth--for the enrichment, as I hope to show in these two chapters, of the latter.²¹

In my final chapter I shall concentrate exclusively upon Wordsworth, and shall attempt briefly to indicate how some of the phenomenological perspectives developed in the preceding chapters might be useful in evolving solutions to certain problems faced by any reader of the poet. The experience of the sublime, as will be abundantly clear at this point in the essay, is frequently involved with a certain experience of space. And since my thesis is concerned with a moment in Wordsworth's poetry when he feels an identification between his mind and a spatially extended "something," it seems a related task to attempt a general description of the traffic between the poet's imagination and the images of space his eye encounters. While much of this description will have been adumbrated in the preceding chapters, it will be useful, especially in a concluding chapter, explicitly to present a summary sketch of the nature of Wordsworthian space. But where there is a discussion of space, can a discussion of time be far behind? Thus in this final chapter I shall also examine Wordsworth's very special sense of time, involved as it is with an act of memory so crucial to many of his best poems. I shall also examine the relationship between his act of memory and his own creative process. I hope to show how both the nature of Wordsworthian space and the nature of Wordsworthian time can be significantly clarified if we accept the thesis of this essay as correct. Finally, I shall examine what Meyer Abrams calls the "central paradox in the oracular passages of Wordsworth's major period: the oxymoron of the humble-grand, the lofty-mean, the trivial-sublime" ²² If

the "sense sublime" of "Tintern Abbey" is for Wordsworth his deepest intuition of the enduring nature of things, then perhaps he has the right to assume the potential sublimity of everything, even of the most trivial phenomena; for the universally in-dwelling "something," like Hopkins' "grandeur of God," can shine out of the "meanest flower that blows" as well as out of more likely places such as the sublime vistas of ocean and sky. But I believe that the paradox of humilitas-sublimitas can be taken as descriptive, not only of Wordsworth's deepest sense of the nature of the real, but also of his explicitly formulated poetic program. And, in addition, if my thesis is correct--namely, that the poet's "sense sublime" of a universally in-dwelling "something" is indeed a function of consciousness becoming reflexively aware of its own interfusing energies--we can then say that in the last analysis the "central paradox" of Wordsworth's major period is a reflection of a recurring structure of his imaginative consciousness. This structure of consciousness is like that described by the poet as belonging to the Pedlar of "The Ruined Cottage," who "in the mountains did feel his faith" and directly saw that

All things there
 Looked immortality, revolving life,
 And greatness still revolving, infinite;
 There littleness was not, the least of things
Seemed infinite²³

Such a power of consciousness--to make the least seem infinite, the humble seem sublime--I take as one of the essential characteristics of Wordsworth's imagination. It is also a power, as I hope to show, closely related to a "sense sublime" capable of transcendent encounters.

--4--

Now, as quickly as possible, a few words about my critical approach: I carry no brief for any one critical method and am willing to exploit any means that offers aid in advancing my thesis. I promise in subsequent pages to engage in close-in reading of the text, to step abruptly back for long-range thematic generalizations, to use when I can the testimony of other critics, to apply where I can the insights of certain philosophers, even to enjoy the help of an etymology when a point can be so nailed--in short, to be as pragmatically syncretic as many good critics of Wordsworth have been when facing up to the enormous complexities of that poet's work. I think especially of the example of Geoffrey Hartman--to whose revealing work this study is deeply indebted²⁴--who does not hesitate to employ insights taken, without apology, from contemporary European phenomenology; perspectives developed by myth criticism; psychoanalysis; traditional literary history; even such old-fashioned disciplines as textual examination and biography. I do not mean to suggest that this essay will exhibit the range of critical techniques that Hartman's work exhibits; my focus upon Wordsworth is much more narrow than his. But I do wish to make it clear at the outset that the unity of my study is to be detected, not in the consistent use of a single carefully articulated, rigorously applied critical method, but in the cumulative force of an argument expanding around a single thesis. I seek a singleness of argument, not a singleness of method.

All this is not to say that there is not a general emphasis in how I choose to look at the poetry, an emphasis already suggested in

in the earlier discussion of my preference for the term "natural mysticism." This emphasis emerges from a tendency, implicit in any expressive theory of art, to look upon the poem as an "exfoliation"--the organic metaphor is based on Coleridge's precedent²⁵--of a certain state of the poet's consciousness. Such a way of reading tends to overlook the poem as, for example, a "well wrought urn," a structure in language possessing its own immanent verbal laws; and it instead seeks to discover a way of characterizing the movement of the poet's mind as it engages with its materials and as this movement is embodied in the language of the poem. Thus, from this point of view, the proper subject of "The Solitary Reaper" is not the solitary, singing lass but the drama of the evolving structure of Wordsworth's conscious reactions to his memory of the girl. And thus the proper study of this changing reaction begins, and sometimes ends, with an effort to describe this actio mentis. In other words, my emphasis in this study might be called "phenomenological": I am concerned with describing certain structures of Wordsworth's consciousness as these are exhibited or implied in his poetry.

In his essay "Upon Epitaphs (3)" Wordsworth observes that words are to be ideally "an incarnation of the thought."²⁶ This metaphor rejects the curious distinction between word and thought implied in the popular eighteenth-century metaphor of words being the "clothing" of thought.²⁷ The metaphor also intimates, I believe, that a sequence of words in a poem by Wordsworth can be taken as an enactment of a certain sequence of thought or, better, of thinking. The word is not an overt statement of an already conceived thought,

somehow separable from that thought as clothing is from a body. Rather, the relationship between word and thought is analogous to the relationship between body and soul: words "body forth" an otherwise hidden activity of the mind, they are one with that activity, and their progression is expressive of a certain progression in consciousness. I say "activity of the mind" and "progression in consciousness" because I wish to avoid the suggestion that the thought, or thinking, is exclusively or even necessarily discursive.²⁸ As Wordsworth tells us in the same essay, the "excellence of writing . . . consists in a conjunction of Reason and Passion,"²⁹ and it is presumably this conjunction which finds embodiment in language. The metaphor of incarnation also seems to reject the highly rhetorical, audience-directed implications of the metaphor of clothing, implications perhaps most clearly seen in the locus classicus of this metaphor in eighteenth-century poetry, namely, Pope's observation that "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,/ What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."³⁰ The metaphor of incarnation, on the other hand, points back in the direction of the poet's mind. The efficacy of a word in a poem is to be judged not so much by the kind of "impression" it makes upon the reader but by its power to "ex-press," to "body forth" a certain "conjunction" of the poet's "Reason and Passion."

My point is not to defend Wordsworth's position on the always perplexing question of the relationship between thought and language. The organicism of his position is evident--certainly his metaphor indicates an organic relationship--and perhaps can best be examined within the context of a study of the Romantic period's general commitment to the use of organic metaphors in analyses of the poetic

process. I seek merely to suggest the grounds of my assumption that one of the productive ways of reading certain poems by Wordsworth is to take them as documents descriptive, explicitly and sometimes implicitly, of evolving structures of consciousness. What is The Prelude if not, among other things, just such an explicit document?³¹

I make no theoretical defense of this approach--the subject is far too elaborate for the scope of this essay--but recall, first, Hartman's exemplary success in treating the poems in this wise, his describing single dramas of Wordsworth's mind in individual poems as well as developing a history of the poet's consciousness through a series of poems. Second, I think of Wordsworth's own practice in explaining his sonnet "With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh." In a letter to Lady Beaumont he provides a reading which in fact regards the poem as essentially a description of a progression of conscious states.

His commentary deserves to be quoted at length:

I am represented in the sonnet as casting my eyes over the sea, sprinkled with a multitude of ships, like the heavens with stars. My mind may be supposed to float up and down among them, in a kind of dreamy indifference with respect either to this or that one, only in a pleasurable state of feeling with respect to the whole prospect. 'Joyously it showed.' This continued till that feeling may be supposed to have passed away, and a kind of comparative listlessness or apathy to have succeeded, as at this line,

Some veering up and down, one knew not why.

All at once, while I am in this state, comes forth an object, an individual; and my mind, sleepy and unfixed, is awakened and fastened in a moment.

Hesperus, that led
The starry host

is a poetical object, because the glory of his own nature gives him the pre-eminence the moment he appears. He calls forth the poetic faculty, receiving its exertions as a

tribute. But this ship in the sonnet may, in a manner still more appropriate, be said to come upon a mission of the poetic spirit, because, in its own appearance and attributes, it is barely sufficiently distinguished to rouse the creative faculty of the human mind, to exertions at all times welcome, but doubly so when they come upon us when in a state of remissness. The mind being once fixed and roused, all the rest comes from itself; it is merely a lordly ship, nothing more:

This ship was nought to me, nor I to her,
Yet I pursued her with a lover's look.

My mind wantons with grateful joy in the exercise of its own powers, and, loving its own creation,

This ship to all the rest I did prefer,

making her a sovereign or a regent, and thus giving body
and life to all the rest; mingling up this idea with
fondness and praise--

where she comes the winds must stir;

and concluding the whole with,

On went she, and due north her journey took;

thus taking up again the reader with whom I began, letting
him know how long I must have watched this favourite vessel,
and inviting him to rest his mind as mine is resting.³²

We can note in this "interpretation" how Wordsworth invites his reader to make a number of suppositions, all of them about the action of his mind, and none immediately explicit in the text of the poem. The first supposition we are to make is that the poet's mind is floating "up and down" among the ships in almost a Keatsian state of empathy. The poet's mind is "in a kind of dreamy indifference with respect either to this ship or that one, only in a pleasurable state of feeling with respect to the whole prospect." This supposition is to be based upon the first quatrain of the sonnet:

With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh,
Like stars in heaven, and joyously it showed;

Some lying fast at anchor in the road,
Some veering up and down, one knew not why.³²

Only two statements in the quatrain seem to allow for any immediate inference about the state of mind of the observer: "joyously it showed" and "one knew not why." The impersonal phrasing of these two statements hardly indicates the strong presence of an individual onlooker. Yet Wordsworth asks his reader to suppose that the words of the quatrain, in addition to their descriptive function, suggest, through the objects named in the description, an activity of the poet's own consciousness. These words, then, have a double function; they point simultaneously in the directions of the observer and of the observed. For in naming the ingredients of the scene they also presumably express a certain activity of the mind, an activity which does not include--precisely because the mind is floating with "dreamy indifference"--a strong sense of personal identity. Hence, we might also infer, the impersonal phrasing of "joyously it showed" and "one knew not why."

The second supposition Wordsworth invites his reader to make would have us take this quatrain as an indirect description, not simply of a fixed state of consciousness, but also of a progression in consciousness. In the fourth line we are to surmise Wordsworth's opening "pleasurable state of feeling" to "have passed away, and a kind of comparative listlessness or apathy to have succeeded." Whether we are to surmise this apathy from the image of the ships "veering up and down" or from the vaguely perplexed and emotionally flat tone of "one knew not why," is a difficult question to decide. Perhaps from both.

Wordsworth sees the next quatrain as illustrative of the will-

ful exercise of the creative imagination:

A goodly Vessel did I then espy
Come like a giant from a haven broad;
And lustily along the bay she strode,
Her tackling rich, and of apparel high.

Wordsworth's commentary would have us understand that this ship, its appearance amplified through the elaborate and sustained simile of the striding giant, was in fact "barely sufficiently distinguished to rouse the creative faculty of the human mind." Strangely, however, it is precisely for this reason that the ship may be said to have "come upon a mission of the poetic spirit." In other words, the highly figurative vision of the second quatrain is to be taken as the result of the sudden intrusion of a ship "barely sufficiently distinguished" upon the point of view of an observer who is "in a state of remissness," "sleepy and unfixed." The abrupt fixation of Wordsworth's eye upon the single ship awakens the "I" of the poem--the personal point of view is named for the first time in the poem in line 5--and triggers a release of the imagination, an exercise of creative power "doubly" welcome to the poet because of the immediately preceding state of "apathy" and "listlessness." (We might also note in passing the oblique suggestion of reflexive imaginative consciousness in Wordsworth's observation that his stated preference for this "ship to all the rest" in line 11 is the result of the fact that his "mind wantons with grateful joy in the exercise of its own powers"; the value of the ship is a function of the poet's recognition in the ship's imaginatively transfigured appearance of his own creative mind.) Thus, behind the overt statements of the first eight lines of this sonnet, Wordsworth asks his reader to envisage a progressive

activity of consciousness in which the mind passes from a state of pleasurable passivity to a state of near torpor to a state of exultant creativity. The words of these lines, in addition to their obvious descriptive functions, finally are supposed to tell a tale of the poet's mind, a tale which, without the commentary of the poet himself, would certainly not be immediately apparent.

Wordsworth's invitation in his letter to Lady Beaumont to suppose in this fashion is the final justification I offer of that way of reading his poetry which I plan to emphasize in this study. And with this invitation in mind, we can turn to his "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey."

NOTES: CHAPTER I

¹The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, eds. E. de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1954), II, 261-262, ll. 93-102. Hereafter this five volume edition will be cited as Poetical Works, with the appropriate volume number always given.

²For a statement of the traditional interpretation of "natural mysticism," see the introduction to Wordsworth's poems by Russell Noyes in his anthology English Romantic Poetry and Prose (New York, 1956), pp. 239-240.

³Ernest Bernbaum observes that these "lines are commonly considered pantheistic." See his notes to the poem in the 3rd edn. of his Anthology of Romanticism (New York, 1948), p. 1107. Noyes combines the reading of "pantheism" with his reading of "natural mysticism." The two characterizations are, of course, not a priori irreconcilable.

⁴St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, writes: "God is in all things, not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident, but as an agent is present to that upon which it acts. For an agent must be joined to that on which it acts immediately, and reach it by its power Now, since God is being itself by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect; as to ignite is the proper effect of fire. But God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being; as light is caused in the air by the sun as long as the air remains illuminated. Therefore, as long as a thing has being, so long must God be present to it, according to its mode of being. But being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally present within all things Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermost." Summa Theologica, Part I, Q. 8, Art. 1. Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York, 1945), I, 63-64. The translation, as Pegis notes in his preface, is a revision by the editor of the English Dominican Translation by Father Laurence Shapcote.

⁵Hopkins' version of immanence is mediated by Ignatian spirituality and by a belief in the eternal fact of the Incarnation. See his "Hurrahing in Harvest" for a good example of this mediation. For an interesting comparison of Hopkins' approach to nature with Wordsworth's, see John Crowe Ransom's "William Wordsworth: Notes toward an Understanding of Poetry," Wordsworth, Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities, ed. Gilbert T. Dunklin (London, 1963), pp. 106-108.

⁶St. Augustine, for example, writes: "Recognize in thyself something within, within thyself. Leave thou abroad both thy clothing and thy flesh; descend into thyself; go to ~~thy~~ secret chamber, thy mind. If thou be far from thine own self, how canst thou draw near unto God? For not in the body but in the mind was man made in the image of God. In his own similitude let us seek God: in his own

image recognize the Creator." In Joannis Evangelium tractatus, XXIII, 10. Quoted in An Augustine Synthesis, ed. Erich Przywara (New York, 1958), p. 18. No translator indicated.

⁷William Empson, in his Seven Types of Ambiguity (New York, 1955), finds these lines "muddled" and "shuffling" (p. 174). But perhaps Empson is led to this conclusion by his search for Wordsworth's "doctrine": "It is reasonable, then, to try to extract from this passage definite opinions on the relations of God, man, and nature, and on the means by which such relations can be known" (p. 172).

⁸For a discussion of the anima mundi in Wordsworth's thought, see the account by Raymond Dexter Havens in his The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore, 1941), I, 190-198.

⁹The Fenwick note reads in part: "To that dream-like vividness and splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the Poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. . . . Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point where on to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this Poem on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet." Poetical Works, IV, 463-464. As Wordsworth protests that he never "meant to inculcate such a belief," we hear, among other things, the voice of the orthodoxy of his old age. But the important point to note is how Wordsworth speaks here of the belief as a kind of symbolic form useful for structuring his experience of the "world of his own mind."

¹⁰Quoted by Pierre Thévenaz, "Reflexion and Consciousness of Self," What is Phenomenology? and Other Essays, ed. James M. Edie, trans. James M. Edie, Charles Courtney, Paul Brockelman (Chicago, 1962), p. 116. Here and occasionally elsewhere, where I use technical philosophical terms, I want it understood that I mean no more by them than what I make explicit in my text. I certainly do not mean to carry into my essay the systematic demands or implications these terms might have in their original context. I also reserve the right to extend somewhat the meaning of these terms, always with explicit acknowledgment, when it suits my purpose.

¹¹I assume of course that a memory has passed into a re-experiencing. See my comments above (p. 1) upon the implication of the shift in tense from "have felt" to "disturbs." For a discussion of this way of reading Wordsworth--of finding in a poem an immediate-

ly enacting consciousness--see the fourth section of this chapter. Donald Davie, in his Articulate Energy (New York, 1958), has a relevant observation. Speaking of the syntax of The Prelude--a syntax quite similar to that of "Tintern Abbey"--he notices that it "seems to be explaining, while in fact it is meditating, ruminating, at all events experiencing more fully than one does when one explains" (p. 111).

¹²From time to time throughout this study I shall support a point with an appeal to an etymology. I have no special theoretical case in support of this practice, merely a suspicion than an increasing sensitivity to the Latin origins of Wordsworth's occasionally Latinate diction will be illuminating--a suspicion which I hope will be pragmatically supported by the results of my practice. Certainly Wordsworth, with his classical training, was more sensitive to these roots than the average reader of today.

¹³Coleridge's object qua object always requires a subject, and thus can be identified with "intended object" which is always that which consciousness is conscious of. The question of whether this object, "intended" or Coleridge's object of a subject, is extra-mental is beside the point.

¹⁴Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, ed. Nowell C. Smith (London, 1905), p. 161--hereafter cited as Literary Criticism. Italics mine.

¹⁵The Structure of Complex Words (Norfolk, Conn., 1951), p. 304.

¹⁶The question of the relationship between Wordsworth and the sublime has often been explored--and in a variety of contexts. See, for example, James Benzinger, Images of Eternity (Carbondale, Ill., 1962), pp. 52-64; J. T. Boulton, in the introduction to his edition of Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (New York, 1958), pp. xcvi, xcix-cii, lxxviii; A. C. Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London, 1909), pp. 125-145; E. F. Carritt, The Theory of Beauty, 4th ed. (London, 1931), 220f.; R. D. Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore, 1941), I, 39-51; James Scoggins, Imagination and Fancy (Lincoln, Neb., 1966), pp. 139-190. Other studies which have proved specifically helpful in my treatment of this question are noted, when appropriate, throughout the essay.

¹⁷"The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination." Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford, 1907), II, 12.

¹⁸Hereafter I omit quotation marks around the word "sublime" except when the word is used precisely as a word. By "sublime" I generally refer to the structure of consciousness which this essay investigates. Sometimes, however, the word will be used without

quotation marks as an adjective to refer to the "sublime" object toward which consciousness is directed. The context should make clear when this is the case.

¹⁹An excellent study of the development of this taste is Marjorie Hope Nicolson's Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite (New York, 1963).

²⁰Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England (New York, 1935). This work, the standard treatment of the subject, has proved invaluable in the preparation of this study.

²¹For additional comments upon the methodological assumptions of these two chapters, see Section I of Chapter III. See also nn. 1 and 2 of that chapter.

²²"English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," Romanticism Reconsidered, ed. Northrop Frye (New York, 1963), p. 64.

²³Poetical Works, V, 382-383; ll. 149-154. Italics mine for "the least of things/ Seemed infinite"; the rest Wordsworth's.

²⁴Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814 (New Haven, 1964).

²⁵Meyer Abrams observes that "it is astonishing how much of Coleridge's critical writing is couched in terms that are metaphorical for art and literal for a plant; if Plato's dialectic is a wilderness of mirrors, Coleridge's is a very jungle of vegetation." The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1958), p. 169.

²⁶Literary Criticism, p. 129. I say "ideally" because Wordsworth in the same passage says that words can also be used as "only a clothing" for thought. But when so used, he goes on, they will "prove an ill gift."

²⁷In a very popular work of the late eighteenth-century, Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783), we find for example: "Simple expression just makes our idea known to others; but figurative language, over and above, bestows a particular dress upon that idea; a dress, which both makes it to be remarked, and adorns it" (Lecture XIV, "Figurative Language"). Quoted in Essays on Rhetoric, ed. Dudley Bailey (New York, 1965), p. 108.

²⁸John F. Danby, in his William Wordsworth: The Prelude and Other Poems (New York, 1963), has puzzled over the meaning the word "thought" ought to have in discussions of Wordsworth. He observes that for Wordsworth "a 'thought' is a movement of the mind when the mind is entering into and upon the self-constituting order-of-things" (p. 48). I accept the genus of Danby's definition: "thought" to be understood as "a movement of the mind."

²⁹Literary Criticism, p. 130.

³⁰"An Essay on Criticism," ll. 297-298.

³¹And sometimes just such an implicit document. See Donald Davie's observation quoted in n. 11 above. In the poem, in other words, we can see Wordsworth consciously reacting to, even re-experiencing, the history of his mind.

³²Literary Criticism, pp. 51-53.

³³Poetical Works, III, 18.

CHAPTER II

A POEM ABOUT INTERIORS

"Tintern Abbey" resembles the classical religious meditation in that it begins with a careful description of a scene, with what St. Ignatius would have called "the composition of place." It also shows Wordsworth employing those three powers of the mind designated by the ultimately Augustinian psychology from which the religious meditation was derived: memory, understanding, and will. In the poem we find Wordsworth struggling to understand what his memory so poignantly reveals--that his perception of nature has irrevocably changed with the passing of years. We also find him making certain promises: that he shall continue to turn to nature as the "guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/ Of all my moral being" (ll. 110-111). But despite these similarities with the religious meditation, the atmosphere of Wordsworth's poem is vastly different. The scene which is "composed" is significant only because of the private resonances Wordsworth discovers in it. It carries in its texture none of the traditional dimensions of meaning that the classical scenes from scripture had for the disciple of St. Ignatius. Moreover, as Louis Martz has pointed out, the kind of understanding which is "applied" is associative rather than, as in a meditation by Donne, dialectic.¹ And the moment of illumination toward which this ruminating understanding gropes lacks the benefit of an orthodox theology by which to guide itself. Finally, the resolution which Wordsworth makes, his pledge of continuing fealty to nature, is based exclusively upon his past experience.

His wish derives none of its force or point from any traditionally sanctioned moral directive.

Perhaps it is this complete absence of any perspective other than the private which makes the total impression of Wordsworth's poem so different from the impression left by a classical religious meditation. We may, for example, find Donne struggling in his meditations with grave doubts about his own possibilities for salvation; but the fundamental coordinates of his universe are secure. And his precisely defined orthodoxy more often than not provides the alembic in which his doubts are resolved. In "Tintern Abbey," on the other hand, Wordsworth's universe and his resolution are far more tentative. The essential elements of his vision of nature are questioned a number of times in the poem. And his wish to find continuing sustenance in nature, a wish which grows out of his tentative vision, has none of that certainty of fulfillment which Donne can feel in the Christian promises. In the concluding lines of the poem, Wordsworth even finds it necessary to project his sister Dorothy into the uncertain future: she will, he hopes, sustain the necessary relationship with saving nature even if he no longer can do so. In other words, both the poet's faith in nature and the version of "salvation" that faith implies are shot through with ambiguities. We might even go so far as to agree with what one critic of "Tintern Abbey" has suggested, namely, that the "dominating mood of the greater part" of Wordsworth's meditation along the banks of the Wye is "one of perplexity."² This perplexity quietly intrudes into what appears to be the most affirmative passage of the poem: Wordsworth can find no better name for the principle of cosmic

oneness which he intuits than "something."

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the sources of Wordsworth's perplexity. I believe that these sources can be indirectly approached by posing the following question: to what extent can we see in the whole activity of mind which the meditation describes reflections of that moment of sublime consciousness when Wordsworth undergoes an encounter with an interfusing cosmic presence; an encounter which dissolves distinctions between the activity of consciousness and the activity of its intended object; an encounter which finally, I have argued in my introductory chapter, is a manifestation of imaginative consciousness becoming reflexively aware of its own ubiquitous energies? This thesis, it is now relevant to admit, suggests that Wordsworth, even at that moment when his rhetoric indicates a mind at the highest pitch of intuitive certitude, is still struggling unawares with a perplexity: a consciousness of transcendence without the proper name for what is indeed the transcendent agent--his own mind. To put this another way: the tentative quality of Wordsworth's vision and hope in "Tintern Abbey" is not simply the result of the privacy of that vision and hope--their lack of sanction in terms of a traditional orthodoxy. Within the poet's very privacy there is a failure of recognition. He displaces his "sense sublime" of the power of his own imaginative consciousness into a "something" dwelling throughout the universe. And this displacement is but the most extreme of a series of displacements of the recognition of imaginative activity which pervades the entire meditation.

These generalities will, it is hoped, be clarified and sup-

ported in the following pages by a consideration of the poem from two points of view: 1) as a poem about interiors; 2) as a meditation which proceeds as a continuing exploration of the sense of interiors. The first point of view will bring us up against Wordsworth's persistent characterization of imaginative activity as a creation of a sense of immanence, of a "within," in phenomenal nature; and also up against the question of how indeed this activity itself proceeds from a "depth" of the mind far below the surface of ordinary consciousness. The second point of view will enable us to see the associative progressions of the poem as controlled, in part at least, by an explorative movement of the poet's mind from one "interior" of consciousness to the next--a journey through a variety of mental depths. These two approaches, while not adding up to a total reading of the poem, and while probably raising more spectral questions than solid answers, will at least bring us closer to a means of describing the grounds of Wordsworth's perplexity.

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"Tintern Abbey" is a poem preoccupied with the insides of things or, to put this more exactly, with a sense of immanent power lurking beneath the surface of phenomena.³ The "something," of course, is "deeply interfused" and dwells within all things. But even in Wordsworth's opening "composition of place" (ll. 1-22), the poet's eye and ear encounter a landscape redolent with immanence. The mountain springs of the Wye are heard as rolling with a "soft inland murmur," the word "inland" not only supplying a reason for the softness of the

murmur but also obliquely evoking a much more extensive region than that seen in the poem, a region within which the immediate landscape around Tintern Abbey is located. The "wild secluded scene" of this landscape is seen by the poet as somehow impressed by "steep and lofty cliffs" with "Thoughts of more deep seclusion," as if the elements of the scene were in themselves enacting the poet's sense of intensifying solitude. Wordsworth finds himself located in a kind of interior: "I again repose/ Here, under this dark sycamore." He observes "orchard-tufts" which because of their "one green hue" seem almost to be submerging as they "lose themselves/ 'Mid groves and copses." The "pastoral farms" of the scene barely emerge from the lush, enclosing landscape: they are "Green to the very door." The poet, noticing suggestive "wreaths of smoke" drifting up from among the trees with "some uncertain notice," begins to shape hypotheses about the immanence of the woods. Perhaps the uncertain notice is of "vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods." The quiet oxymoron "vagrant dwellers" prefigures the curious way in which Wordsworth will later attempt to fix the location of the "something": its "dwelling" turns out to be everywhere. Here, at the opening of the meditation, the "dwellers" of the woods, perhaps gypsies, are in fact wandering (L. vagari, to wander); and it seems only fitting that they be located where there are no fixed human locations. Their potential ubiquity within the "houseless" woods resembles the ubiquity of the "something" within its universal dwelling-places.

Finally Wordsworth surmises a "Hermit" sitting alone at the quiet heart of the landscape. This surmise completes the centripetal

movement of the poem's first verse paragraph. The Hermit's presence is envisaged as not only within the landscape (itself surrounded by a larger, unseen region) but also within an enclosure itself contained by the woods--a "Hermit's cave." This last interpretation by Wordsworth of the "uncertain notice" is also the last refinement of his "Thoughts of more deep seclusion." The "wild secluded scene," at the moment when Wordsworth is about to turn away from a direct contemplation of it, is thus sensed as possessing an immanence--and is perhaps not so wild after all. For the solitude enclosed within the landscape is surmised as a human solitude.

We might also characterize the progression of Wordsworth's mind in his initial meditative act as a movement downward and inward: from the sight of "steep and lofty cliffs" to a sense, beyond the reach of sight, of an immanent human presence deep in the woods. And if we try to characterize this progression in terms of a larger context of metaphorical implication, we find useful Northrop Frye's observation that the "metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to move inside and downward instead of outside and upward, hence the creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the presence of God."⁴ Thus, we are tempted to ask of Wordsworth's composition of place whether it in fact is symbolic of a movement of his mind toward the sources of his creativity; whether the poet's preoccupation with the immanence of phenomena is not really a preoccupation with the power of imagination immanent within his own mind; and whether, finally, the movement downward and inward does not prefigure the poet's later encounter with his transcendent "something." To provide the context necessary for an investigation of these ques-

tions, we must step momentarily away from "Tintern Abbey" and consider at large Wordsworth's metaphorical geography of introspection.

I say "geography" because Wordsworth consistently tends to speak of his mind in metaphors implying spatial extent; and thus the acts of introspection, of memory, of consciousness in general, all of which take place within this spatialized mind, can be likened to a movement within a special kind of spatial dimension or even to a journey through a certain region.⁵ What, then, are the main (physical and psychological) features of Wordsworth's interior landscape? We might say, first of all, that since Frye's observation suggests a metaphorical equation between the place where imaginative power is to be found and the place where--to borrow a term from Rudolf Otto--the "Holy" is to be encountered,⁶ the journey into what has been referred to in Wordsworth as the "abysses of the subjective consciousness" is simultaneously a journey toward the numinous, the transcendent, even the awful.⁷ And in terms of this geography of introspection Wordsworth at times approaches his power of imagination with something of the same mixture of dread and desire that a soul of an earlier tradition might have experienced in feeling himself translated to the otherworld.

In the fragment of The Recluse which Wordsworth includes in the preface to the 1814 edition of The Excursion, the poet deliberately recalls the Christian tradition of vision, only to express, with a certain bravado, his emotional indifference to it:

Jehovah--with his thunder, and the choir
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones--
I pass them unalarmed.⁸

Instead, Wordsworth discovers his terror of the "Holy" in the journey

"inside and downward"--in the visionary act of introspection. In lines immediately following his almost contemptuous dismissal of Jehovah's "shouting Angels," he writes:

Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams--can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man--
My haunt, and the main region of my song.⁹

Wordsworth's otherworld is thus an underworld, not that created by Miltonic vision but that discovered by consciousness turning inward upon itself. The negative comparisons of these lines curiously suggest that this underworld, while totally devoid of form or shape, is still a space, a "haunt," an almost sacred spot filled with the presence of awesome power. Since, in terms of Wordsworth's metaphors, there is nothing to be seen in this haunt--no palpable shape upon which the mind can establish a purchase--reflexive consciousness discovers no limiting contours to its introspective plunge and thus finds itself upon a fearful journey into an open-ended abyss.

This kind of interior space is quite different from the confining space of Locke's camera obscura. This earlier metaphor of the mind reflects both Locke's rejection of the theory of innate ideas, which were often described by the Cambridge Platonists as kinds of inner light, and his restriction of the sources of knowledge to the not always certain reports of the senses.¹⁰ Wordsworth's metaphor of the mental abyss, on the other hand, intimates a theory of the mind which goes far beyond Locke's careful empiricism. For immanent throughout the poet's interior space is the numinous power of the

imagination--sometimes referred to by him as a mist or vapour, sometimes as a stream, sometimes as nothing more than the sound made by an unseen stream. In Book XIV of The Prelude, for example, Wordsworth characterizes his history of the growth and development of his imagination as the tracing of a "stream/ From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard/ Its natal murmur."¹¹ Earlier in the same book, where Wordsworth discovers in the mountain vision (also a vision of depths) from the top of Snowdon a "perfect image of a mighty Mind," he sees in a "blue chasm" in the outspread mist below a "breach/ Through which the homeless voice of waters rose." And in this "dark deep thoroughfare," he goes on, "had Nature lodg'd/ The Soul, the Imagination of the whole."¹² We might note in these lines, incidentally, a suggestion of the same oxymoron of home/homeless--the "vagrant dwellers" of the "houseless" woods, the something's "dwelling" ubiquitously--which we saw in "Tintern Abbey": here the "homeless voice of waters" is "lodg'd" as an auditory emblem of the "Imagination" in the "blue chasm" in the mist.

In Book VI of The Prelude, after Wordsworth describes his discovery of having crossed the Alps without realizing it, the poet is suddenly confronted directly by his imagination:

here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller.¹³

The imagery here is especially involved. Not only does the imagination rise from the by now familiar subjective abyss; but the mind itself, confronted suddenly by its immanent power, is enclosed (imagination

"enwraps" the traveller) by the intensity of its reflexive awareness. Consciousness is both the container which in its depths contains imagination and, now that imagination has leapt forth from these depths, the contained. Imagination is described as this confining, enclosing mist because so potent is its abrupt intrusion into awareness that the phenomenal world is lost. As Wordsworth tells us a few lines later: "the light of sense/ Goes out."¹⁴ The phrase "light of sense" recalls of course the Lockean epistemology and his notion of the mental camera obscura into which sensation, as it were, beamed its message. But when this light is extinguished for Wordsworth, there is discovered by the poet an innate power of the mind undreamt of in Locke's philosophy.

This direct, unmediated confrontation with imaginative power is rare in Wordsworth. The poet's primary aim, he tells us in the preface to The Excursion, is to sing a "spousal verse" celebrating the marriage of his mind to nature.¹⁵ Such a marriage would inevitably have to avoid a prolongation of that state of mind brought about when the light of sense has gone out; for this kind of awareness necessarily involves a break with nature, a divorce of consciousness from the phenomenal world. Nature, the chosen partner of Wordsworth's mind, demands that the light of sense be maintained. The obvious difficulty in meeting this demand--from the point of view of the metaphors we have been examining--is that the imagination, that power whereby Wordsworth seeks to blend his mind with nature, includes a tendency to force Wordsworth's awareness back toward the abysses of subjective consciousness, to halt and enwrap the mental traveller. Reflexive

imaginative consciousness tends to be the antithesis of the awareness of nature. And even when the power discovered in the abysses of the mind has been somehow synthesized with consciousness of nature, it threatens always to destroy nature by its own exuberance. Wordsworth complains in The Prelude:

Oh! why hath not the Mind
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?¹⁶

In these lines we again see Wordsworth's concern with a dwelling: his "spirit" of imagination is to "lodge" in nature, however "frail" its "shrines" may prove to be. (The lodges of nature are appropriately "shrines" because the imagination is a numinous power.) In these lines we also see a metaphorical paradigm of how Wordsworth attempts to solve the problem posed by his scheme of marriage. Reflexive imaginative consciousness is to be mediated by awareness of nature. The poet will transfer ("stamp") the image of his mind as a place wherein lurks an immanent power onto nature. Nature now must become a dwelling, a lodge, a home--and also, therefore, a place of immanence. We might say that the sense of the abyss of the mind is converted into a sense of the depths of nature; but of course nature exhibits these depths only insofar as imagination has been sent abroad, as it were, to deepen nature. Reflexive imaginative consciousness is to be experienced sub specie naturae; or as Hartman has put it, in commenting upon Wordsworth's "obsession with specific place," "consciousness of self" is to be "buried in nature."¹⁷ Consciousness allows itself to become aware of imagination's power by

displacing that power into a shrine (or lodge, or home, or house, and so on) in the phenomena supplied by the light of sense. This relationship between consciousness and nature is inevitably oxymoronic: the "homes" provided by nature, although limited in terms of their phenomenal surface, must simultaneously possess an immanent open-ended space adequate to the nature of the numinous power of imagination whose original dwelling-place was the infinite underworld of Wordsworth's mind. The poet's "natural mysticism," therefore, might be characterized as a consciousness of this underworld opening out beneath the surface of the natural world.

I have attempted in the preceding paragraph to describe one of the essential metaphorical structures of Wordsworth's marriage of mind and nature. Obviously a more precisely philosophical account of this marriage--of the grounds of this displacement of reflexive imaginative awareness into lodges provided by nature--is required; and will be given in Chapters III and IV of this study. But by now it should be apparent toward what conclusions about the opening landscape of "Tintern Abbey" this brief account of Wordsworth's metaphors of immanence is leading. The sense of interiors which so fascinates the poet in his composition of place is in fact a sense of the power of his own imagination enclosed within nature. This sense of interiors, of something far more deeply interfused, is what Wordsworth's eye attempts to resolve as it scans a landscape shot through with unseen presence and as the landscape itself seems to dissolve into the pervasive green of the season. The gradual focus of his eye upon the "uncertain notice" of the wreaths of smoke, and then the passing of

his mind beyond the reach of sight into the depths of the green woods where he postulates "vagrant dwellers" in the "houseless" forest and a Hermit sitting alone in a cave,¹⁸ are actions which recall in a remarkably distilled and naturalistic fashion the metaphors of consciousness we have been tracing: the imagination as a mysterious vapour rising from the depths, the oxymoronic dwelling in an unconfined space, the mind as a cave wherein lurks a secret power. And just as in the Alps the imagination enclosed Wordsworth's awareness like a mist and extinguished the light of sense, so here the rising smoke from the depths of the landscape leads Wordsworth beyond the phenomenal world into the immanence of the forest, into the underworld of his own mind.¹⁹

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We are now in a position to analyze what Professor Martz has described as the "associative" understanding of Wordsworth's meditation. After the composition of place of the first verse paragraph, the poet turns away from a direct contemplation of his scene and begins to explore the significance for himself of the "beauteous forms" (1.22) of the landscape, an exploration which brings him to thoughts of both his past and his future--and also to an encounter with "something far more deeply interfused."

The language of this exploration suggests a continuing sense of the mind as a kind of interior space, a space into which the poet seeks to sink, escaping from the "heavy and weary weight/ Of all this unintelligible world" (ll. 39-40). For the most part this escape, this inward sinking, is mediated through a vision of phenomenal na-

ture, a vision which requires sensation or at least the memory of sensation before the poet can turn inward upon himself. At the end of the fourth verse paragraph phenomenal nature, the nature revealed through the "language of the sense," is described by Wordsworth as the "guide, the guardian" of his heart, and finally as the "soul" of all his moral being (ll. 108-111). We might understand this characterization as the poet's recognition of nature's role in restoring him to a sense of his own heart, his own soul--to a sense of what is most essentially inward in himself. That nature is granted the epithet "soul," as if Wordsworth were saying that nature at least in one respect was his very essence, is but another manifestation of his habit of displacing his own inwardness into nature. But this displacement turns out to be reciprocal for Wordsworth: having transferred his sense of self into nature, he finds that nature made immanent leads him back toward himself.

At the beginning of the second verse paragraph we find an example of such a backward turning. After having surmised an unseen Hermit at the heart of the landscape, Wordsworth continues his movement beyond the immediacies of the scene by directing his consciousness toward his past: he transforms his sense of a human presence enclosed in the woods into an explicit memory of himself "in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din/ Of towns and cities" (ll. 25-26). The cave of nature becomes a room in London, the identity of whose inhabitant is now no longer disguised. The poet's envisaging of hidden solitude is converted, through a process of association, into an overt memory of his own past solitude. This transformation makes more understand-

able the grounds of the sense of pervading immanence of the opening landscape. Consciousness of self is lodged through the scene because, as Wordsworth's eye passes over it, he is simultaneously aware, however subliminally, of the previous encounters of his mind with the scene--a direct encounter in the year 1793, the time of his first visit to Tintern Abbey; and then a series of indirect encounters made possible by his recalling through the agency of affective memory, the "beauteous forms" during the period between 1793 and July 13, 1798, the day of his return and his meditation. The landscape, therefore, so strangely immanent, is not simply being seen, but is being seen "again"--the word is repeated four times in the first 22 lines. And so it is filled with an implicit history of the poet's past conscious experiences with its forms. We might say that it is the richness of the sense of "being seen again" which is, as it were, spatialized into the immanencies of the scene. We might also say, from this point of view, that Wordsworth's image of himself in a lonely city room is an image which was, up to a point in the poem, buried in the unseen spaces of the landscape: one of his earlier undefined thoughts of "more deep seclusion." The image now becomes emergent and explicit.

The seclusion of the city, as Wordsworth remembers it, also was characterized by movements of consciousness describable in terms suggesting a movement into an interior. Since Wordsworth apparently found in the phenomena of the city nothing more than "many shapes/ Of joyless daylight" (ll. 51-52)--an oppressive experience of the "burthen of the mystery" of things (l. 38)--he would turn for "tranquil restoration" (l. 30) to his memories of the phenomena of the

landscape around Tintern Abbey. He tells us that he owed to these remembered forms

sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration

(ll. 27-30)

The language of these lines suggests a movement of awareness from a purely sensory state ("sensations sweet/ Felt in the blood") to a state of more diffused emotion ("felt along the heart") and finally to a state which seems to transcend the physicality of sensation and emotion: the "sensations sweet" are said to somehow pass "even" into Wordsworth's "purer mind"--as if these sensations were penetrating a region of interior consciousness where sensation is not normally found. These lines become more intelligible if we take them as descriptive of a movement of consciousness, by means of a contemplation of the remembered "beauteous forms," from a state which is almost exclusively sensory to a state which, though dependent upon remembered sensation, is more enclosed, more self-contained, more inward than the state of sensory awareness in which consciousness is principally directed toward the remembered objects of sensation. In other words, I take this description of sensations passing into Wordsworth's "purer mind" as suggesting a movement of consciousness implicitly analogous to the movement of the poet's mind described in the first verse paragraph: from the surface of phenomena (though in "lonely rooms," a remembered surface) to a sense of enclosed immanence. And this meditative recall by the Wordsworth of 1798 of his earlier acts of remembering continues the process of inwardly deepening consciousness implicit

in the poem from its very inception.

An even more intense form of this kind of consciousness is delineated in the final lines of the second verse paragraph. Wordsworth claims that he owes to his memories of the "beauteous forms" "another gift,/ Of aspect more sublime" (ll. 36-37). This "aspect" is a certain kind or power of vision (L. aspectus, a seeing, a looking, a power of vision), and is described in language intimating an encounter with an immanent presence. This encounter occurs in

that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,--
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

(ll. 41-49)

Wordsworth shifts in these lines into the first person plural, a rhetorical heightening which seems to universalize the availability of the kind of vision he is describing: "we," all of us, are potentially capable of such an "aspect," such a power of vision. But this shift in point of view also suggests that it is of the nature of this kind of encounter with "the life of things" to convert the sense of "I" into a sense of "we"--to attenuate the awareness of the self as a single, isolated ego. Such an awareness is thus analogous to the poet's awareness later in the poem of a ubiquitous, all-pervading "something" which lies in the innermost space of all things, including the mind of man: all identities tend to be lost in the universally immanent "something." Here the "aspect more sublime," this

vision of "the life of things," is, we note, a seeing "into." And the language describing the movement of consciousness toward the moment of such seeing "into" indicates an awareness which passes beyond bodily sensation ("we are laid asleep/ In body") toward an intensity of inward vision ("and become a living soul"). The eye which then sees "into" is of course not the corporeal eye--that along with the body has been "laid asleep"--but the inward eye of meditative introspection, an eye which has been made tranquil by a "power/ Of harmony" and a "power of joy" which, we also note, is "deep." This word which Wordsworth uses to describe the sense of joy accompanying his vision suggests not simply the intensity of the joy but, more importantly from the point of view of the poem's language of immanence, the interior of consciousness in which harmony, joy, and a vision "into the life of things" is to be experienced. Finally, we might observe that this "aspect" is "more sublime" than that state of awareness in which he felt "sensations sweet" passing into his "purer mind." The comparative form of the adjective tells us that both structures of inward consciousness described in the second verse paragraph are "sublime"--a characterizing term which appears elsewhere in the poem only in Wordsworth's account of a "sense sublime" of "something far more deeply interfused." We might say, therefore, that whatever else "sublime" awareness, or "sublime" intentionality, is in "Tintern Abbey," it seems to involve an act in which consciousness senses itself penetrating an interior. And implicitly, we might also conclude, Wordsworth's surmise at the end of his composition of place of a hermit enclosed within the landscape is a movement of his mind

toward sublimity.

Now the question might be asked of the conclusion of the second verse paragraph what exactly is this "life of things" into which Wordsworth claims he has seen? The difficulty in answering this question has already been indicated by the analysis of the preceding paragraph. Wordsworth's emphasis in his retrospective account is almost entirely upon the state of consciousness which sees "into" rather than upon the intended object of that state of consciousness. It is this structure of awareness which he claims is one of the principal gifts of his memories of the "beauteous forms." Moreover, as the third verse paragraph tells us, while the poet is certain both of having undergone this visionary experience and of the "method" of moving toward such a vision, the precise content of that vision, the presumed encounter with the "life of things," is not so certain after all:

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

(ll. 49-57)

These lines come as a dramatic turn in the poet's meditative action. (In a note to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth claims that the poem roughly resembles an ode in its "impassioned music" and in "the transitions"; it might be said that here is an impassioned example of the "antistrophe," or the "turning against," of that form.²⁰) Until this point Wordsworth's awareness--first as

he scanned the scene, then as he recalled the quality of his retrospective encounters with the scene--had been growing progressively more inward. But now it appears as if the very language of his meditation--the very articulation of this deepest intuition--has triggered a seizure of doubt. Certitude is abruptly converted into the uncertainty of a hypothesis. It is not the experience itself which might be "a vain belief." Instead, the question is whether he can characterize this vision as indeed a seeing "into the life of things." That phrase, though ringing with an almost metaphysical assurance, is at the same time so vague and extensive in its reference as to be potentially meaningless. What exactly, Wordsworth suddenly seems to inquire, am I to make out of this "aspect more sublime"? Can I base such a sweeping claim on such a private experience? Wordsworth's perplexity here prefigures the later perplexity hidden in his use of the groping term "something" to designate the indwelling spirit of all the cosmos. The poet's deepest intuitions can make no clarifying appeal to traditional myth or to a discursively worked out set of dogmatic formulations. And as he leaves behind the concrete sources of these intuitions, his memories of the "beauteous forms" of the landscape of Tintern Abbey, and as he retrospectively works his way through his memory of these memories toward a statement of his vision, his language grows progressively more abstract, more generalized, and finally, even to himself, dubious.²¹

Yet this experience of doubt is momentary. The "antistrophe" of the third verse paragraph almost as quickly becomes an "anti-antistrophe." Lacking the support of a traditional myth or dogma,

Wordsworth again turns to the undeniable facts of his experience and finds support against his doubts by recalling the genuine solace of his memories when he was oppressed by the "fever of the world" in the midst of "joyless daylight." But this appeal to the past is simultaneously an appeal to the present and to the immediate locale of his meditation. For out of this new memory of his acts of remembering, he apostrophizes the "sylvan Wye" flowing directly before him in the landscape. His appeal, in other words, combines the experiential testimony of both the past and the present. His second-person address to the Wye as "thou wanderer thro' the woods" evokes yet another image of immanence--but an image which draws the poet's eye back into the specific scene and recalls him from the wavering expressed in his suddenly intruding hypothesis. This return to the concrete as an anodyne for doubt is an action which the poet later formulates as a fundamental requirement of his consciousness: Wordsworth writes in lines 107-109 that he is "well pleased to recognize/ In nature and the language of the sense/ The anchor" of his "purest thoughts." An anchor, of course, achieves a purchase upon stability by sinking into the depths of the sea; and here Wordsworth stabilizes himself, escapes from the wavering hypothesizing of one of his "purest thoughts," by addressing his awareness to an immediately given image of an action proceeding through an interior.²² Vision is to be preserved by an adhesion to sensation, and his eye returns to an image of the immanence of the woods.

At the end of the third verse paragraph Wordsworth has thus completed an almost circular movement of his consciousness: from

present to past back to present; from landscape to a history of the relationships of his mind to that landscape back to landscape; from outward awareness to inward awareness back to outward awareness. The phenomenology of this circular movement might almost be compared to an exploration of Chinese boxes: Wordsworth "opens" the strangely immanent landscape and discovers himself in the "box" of a room in the city. He recalls, almost seems to re-experience, the exploration by his past mind (trapped within that city box) into the remembered "beauteous forms." Immanence leads to deeper immanence. At the moment of deepest penetration, there occurs a vision "into" something he terms "the life of things." And immediately, at this moment of climax, the lid of this ultimate interior slams shut; and Wordsworth is left wondering whether he is guilty of a "vain belief." His anxiety is dispelled, or at least he attempts to dispel it, by a return through his memories to the surface of the landscape. This action of consciousness is similar in part to that poignant moment of introspection in Book XII of The Prelude where Wordsworth also uses the language of immanence to delineate an intense moment of perplexing introspection:

Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
 Proceed thy honours. I am lost
 . . .
 The days gone by
 Return upon me almost from the dawn
 Of life: the hiding-places of man's power
 Open; I would approach them, but they close.²³

In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth's search into the depths of subjective consciousness, a downward and inward journey which seems to carry him to a sight of what Frye, we have noticed, has called "the

creative world" or the "place of the presence of God," is terminated by a scrupulous hypothesis. We have already suggested that one reason for the poet's sudden worry about a "vain belief"--as if a question of doctrine were at issue--was the fact that Wordsworth's poetic articulation of his vision, his rendering of his "aspect more sublime" into statement, exposed the vision to the kinds of questions that can be asked of any statement, but are especially likely to be asked of any affirmations about the "life of things." But perhaps a still more fundamental reason can be offered to explain Wordsworth's abrupt upsurge of anxious uncertainty. Perhaps his anxiety is a displaced, brief, and somewhat muted expression of the "fear and awe" which, according to his preface to The Excursion, he claims to experience when he approaches the "haunt" and "main region" of his song, namely, his own mind. In other words, the "life of things" is the numinous presence in the creative underworld of his mind--a presence I have already called the power of "imagination"²⁴--and his fearful turning for comfort to the "sylvan Wye" wandering through the woods is but another attempt to find a lodge for his imagination in the phenomena of nature. Going too far beyond, or rather within, these phenomena can lead to a "serene and blessed mood"; but the "Holy"--the "life of things"--is also "awful," and can breed anxiety and confusion.

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In the fourth verse paragraph Wordsworth plunges again into the past, but to a time even prior to the period of his solacing introspection "in lonely rooms." The poet attempts a picture of what

he "was when first" he "came among these hills," that is, on his walking tour of 1793 (ll. 66-67). But what he was in that year, at least as "Tintern Abbey" describes it, was essentially a certain structure of consciousness immersed in the depths of the phenomenal world, a mind almost totally one with nature. He claims that "like a roe" he

bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved.

(ll. 67-72)

We have here another image of depths ("deep rivers") and of seclusion ("lonely streams"). We also have a curious implication in the simile which concludes the passage: Wordsworth seems to be suggesting through the comparative form of the figure that **though his** relationship to nature at that time might be compared to the pursuit by a lover (himself) of his beloved (nature), a better characterization of this relationship is the simile of himself as the pursued fearing and flying from an unknown pursuer ("something"). But of course if the pursuer is only a vague "something," how can this simile be taken--as it indeed seems to offer itself--as delineating the relationship between his mind and nature? That this dreadful "something" was not nature, although at first reading it might be taken as such, is indicated by line 70 which tells us that it was nature who "led" the young poet, and therefore was in a certain sense at least not "behind," the proper place for all pursuers. Perhaps even the "thing he loved" cannot be taken to refer to nature. These lines really do

not provide enough to solve the puzzle, and all we can safely infer is that at this time Wordsworth's consciousness was a curiously ambivalent and contradictory mixture of the sense of being led (by nature), of the sense of his own loving pursuit (of nature?), and, most strikingly and memorably, of the fearful sense of being pursued. Perhaps it is his awareness of these riddles of his past state of mind which prompts Wordsworth to say in lines 75-76: "I cannot paint/ What then I was."

What he immediately proceeds to paint instead is a picture of nature in which the phenomena of the landscape are almost identical with certain structures of consciousness:

The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye.

(ll. 76-83)

Wordsworth's language presents a world in which there is no distinction to be made between his intentionality and his intended objects. The "directions" of consciousness at this time were totally equivalent to the ingredients of the landscape. These "forms" quite simply-- and the equation is startling--"were" for Wordsworth an "appetite; a feeling and a love." Thus there logically would be no need for "any interest/ Unborrowed from the eye." The simple act of sensation, the mere act of looking, would be sufficient to involve Wordsworth's awareness in a range of conscious experiences far richer than the experience of ordinary seeing. To see, in other words, is not to

produce an occasion for possible emotion; to see is in itself to feel emotion. Phenomena are feelings, and feelings are phenomena. And to hear a "sounding cataract" is directly to be "Haunted" by a "passion," as if the "sounding cataract" in itself were a certain structure of consciousness (the experience of a "passion") impinging upon awareness. This image of the "sounding cataract"--an image of a dislocated sound--I take to be another image of immanence: it is analogous to the "soft inland murmur" of line 4 in that because its source is unseen, it suggests something hidden away from sight, an interior behind the surface of phenomena. It is precisely this sense of an interior which enables Wordsworth to describe the "sounding cataract" as if it were in itself a structure of consciousness. For, as we have already seen, the sense of immanence is for Wordsworth the sense of his own mind hidden in the landscape. And insofar as phenomena convey this sense of immanence, he is made dimly aware, in this case "Haunted," by the underworld of his mind which he has displaced into nature.

The previously noticed riddles of Wordsworth's curious comparative simile can now be unravelled. Both the term "something" and the term "thing" belong to the poem's language of perplexity (the most obvious example of this language is of course the poem's only other "something," that which is "far more deeply interfused"). This perplexity, I have been arguing, relates to Wordsworth's reflexive consciousness of the activity of his own mind; a consciousness which is interfused with his awareness of the phenomena of nature; a consciousness which in Book XIII of the 1805 Prelude is the "highest

bliss" of those poetic minds whose

consciousness
Of whom they are ~~its~~ habitually infused
Through every image, and through every thought,
And all impressions²⁵

The precise grounds of Wordsworth's perplexity in "Tintern Abbey" is the fact that, though the entire meditation is an exploration of how his mind is immanent in nature, infused through every image, every thought, and all impressions, he never can quite bring himself to recognize this infusion. To be sure, the landscape makes him think a great deal about his mind, its transactions with itself and with nature in the past, the present, and the future. But during this "thinking about," which constitutes the action of the meditation, Wordsworth does not seem explicitly to recognize that the special resonance of his perceptions, both in the present and in the chambers of memory, resides in the fact that frequently these acts of perception are simultaneously acts of apperception; or, to put this in terms used in my introductory analysis of the "sense sublime," that frequently the intended objects of his consciousness tend to become indistinguishable from the intentionality, the direction of consciousness, which grasps them. Apperception, the reflexive sense of the mind's activity, is lodged in perception; and thus nature becomes immanent.

Now, as we also have seen, Wordsworth is afraid of staring too directly at his mind--afraid, in other words, of too unmediated an act of apperception. His mind is a "haunt," a sacred region filled with a numinous presence, and thus it fills him with awe and dread. But this mind which is experienced as a "haunt," as the place

of the "Holy," is not the mind which he thinks about, the mind which he constitutes as the direct object of his meditation; it is rather the immediately "living" mind which he encounters more or less obliquely in the act of apperception, in the activity of reflexive self-awareness. While the Wordsworth of 1805 may have decided this structure of consciousness was "highest bliss," the Wordsworth of 1793 was flying from "something" that he dreaded--in much the same way a soul of an earlier tradition might flee from the awful majesty of God.²⁶ And just as this soul might also pursue his God with love, so the Wordsworth of 1793 was pursuing the numinous presence of the underworld of his mind in a landscape where phenomena and structures of awareness were identical. But, of course, as the comparative form of Wordsworth's simile indicates, the sense of fear predominated. Perhaps the image of the "sounding cataract" haunting him like a passion most adequately summarizes the paradoxical doubleness of Wordsworth's relationship to his act of reflexive self-awareness infusing itself throughout the phenomena of nature. To be haunted by a passion is to be haunted by his love, his desire to encounter the visionary underworld of apperception. And he is simultaneously afraid of this love, of apperception, of staring too directly into the awe-engendering underworld of consciousness--an underworld from which, however, he cannot turn his face away in the patent "deep and gloomy wood" of Tintern Abbey.

The Wordsworth of 1798, looking back at this time of "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" (ll. 84-85), does not quite know what to make of it ("I cannot paint"), except finally to say it is "now no

more" (l. 84). Certainly the immediate intensity of the 1793 experience is past. But has the experience been completely lost, as Wordsworth indicates, or has it simply been attenuated? The very power of the poet's description of the experience suggests that, in the words of the "Immortality Ode," in the "embers" of his memory "Is something that doth live."²⁷ Perhaps the difference between his consciousness of 1793 and his consciousness of 1798 can be metaphorically depicted as the difference between the sound of the "sounding cataract" of the past and the sound of the "soft inland murmur" of the present. In other words, attenuation, not total loss. For Wordsworth still senses the landscape as immanent, though it is no longer seen and at the same time felt as a structure of consciousness. What appears to have happened is that he has so deeply lodged his self-awareness inside nature, that when he encounters it, as he does again shortly in the so-called "pantheistic" lines of the fourth verse paragraph, he does not know what to call it--especially since this "something" is "far more deeply interfused" than any of the other immanencies of the poem.

We must look upon the metaphor of "dwelling" of these lines as not only Wordsworth's most succinct description of the relationship of his mind and nature--a metaphor of extraordinary tension, yoking into a single precarious focus unbounded objects of perception (sky, air, ocean) with an apperception ubiquitously interfused. The metaphor can also be taken as Wordsworth's most explicit attempt in the poem to define his strangely immanent "something." Kenneth Burke has observed, in A Grammar of Motives, that to "tell what a thing is, you

place it in terms of something else. This idea of locating, or placing, is implicit in our very word for definition itself: to define, or determine a thing, is to mark its boundaries, hence to use terms that possess, implicitly at least, contextual reference."²⁸ That Wordsworth feels he has resolved his perplexity--using the entire universe as a vehicle for contextually defining the unrecognized immanence of his consciousness--is indicated by his surprising "Therefore" which begins the sentence immediately following his vision of the "spirit" that "rolls through all things" (ll. 100, 102). Why, we might ask, a "Therefore"? Is a hidden syllogism being brought to a finish? What are the grounds of this apparent conclusion? Why, suddenly, this rhetoric of resolution?

The answer to these questions seems to be that Wordsworth has convinced himself that he has uncovered a way out of his difficulties. His experience of transcendence, of the hidden "life of things," is not a "vain belief," so long as he can contextually define, mark the boundaries of, this experience by reference to the phenomena of nature--a strategy of definition which uses the "language of the sense." Nature will provide what traditional myth or religious dogma no longer provide: both a way of making intelligible the visionary world and a way of mediating its terrors. Wordsworth is "still/ A lover of the meadows and the woods,/ And mountains"--the polysyndeton of these lines (102-104) expresses the intensity with which he feels his solution--because these "beauteous forms" will continue to serve not only as vehicles of vision but even more crucially as the means of resolving the haunting perplexities of that immanent vision. In fact, of

course, Wordsworth's "religion of nature" is a means of providing symbolic form to the underworld, darker and more chaotic than "lowest Erebus," which is opened up by reflexive self-awareness. And his "Therefore" emerges from the practical reason, not the theoretical. For his solution is to be almost exclusively experiential, derived from the "language of the sense." But at least in one respect his "religion of nature" will be Pauline: his "God," like Paul's, is a hidden God, that is to say, hidden from the discursive eye of speculative reason.

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I have not presented in this chapter a complete reading of "Tintern Abbey." But my ambition, as I indicated in Section 1, was not to offer a total explication, but only a supporting context for the interpretation of the "sense sublime" presented in my introductory chapter. My aim was, as I stated there, to trace echoes of the structure of consciousness I saw in Wordsworth's "sense sublime" throughout the poem. This tracing involved us in the problems posed by the poet's metaphors of an interior space of the mind, by the connections he intimates between the act of visionary imagination and the act of reflexive self-awareness, and by the question of the grounds of his perplexity in "Tintern Abbey." Another way of approaching this last question might have been to see it from the perspective of Wordsworth's calculus of loss and gain, a calculus elaborately worked out in the poem and deeply involved in the poet's brooding sense of past and present. But this theme of compensation did not really fall within my focus. I have also ignored, for limits of space as well

as limits of focus, many other things, including the entirety of the fifth verse paragraph, in a discussion of which I might have said a few words about Wordsworth's characterization of Dorothy's future mind as a "mansion for all lovely forms" and her memory as a "dwelling-place/ For all sweet sounds and harmonies?" (ll. 140-142). But there would have been no way of dealing with this metaphorical projection--again in the language of immanence!--without raising the question of the poem's theme of hope; and that question in turn is enmeshed in the calculus of loss and gain.²⁹

Some readers might feel that in my discussion of Wordsworth's perplexity I have given the impression that the poet really did not know what he was writing about--always an ungrateful impression to be left by any critic. The reply to this objection, however, is very simple: Wordsworth knew very well that he was wrestling with the significance of encounters with a "something" he could find no better name for; and his meditation is an explicit and deeply moving account of that struggle.

NOTES: CHAPTER II

¹The Poetry of Meditation, rev. edn. (New Haven, 1962), p. 329.

²Albert S. Gerard, "Dark Passages: Exploring Tintern Abbey," SIR, III (1963), 22. David Ferry, in his The Limits of Mortality (Middletown, Conn., 1959), observes of the poem that it is "hard not to mistake for a confusion of feeling what may be a complexity of feeling, a contemplated and contained ambivalence" (pp. 110-111). Others who have proved helpful to me in preparing this reading are: Harold Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry (New York, 1963), pp. 149-159; Roger N. Murray, Wordsworth's Style (Lincoln, Neb., 1967), pp. 25-32; Christopher Salvesen, The Landscape of Memory (Lincoln, Neb., 1965), pp. 38-39; Carl Woodring, Wordsworth (Boston, 1965), pp. 59-64; and especially Geoffrey Hartman, op.cit., pp. 26-30, 175-176, et passim.

³I use the word "immanent" in two slightly different senses throughout this essay: 1) to indicate "being within," as in "mind is immanent in nature"; 2) to indicate "having a 'within' or interior," as in "nature made immanent," i.e., made to have mind inside of it. This second usage (far less frequent than the first) is prompted by Wordsworth's habit of obscuring the distinction between container and contained, indeed of reversing the roles without warning. See my comments below on Wordsworth's encounter with his imagination in Book VI of The Prelude. Which of the two senses is intended should be clear from the context. In my analysis of what I later call Wordsworth's "language of immanence" I have been especially helped by C. C. Clarke's Romantic Paradox (New York, 1963), pp. 44-53.

⁴"The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism," Romanticism Reconsidered, ed. Northrop Frye (New York, 1963), p. 16.

⁵The term "geography" was suggested to me by Lane Cooper's "A Glance at Wordsworth's Reading, II," MLN, XXII (1907), 116. Cooper uses the term in his study of Wordsworth's interest in travel books, and characterizes the poet as "in the truest sense a poetical geographer, a spiritual interpreter of observed phenomena on the earth."

⁶The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd edn. (London, 1950). I introduce Otto's term for the sake of corroborating my connection between Wordsworth's act of visionary introspection (Frye's journey downward and inward) and the experience of awe and dread. According to Otto's phenomenology of religious consciousness, one of the essential characteristics of an encounter with a "numinous object" is the experience of "mysterium tremendum." See Otto's analysis of "The Element of Awfulness," pp. 13-19. Wordsworth himself corroborates this connection in The Recluse lines cited in the text. The experience of "mysterium tremendum" is closely related to the feeling of a special kind of fear which many commentators have observed is a characteristic of the experience of the sublime, a relationship Otto himself notes (p. 42).

⁷G. W. Knight, The Starlit Dome (London, 1959), p. 11. Knight's study of "The Wordsworthian Profundity," pp. 1-82, is a brilliantly suggestive treatment of the poet's fascination with depths, dwelling-places, and, in his later poems, architectural structures of all kinds; and in this respect corroborates the point of view taken in this chapter, i.e., regarding "Tintern Abbey" as a poem about interiors.

⁸Poetical Works, V, 4, ll. 33-35.

⁹Ibid., ll. 35-41.

¹⁰For a discussion of Locke's metaphors of the mind, see The Mirror and the Lamp, pp. 57-58. Also see Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace (Berkeley, 1960), p. 19.

¹¹Ll. 194-196.

¹²All references to The Prelude are, unless otherwise indicated, to the 1850 version, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd. edn. rev. Helen Darbishire (Oxford, 1959). Here I quote from the 1805 version of Book XIV, i.e., Book XIII, ll. 69, 56, 62-65. In the 1850 version the explicit connection between imagination and the blue chasm disappears; the Snowdon scene is

All meek and silent, save that through a rift--
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place--
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice!
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.
(ll. 56-62)

In an early ms. version of this passage given by de Selincourt (The Prelude, p. 483), the relationship between the subjective abyss and the visionary world is quite explicit. Wordsworth speaks

of a mighty Mind
That while it copes with visible shapes hears also
Through vents and openings in the ideal world
The astounding chorus of infinity
Exalted by an underconsciousness
Of depth not faithless, the sustaining thought
Of God in human Being. . . .

¹³Ll. 592-596. See Hartman's analysis of this episode, op. cit., pp. 45-48.

¹⁴Ll. 600-601.

¹⁵Poetical Works, V, 4. This paragraph is especially indebted to Hartman's central thesis that Wordsworth, throughout his major

poetry, exhibits a fear of what Hartman calls "apocalypse," i.e., the "death of nature."

¹⁶Book V, 45-49.

¹⁷Hartman, op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁸Gaston Bachelard, in his The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (New York, 1964), analyzes what he calls the "phenomenological reverberation" of the image of the hermit's hut as it is used in poetry. He offers a suggestive corroboration of the visionary implications I have been arguing attach to Wordsworth's image of the Hermit's cave: "The hermit's hut is an engraving that would suffer from any exaggeration of picturesqueness. Its truth must derive from the intensity of its essence, which is the essence of the verb 'to inhabit.' The hut immediately becomes centralized solitude, for in the land of legend, there exists no adjoining hut. . . . The image leads us on towards extreme solitude. The hermit is alone before God. His hut, therefore, is just the opposite of the monastery. And there radiates about this centralized solitude a universe of meditation and prayer, a universe outside the universe" (p. 32). In Wordsworth, of course, the "universe outside" is a "universe inside," and "centralized solitude" is the condition of the mind's encountering its own powers.

¹⁹Wordsworth's sense of, and language of, space is not confined to his own practice but seems to be one of the commonplaces of the Romantic Period. Thomas De Quincy, for example, offers what could almost be taken as a paradigm for the kind of reading I am pursuing: "Great is the mystery of Space, greater is the mystery of Time. Either mystery grows upon man as man himself grows; and either seems to be a function of the godlike which is in man. In reality, the depths and the heights which are in man, the depths by which he searches, the heights by which he aspires, are but projected and made objective externally in the three dimensions of space which are outside of him. He trembles at the abyss into which his bodily eyes look down, or look up; not knowing that abyss to be, not always consciously suspecting it to be, but by an instinct written in his prophetic heart feeling it to be, boding it to be, fearing it to be, and sometimes hoping it to be, the mirror to a mightier abyss that will one day be expanded in himself" Collected Writings, ed. David Masson, 14 vols. (London, 1896, 1897), VIII, 15/.

²⁰Poetical Works, II, 517. I use the term "antistrophe" (Gk. antistrophein, to turn against or opposite) in somewhat of a Romantic way: to refer to a movement of the mind rather than to a stanza in the traditional "sublime ode." The usage is suggested by Wordsworth's note.

²¹The introspective act described by Wordsworth in the second verse paragraph is, in certain respects, similar to one of the ways in which a man might pursue, in Addisonian terms, the "pleasures of the imagination." Addison writes in The Spectator, No. 411, how by "this Faculty a Man in a Dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with

Scenes and Landscips more beautiful than any that can be found in the whole Compass of Nature." Addison of course would probably disallow Wordsworth's claim that in his city dungeon he saw into the "life of things": the imagination, to be sure, can give great pleasure, but to say that it is capable of such metaphysical insight is to allow the pursuit of imagination's pleasures to turn into a dangerous form of enthusiasm. Is Wordsworth here vaguely troubled by the possible charge of enthusiasm? In any case, Wordsworth's "antistrophe" is related to what Robert Langbaum, in "Romanticism as a Modern Tradition," A Grammar of Literary Criticism, ed. Lawrence Sargent Hall (New York, 1965), has said is a recurring problem of many Romantic moments of "illumination": "As an experience, the illumination is undeniably valid. But once the perception of value is abstracted from the immediate experience and formulated for application elsewhere, it becomes mere theory and therefore problematical" (p. 255). For a recent study of the Romantic problem of experience vs. formulation, as this problem is worked out in a single poem, see Bernard J. Paris, "Coleridge's 'The Eolian Harp'," PMASAL, LI (1966), 571-582.

²²An anchor is also the traditional symbol of hope. St. Paul establishes the equation in Hebrews 6:19: ". . . hope we have ~~as~~ an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (King James Version)..In English poetry examples of this traditional emblem can be found in George Herbert's "Hope" and in Spenser's portrait of Speranza in Book I, Canto X, xiv, of The Faerie Queene. In "Tintern Abbey," just as Wordsworth meditates his way toward a pledge of continuing faith in nature, so also he is seeking grounds for a continuing sense of hope: he dares "to hope" in line 65. In terms of traditional symbolism to "anchor" one's "purest thoughts" in "nature and the language of the sense" is to posit a purely sensationalistic ground for hope--an extraordinary reversal of the Christian grounding of hope in the world beyond. Note also how St. Paul's metaphor of hope as that "which entereth into that within the veil" suggests a movement into a transcendent interior (his vehicle, of course, is the veil of the Jewish temple). Likewise, in Herbert's poem personified Hope presents the poet with an "optick" or telescope, a means of penetrating otherwise hidden spaces. These associations become even more provocative if we regard Wordsworth's counting of the "gifts" he has received from nature as a secularized version of a traditional meditation recommended for those tempted by despair. Jeremy Taylor, for example, gives as his ninth "remedy" against despair the directive: "Gather together into your spirit and its treasure-house the memory, not only all the promises of God, but also the remembrances of experience and the former senses of the Divine favours, that from thence you may argue from times past to the present, and enlarge to the future and to greater blessings. For although the conjectures and expectations of hope are not like the conclusions of faith, yet they are a helmet against the scorching of despair in temporal things, and an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, against the fluctuations of the spirit in matters of the soul" The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living, ed. Thomas S. Kepler (New York, 1956), p. 160/. I am not suggesting "source" or "influence"; but certainly Wordsworth's oblique echoing of these traditions suggests that

an illuminating reading of the poem might be developed by regarding it as a meditation principally concerned with the problem of hope--a suggestion enforced when we recall that the longest poem published by Wordsworth during his lifetime, The Excursion, has as its central theme the correction of despondency or despair. Two final observations: 1) the prevailing color of the landscape of Tintern Abbey is green, another traditional emblem of hope; 2) in Book VI of The Prelude, at the moment of Wordsworth's unmediated contact with imagination rising from the mind's abyss, the poet claims to see, among other things, that

our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die
(ll. 604-606)

The vision provided by his encounter with imagination, in other words, reveals the grounds of hope. In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth decides that "nature and the language of the sense" will be his anchor immediately after his encounter with the transcendent "something." It goes without saying that the parallel is striking: in "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth searches through the dwelling-places of nature to a "sense sublime" of the activity of his own consciousness, i.e., the act of imagination.

²³Ll. 272-273, 277-280.

²⁴In Section 4 of this chapter I deliberately abandon the use of the term "imagination." Up to this point I have been employing the term freely because I have been attempting to trace indications of certain features of what I have called Wordsworth's "geography of introspection"; and from that point of view it seemed necessary to say--led on by the example of Wordsworth's own metaphors--that imagination is encountered by the act of introspection in the depths of subjectivity. In the concluding analysis of Section 4, however, I try to shift my terms away from metaphor toward greater precision. The reader is asked to assume that I intend a rough equation between "the act of reflexive self-awareness" and "the act of imagination." The grounds of this equation, which I explore in the next chapter, are exceedingly intricate, and cannot be faced now without muddling somewhat the analysis of the poem. To avoid this muddle, I momentarily suspend my use of the term "imagination," and ask my reader's patience. Hartman occasionally uses the term "imagination" as almost a synonym for "self-consciousness." He does not, in my judgment, sufficiently distinguish between what I call in Section 4 "thinking about" the self, i.e., constituting the subject as an object for thought, and what I call "reflexive self-awareness" or "apperception," i.e., becoming consciousness of the activity of the subject's consciousness without the subject's constituting this activity as an object of consciousness. This distinction is related to one of the central questions of modern phenomenology: whether the subject can become aware of the subject qua subject without losing itself as an object of

thought. See Pierre Thévenaz's discussion of this "Charybdis and Scylla" of introspection in What is Phenomenology?, esp. pp. 113-115.

²⁵L1. 107-111.

²⁶Cf. the implication of Donne's "Who sees God's face, that is self life, must die" ("Good Friday, 1613," l. 17).

²⁷Poetical Works, IV, 283, ll. 130-131.

²⁸A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives (New York, 1962), p. 24. From this Burkean point of view we might also suggest that the previously noticed complaint by Wordsworth about the inadequacy of the frail lodges of nature is, among other things, a complaint about the inadequacy of nature as a language whereby to express the reality of his mind. In Book V of The Prelude Wordsworth sees the language of poetry as a "mansion" (like the dwelling-places of nature?) which embody "Visionary power" and the "host of shadowy things" (ll. 595-600). We noted in the introductory chapter how words, according to Wordsworth, ideally should be an "incarnation" of thought. If nature is also to provide a "language," then of course it too ideally should be an "incarnation" of thought, i.e., of the visionary underworld.

²⁹See n. 22 above. See also the discussion of the relationship between Wordsworthian time and the problem of hope in Section 3 of Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

THE EXTENSIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The analysis of "Tintern Abbey" in the preceding chapter was prompted by a desire to trace echoes of Wordsworth's "sense sublime" throughout that poem's history of his mental operations. In this analysis I suggested that for Wordsworth the activity of reflexive self-awareness or the act of apperception is closely related to, if not identical with, the activity of his imagination. By "apperception" I do not mean a constitution by the mind of its own nature or activity as a direct object of consciousness. To "think about" one's mind is not the same thing as apperceiving its operations. By the term, rather, I mean a more or less indirect sense of the mind's own activity as that activity is immediately present in every act of perception. My analysis of the language of immanence in "Tintern Abbey" was designed to show, among other things, how Wordsworth seems peculiarly fascinated by the content of apperception latent in his perceptions; how indeed this latent content most explicitly surfaces in his encounter with a universally interfused "something."

My purpose in the remainder of this essay is further to contextualize my analysis of Wordsworth's "sense sublime" by exploring the poet's work as a whole for echoes of this reflexive structure of consciousness. My immediate purpose in this chapter and the next is to examine the ways in which we can engage in such an exploration from the points of view provided by certain theories of that category of aesthetic experience traditionally discussed under the rubric "The

Sublime." I hope to show that some of these theories offer a rich set of perspectives upon my subject.

In this chapter I examine certain eighteenth-century theories of the sublime which describe the mind as a spatially extended entity and as especially so when the mind is undergoing the experience of the sublime. That such theories seem suggestively relevant should be obvious at this stage of my argument. In the next chapter I shall examine Coleridge's speculations upon the sublime, and shall try to trace relationships between these speculations and his theory of the imagination. Since I am arguing in this essay a close relationship between Wordsworth's "sense sublime" and the activity of his imagination, the relevance of this Coleridgean investigation should appear even more immediately obvious than the relevance of my examination of certain eighteenth-century theorists. In both chapters, after having developed certain perspectives out of the theoretical material, I turn to Wordsworth, and try to see what I can see.

A word must now be said about the methodological assumptions of these two chapters. I offer no claim that the kind of study I am making here ought to be taken as a "source study" or as an "influence study." As tempting as such a claim might be--especially as a way of characterizing my pursuit of Wordsworth armed with the vision and the infinitely suggestive categories of Coleridge--I cannot pretend to demonstrate that any part of the ennobling interchange between Wordsworth's mind and nature was structured either by his reading in eighteenth-century aesthetics or by his prolonged and undoubtedly shaping contact with Coleridge. The question of such historical cau-

salities simply does not interest me, and I am content to leave the question to the investigative talents of others.¹ My rejection of historical bridge-building, however, leaves me with the task of offering some explanation and justification of the way in which I hope to use historically given theories for the sake of opening up lines of vision upon Wordsworth. How do I plan to mediate between poet and theory if indeed I am not mediating in the time-honored way of arguing "source" and "influence"?

My answer is this: I assume, along with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Kant, Burke, and a host of other theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that the experience of the sublime is indeed a distinguishable type of conscious experience--what I shall henceforth call "sublime consciousness"--and therefore deserves to be described as if it were such a distinguishable type. This assumption has the virtue of establishing the possibility of a mediation which is not dependent upon the mediation of historical cause and effect. No longer is it a matter, for example, of showing how Burke influenced Kant who influenced Coleridge who influenced Wordsworth, and so on. Now, with the assumption of a really distinguishable and recurring type of conscious experience, we can also assume that each theorist in his own way has made a contribution--however incomplete and inconclusive and perhaps even incorrect in some respects--to an emergent theory of the nature of sublime consciousness. And thus we are set free to ask the following questions: can we examine the various theories of the sublime with an eye open, not for their differences in emphases, vocabularies, philosophical presuppositions, and so on, but for their agree-

ments? Can we emerge with a typification of sublime consciousness through this search for consensus? Can we, through the use of a phenomenologically oriented and mediating vocabulary, gather notes toward a phenomenological archetype, notes toward a description of what seem to be the fundamental structures of consciousness in the experience of the sublime?² Can, finally, such notes be useful in approaching Wordsworth?

I believe that such a phenomenological archetype can be constructed, and the next two chapters are offered both in support of this belief and as my contribution toward such a result. I believe also that this archetype can be extremely heuristic for my treatment of the poet. In fact, I am concerned with describing sublime consciousness primarily for the sake of mediating between theory and Wordsworth. This priority in my intention suggests to me the necessity of imposing certain limitations. Thus in this chapter, where I move toward Wordsworth out of certain eighteenth-century theories of the sublime, I omit discussion of the theories of Burke and Kant, and instead confine myself exclusively to those theorists who speak of the experience of the sublime in metaphors implying the spatialization of the mind. Obviously any study which is primarily concerned with describing the phenomenological archetype of sublime consciousness as completely as possible cannot overlook these two thinkers. But in this chapter and the next I am concerned with gathering notes toward the archetype only to the extent of including, and thereby illuminating, Wordsworth's own version of sublime consciousness; and I feel that I can do what I want to do in this matter without evoking the theories of either Burke or Kant.³

Now I must be even more specific about the limits of my investigation and about the way in which I plan to mediate between theory and poet. In this chapter and the next I consider certain theorists of the sublime from the angles of vision suggested to me by my reading of "Tintern Abbey"--a meditation which, I have argued, has as its climactic moment an intense experience of sublime consciousness. I shall be examining these different theorists for the implications of their characterization of the mind as a spatially extended entity; for discussion of the experience of the sublime as, in some sense, an encounter with transcendence, either in nature or in the mind itself; finally, and most importantly, for recognition that in the experience of the sublime the mind becomes deeply aware of its own powers. It should be obvious from this statement of the limits of my investigation that, even with respect to the theorists I evoke, I am not at all concerned with presenting a systematic or comprehensive summary of their thinking upon the subject.⁴ It should perhaps be also obvious from this statement of my limits that my phenomenological focus is ultimately upon Wordsworth, and that in this chapter and the next I continue my task of uncovering support for the central thesis of this essay. That is to say, I continue to gather evidence for my contention that for Wordsworth the act of apperception is the foundation of his most visionary moments and that it is therefore at the heart of the activity of his imagination.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into two sections. In Section 2 I discuss the theorists of the sublime with only an occasional aside in the direction of Wordsworth. In Section 3 I attempt to use

some of the perspectives evolved in Section 2 for a sustained discussion of the problem of sublime consciousness in Wordsworth.

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Ernest Lee Tuveson has observed that according to "eighteenth-century theories of the imagination, the contemplation of a physically vast object, or one suggesting vastness, somehow increases the physical extent of the mind Awareness, it would seem, occupies a room whose walls can be pushed back. Behind the concept lies a spatial image of the mind"5 John Baillie, for example, in his An Essay on the Sublime, writes that "every Person upon seeing a grand Object is affected with something which as it were extends his very Being, and expands it to a kind of Immensity. Thus in viewing the Heavens, how is the Soul elevated; and stretching itself to larger Scenes and more extended Prospects, in a noble Enthusiasm of Grandeur quits the narrow Earth"6 The same spatializing of the mind is repeated, albeit with more restraint of phrase, by Joseph Priestley: "The mind . . . conforming and adapting itself to the objects to which its attention is engaged, must, as it were, enlarge itself, to conceive a great object."7 Alexander Gerard, in his An Essay on Taste, is so bluntly literal in his presentation of the same idea that he sees no need of the qualifying "as it were" of Baillie and Priestley: "We always contemplate objects and ideas with a disposition similar to their nature. When a large object is presented, the mind expands itself to the extent of that object, and is filled with one grand sensation"8 Even the fastidious prose of David Hume does not escape a trace of this metaphorical habit: ". . . 'tis evident that

the mere view and contemplation of any greatness, whether successive or extended, enlarges the soul, and gives it a sensible delight and pleasure."⁹

The tendency of these spatializing metaphors, if we choose to take them literally, is to bestow upon the mind what Descartes had declared to be the essential and distinguishing characteristic of matter alone, namely, extension. The mind, like a balloon of remarkable elasticity, expands and enlarges itself in order to accommodate the extension of the "grand Object" under contemplation. If indeed this "grand Object" appears to be immense or infinite--as, for example, Newtonian space appeared to be to many eighteenth-century observers--then the expanding mind finds itself in the paradoxical position of trying to accommodate an object which finally can be apprehended or grasped only by an equally infinite extension of the mind. I say "paradoxical" because from the point of view of strict logic this accommodation would be impossible: that the mind might grasp, or somehow contain, the immensity of a "grand Object," its own extension must become slightly more infinite, and by definition there can be no such thing as one infinity of extension larger than any other. This paradox is embedded in the language of Addison's description of one of the "pleasures of the imagination": "Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stilness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them."¹⁰ How the imagination can "grasp," or achieve an "Apprehension" of, an "unbounded" object is really not explainable

in spatial terms. The unbounded precisely as unbounded can never be contained no matter how capacious the container. Still, to testify that such an "Apprehension" does somehow occur, we have feelings of being "flung into a pleasing Astonishment" and of a "delightful Stilness and Amazement."

The moral of course is that we ought not take these metaphors of the expanding space of mind as they never were intended to be taken, that is, literally. They are intended to describe not the nature of the mind but the experience of consciousness when consciousness is directed toward the "larger Scenes and more extended Prospects" of nature. These metaphors in fact describe the mind as it is subjectively apprehended in the experience of the sublime, in the feeling of what Gerard calls "one grand sensation." But to use spatial metaphors to describe this experience is deceptive in that such language tends to visualize the process, to convert it into an object of sight, and hence to give the impression that the mind itself is being discussed as an object from an outside point of view.¹¹ The proper interpretation of these metaphors requires that we treat them as expressive of a subjective process which like any subjective process is quite invisible.

What, then, does it mean to say that the mind "expands" when confronting a "grand Object"? We might begin to construct a partial answer by proceeding from the already mentioned Cartesian premise that the "essence" of matter is extension; from, in the words of Ernst Cassirer, one of "the basic presuppositions of the Cartesian metaphysics," namely, that "the thing, the empirical object, can be clearly and distinctly defined only through its purely spatial determina-

tions. Extension in length, breadth, and depth is the only objective predicate by which we can determine the object of experience."¹² From the point of view of this presupposition, we might say that in the experience of sublime consciousness, in the confrontation by the mind with a "grand Object," there develops an awareness of the mind's having been granted the "only objective predicate" whereby to determine empirical objects, namely, extension in length, breadth, and depth throughout material space. Insofar as the mind is felt to expand, it is sensed as possessing an increasing amount of extension, as spreading itself outward into space; and thus it is sensed as developing in at least one fundamental respect a resemblance to matter which, despite the bewildering variety of its manifestations, always exhibits extension. In the experience of the sublime, we might say, there is developed a structure of awareness in which the radical Cartesian divorce between mind and matter is felt to have been overcome.¹³ The mind, by subjectively sensing itself as extended, simultaneously senses itself as if it were an empirical object spread, like the material atmosphere, throughout space. In Coleridgean terms we might characterize this structure of awareness as one in which there occurs the potentiality of a mediation between subject and object, assuming in this case mind to be subject and matter to be object. The grounds of this mediation would of course be the phenomenon of the simultaneous possession by both mind and matter of the common attribute of extension. And in Wordsworthian terms, I might add, sublime consciousness seems to offer suggestive possibilities for the marriage of mind and nature, especially for a marriage by the mind to nature in its more extended prospects.

These possibilities become clear if we remember that the extension of the mind throughout space tends to become infinite insofar as the "grand Object," to which consciousness is struggling to accommodate its capacity, is in itself unbounded. Consciousness thus moves into a state of potentially becoming aware of itself as an oxymoronic psychical-empirical entity ubiquitously spread out through nature; or, in the words of Gerard, the mind at the moment of sublime consciousness "sometimes imagines itself present in every part of the scene which it contemplates."¹⁴ The potential gloss which these words by Gerard provide for my reading of Wordsworth's "sense sublime" needs, at this point in my argument, no elaboration--except the remark that at that dramatic moment of sublime consciousness in "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth fails to recognize that it is his own mind which is ubiquitously in-dwelling throughout the vistas of sky, ocean, and air.

It must also be said that sublime consciousness, precisely because it can "sometimes" in some way imagine "itself present in every part of the scene" under contemplation, runs the risk of a profound sense of dislocation. Addison, for example, writing on the pleasures of contemplating the Newtonian heavens, gives us a hint of this risk. He comments on how we can feel ourselves "lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the immensity and magnificence of nature"; the mind, or more precisely the imagination, can find "her self swallowed up in the immensity of the Void that surrounds it."¹⁵ We might say that sublime consciousness, though involving a sense by the mind of its own increasing extension and therefore a sense by the mind of itself as a quasi-empirical object--this

sublime consciousness does not seem simultaneously to permit a Cartesian use of the newly acquired predicate of extension to define or determine the mind in the objective manner appropriate for an empirical object. The mind, in its encounters with sublimity, can become "lost" and "confounded," unable to define itself in terms of its "spatial determinations." It almost seems as if the very intensity of the sense of the spatialization of the mind carries within itself a potential sense of a kind of "aspatiality," of passing over into a dimension of being where no localization of the self is possible. Precisely because consciousness moves toward an awareness of its being "every-where," it paradoxically exposes itself to the risk of an awareness of its being "no-where," of being "swallowed up in the immensity of the Void." "Sublime space," the phenomenological space created by the mind's sense of its own infinite extension, is thus quite different in its effects from Cartesian space. Though both spaces are extended, the extension of Cartesian space creates the potential for both the determination and the localization of an object. But the extension of sublime space, the space that is phenomenologically generated by the mind's sense of itself spreading outward, establishes the possibility of both the indetermination and the dislocation of a subject. It follows, then, that if this sense of dislocation becomes too intense, the subject moves toward an awareness of "transport"--a favorite word in commentaries on the sublime--of being carried quite away from the world of ordinary, always confining localizations; of indeed, in the words of Baillie, quitting "the narrow earth" or of, in the words of Wordsworth, passing over into

"strange seas of Thought, alone."¹⁶

And if at this point we accept the justice of equating Wordsworth's state of imaginative consciousness with the state of sublime consciousness, we can arrive at a richer understanding of Hartman's contention that imagination in Wordsworth exposes him to the terrors of "apocalypse"--to the phenomenological possibility of the destruction and loss of the world. Wordsworth's ambition to "lodge" his mind in nature's phenomena, an ambition discussed in the previous chapter, can thus be seen as an effort to conserve the world, as an antithetical attempt to localize a consciousness which as it becomes imaginative or sublime moves toward the possibility of become so profoundly dislocated that it can experience a sense of "transport" out of the ordinary world of things in their places. The irony of this frightening possibility is that it is set up initially by the mind's acquisition of a sense of coming to possess the "only objective predicate" of the world of matter, namely, extension. The paradox of this structure of awareness can be even more sharply stated: too great a fusion by consciousness with the material world--too great an abolition of the sense of the dualism of mind and nature--can lead to a phenomenological destruction of that world. From the point of view of this paradox, the famous Fenwick note to the "Immortality Ode" takes on an added significance. There Wordsworth observes that as a child he "was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this

abyss of idealism to the reality."¹⁷ Wordsworth's grasping "at a wall or tree" can be seen as analogous to his later, more explicit poetic ambition to "lodge" his mind in nature's phenomena: both are acts of localization and both are attempts to overcome the vertigo caused by an encounter with the open-ended space ("abyss") of consciousness. Both acts are attempts to avoid apocalypse.

Now if the sense of dislocation experienced by sublime consciousness threatens the sense of the loss of the ordinary world of things in their places, it also exposes the mind to radical alterations of the sense of its own identity. Cassirer has observed that each "single, real thing bears witness to its reality above all by occupying a segment of space from which it excludes everything else. The individuality of the thing rests ultimately on the fact that it is in this sense a spatial individual--it possesses a sphere of its own, in which it is and in which it asserts itself against every other reality."¹⁸ Cassirer here suggests that the sense of the individual reality of a thing is "above all" a function of its spatial identity. We might ask the following questions: what witness is borne to the reality of a mind by the fact that as it senses itself expanding outward into space, it comes to occupy a "segment of space" which is not exclusive at all, but indeed universally inclusive? What becomes of the spatial individuality of such a mind when its expanding "sphere" does not permit it to assert "itself against every other reality" precisely because its sphere is moving toward an inclusion of every other reality? Answers to these questions are suggested in Tuveson's observation that the radical alteration of the mind's sense of its

spatial identity during the experience of the sublime is, according to eighteenth-century theorists of the imagination, a "means of making the mind godlike."¹⁹ What other mind but a quasi-divine mind could be so universally inclusive? We must understand of course that the god, to which sublime consciousness can feel a resemblance, is neither the Jehovah of the Old Testament nor the Heavenly Father of the New. This god is rather like the peculiarly spatialized being suggested by Newtonian theology; the god necessarily immanent throughout all of space since he is a being who, in the words of the "General Scholium" of the second edition of Newton's Principia, "constitutes . . . space."²⁰ This god also resembles the "Being . . . boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable" who is apostrophized in Shaftesbury's "The Moralists" as the "active Mind, infus'd thro all the Space," an interfusing presence who "Unites and mingles with the Mighty Mass!"²¹ In other words, sublime consciousness, when interpreted in the light of certain eighteenth-century versions of the nature of divinity, is a structure of consciousness in which, through a violent alteration in the sense of spatial identity, the sense of a distinction between creator and created being is potentially overcome. The mind experiences itself as having expanded to a state of divinity.

And even if consciousness does not quite attain such a majestic alteration in the sense of self, there still seems to be in the experience of the sublime ample ground for self-congratulation. In fact, according to many theorists, one of the characteristic pleasures of sublime consciousness apparently involves the recognition, either explicit or implicit, that the mind is indeed capable of experiencing

sublimity. This recognition in turn seems to lead to an improvement in one's self-esteem. Longinus, as is to be expected, was the first to take notice of this phenomenon of sublime consciousness, and no doubt established such notice as a commonplace for English commentators of the eighteenth century. He writes that the "soul is naturally uplifted by the truly great; we receive it as a joyous offering; we are filled with delight and pride as if we had ourselves created what we heard."²² Of course Longinus is here speaking of the rhetorical sublime, or the sublime in writing. But we can, disregarding the occasion of the experience, still note that Longinus suggests a state of reflexive self-awareness, a looking inward with pride--even though this state of awareness, paradoxically enough, does not seem to exclude the theoretical recognition at least that what has occasioned the experience of sublimity was in fact created by someone else and that, in all justice, any self-congratulation belongs to that author alone.

In John Baillie's An Essay on the Sublime the theme of the improvement in self-esteem is quite explicit, though not directly attached, as it is in Longinus, to the "truly great" in composition. Baillie assumes, along with Longinus, that the pride of consciousness is a natural consequence of an encounter with sublimity, a consequence not necessarily dependent upon any subsequent rational analysis of the experience. (The least bit of rational analysis would of course dispel the grounds--the sense that "we had ourselves created what we heard"--of the Longinian "delight and pride" in the self.) Baillie's account is in the Lockean tradition of empiricism and even suggests,

with unintentional irony no doubt, a certain passivity of the mind as it is endowed through sensory impressions with a better recognition of its own active excellence. Thus Baillie writes that "vast Sensations give the Mind a higher Idea of her own Powers," and that these sensations are given by "Vast Objects."²³ Baillie also goes so far as to establish the improvement in self-esteem as one of the necessary tests of genuine sublimity, and sees a newly acquired pride of consciousness as one of the specific traits of sublime consciousness. He observes that that "only can be justly called Sublime which in some degree disposes the Mind to an Enlargement of itself, and gives her a lofty Conception of her own Powers."²⁴ Given Baillie's commitment to the use of metaphors of the mind's extension, it is almost inevitable that he explains the "Exultation and Pride" of sublime consciousness as emotions which "the Mind ever feels from the Consciousness of its own Vastness."²⁵ And, to be sure, this exultation can sometimes be the result of the mind's recognition of its own approximation of the extensio Dei. Baillie writes that just as one of the "sublime Attributes of the Deity" is "Universal Presence," so the mind, when "contemplating the Heavens" and taking in the "mighty Orbs of the Planets," becomes consciously "present to a Universe" through its expansion; and thus can feel a "noble Pride," as it recognizes itself "nearer advancing to the Perfections of the Universal Presence."²⁶ It would seem that Baillie's commitment to metaphors of the mind's extension also commits him, in his description of how the mind comes to think better of itself in an encounter with sublimity, to the proposition that the quantity of the mind's expan-

sion is somehow a revelation of its quality; or, to put this another way, the bigger the mind's capacity for extension, the better that mind is.²⁷

This proposition can easily be converted into a program for increasing the powers of the mind. Edward Young, in his Night Thoughts, writes that certain phenomena, such as starry night skies, which are "ample of dimension" or "vast of size" can "an aggrandizing impulse give"; and that "vast surveys, and the sublime of things,/ The soul assimilate, and make her great."²⁸ In other words, the proposition that in matters of sublimity quantity of the mind's extension is a revelation of its quality is a proposition which suggests a certain path toward psychological progress: namely, the more the mind is exercised through an expanding confrontation with the "sublime of things," the better that mind somehow shall become. Sublime consciousness thus might be described as an experience in which the mind can improve not only its awareness of its own excellence, but even the very object of that self-applauding awareness, even the very grounds of its self-esteem. Gerard writes how the mind "finds such a difficulty in spreading itself to the dimensions of its object, as enlivens and invigorates its frame"²⁹ And Hume, commenting upon the difficulty or "opposition" the mind faces in attempting to conceive a great object, observes that in "collecting our force to overcome the opposition, we invigorate the soul, and give it an elevation with which otherwise it wou'd never have been acquainted."³⁰ Especially is this true, according to Hume, when the consciousness attempts to move backward through a "great removal" in time to grasp the

"relicts of antiquity": the mind "being oblig'd every moment to renew its efforts in the transition from one part of time to another, feels a more vigorous and sublime disposition, than in a transition thro' the parts of space, where the ideas flow along with easiness and facility." The greater difficulty of the "transition" backward through time is based, according to Hume, upon the phenomenological fact that "space or extension appears united to our sense, while time or succession is always broken and divided."³¹

Finally we might note that Joseph Priestley connects the difficulty in achieving sublime consciousness with the special pleasures of the experience. To conceive a great object, Priestley writes, "requires a considerable effort of the imagination, which is also attended with a pleasing, though perhaps not a distinct and explicit consciousness of the strength and extent of our own powers."³² In other words, in the severe exercise of its capacity for expansion, the mind can indirectly and somewhat paradoxically experience its own straining but successful powers as a source of pleasure. We might also observe, in terms used earlier in this essay, that Priestley's phrasing ("though perhaps not a distinct and explicit consciousness") seems to suggest the possibility of a structure of awareness in which the subject becomes aware of itself qua subject, not constituting its activity as a direct object of thought, but experiencing itself, as it were, from within--through the very intensity of its activity. It thus might be said that sublime consciousness, precisely because of the difficulty in achieving such a structure of awareness, establishes the possibility of a vivid act of apperception.

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The theme of sublime consciousness both as inducing a special kind of self-consciousness and as increasing, in some way, the powers of the mind is a theme which seems to be involved in Wordsworth's various descriptions of the development and the workings of the poetic mind. In The Prelude, for example, the poet sees a special formative virtue in the fact that the circumstances of his boyhood provided him with "early converse with the works of God," especially in a region "where appear/ Most obviously simplicity and power."³³ Now if we remember that "simplicity" and "power" are, according to many eighteenth-century theorists, characteristic features of those natural phenomena most likely to produce a sense of sublimity,³⁴ we can interpret Wordsworth's praise of an "early converse with the works of God" as a tribute paid to a youth spent among nature's sublime forms. Thus it should not seem unusual that Wordsworth illustrates the advantages of this kind of "early converse" with a reference to a mountain:

By influence habitual to the mind
The mountain's outline and its steady form
Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
The measure and the prospect of the soul
To majesty; such virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills³⁵

This passage subtly echoes a theme we have already examined at length: the way in which the extension of a sublime object is in some way transferred to the mind. Wordsworth's version of the theme, however, avoids an emphasis, which is found in many commentaries, upon the violence and the uniqueness of the experience. For Wordsworth the mind is given a sense of its own "pure grandeur" by an "influence habitual," a constantly recurring encounter with the mountain's "out-

line" and its "steady form." Sublime consciousness, Wordsworth suggests, is not necessarily a sudden intrusion into ordinary consciousness, accompanied by the profoundly felt emotions of abrupt astonishment and amazement. Such a consciousness is rather--at least in the circumstances of his youth in the Lake Country--a structure of awareness which can be gradually elicited by nature. And in this respect it is as important for the mountain's "form" to be "steady" as it is for the mountain's "outline" to possess, and therefore be capable of conferring, "grandeur." The mind, habitually exposed to the enduring sublimity of such a phenomenon, thus comes to recognize itself as possessing, like the mountain, an "extension," not so much through space, but through time. The "virtue" or power "of the ancient hills" to alter self-consciousness resides in the special fact that these phenomenal "forms" are "Perennial." Through constant "converse" with these hills, through a deepening comprehension of their eternity--what Hume might call a grasp of infinite "succession"--the mind somehow grows into an awareness of its own enduring qualities; an awareness of how indeed the "soul" has a "prospect" of "majesty" precisely because the mind is eternal.³⁶ In the manner in which he stresses the temporality of this process of self-recognition, Wordsworth goes far beyond Baillie's somewhat mechanical account of the origin of sublime self-consciousness. Baillie, as we have noted, sees the awareness of the "vastness" of the mind as simply engendered by the "vast" sensations conferred by "vast" objects. But Wordsworth, eschewing here such a literal reliance upon spatial metaphors, chooses to emphasize the organicism of the process: the mind is not suddenly

"expanded" into a certain kind of self-consciousness; rather, through a gradual assimilation of the sublime phenomena of nature, it comes to recognize these phenomena as almost paradigmatic of its own powers.³⁷ And these phenomena can be so paradigmatic because they elicit, in the act of habitually apprehending them, a consciousness of these powers.

In the first book of The Excursion Wordsworth describes an education at nature's hand of the mind of the Pedlar. This solitary and wandering figure, one of Wordsworth's alter egos in the poem, grew up among the Scottish "hills of Athol," surrounded by a landscape very similar to Wordsworth's Lake Country. He is characterized as one of the many

Poets that are sown
By Nature; men endowed with highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine;
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse³⁸

Wordsworth tells us that this mute, yet not inglorious visionary many times as a child "saw the hills/ Grow larger in the darkness," and in complete solitude "Beheld the stars come out above his head." In the midst of these sublime phenomena, Wordsworth observes, "the foundations of his mind were laid." At a very early age the Pedlar had

perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed
So vividly great objects that they lay
Upon his mind like substances, whose presence
Perplexed the bodily sense.³⁹

Wordsworth here suggests that an early encounter with "great objects" leaves an indelible impression upon consciousness, at least with respect to its capacity to constitute phenomena through the powers of

sensation. The sensory memory of these "great objects" enabled the Pedlar, "as he grew in years," to establish a comparative perspective upon all subsequent objects of consciousness: "With these impressions would he still compare/ All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms"40 And out of this continual activity of comparing his haunting memories of "great objects" with subsequent phenomena,

he thence attained
An active power to fasten images
Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
The liveliness of dreams.⁴¹

We might say, then, that for Wordsworth an early encounter with "the presence and the power/ Of greatness" in nature can induce in a developing mind a capacity to endow phenomena with a visionary resonance. The impressions left behind by "great objects" become, as it were, constitutive forms of perception which can significantly alter the content of subsequent acts of sensation. This effect is even more clearly suggested in one of the early drafts of this account of the Pedlar's mental history. In these lines, which de Selincourt supplies in the notes to his edition of The Excursion, the "great objects" are described as having been impressed so vividly upon the child's memory that they become "almost indistinguishably mixed/ With things of bodily sense."⁴²

Now what is important to observe in this history of a growing consciousness is, I believe, Wordsworth's emphasis on how early exposure to nature's sublime phenomena triggers a process which finally enables a mind to regard subsequent phenomena as if indeed they possessed the "liveliness of dreams"; that is to say, as if in one

respect at least they were a special kind of subjective event. Whether we take the "images" upon which the child "intensely brooded" as images directly perceived in nature (such a usage is not uncommon in Wordsworth's poetry),⁴³ or as images conjured up out of the memory, the point is that as objects of consciousness, they come to appear, through their acquisition of the "liveliness of dreams," less and less as images of nature--significant for what they might mirror of an external world detected through ordinary sensation. Instead, they more and more appear to take on the character of images specially constructed by the mind itself--images resembling in their very vividness those kinds of psychic entities engendered by the mind in the intense subjectivity of the act of dreaming.⁴⁴ We might formulate the meditative transformation in this fashion: phenomena come peculiarly to appear as if they had their origin in the mind and were not necessarily to be found outside the mind, that is, in objective nature. The world of ordinary sensation takes on the character of a world that is dreamt. The objects of consciousness come to appear as functions of subjectivity--and as somehow therefore revealing the activity of mind.

It follows that in this structure of awareness, ultimately growing out of an early encounter with nature's "great objects," natural phenomena can simultaneously be seen as mental phenomena. Nature is brought to the edge of the "abyss of idealism." Wordsworth goes on to tell us of how the boy, spending "many an hour in caves forlorn,/ And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags," could trace in the "fixed and steady lineaments" of these phenomena "an ebbing and a flowing mind,/ Expression ever varying!"⁴⁵ Wordsworth's description

of this paradoxical vision, in which the fixity of phenomena seen as natural phenomena stands in opposition to, yet is somehow blended with, the fluidity of these same phenomena simultaneously seen as mental phenomena, is subtly related, I believe, to a theme which was discussed earlier in this chapter: how in the experience of the sublime there is developed a structure of awareness in which the dualism of mind and matter is experientially overcome. In Wordsworth's account of the developing consciousness of the Pedlar, the mediating force is not a sudden experience of the mind's extension into "vastness," but the haunting memories of youthful encounters with the sublime, with the "presence and the power/ Of greatness." These lingering impressions provide the psychological foundation of a meditative process in which nature's phenomena can become expressive of mind--can be seen as mind--while at the same time remaining nature's phenomena in their "fixed and steady lineaments." Wordsworth's mediation, in other words, is not accomplished through the annihilation of matter. Nature is not lost in the "abyss of idealism." On the contrary, as in "Tintern Abbey," a vision of mind is obtained by an explorer of nature's immanent places: "'mid the hollow depths of naked crags."

Perhaps the culmination of the Pedlar's education at the hand of nature occurs in the way in which nature corroborates the Christian doctrine of immortality. Commenting on the boy's youthful exposure to the Bible-centered orthodoxy of the Scottish Church, Wordsworth writes:

Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays

The mystery, the life which cannot die⁴⁶

But, Wordsworth immediately goes on, the truth of the Book of God and its "written promise" of man's immortality is authenticated for the Pedlar by his direct experience with nature's sublime objects. For

in the mountains did he feel his faith.
All things, responsive to the writing, there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite:
There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,--he saw.
What wonder if his being thus became
Sublime and comprehensive!⁴⁷

We can distinguish in this passage two related ways in which nature assists in the corroboration of the Christian doctrine of immortality. Both of these ways seem to involve the kind of self-consciousness evoked in the experience of the sublime. First, there is the corroboration of the article of faith by the feelings engendered in the Pedlar by his being "in the mountains." Wordsworth suggests that the written promise of God is in some way "Breathed" again by nature's phenomena. These phenomena speak, as it were, of "revolving life,/ And greatness still revolving"--and buried in Wordsworth's twice repeated participle here is the traditional symbol of eternity: the circle. Of course nature's testimony, as already indicated, has to be understood as its power to elicit in the Pedlar certain feelings. These feelings, since they bear witness to the immortal nature of man's soul, can be characterized as feelings "about" the self or as a form of self-consciousness. We also note that the Pedlar's vision is directed outward, upon "All things" which are described as "responsive to the writing," that is, corroborating

and answering to the Bible's promise of immortality. The precise nature of this act of corroboration thus can be understood as related to that characteristic of sublime consciousness we have already discussed: how the mind, in the act of apprehending sublime phenomena, comes to feel, explicitly or implicitly, the extent and nature of its own powers. In the act of comprehending the eternal greatness of the mountain landscape, the Pedlar grows aware of his own eternal greatness.

But not only is nature "responsive to the writing" of the Christian Bible. The Pedlar himself actively answers to nature's initial responsiveness. Out of the structure of consciousness which nature's sublimity induces in him, the Pedlar becomes creative: "his spirit shaped/ Her prospects, nor did he believe,--he saw." This shaping into visibility of man's immortal prospects can be distinguished as the second way in which the "written promise" is corroborated. The grounds of assent have moved from the word to the emotions to the eye. Not only, to begin with, does the Pedlar believe in his immortality; not only is he then given feelings of his immortality by nature's phenomena; but indeed, through his own creative response, he finally comes to see in nature's phenomena an image of his immortal nature. Sublime self-consciousness, in other words, is displaced into nature and therefore becomes visible. The eternity of mind is seen under the aspect of nature: the eternity of the mountains is sensed as an image of the eternity of the self. And in turn faith, which according to St. Paul is the substance of things unseen, is no longer necessary: "nor did he believe." The Pedlar moves

beyond the necessity of faith because his intuition of his own nature takes on the character of an empirical act, a sensory encounter with an externally existing objective world. Apperception, prompted by perception, is "shaped" back into perception.⁴⁸

Wordsworth suggests, in this account of how the Pedlar's "being" became "sublime and comprehensive," a very close relationship between sublime self-consciousness and the activity of the imagination--almost as if such a structure of consciousness were the source of imagination's operations.⁴⁹ This connection is quite explicitly made by Wordsworth in his "Preface to Poems (1815)." There, discussing the shaping and creative functions of the imagination, the poet writes that that power finds its greatest "delight" in the acts of "consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into numbers" Wordsworth goes on to observe that these actions are "alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers."⁵⁰ Without at this point going into the question of what Wordsworth exactly means by his description of imagination's operations of consolidating numbers into unity and of dissolving unity into number, we should note that both transformations, or "alternations," find their source for Wordsworth in an act of self-consciousness which he designates as "sublime." Now we cannot logically assume that this special structure of consciousness is initiated by the mind's awareness of its imaginative activity (though, to be sure, such an awareness may augment the sense of self as sublime); for Wordsworth explicitly tells us that imagination's activity proceeds from--almost as an effect proceeds from its

source--sublime self-consciousness. Thus we cannot assume that when Wordsworth speaks of the "mighty and almost divine powers" of which the mind becomes aware in the creative act, he is necessarily referring exclusively to the powers of the imagination to consolidate and to dissolve. It would seem that the mind becomes reflexively aware of its powers in a different, perhaps more inclusive way; and that it is out of this initial and "sublime" self-awareness that imagination arises and proceeds to the delightful labor of shaping and creating "alternations" in phenomena.

What then, in Wordsworthian terms, is sublime self-consciousness? Answers to this question have obviously been suggested in the analysis of the last few pages. But a more precise answer, and one which is more immediately useful in a consideration of the question of the relationship between imagination and sublime self-consciousness, can be constructed, I believe, by examining Wordsworth's remarks, in the "Preface to Poems (1815)," about what he considers to be the "grand storehouses" in literature "of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination." These "storehouses" (and the metaphor seems to belong to that family of dwelling-place metaphors examined in the preceding chapter) are for Wordsworth "the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton; to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser." Wordsworth explains that he selects these writers "in preference to those of ancient Greece and Rome, because the anthropomorphism of the Pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets in those countries too much to the bondage of definite form; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry.

This abhorrence was almost as strong in our great epic Poet, both from the circumstances of his life, and from the constitution of his mind. However imbued the surface might be with classical literature, he was a Hebrew in soul; and all things tended in him towards the sublime."⁵¹

Wordsworth's reasoning in this passage seems based upon a provocative series of equations. Reading these backwards, we might first of all say that to have a mind like Milton's which tends "towards the sublime" is to be a "Hebrew in soul." But to be a "Hebrew in soul" is to have an "abhorrence of idolatry." And to have an "abhorrence of idolatry" is not simply to reject the "anthropomorphism of the Pagan religion," but more generally it is to have a mind which refuses to be "subjected . . . to the bondage of definite form." Telescoping these equations, we might then say that, according to Wordsworth, a mind which like Milton's tends "towards the sublime" is a mind which in its conceptions and its imaginings tends to go beyond the limitations or the "bondage" of any "definite form." Consciousness tending toward the sublime experiences the freedom of having the indefinite as its direct object of awareness.

Now Wordsworth writes in the same "Preface" that imagination, the power which proceeds from sublime self-consciousness, "recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite."⁵² Imagination, in other words, will exercise its shaping and creative functions only with reference to those phenomena which likewise tend "towards the sublime," that is to say, those phenomena which possess the potential of escaping from the "bondage of definite form" as they are grasped by

imaginative consciousness. And thus it should be no wonder why in "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth experiences a "sense sublime" in an encounter with nothing more definite than a "something"--certainly as plastic and as pliant an entity as imagination might wish. But, of course, I have argued in the preceding chapter how this "something" can be interpreted as the activity of Wordsworth's own mind ubiquitously interfusing itself with the images of the visible cosmos; and how, therefore, Wordsworth's "sense sublime" of this "something" can properly be described as an act of reflexive self-awareness.

We are now in a position to attempt a more precise description of what sublime self-consciousness is for Wordsworth. It seems to be an act of reflexive self-awareness in which the self becomes conscious of the self without being "subjected . . . to the bondage of definite form"; the self becomes aware of the self as nothing more precise than a "something," as an entity neither defined for consciousness in any fixed conceptual way, nor delineated for consciousness by means of any specific, in-forming image. Sublime self-consciousness involves an intuition of the self without a principle whereby this self-awareness might be limited, either by a concept of the self or by an image of the self. Translating this structure of consciousness into grammatical terms, we might say that it is a self-awareness which lacks a predicate complement. The fact of the self's reality is intuited, its presence and existence are asserted; but this fact is in no way limited by any simultaneously grasped and defining assertion about the nature of the self: "I am," but not "I am x" or "I am y." My Coleridgean echo here is not accidental, for in this structure of awareness we have a perfect

fusion of subject and object. Just as consciousness cannot limit its awareness of self through a concept or an image, so it cannot constitute itself as a distinct object of thought through a concept or an image. The self is present to the self in a thoroughly unmediated fashion: it is, in other words, apperceived. Minds which possess the potential for such a structure of awareness are, in Wordsworth's words, "truly from the Deity,/ For they are Powers." They possess a "consciousness/ Of whom they are" which is "habitually infused/ Through every image, and through every thought,/ And all impressions."⁵³ These minds also possess an almost godlike liberty, for as long as they remain in such a state of self-awareness, they will never find their consciousness subjected to the bondage of any definite image, or confining thought, or restricting impression. Latent in any specific act of sensation will be the indefinite reality intuited in the act of apperception. Hidden in any definite perception will be the sublime presence of a nearly divine "something" universally interfused.

From this perspective it should not be surprising that sublime self-consciousness is sometimes described by Wordsworth in metaphors suggesting an encounter with a completely blank, thoroughly open-ended space--a plunge into the "abyss of idealism" or a glimpse into a "haunt" which is a "blinder vacancy" than the mythological "Chaos" or the "darkest pit of lowest Erebus." We might also note that Wordsworth's metaphors of self-consciousness are, in one fundamental respect, directly in the tradition of those metaphors of the mind's infinite expansion which are so frequently found in the eighteenth-

century commentaries on the sublime. Both sets of metaphors are expressive of a dissolution of the mind's sense of itself as a fixed and limited entity.⁵⁴ Both sets of metaphors are also expressive of the vertigo of sublime self-consciousness, a vertigo brought on by the intrusion into awareness of a sense of the mind's "mighty and almost divine powers."

Nor should it be surprising why imagination for Wordsworth "recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite." In this act of recoil imagination shows that it is indeed "governed by" a "sublime consciousness of the soul" of its own undefined and therefore unlimited nature. In this act of recoil imagination, reflecting the structure of awareness in which it finds its origin, refuses to submit the mind's freedom to the bondage of definite form. More precisely, we might say that imagination is the power whereby the mind does not lose its undefined sense of self in any act of specific perception. Imagination is the power whereby the mind sustains and marries its undefined sense of self with the phenomena provided by nature; these phenomena are immanent and are filled, as it were, with sublime self-consciousness. The Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey" discovers the most intense fruition of imagination's mediating power in his encounter with a "something" in-dwelling throughout the vast expanses of sky and ocean. The Pedlar of Book I of The Excursion shapes his intuition of his immortal nature into the visibility of the sublime landscape of the hills of Athol.

NOTES: CHAPTER III

¹I might also argue that the pursuit of such historical causalities is but another version of the reductio ad doctrinam, the dangers of which approach in the case of Wordsworth I discuss in my introductory chapter. To expand on those remarks: the attempt to view the poet's work sub specie doctrinae historicae seems to me to express a certain unwillingness to face up to the full implications of the kind of claim Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," and certain of his other poems, make upon the reader; a claim by the poet that he has indeed "felt," not read about, a "sense sublime," and that the sublime is a distinguishable category of his conscious experience--regardless of whose theories he may have read or heard about. Furthermore, as The Prelude clearly tells us, many of the poet's encounters with what he himself characterizes as the "sublime" occurred at an age in his life when he was not likely to have been familiar with, let alone influenced by, contemporary aesthetic speculation. I do not mean to suggest that Wordsworth's use of the term "sublime," either in his poetry or in his prose, does not indicate a familiarity with the fashionable critical discourse of his age. But I do reject the notion that Wordsworth's actually felt "sense sublime" was primarily constituted by his knowledge of a certain theory of the sublime and therefore can be "explained," as an effect can be "explained" in terms of its cause, by reference to the original categories of this theory--if only we can find the right one!

For an instance of the way in which too great a preoccupation with showing historical "source" and "influence" can lead to distortion, see Arthur Beatty's William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations (Madison, Wisc., 1927). This book attempts to explain, on the premise of direct historical "influence," Wordsworth in terms of the associational psychology of David Hartley. Without denying a relationship between Hartley's thought and Wordsworth's poetry, I nevertheless submit that the poet who emerges in Beatty's pages frequently bears little resemblance to the Wordsworth a more careful reader can discover in the poetry; and this distortion, it seems to me, is the direct result of Beatty's anxiety to perform a reductio ad doctrinam historicam. This charge, I might add, is now a commonplace in Wordsworthian studies and needs no great specification here. For an instance, however, I might point out that Beatty never really faces the problem of the absolute incompatibility between Hartley's necessitarianism and Wordsworth's frequent claims of the mind's autonomy and radical freedom.

²I owe the term "phenomenological archetype" to Murray Krieger who suggested it to me in conversation as a way of characterizing my mediating assumption in this and the next chapter. Obviously Professor Krieger is in no way responsible for the results of my assumption. I know of no explicit study of the use of the concept of a phenomenological archetype in literary studies--although the practise of Georges Poulet is clearly based upon the concept. The general notion of type, as this notion can be used for purposes of criticism, is discussed by

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., in the introduction to his Wordsworth and Schelling (New Haven, 1960), pp. 8-14. In that book, of course, Hirsch is concerned with describing what he calls a "Weltanschauung type." He points out, in defense of his method, that the study and description of types is a common procedure in many disciplines. My stipulative assumption of a really distinguishable type of consciousness which can be called "sublime consciousness" also grows out of this common procedure. I am willing to admit that any phenomenological archetype may be nothing more than a useful, organizing fiction--a way of provoking revealing analogies.

³Discussions of the relationship between Wordsworth and Kant can be found in James Benziger's Images of Eternity (Carbondale, 1962), pp. 53-54; and in James Scoggins' Imagination and Fancy (Lincoln, 1966), pp. 154-160. Neither discussion, in my judgment, probes into the subject as deeply as it might; neither really attempts a precise phenomenological mediation between the poet and the Critique of Judgment--in which work of course Kant develops his theory of the sublime. I resist the temptation to introduce Kant into this chapter principally to avoid complicating even further an already complicated terminology; besides, the subject could easily be developed, and deserves to be so developed, into a separate study.

Brief discussion of the relationship between Burke's theory of the sublime and Wordsworth can be found in Raymond Dexter Haven's The Mind of a Poet, I (Baltimore, 1941), 47-48, 52-53; and in J. T. Boulton's introduction to his edition of Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (New York, 1958), pp. xcix-cii.

My exclusion of Burke from this chapter is not intended to deny the possibility of a phenomenological mediation between Burke's "aesthetics of terror" and Wordsworth's experience of the sublime; certainly my discussion of Wordsworthian "awe" in the previous chapter is suggestive in this direction. Such a mediation, however, can only be made on a very high level of phenomenological abstraction, a level which will enable us to overlook the explicit sensationalism of Burke's theory. I suggest that an approach to the problem might be developed out of a careful analysis of what Burke means when he speaks of a "delightful terror" which for him is the essential ingredient of the experience of the sublime. This terror, according to Burke, is of a very special kind; it ought not to be confused with the terror aroused because of an immediate and seemingly inescapable threat to one's well-being. Burke indicates this distinction in his observation that when "danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful . . ." (ed. cit., p. 40). In other words, the terror of the sublime must be mediated by a simultaneous recognition that the self is not really about to be destroyed: the terror ought not to be "conversant about the present destruction of the person" (p. 136). Such a terror is thus related to those "Passions belonging to self-preservation" which Burke claims to be the "strongest of all the passions" (p. 51). And such a terror can be characterized by Burke as "delightful" because,

as he tells us early in his Enquiry, he thinks the word "delight" ought to be used "to express the sensation which accompanies the removal of pain or danger . . ." (p. 37). For Burke, it would therefore seem, the experience of the sublime is curiously double, involving both a painful sense of the potential destruction of the self and a delightful sense of security, a sense of the self's "removal" from the imminence of death.

Now, if we go on to characterize this structure of consciousness as essentially dialectical--a curiously intense mixture of a sense of personal danger and mortality with a sense of personal transcendence--we are in a position, I think, to approach Wordsworth. The dialectic of this phenomenological polarity seems to be involved in a number of the poet's more memorable experiences. I think especially of the "spots of time" passages in The Prelude which so often tell of Wordsworth's encountering the terrible and the threatening and at the same time somehow finding implicit in these encounters a sense of the power of his own mind to attain to a visionary state in which the fear of personal danger is overcome. One way of looking at "Resolution and Independence" might be to see it as a poem which tells of the movement of the poet's mind from an anguished preoccupation with thoughts of death to a state in which, because of the strangely visionary resonances of the leech-gatherer, the fear of death is transformed into a triumphant sense of man's ability to live in spite of the encroachments of mortality. Perhaps the leech-gatherer, as a living emblem both of the terrible ravages of time and of a man's power to resist these ravages, might be taken as a visible expression of that dialectical structure of consciousness in which the terrors of annihilation are transformed into a sense of secure endurance. And perhaps, therefore, it is Wordsworth's chance meeting with the leech-gatherer which provides the poet with what might be called a living emotional paradigm in terms of which he can organize his own emotions and finally stabilize himself in the face of his own fear of death.

Obviously in the preceding paragraph I merely sketch a possible way of mediating between Burke and Wordsworth; the subject deserves much further analysis than I can here give to it. I use this note principally to indicate that the notion of a structure of consciousness in which there is a paradoxical combination of a sense of personal mortality with a sense of personal transcendence, is a notion which can be elicited out of Burke's analysis of the "delightful terror" of the sublime, and which, in turn, might prove to be diagrammatically useful in approaching some of Wordsworth's poems.

⁴For such a systematic and comprehensive summary, the standard work remains Samuel H. Monk's The Sublime, A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (Ann Arbor, 1960).

⁵The Imagination as a Means of Grace (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960) p. 105.

⁶An Essay on the Sublime, The Augustan Reprint Society, No. 43 (Los Angeles, 1953), p. 4. Originally published in London in 1747.

⁷A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism (London, 1777),

p. 151.

⁸An Essay on Taste, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh, 1780), p. 12.

⁹A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1888), p. 432.

¹⁰The Spectator, No. 412; italics mine. Monk points out that for Addison greatness "is identical with sublimity" (p. 57).

¹¹Walter J. Ong, S. J., would probably see in this use of spatial metaphors but another manifestation of the tendency to conceptualize mental operations in terms of visual and spatial analogies, a tendency which he argues begins to dominate western thinking about thinking with the quantification of late medieval logic. See his "System, Space, and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism," The Barbarian Within (New York, 1962), pp. 68-85. Certainly British eighteenth-century empiricism is dominated by the Lockean conception of thinking as a kind of seeing. This analogy can be seen explicitly working in Hume's description of the moral judgment: "It has been observ'd, that nothing is ever present to the mind but its perceptions; and that all the actions of seeing, hearing, judging, loving, hating and thinking, fall under this denomination. The mind can never exert itself in any action, which we may not comprehend under the term of perception; and consequently that term is no less applicable to those judgments, by which we distinguish moral good and evil, than to every other operation of the mind. To approve of one character, to condemn another, are only so many different perceptions" (A Treatise of Human Nature, *op. cit.*, p. 456). For Hume, it would seem, the metaphor of thinking as a kind of seeing is universal in its applicability to the analysis of consciousness: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception" (*ibid.*, p. 252). It might be argued that implicit in this last statement by Hume--and perhaps implicit in the whole British empirical psychology committed as it was to the Lockean analogy of thinking as a kind of seeing--is the impossibility of any adequate theory of apperception, of any theory of the subject grasping the subject qua subject. Reflexive consciousness for Hume would logically always have to be thought of as an object being seen. In the act of introspection, in other words, the self would always have to be perceived; it could never be apperceived. Now from this point of view--and granting the thesis of this essay, namely, that for Wordsworth the activity of his imagination is grounded in an act of apperception--we should not be surprised to find the poet moving toward the visionary as he moves from images of the eye to "images" of the ear: precisely the action of the first stanza of "The Solitary Reaper." Nor should we be surprised that Wordsworth is frequently preoccupied, as he tries to explain poetic consciousness, with dark, open-ended spaces or with unseen, dislocated sounds. Both sets of phenomena might be taken as the poet's expressive vehicles of a consciousness grasping

itself as an active subject, and refusing to transform itself into a "visible" object of perception. Wordsworth's preoccupation with "immanence"--discussed in the previous chapter--thus might further be understood as a search for a way of conceptualizing consciousness in a manner undreamt of in Locke's philosophy: the unseen depths of visible things are emblematic of those operations of the mind which cannot be explained according to Locke's basic analogy without their being explained out of existence. From this point of view we might further understand why, as I state at the conclusion of the previous chapter, Wordsworth's "God" must be as hidden, i.e., as unseen, as St. Paul's.

¹²The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Three: The Phenomenology of Knowledge, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, 1957), p. 144.

¹³For a discussion of the theoretical difficulties of Cartesian dualism, see Basil Willey's The Seventeenth Century Background (New York, 1953), pp. 89-91. Of course sublime consciousness, as described at this point in my essay, offers no theoretical solution to the problems of dualism.

¹⁴Gerard, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁵The Spectator, No. 420.

¹⁶The Prelude, III, 63. From the point of view of the history of ideas, it is indeed appropriate that Wordsworth applies these words to Newton who of course, more than any other thinker, "created" the infinite space explored by many theorists of the sublime.

¹⁷Poetical Works, IV, 463.

¹⁸Cassirer, op. cit., p. 143.

¹⁹Tuveson, op. cit., p. 105.

²⁰Principia (Berkeley, 1946), p. 544.

²¹Characteristics (London, 1787), II, 345, 343.

²²On Great Writing (On the Sublime), trans. G. M. A. Grube, The Library of Liberal Arts, No. 79 (New York, 1957), p. 10.

²³Baillie, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁴Ibid., p. 4.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 6

²⁷The same tendency to explain the quality of a mind in quanti-

tative terms can be found in the following remarks of John Dennis:
 "Men are mov'd for two Reasons, either because they have weak Minds and Souls, that are capable of being mov'd by little Objects and consequently by little and ordinary Ideas; or because they have Greatness of Soul and Capacity, to discern and feel the great ones; for the Enthusiastick Passions being caus'd by the Ideas, it follows, that the more the Soul is capable of receiving Ideas whose Objects are truly great and wonderful, the greater will the enthusiasm be that is caus'd by those Ideas. From whence it follows, that the greater the Soul is, and the larger the Capacity, the more will it be mov'd by religious ideas" /The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, in Critical Works, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (Baltimore, 1939-1943), I, 340/

²⁸Night Thoughts, IX, 11. 913-914, 1013-1014.

²⁹Gerard, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁰Hume, op. cit., pp. 433-434.

³¹Ibid., p. 436.

³²Priestley, op. cit., p. 151.

³³The Prelude (1805), VII, 718-720.

³⁴Certainly for Baillie simplicity is a desired characteristic of the sublime: "The Sublime, when it exists simple and unmixed, by filling the Mind with one vast and uniform Idea, affects it with a solemn Sedateness; by this means the Soul itself becomes, as it were, one simple grand Sensation" (op. cit., p. 33). Burke states quite categorically that he knows "of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power" (op. cit., p. 64).

³⁵The Prelude (1805), VII, 721-729.

³⁶Since Wordsworth so often speaks of the eternity of the mind, I see no distortion in equating, as I do here, the term "mind" and the term "soul." It can generally be said that "mind" in Wordsworth, when seen under the aspect of its own eternity, is frequently characterized by the poet as "soul."

³⁷The paradigmatic and revelatory function of natural phenomena is quite explicitly described in these lines from the 1850 Prelude:

Think, how the everlasting streams and woods,
 Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
 The roving Indian, on his desert sands:
 What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
 Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye:
 And, as the sea propels from zone to zone,
 Its currents; magnifies its shoals of life
 Beyond all compass; spreads, and sends aloft
 Armies of clouds,--even so, its powers and aspects

Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
The views and aspirations of the soul
To majesty.

(VII, 745-756)

(DeSelincourt--or perhaps it was Wordsworth--mispunctuates in l. 748. The colon seems properly to belong after "roving Indian," leaving "on his desert sands" to the sun-burnt Arab.)

³⁸The Excursion, I, 108, 77-80. All references to this poem are to the version appearing in Volume V of Poetical Works.

³⁹Ll. 127-129, 132, 135-139.

⁴⁰Ll. 141-142.

⁴¹Ll. 144-148.

⁴²Poetical Works, V, 13.

⁴³The ambiguities of the term "image" in Wordsworth's poetry is one of the central preoccupations of C. C. Clarke's Romantic Paradox (New York, 1963).

⁴⁴DeSelincourt's note is helpful here: "It is generally stated that the images of dreams are vague and indistinct and lack colour. W.'s experience was the opposite" (Poetical Works, V, 411).

⁴⁵Ll. 160-163.

⁴⁶Ll. 223-225.

⁴⁷Ll. 226-234.

⁴⁸Another way of understanding how the Pedlar finds "evidence" for his immortality by contemplating the mountains' sublime forms might be developed through an analysis of the phenomenological affinities between sublime consciousness and what Cassirer calls "mythical consciousness." Such a consciousness, according to Cassirer, "refuses to draw a distinction which is not inherent in the immediate content of experience, but which results only from reflection on the empirical conditions of life, that is, from a specific form of causal analysis. . . . all reality is taken only as it is given in the immediate impression. . . ." Thus, for such an "undifferentiated" and "unreflecting" consciousness, it "is not immortality, but mortality that must be 'proved,' i.e. that must little by little be ascertained theoretically, through dividing lines which progressive reflection draws in the content of immediate experience" /The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Two: Mythical Thought, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, 1955), p. 37/. Now, if we recall that according to eighteenth-century theorists one of the principal effects of the sublime is "astonishment," and if we accept Burke's not untypical description of astonishment as that "state of the soul" in which "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it

cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it" (op. cit., p. 57), then we might argue that sublime consciousness is similar to mythical consciousness in at least this one respect: both involve structures of consciousness in which, in the words of Cassirer, "all reality is taken only as it is given in the immediate impression." For neither kinds of consciousness, therefore, is there the possibility of those "reflections on the empirical conditions of life" which can lead to the judgment that beyond the vividness of the "immediate impression" is the prospect of death. The Pedlar in the mountains, in other words, is "astonished" into a mythical structure of consciousness in which the idea of his own death is impossible. Likewise, the mountains are seen as "eternal" because the reflective judgment that they might indeed have an end in time is not possible for that state of subjective awareness which these mountains elicit in consciousness. Obviously the analogies that might be drawn between sublime consciousness and mythical consciousness deserve careful analysis, especially with reference to Wordsworth whose most sincerely felt religious pronouncements quite frequently grow out of mental experiences he himself characterizes as "sublime." Obvious also is the necessity of finding some way of accommodating the analogy sketched here to the Burkean position that the experience of the sublime involves a vivid intuition of the mortality of the subject. See n. 3 above.

⁴⁹The notion that in the experience of the sublime the fancy or the imagination is stirred to some sort of answering action is a commonplace found in many eighteenth-century commentaries. Perhaps the notion grows out of Longinus' remark that one of the tests of the rhetorical sublime is whether the passage in question provokes in the mind of the reader "reflections which reach beyond what was said . . ." (op. cit., p. 10). In Archibald Alison's Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste, 5th ed. (Edinburgh, 1817), we find the observation that the true experiencing of sublime emotion is not possible unless "our imagination is seized, and our fancy busied in the pursuit of all those trains of thought" which should have been awakened by the original perception of the sublime object (I, 5).

⁵⁰Literary Criticism, p. 161. We can note how for Wordsworth these actions of the imagination are themselves productive of the sublime. He writes, in his Guide through the District of the Lakes, ed. W. M. Merchant (London, 1951), that "sublimity will never be wanting, where the sense of innumerable multitude is lost in, and alternates with that of intense unity. . ." (p. 123).

⁵¹Literary Criticism, p. 162. Coleridge sees a similar relationship between the Hebrews and sublimity: "Could you ever discover anything sublime in our sense of the term, in the classic Greek literature? Sublimity is Hebrew by birth." Table Talk and Omnia, ed. T. Ashe (London, 1884), p. 174.

⁵²Literary Criticism, p. 163.

⁵³The Prelude (1805), XIII, 106-107, 108-111.

⁵⁴And insofar as Wordsworth's metaphors are of a space which is dark and open-ended (or immanent), they in fact present a mind which cannot be visualized, or converted into an object of thought as if it were an object of some inner "perception." See n. 11 above.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTUITION OF EXISTENCE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge has not bequeathed to us a perfectly developed theory of the sublime. We must instead be content with what he has scattered throughout his often fragmentary work--a legacy composed of a number of extraordinarily provocative comments on the subject, comments which at times seem to be suggestively involved with his deepest researches into the nature of the mind and the power of the imagination.

My purpose in this chapter is to consider these random speculations of Coleridge, not so much in order to pull them together into an appearance of consistency and encompassing range--an appearance which perhaps they do not finally deserve--but in order to explore the ways in which these speculations will help me to extend my own analysis of sublime consciousness in Wordsworth.¹ I plan to mediate between the theory of Coleridge and the practice of Wordsworth in much the same way I mediated between theory and poet in the preceding chapter: not by arguing "source" or "influence," but on the basis of the assumption that the experience of the sublime is indeed a distinguishable type of conscious experience and therefore deserves to be described as such. This assumption enables me to formulate and pursue the following questions: what contribution has Coleridge made toward a description of what seem to be the fundamental structures of consciousness in the experience of the sublime? How does Coleridge help us to deepen and extend our understanding of the phenomenological archetype delineated

in the preceding chapter? And, finally, in what ways is Coleridge's analysis of the sublime heuristic for a treatment of the question of the relationship of self-consciousness and imagination in Wordsworth? What I hope principally to show through a consideration of these questions is that Coleridge, in his own theoretical way, seems to corroborate my analysis of the Wordsworthian "sense sublime" so far developed in this essay, especially with respect to my central assertion that Wordsworth's testimony of an encounter with a ubiquitously in-dwelling "something" is in fact testimony descriptive of an intensely visionary act of apperception in which the poet dramatically encounters his own subjectivity.

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Just as many eighteenth-century theorists of the sublime argue that sublime consciousness is induced in an attempt by the mind to "comprehend" or "grasp" something which is too large for its capacity (the infinite space of the Newtonian heavens, for example), so Coleridge sees sublime consciousness as necessarily involving an encounter between the mind and, in the words of Clarence DeWitt-Thorpe, a "form which escapes successful apprehension."² In his marginal notes to Herder's Kalligone Coleridge remarks that a "whole (a visual whole, I mean) . . . cannot be sublime. A mountain in a cloudless sky, its summit smit with the sunset, is a beautiful, a magnificent object: the same with its summit hidden by clouds and seemingly blended with the sky, while mists and floating vapours encompass it, is sublime."³ Coleridge's point seems to be that it is not the vastness as such of the mountain which functions as an occasion for the experience of sub-

limity. Instead, it is the fact that the perceptual boundaries of the mountain are obscured which allows for the experience and which permits him, as an aesthete concerned with the precise use of terms, to designate the mountain as "sublime." We might generalize from Coleridge's observation and say that for Coleridge the intended object of sublime consciousness must be in some way undefined, lacking in observable limits, and therefore not exhibiting a precisely delineated spatial identity. Such an object may not, in the words of Cassirer, "bear witness to its reality . . . by occupying a segment of space from which it excludes everything else."⁴ On the contrary, its status as the intended object of sublime consciousness involves an experience of a space which is open-ended. Or as Coleridge puts it in one of his numerous attempts to distinguish the beautiful from the sublime: "Nothing not shapely . . . can be called beautiful: nothing that has a shape can be sublime except by metaphor ab occasione ad rem. So true it is, that those objects whose shape most recedes from Shapeliness are commonly the exciting occasions."⁵

Coleridge indicates that he found a number of such "exciting occasions" in the gloomy and receding spaces of the Gothic cathedral. He observes that "Gothic art is sublime. On entering a cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left is, 'that I am nothing!'"⁶ This passage is extraordinarily rich and even puzzling in its implications. First of all, we might speculate that this experience of the sublime depends

upon a situation--an architecturally enforced and controlled obscurity--in which shapes tend inevitably to recede from shapeliness. Second, the "actualities" of the cathedral, precisely insofar as they recede from shapeliness and can no longer therefore "bear witness" to their reality by occupying an excluding and exclusive segment of space, become "lost" to the observer. That is to say, he can overlook--simply, in some way, look beyond--these "actualities" insofar as they appear spatially diffused and open-ended. Their identity, as it were, pours out through the gaps in their spatial boundaries. Third, the dissolution of the spatial identities of the objects of perception seems to lead to a dissolution of a sense of a fixed spatial identity on the part of the subject. Insofar as these objects or "actualities" phenomenally dissolve into the Gothic gloom, they no longer "surround" the subject and thus no longer provide a means whereby the subject might generate a sense of his own spatial exclusiveness and identity. By becoming "lost to the actualities that surround" him, he also loses his sense of the way in which his presence is delimited in space. Hence the subject can feel his "whole being" expanding "into the infinite." It is now the turn of the subject to feel his spatial identity, as it were, pouring out through the gaps created in his spatial boundaries by his losing his awareness of the "actualities that surround," and therefore spatially define, him.

We see of course in Coleridge's use of the term "expands" an echo of the habit of eighteenth-century theorists to speak of consciousness in spatial metaphors. And with respect to Coleridge's use of the metaphor we can remark that he seems to be indicating the same

phenomenon spoken of, in one way or another, by so many eighteenth-century theorists; namely, that sublime consciousness involves a radical alteration in self-consciousness. One way of characterizing this alteration is to say that the self now becomes aware of itself, potentially at least, as deserving to be designated as "sublime" according to the way in which Coleridge himself insists that term be applied. Insofar as the self feels itself expanding "into the infinite," quite obviously it senses itself as approaching, in some metaphoric way, a state in which it may no longer sense itself as in any way possessing a "shape." The notion of an infinite shape, like the notion of an enclosed infinite space, is a contradiction in terms. Thus, by sensing itself as having expanded into infinity, the self will have fulfilled one of the necessary conditions for a Coleridgean designation of itself as "sublime": it will have developed a sense of itself as having infinitely receded "from shapeliness." (In this paragraph, the reader should note, I am not trying precisely to describe the structure of consciousness behind Coleridge's metaphor of the mind's expansion, but am simply attempting to suggest, through a kind of metaphoric logic, the possible applicability to that structure of consciousness of the term "sublime.")

Another way of characterizing this alteration in self-consciousness is to say that it seems to include a growing sense of the self's becoming, in one fundamental respect, identical with what is not the self: "all swell up into eternity." Subject and object can become one in the act of swelling into eternity because, from a phenomenological point of view, both subject and object no longer possess a delimited

spatial identity. Precisely because the phenomenal space of both subject and object does not exclude everything else, a potential is established for consciousness whereby the mind might sense everything as merging into or including everything else. Thus a structure of awareness is induced in which contraries can be resolved: not only do subject and object become one through corresponding losses of their spatial exclusiveness and identities (i.e., from the point of view of the observer in the Gothic gloom), but even "earth and air, nature and art" can move toward a reconciliation of their traditional conflicts insofar as these phenomena become caught up in a consciousness by the self of itself expanding "into the infinite." It would seem, therefore, that sublime consciousness for Coleridge--at least the kind of sublime consciousness provoked in him on "entering a cathedral"--is a structure of awareness in which phenomena tend to undergo the same sort of changes that, according to the theory of the Biographia, they undergo when exposed to the esemplastic power of the imagination: they are dissolved, diffused; and phenomenal contraries move in some way toward reconciliation.

Finally, the passage suggests that for Coleridge the experience of the Gothic sublime confines the range of awareness to nothing but self-consciousness--and that of a very special kind: " . . . the only sensible impression left is, 'that I am nothing!'" Since Coleridge indicates that this "only sensible impression" is the culminating intensity of his whole encounter with Gothic sublimity, we are free to characterize this sense of the self's nothingness as, paradoxically enough, a version of sublime self-consciousness. And now of course

we are struck by a puzzle. How can a sense of the self expanding "into the infinite" develop into a sense of the self as "nothing"? Why does Coleridge not go the way of so many eighteenth-century theorists and characterize the culminating intensity of sublime self-consciousness as a kind of phenomenal apotheosis--an exhilarating intrusion into awareness of a sense of the mind's quasi-divine power and capacity? Why instead does he use language which could be taken to indicate a kind of self-awareness at the furthest possible remove from a sense of self as godlike or nearly so? Certainly to feel vividly and exclusively that the self is "nothing" hardly seems to be an appropriate sentiment for a creature who, just prior to this "only sensible impression," experienced his "whole being" expanding "into the infinite" and therefore expanding, from an eighteenth-century point of view, into a resemblance to the deity diffused throughout the infinite reaches of Newtonian space. Another, more diagrammatic way of characterizing the puzzle here would be to say that sublime self-consciousness undergoes a simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal action: the sense of the self centrifugally expanding "into the infinite" is accompanied by a centripetal constriction of awareness to the self alone, indeed to a self of which there is finally no predication possible beyond the term "nothing." In other words, sublime self-awareness is reduced to a statement about the self to the effect that there is nothing to be said about the self.⁷

The resolution of this puzzle obliges us to take an analytical look at some of Coleridge's other comments on the sublime. This analysis will, I believe, corroborate in many respects the description of

the Coleridgean sublime so far presented. More significantly, it will enable us gradually to move beyond an undue reliance on spatial metaphors for the development of our analysis, and thus to move toward a more precise statement of the phenomenological structure of the Coleridgean experience of sublimity. Throughout what follows the primary focus of investigation will be upon the question of what relationship this experience has to self-consciousness. In working out an answer to this question, I hope to show that the sense of the self as "nothing" can be taken as an important characteristic of what sublime self-consciousness seems to be for Coleridge--that indeed the sense of self as "nothing" might be taken with certain qualifications as the tenor of the metaphor of the expanding self.

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In one of his essays for The Friend, Coleridge lays down the postulate that "deep feeling has a tendency to combine with obscure ideas, in preference to distinct and clear notions" He goes on to speak of certain "deep feelings which belong . . . to those obscure ideas that are necessary to the moral perfection of the human being" And he insists that these feelings ought to be reserved "for objects, which their very sublimity renders indefinite, no less than their indefiniteness renders them sublime,--namely, to the ideas of being, form, life, the reason, the law of conscience, freedom, immortality, God."⁸ Coleridge here suggests that the experience of the sublime is derived from an encounter with obscurity and indefiniteness. Such an encounter is also the occasion of "deep feelings," which presumably cannot be so successfully occasioned by whatever is "distinct

and clear."⁹ Here, I believe, we see Coleridge postulating for the world of ideas what we have already seen him postulating for the world external to the mind--the proposition that "nothing that has a shape can be sublime," and this proposition's corollary that "those objects whose shape most recedes from shapeliness are commonly the exciting occasions." Now of course an idea cannot be said to have a "shape" if we take the term to apply exclusively to the physical contours of an object. But by an easy and obvious metaphoric extension, an idea can be said to have a "shape" insofar as it possesses the Cartesian virtues of clarity and distinctness. Conversely, therefore, to the extent that an idea becomes obscure and indistinct, it takes on a metaphorical resemblance to those objects in the physical universe "whose shape most recedes from shapeliness" And just as these shapeless objects (a cloud-draped mountain, for example) are "exciting occasions" of sublime emotion, so certain obscure and indistinct ideas (the idea of God, for example) have "a tendency to combine" with "deep feelings."

But what I believe to be most worthy of notice in this passage is Coleridge's suggestion of a reciprocal relationship between the quality of being indefinite and the quality of being sublime. He says that not only is it the "indefiniteness" of certain ideas which "renders them sublime," but also it is "their very sublimity" which "renders" them "indefinite." I think that we can generalize from Coleridge's statement of this reciprocity the proposition that for him the kind of "indefiniteness" he proposes as a necessary characteristic of the sublime object (whether this object be an idea or something in the external world) is not necessarily a characteristic of

that object taken in itself; rather, this "indefiniteness" is largely a function of the relationship between subject and object, or between thinker and idea, or between observer and observed. To put this another way: whenever anything is grasped as sublime, it necessarily takes on the characteristic of appearing "indefinite," whether or not it possesses this characteristic in itself apart from any relationship to a subject. The quality of "indefiniteness" possessed by the sublime object thus might be exclusively phenomenal, an "appearance" constituted by the way in which that object stands in relationship to the subject. And when we find Coleridge categorically stating that "nothing that has a shape can be sublime," I suspect that we best understand him as saying that nothing can be sublime which cannot, in some way, be made to take on a kind of phenomenal shapelessness or indefiniteness.

What all this suggests is that for Coleridge the true source of the sublimity of anything, physical object or idea, is always the subject. Thus Coleridge writes: "I meet, I find the Beautiful--but I give, contribute, or rather attribute the Sublime. No object of Sense is sublime in itself; but only as far as I make it a symbol of some Idea. The circle is a beautiful figure in itself; it becomes sublime, when I contemplate eternity under that figure" ¹⁰ Now we can easily see, from the point of view of Coleridge's previously cited distinction between the beautiful as necessarily shapely and the sublime as necessarily shapeless, why the circle can be taken by him as a "beautiful figure in itself." The circle is found to be, of and by itself, a figure of exact proportions. (And Coleridge here suggests that beauty is an objective property of things, at least insofar as the beautiful

object does not seem to require the subject to add anything to that object.) But how this same circle can also become sublime for Coleridge is not so immediately evident. Clearly the circle, even as symbol of the idea of eternity, remains an eminently shapely figure in a purely objective sense. The resolution of this problem, I believe, requires us to understand that Coleridge's use of the term "shape," in the proposition that "nothing that has shape can be sublime," finally refers not to the objective shape of a thing, but rather to the phenomenal shape a thing may assume when regarded by the subject from a certain point of view. The circle, precisely because of its function as a symbol of the idea of eternity, is now involved with an idea which, as we have already seen, Coleridge would regard as "obscure" and "indefinite"--and therefore sublime. We might say that the circle, though retaining its purely objective shape, does indeed recede from shapeliness to the extent that it comes to function as a phenomenon symbolic of the obscure and indefinite idea of eternity. For consciousness the image of the circle as objectively shapely recedes, as it were, into the obscurity of the idea of eternity. The circle comes to be seen not for what it is, but for what it represents as a symbol; and as a phenomenon, therefore, its objective shape sinks away into the indefiniteness of its symbolic dimension. To the extent the circle functions as a symbol, its objective shape simultaneously takes on a kind of subjective shapelessness, and thus the circle is rendered sublime.¹¹

Now, in facing the question of what exactly Coleridge means when he speaks of attributing the sublime to an object of sense, we might

say that the object must somehow become caught up in a purely subjective awareness of something obscure, indefinite, shapeless. Consciousness bestows upon that object of sense an appearance which in fact has been generated in a purely subjective encounter. Sublime consciousness is somewhat Janus-faced: though directed outward toward a sublime object in the external world, it is simultaneously directed back toward the self, toward a source of obscurity and indefiniteness discovered within the realm of subjectivity. It follows from this that the sublime in literature is essentially a record of a poet's subjectivity. All poems, even epics, insofar as they are taken as sublime poems, are at the same time being taken as expressive documents, revealing the inner history of the poet's mind. Thus Coleridge can write that in "Paradise Lost the sublimest parts are the revelations of Milton's own mind, producing itself and evolving its own greatness; and this is so truly so that when that which is merely entertaining for its objective beauty is introduced, it at first seems a discord."¹² Paradise Lost, from this Coleridgean point of view, is to be read as a document allowing all to see Milton's mind in the act of discovering the sources of sublimity within itself. When the poem is read from this perspective, the discovery of images of "objective beauty," presumably images possessing the quality of shapeliness, appears at first glance to be at odds with the poem's projection of the obscurity and indefiniteness of Milton's own sublime subjectivity. Also, we might note, Coleridge regards Christianity as especially conducive to sublime consciousness because it provides a way of thinking about reality whereby "the Imagination is kept barren in definite

Forms and only in cooperation with the Understanding labours after an obscure and indefinite Vastness."¹³ Sublime consciousness, in other words, is for Coleridge a structure of awareness in which all conceptions tend to recede from shapeliness or distinction, and the mind is left groping in the darkness of its own subjectivity for an "indefinite Vastness."

We might now ask the question in what way the subject can attribute the sublime, not to an object of sense, but to those "objects" of the world of ideas, that is to say, to ideas themselves. Earlier, in explaining how a distinctly shaped object of sense such as a circle can be rendered sublime, I argued that the phenomenal shape of the circle, insofar as it comes to function as a symbol of the idea of eternity, sinks away, as it were, into the obscurity of its own symbolic dimension. This analysis assumes that the subjective source of the sublime in this instance is the idea of eternity as such--that such an idea is inevitably indistinct and therefore sublime. But now might it not be more accurate to locate the subjective source of the sublime, not so much in the ideas which are entertained by sublime consciousness, but in the very way in which sublime consciousness entertains or "labours after" such indefinite ideas? Might it not be more precise to regard the subjective source of the sublime, not as an encounter by the mind with certain of its own ideational contents (ideas of eternity, God, immortality, and so on), but as an encounter with its own subjective action in attempting to come to terms with such ideas? I am arguing, in other words, that the subjective source of the sublime is in fact an act of apperception in which consciousness becomes vividly aware of

itself because of its inability to define its intentionality, or direction of consciousness, with respect to any precisely delimited conception or idea. Consciousness, labouring after the "obscure and indefinite Vastness" suggested by such an idea as the idea of God, is thrown back upon itself, becomes self-conscious with respect to its own labouring. Precisely because of its inevitable failure to achieve the "rest" or stasis of a perfectly adequate image or conception of an "obscure and indefinite Vastness," consciousness becomes vividly aware of itself as an indefinitely dynamic agent, as possessing an intentionality in pursuit of an intended object which infinitely recedes from adequate comprehension. Sublime consciousness for Coleridge reveals itself to be, in the last analysis, sublime self-consciousness; and those ideas which he designates as sublime are in fact ideas which throw the mind back toward an awareness of its own indefinite activity. Reflexive consciousness discovers the "shapelessness" of the sublime in its own structure of awareness--a structure unable to "close itself off" with respect to any clear and distinct object of consciousness.¹⁴

Obviously I cannot insist that this version of the Coleridgean sublime is necessarily the correct one. There is simply not enough evidence upon which to base such a firm conclusion. But I can indicate that the position described in the previous paragraph is at least plausible, and that the relationship between self-consciousness--indeed a version of self-consciousness which could be characterized as an act of apperception--and the experience of the sublime is a relationship which seems to have been recognized by Coleridge. And

to remind my reader that I have not forgotten the puzzle left unsolved at the end of Section 2 of this chapter, let me say that the following exploration of this relationship in Coleridge's writings will bring us to a way of understanding the statement "I am nothing!" as a valid characterization of that state of self-consciousness arrived at in the experience of the sublime.

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In his Notebooks Coleridge observes, " . . . let me think of myself--of the thinking Being--the Idea becomes dim whatever it be--so dim that I know not what it is--but the Feeling is deep & steady--and this I call I--~~the~~ identifying the Percipient & the Perceived."¹⁵ Coleridge here seems to be describing an act of apperception in which the subject intuits the subject qua subject. Consciousness, in turning back to focus exclusively upon the self, loses whatever distinct conception it might have had of the self ("the Idea becomes dim"), even to the extent of becoming finally unable to formulate any conception adequate to the intuited reality ("I know not what it is"). But a feeling without a concept remains; and it is this feeling, this unmediated sense of self, which Coleridge designates as the "I". In this feeling, also, there is an identification of "the Percipient & the Perceived." In other words, the self as "Perceived," as constituted as an object of reflexive consciousness, merges into the subjectivity of the "Percipient." Because the idea of self has become "dim," consciousness can no longer constitute itself as a direct object (or as something "Perceived") of thought. The sense of self as object is converted into a sense of self as subject, into a feeling which is

"deep & steady."

The question now is to what extent might this structure of reflexive awareness be designated, from a Coleridgean perspective, as "sublime"? In answer we can say, first of all, that the act of thinking "of the thinking Being" seems to lead to an ideational "dimness" which is in certain respects phenomenologically similar to Coleridge's encounter with the gloom of a Gothic cathedral. There, it will be recalled, Coleridge described himself as feeling as if his "whole being" were expanding "into the infinite." We understood this metaphor of expansion as an expression of a radical alteration in the sense of identity: no longer could the subject define himself in terms of an exclusive spatial identity. Self-awareness developed a sense of the self as having infinitely receded "from shapeliness." Here, in this passage from the Notebooks, we find Coleridge also describing an alteration in the sense of identity: the idea of self, "whatever it be," recedes from whatever "shapeliness" it might have had. The idea of self is rendered obscure and indefinite. Furthermore, just as in the Gothic gloom the subject's sense of its own expansion led to a sense of the fusion of subject and object and a sense of reconciliation between contraries, so here we find the growing obscurity and indefiniteness of the idea of self leading to a fusion of subject and object--in this case the identification of the "Percipient and the Perceived" within a context of introspection. The contraries of self as subject and self as object are resolved, and the "I" is completely one with itself by means of a feeling which is "deep and steady." Finally, this passage from the Notebooks suggests that insofar as the

sense of self becomes, as it were, deconceptualized, the self can no longer introduce a division into the immediate sense of identity by thinking about the self by means of a distinct idea of the self. Those versions of the self which are presented in distinct ideas of the self are all of them obliterated, annihilated. We might characterize this structure of reflexive awareness as one of which from the point of view of the "I" no predication is possible; or, if predication be demanded, as one which the "I" might describe in the sentence "I am nothing!"-- here, of course, using the term "nothing" not to deny the existing reality of the "I," but to suggest the special nature of that structure of consciousness in which all distinct concepts of the self have disappeared. The self feels itself as "nothing" because it now lacks the means whereby to define itself as any precisely limited "thing."

/ A second answer to the question of how the act of thinking "of the thinking Being" might be designated, from a Coleridgean perspective, as "sublime" can be developed if we take note of Coleridge's observation that something can be called "sublime in relation to which the exercise of comparison is suspended"16 Clearly to the extent that consciousness loses all distinct conceptual grasp of its own nature and is reduced exclusively to nothing more than a feeling of the "I" which is "deep & steady," the possibility of exercising the powers of comparison is reduced. Any act of comparison, it seems logical to say, requires that consciousness be able to direct its attention back and forth between at least two objects of thought. Any act of comparison taking place within a context of introspection in which the "thinking Being" is thinking exclusively about itself, would therefore require consciousness to constitute itself as a direct object of

thought in at least two different ways (whether by a concept of the self or by an image of the self is a question not immediately relevant). This act in turn necessarily involves the introduction of an element of division into the mind's sense of identity, into the mind's sense of being one with itself. The exercise of the powers of comparison within a context of introspection in which the "thinking Being" is thinking exclusively about itself, would entail a structure of awareness in which consciousness alternately constitutes itself as a direct object of thought in either this way or that way. But such an alternation in intentionality is impossible when the "thinking Being" finds its consciousness of self reduced exclusively to a feeling of the "I" which is "deep & steady." In this state of awareness the sense of identity precludes any sense of division. The subject is perfectly one with itself qua subject and thus cannot, so long as this feeling of the "I" is sustained, constitute itself as a direct object of consciousness in at least two different ways (or even in any one way for that matter). In other words, this structure of awareness is one in which the exercise of the mind's powers of comparison is suspended. And therefore this structure of awareness, this act of apperception, can be characterized, from a Coleridgean perspective, as "sublime."

Another way of exploring the question of the relationship for Coleridge between self-consciousness and the experience of the sublime will be opened to us if we take a look at "Essay XI" from The Friend, an essay in which, according to Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, we might find "the clue to the nature . . . of Coleridge's experience of the sublime."¹⁷ In this essay Coleridge asks his readers the following ques-

tions: "Hast thou ever raised thy mind to the consideration of existence, in and by itself, as the mere act of existing? Hast thou ever said to thyself thoughtfully, It is! heedless in that moment, whether it were a man before thee, or a flower, or a grain of sand,--without reference, in short, to this or that particular mode or form of existence?"¹⁸ Coleridge's questions are of course rhetorical; they provide him with a way of initiating an account of this "consideration of existence, in and by itself," this way of regarding reality which later in the same essay he characterizes as an "opening of the inward eye to the glorious vision of that existence which admits of no question out of itself, acknowledges no predicate but the I AM IN THAT I AM!" This "glorious vision" is for Coleridge an "intuition of absolute existence."¹⁹

Now let us assume that Professor Thorpe is correct when he observes that Coleridge's account, in this essay from The Friend, of an "intuition of absolute existence" provides us with a way of understanding the "nature . . . of Coleridge's experience of the sublime." The question for my argument then becomes: what relationship does this very special intuition have to the act of apperception, the act in which, I have been arguing, Coleridge discovers the subjective source of the sublime? Before we can meaningfully face this question, however, we have to consider exactly what Coleridge might mean when he speaks of an "intuition of absolute existence," and exactly how his account of this "glorious vision" might be taken as Professor Thorpe indicates it can be taken.

It would seem that a "consideration of existence" without

reference "to this or that particular mode or form of existence" is in fact a way of looking at the universe which prohibits the use of any predicate but the predicate of existence. From the point of view of this intuition consciousness becomes absolutely "heedless" of the possibility that the universe might be envisaged as a universe composed of essences. I use this last term in a Coleridgean sense; he writes in the Biographia: "Essence, in its primary signification, means the principle of individuation, the inmost principle of the possibility of anything, as that particular thing. It is equivalent to the idea of a thing" ²⁰ Paradoxically, therefore, all things are especially seen as exhibiting the "mere act of existing" only to the extent that they are not seen as individuals. The sense that a thing is stands in opposition to the sense of what a thing is as this or that particular individual. Consciousness, in forming distinct ideas of individual things, engages in a contemplation of essences, of principles of individuation. Only to the extent that it disengages from all such contemplation--only to the extent that it abandons all distinct ideas of individual things can consciousness move toward an intuition of absolute existence. In short, this "glorious vision" is a vision of existence without essence.

Perhaps all this can be made more clear if we observe that what Coleridge seems to be describing is a structure of consciousness which is directed toward something rather like what certain scholastic theologians would have called "actus purus." For these theologians of course the actus purus is none other than God. Gilson points out that Aquinas, for example, conceives of God as nothing more and nothing less

than an "absolute act of being"; God is "the being whose whole nature it is to be such an existential act." Therefore, to "say that God 'is this,' or that he 'is that,' would be to restrict his being to the essences of what 'this' and 'that' are. God 'is,' absolutely."²¹

From the point of view of this analogy we might say that Coleridge seems to be suggesting the possibility of a kind of vision for men on earth which most scholastics would have permitted men to obtain only in heaven--a vision which is indeed "beatific" or like the traditional vision of God because, as Coleridge puts it, existence so intuited reveals itself to be "an eternal and infinite self-rejoicing, self-loving, with a joy unfathomable, with a love all-comprehensive."²² Coleridge's version of the actus purus is not of an absolutely existing being veiled from men's eyes because it exists only in some eternal otherworld, in some dimension of uncreated reality far removed from the world of time and created being. On the contrary, this act of "existence incomprehensible and groundless" is thoroughly immanent throughout the world of discrete temporal phenomena; it is, according to Coleridge, a "life-ebullient stream which breaks through every momentary embankment, again, indeed, and ~~evermore~~ to embank itself, but within no banks to stagnate or be imprisoned."²³ (We can observe behind Coleridge's metaphors here a reality provocatively similar to Wordsworth's "something" ubiquitously interfused throughout the farthest reaches of sky and ocean.) The vision of absolute existence might be lost at those times when consciousness is directed toward the "momentary embankment" of the "idea" or essence of a particular thing, but so powerful and free is absolute existence that these embankments

will eventually dissolve. The ideational world of essences will always give way before the intuition of absolute existence.

I believe, along with Professor Thorpe, that in this description of a "glorious vision" of existence Coleridge has presented us with his most valuable, indeed most philosophically precise, account of what constitutes for him the experience of the sublime. We have seen how he postulates that "those objects whose shape most recedes from shapeliness are commonly the exciting occasions" of the experience of the sublime, and we have interpreted this postulate as having reference, not simply to objects possessing a physical shape, but more significantly to certain ideas which as it were lose their "shape" by becoming obscure and indistinct. Now we have also seen that an object contemplated without reference "to this or that particular mode or form of existence" is in fact an object contemplated without reference to its "essence," to the "idea" of the thing as that particular thing. From the perspective of the "glorious vision," nothing may be conceived of as an individual thing. To the extent, therefore, that consciousness intuits existence "heedless" of essence, to that same extent does consciousness intuit a world in which all things lose their ideational "shape" as individual things, a world in which all the ideas of individual things must necessarily grow obscure and indistinct. The "consideration of existence, in and by itself" necessitates, in other words, a structure of consciousness absolutely lacking any means whereby any particular thing may be conceived as this or that particular thing. Nor is this absence of a principle of particularization simply a matter of an inability to conceive of an individual. Certainly, from the perspective of the "glorious vision," the individual thing may still be

contemplated. But precisely because it is contemplated solely under the aspect of existence, and precisely because the existence so revealed is absolute, the individual thing qua individual is simply not seen. Thus, everything loses whatever "shape" or distinctness it might have had as an individual; everything becomes an "exciting occasion" of the experience of the sublime. To put all this in concrete terms provided by Coleridge: neither a man, nor a flower, nor a grain of sand can be either conceived or even seen as an individual. Each is but a "momentary embankment" of the "life-ebullient stream" of absolute existence; and as consciousness directly intuits this stream, the embankment dissolves away. Both idea and image of the individual "recede from shapeliness."

There are at least two other ways of suggesting that Coleridge's description of this intuition might be taken as an account of what is for him the basic nature of the experience of the sublime. First, we have already observed how according to Coleridge an encounter with the sublime leads to a suspension of the exercise of the comparative powers. It goes almost without saying that "the glorious vision of that existence which admits of no question out of itself" entails a structure of consciousness in which individuals cannot be distinguished one from another, let alone conceived as individuals. But when consciousness cannot make such distinctions, it obviously has been precluded from the possibility of making any comparisons. To put this another way: insofar as consciousness is directed exclusively toward any absolute, in this case existence qua existence, it cannot establish for itself a

comparative point of view; the absolute totally confines its attention; the intuition of absolute existence "admits of no question out of itself." Even the individual, when contemplated exclusively from the perspective of this intuition, becomes as it were a kind of phenomenal absolute; and as consciousness grows increasingly "heedless" of the individual as individual, it likewise discovers that the exercise of its own powers of comparison has been suspended.²⁴

Second, we can take note of Coleridge's observation in one of his letters that when the sublime is felt "neither whole nor parts" are seen and distinguished "but unity as boundless or endless allness"²⁵ Coleridge offers this puzzling formulation in a context where he is attempting to distinguish, among other things, the "grand" and the "majestic" from the sublime. Thus with respect to the "grand" he writes: "When the parts are numerous and impressive, and are predominate, so as to prevent or greatly lessen the attention to the whole, there results the grand."²⁶ And with respect to the "majestic" he writes: "Where the impression of the whole, i.e. the sense of unity, predominates so as to abstract the mind from the parts--the majestic."²⁷ We see in these formulations Coleridge's tendency to locate the meaning of aesthetic terms in the subjective effects certain kinds of aesthetic objects have upon the mind of the observer. These formulations thus have phenomenological implications and call attention to the way in which consciousness is directed in the experience of either the sublime or the grand or the majestic. It would seem that the distinction between the grand and the majestic is largely one of emphasis--an emphasis, that is, in the intentionality of the observer.

An object, in order to be characterized as either grand or majestic, is presumably "impressive" in some way. But it can be called "grand" only when its "parts are numerous and impressive," and consciousness is thereby directed toward these parts and away from "attention to the whole." And the object can be called "majestic" only when the mind is so caught up in the "impression of the whole" that the parts of the whole tend to recede from consciousness. Now in the case of the sublime, consciousness is directed toward neither the parts nor the whole but toward a kind of "unity" which Coleridge cryptically explains as a "boundless or endless allness." Apparently the term "unity" here is not being used in the same way that it is used in the explanation of the majestic, where "the sense of unity" is equated with "the impression of the whole." It seems reasonable to say, therefore, that the "unity" encountered in the experience of the sublime is not to be in any way confused with the "unity" of the whole--obviously it cannot be so taken since in this experience the whole is not even seen. What then is consciousness directed toward when it intends the "unity" of a "boundless or endless allness"? What indeed, with respect to the object deserving the designation "sublime," is the mind attending to when it is attending to neither the whole nor the parts of that object?

An answer can be developed, I believe, if we understand that the experiencing of a "unity as boundless or endless allness" is the equivalent, in Coleridgean terms, of an "intuition of absolute existence." Obviously this intuition of the "life-ebullient stream" of existence qua existence is an intuition of an absolute which is by definition "boundless or endless" and which, precisely because it is nothing but

an act of existence or actus purus, possesses a perfect "unity." Now with respect to an object, neither the whole nor the parts of which are seen and distinguished, the subject is caught up in a structure of awareness which lacks a principle of individualization, a way of seizing upon any particularized object of awareness. The intended object neither can be particularized with reference to its parts nor can it be apprehended as an individual whole. The phenomenon is "shapeless," obscure and undefined; it imposes no distinct phenomenal limits upon the attention. The intentionality of consciousness is thereby enabled to become "heedless" of the "particular mode or form" it has before it, and can as it were pour through and beyond a form which escapes successful apprehension. In the very escape of this form, both as a whole and with all of its individual parts, consciousness intuits existence without "essence." To put this another way: the open-ended form of, say, a mist-shrouded mountain dislocates consciousness out of a consideration of "essences," a consideration of either the individual whole or the individual parts. The open-ended form becomes, we might almost say, "transparent": a structure of consciousness is now elicited which penetrates through the opacities, the obscuring "momentary embankments," of defined and individuated phenomena. Consciousness now intuits existence as such, the "life-ebullient stream"; and this absolute can properly be designated, as we have just seen, as a "unity of boundless and endless allness."

We are now in a position to consider the question of what relationship this very special intuition might have to the act of self-consciousness or, more precisely, to that kind of self-consciousness I

have been calling "apperception." An answer can be constructed as follows: insofar as we take Coleridge's account of this intuition as also providing an account of the basic nature of the Coleridgean experience of the sublime, and insofar as we recall all the evidence already presented that for Coleridge the source of the sublime is to be located in the subject, then we must say that the source of the intuition of absolute existence is also to be located in the subject. Consciousness opens its "inward eye to the glorious vision"; it intuitu the act of existence first of all within itself; it intuitu its own existent reality without a "principle of individuation," without simultaneously considering itself from the point of view of "essence." Thus we have a structure of consciousness in which the subject cannot constitute itself as a distinct and individuated object of thought; a structure of consciousness, in terms borrowed from Wordsworth, "unprofaned" by "form or image" of the self; a structure of consciousness in which the subject intuitu itself in a way which "acknowledges no predicate but the 'I AM IN THAT IN THAT I AM!'" Consciousness intuitu its own activity without reference "to this or that particular mode or form of existence," and thus consciousness intuitu its own activity as an absolute. The subject intuitu the subject qua subject as an act of existence without an essence, a principle of individuation. The function of the open-ended form (or, for that matter, the obscure and indistinct idea) in eliciting this act of apperception, this state of sublime self-consciousness, is to throw consciousness back upon itself, to make it aware of itself as an indefinitely dynamic agent unable to "close itself off" with respect to any clear and distinct

object of consciousness. As the intended object indefinitely escapes from successful apprehension, consciousness becomes immersed in its own indefinitely striving intentionality. Consciousness intuits itself as simply an act, an undefined energy of being, a "boundless or endless allness." In other words, Coleridge's metaphor of the "life-ebullient stream" breaking through the "momentary embankments" of discrete phenomena I finally interpret as a metaphor expressive of that structure of consciousness in which the act of apperception, latent in any specific act of perception, suddenly becomes explicit and thus makes it impossible for consciousness to specify its intended object. (Or, in terms again borrowed from Wordsworth, when the light of sense goes out, we see into the life of things--here understanding "life" to refer to that fundamental activity of consciousness which makes possible the entirety of the phenomenal world.) And since the act of apperception is implicit in all acts of perception, an open-ended form in the phenomenal world is not necessarily required to provoke sublime self-consciousness. Even a circle, clearly a perfectly closed form, can become, as we have seen, an "exciting occasion" for the experience of the sublime. And so can "a man . . . or a flower, or a grain of sand."²⁸

Finally, we might ask how Coleridge's account of this intuition helps us to understand the assertion made earlier in this chapter, namely, that the statement "I am nothing!"--Coleridge's characterization of that state of sublime self-consciousness elicited in him by the gloom of a Gothic cathedral--might be taken as the tenor of the metaphor of the expanding self. Coleridge writes in "Essay XI" that if "thou has mastered this intuition of absolute existence, thou wilt have

learnt likewise, that it was this, and no other, which in the earlier ages seized the nobler minds, the elect among men, with a sort of sacred horror. This it was which first caused them to feel within themselves a something ineffably greater than their own individual nature." It was this intuition which raised "them aloft . . . projecting them to an ideal distance from themselves" ²⁹ In the phrase "sacred horror" we find an echo of many eighteenth-century commentaries on the sublime, preoccupied as they were with explaining the "delightful horror," the "pleasing terror," the "awful astonishment," and so on, of the experience. And I take Coleridge's spatial metaphor of the "elect among men" being projected "to an ideal distance from themselves" as perhaps the most subtle version we have seen so far of that habit of eighteenth-century theorists of describing the mind during the experience of the sublime as a kind of expanding space. Of course Coleridge makes it plain that this "distance," to which "nobler minds" are projected, is "ideal," that is, only a "distance" of consciousness. The metaphor is to be taken in much the same way that the metaphors of the expanding mind are to be taken in eighteenth-century commentaries: expressive of a radical alteration in self-consciousness. Those who have been "seized" by the "intuition of absolute existence" feel within themselves a "something ineffably greater than their own individual natures." Suddenly the "elect among men" intuit a reality within themselves which simply cannot be explained in terms of their sense of themselves as individuals. In fact, the intuition of absolute existence stands in total opposition to any ideas they might have of themselves as individuals; and only to the extent that all such ideas

grow obscure and indistinct, can they move toward the "glorious vision." The intuition and the projection of consciousness "to an ideal distance" entails the focusing of awareness into a visionary sense of "I AM IN THAT I AM!" And from the perspective of this intuition, the individual as individual can only say, "I am nothing!" The metaphor, then, of the mind's expansion "into eternity," as well as the metaphor of the mind's projection "to an ideal distance" from itself, are metaphors expressive of a visionary act of apperception, in which consciousness directly intuits its own activity as if it were the incomprehensible ground of the being of the entire phenomenal world. And this act of sublime self-consciousness entails the annihilation of any sense of self as an "individual nature." No wonder, then, that it is felt with "a sort of sacred horror."

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One of the important conclusions suggested by this analysis of sublime self-consciousness is that the act of apperception can be interpreted as in some way revealing the universe in its metaphysical depths--as somehow providing contact with ultimate principles of reality. Keeping this conclusion in mind, we are in a better position to come to terms with those experiences of Wordsworth which can be genuinely characterized as visionary, experiences which he presents both as special states of consciousness and as revelations of metaphysical truths which are normally not available to non-visionary states of consciousness. Of course at this point in my essay the phenomenological similarities between Coleridge's "life-ebullient stream" and the universally interfused "something" of "Tintern Abbey" need no elaboration. What I now

wish to concentrate upon is a passage from Book II of The Prelude where Wordsworth gives testimony of having received from nature an intuition which induced in him an exultant state of mind and which enabled him to detect a transcendent principle of unity binding the phenomenal world together into an organic whole:

From Nature and her overflowing soul
 I had receiv'd so much that all my thoughts
 Were steep'd in feeling; I was only then
 Contented when with bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
 O'er all, that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,
 O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
 If such my transports were; for in all things
 I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
 O'er come by grosser prelude of that strain,
 Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd.³⁰

In these lines Wordsworth describes a structure of awareness in which there develops a progressively more intense intuition of the "one life" in "all things." Even though he says that he "saw" this "one life," the language of the passage makes it clear that this intuition is realized in its purest form when the mind in some way moves beyond the reports of the senses; that, in short, this "one life" is really not to be seen at all but can only be somehow "felt" as consciousness moves progressively beyond the phenomenal world. Thus as Wordsworth feels the "sentiment of Being spread/ O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still," there develops a structure of consciousness which is radically open-ended: the feeling of the "sentiment of Being" induces a kind of centrifugal awareness in which consciousness can

neither conceptualize its contents ("lost beyond the reach of thought/ And human knowledge") nor even locate itself with respect to distinct objects of sight ("to the human eye/ Invisible"). And, as Wordsworth makes it clear at the end of this passage, this intuition is most vivid (or, characterized as a "song," "Most audible") when the "fleshly ear" no longer reports sounds of the phenomenal world. The song of the "one life" is a spiritual ditty of no tone. We might also note that this intuition is partially characterized in metaphors of fluidity. Wordsworth suggests that it finds its origin in nature and "her overflowing soul." Nature in some way gives him "so much" that "all" his thoughts become "steep'd in feeling"--as if to say Wordsworth's own soul begins to overflow with certain feelings which come to dominate his awareness. And the "sentiment of Being" itself is a feeling which somehow spreads, like an overflowing fluid, throughout the entirety of the phenomenal world.

I think we best interpret this passage as a description of an act of apperception in which consciousness comes to a progressively more intense intuition of its own activity as the ground of the phenomenal world. Wordsworth's "sentiment of Being" is, in Coleridgean terms, an intuition of absolute existence; an intuition of the mind's own ubiquitous activity as it constitutes the world of perception. To the extent that the subject becomes progressively aware of its own subjective energy of consciousness, to that same extent is the phenomenal world intuited as possessing a transcendent principle of unity--in this case, that activity of a single mind which enables the phenomenal world to "exist" as an object for a single consciousness. The subject gradually

discovers itself as "spread/ O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still." Consciousness gradually intuites itself as interfusing "all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings." Thus "all things" can be seen as exhibiting "one life": for all things indeed possess--and only possess--this unity insofar as the conscious activity which pervades them all is directly intuited by the mind. The fluid "sentiment of Being" can "spread" throughout the phenomenal world in much the same way that Coleridge's "life-ebullient stream" can break through the "momentary embankments" of discrete perceptions: the subject turns inward upon itself; the act of apperception latent in any act of perception begins to grow explicit; a "something" is intuited as universally interfused. The mind begins to intuit a reality which cannot be reported to it by the senses: this reality is indeed "to the human eye/ Invisible," and yet it "liveth to the heart." The mind begins to intuit a reality which cannot be conceptualized; for the direct encounter by the subject with its subjective energies is, by its very nature, "beyond the reach of thought/ And human knowledge." And this experience is, as so often in Wordsworth, an encounter with the depths, an exploration of the immanent: for the "sentiment of Being" finally spreads "Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself/ And mighty depth of waters."

It should also be noted that these lines suggest that for Wordsworth sublime self-consciousness is not necessarily a structure of awareness which abruptly displaces all other kinds of awareness. The "sentiment of Being" here spreads only gradually, progressively. We can extrapolate from this fact and generally observe with respect to

the question of the nature of Wordsworth's visionary experiences that although there are moments in his poetry when he seems suddenly and totally to be rapt away from the phenomenal world--to be transported, with the light of sense gone out, into "strange seas of Thought, alone"--what is far more usual is a description of a process of consciousness which is more or less visionary; a description of a series of acts of perception in which the latent content of apperception is successively more or less explicit. The "fleshly ear" may sleep at times "undisturb'd" and the phenomenal world may sometimes be lost; but the primary ambition of Wordsworth, as I suggested in my analysis of "Tintern Abbey," is to write a poetry celebrating the way in which the visionary mind may discover dwelling-places in nature. The intuition of the "one life" is not to be purchased by the annihilation of the phenomenal world. Rather, this world, or nature, is somehow to be sustained and made to participate in the visionary dimension disclosed in the act of sublime self-consciousness. In the infinitely delicate task of adjusting his visionary consciousness to nature, Wordsworth's emphasis is largely upon mediation, upon marriage. The "sources of sublimity," he writes in "Essay Supplementary to Preface (1815)," are "in the soul of Man"; but poetry, no matter how "ethereal and transcendent," is "yet incapable" of sustaining "her existence without sensuous incarnation."³¹ Thus the act of apperception and the act of perception must be adjusted one to another. For the sake of poetry itself, the centrifugal awareness of feeling the "sentiment of Being" may only be gradual, progressive; and to preserve the possibility both of a true marriage

between mind and nature and of the celebration of that marriage in poetry, centrifugal awareness must be balanced against a centripetal awareness which clings to the discrete phenomena of nature--in much the same way that the boy of the Fenwick note on the "Immortality Ode" grasped "at a wall or tree to recall" himself from the "abyss of idealism." A visionary mind with ambitions toward poetry cannot overlook the requirement of "sensuous incarnation," and thus must be disciplined in precisely the way Wordsworth claims to have disciplined himself in the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800)": "I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject" The visionary poet must attempt to sustain for his consciousness "an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings."³² In other words, there must be embankments of the "life-ebullient stream."

I believe that for both Wordsworth and Coleridge the power which mediates between sublime self-consciousness and the phenomenal world is what both men call imagination. I noted in the preceding chapter that imagination for Wordsworth is a power which proceeds from, in his own words, "a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers." And I went on to argue that imagination is the power whereby the mind sustains and marries its undefined sense of self with the discrete phenomena provided by nature; these phenomena are thus made immanent and are filled, as it were, with sublime self-consciousness. We might now say in Coleridgean terms that imagination is the power which mediates between the intuition of absolute existence and the world of essences, of discrete particulars. Or, as Coleridge himself remarks provocatively enough in the Notebooks, "Imagination

[is] the laboratory in which Thought elaborates Essence into Existence."³³ That is to say, imagination is the power whereby the world of individual objects--objects which in themselves, in the words of the Biographia Literaria, "are essentially fixed and dead"³⁴--is recreated into a living and organic whole through involvement with an act of self-consciousness in which the mind directly intuits its own undefined and living energies. We might say that the generic image in Wordsworth's poetry of such a recreated world--a world in which thought is elaborating essence into existence, a world in which imagination is struggling "to idealize and unify"³⁵ phenomena into a vision of the one life--is the image of nature to be found in "Tintern Abbey," a nature suggestively disclosing an underworld of open-ended depths in which the poet gradually discovers the organizing ground of being of that phenomenal world: his own consciousness. Imagination is the power which inter-fuses these depths into the surface of nature, and at the same time prevents nature from being swallowed up in them. The world of objects is ideally to be transformed by imagination; it is not to be annihilated in the "abyss of idealism." Sublime self-consciousness, though in itself a structure of visionary awareness in which the mind experiences the "bliss ineffable" of being transported beyond the phenomenal world, is to be married to that phenomenal world by the power of imagination. And though imagination is a power which proceeds from "a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers," it must, as the creative principle of a poetry of "sensuous incarnation," return to the world of individual objects, the world which at the same time sublime self-consciousness progressively

strives to leave behind.

We might say all this in another way by observing that the pure freedom of visionary consciousness--a consciousness we have already seen Wordsworth characterize as one which is "by form or image unprofaned"--is to be progressively tempered and mediated by the relational power of the imagination. The "something" is to be envisioned as ubiquitously interfused throughout the world disclosed by the senses; it is not to be embraced, as it were, in an act of solipsistic autonomy. The world of dead, discrete objects is to be transformed and organized into a community of living dwelling-places. Unless imagination so mediates between sublime self-consciousness and the phenomenal world, that world must remain fixed and dead, without value or meaning. It is this crucial labor of mediation, I believe, which Coleridge was thinking of when he reminded himself in his Notebooks to write "to the Recluse that he may insert something concerning Ego/ its metaphysical Sublimity--& intimate Synthesis with the principle of Coadunation--without it every where all things were a waste--nothing"36

The ego, directly intuited in its "metaphysical Sublimity," is the ultimate source of Wordsworth's vision of the "one life" and the "joy" pervading all things. But this metaphysically sublime ego must at the same time be synthesized with the "principle of Coadunation," with that power of the imagination whereby the mind transforms the phenomenal world into an organic whole. Without this intimate synthesis, the world of discrete objects would remain fixed and dead: "a waste--nothing."

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I shall conclude this chapter with an analysis of what is perhaps Wordsworth's most complex and dramatic account of imagination's mediation between sublime self-consciousness and the phenomenal world: the Simplon Pass episode of Book VI of The Prelude. Just prior to his descent through this apocalyptic landscape, Wordsworth experienced an intensely vivid moment of apperception:

Imagination--here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller.³⁷

In these lines Wordsworth describes a moment in which the power of imagination has suddenly erupted into consciousness. Now we may assume that if this power has abruptly risen in the mind, then that structure of sublime self-consciousness out of which imagination proceeds has also overtaken the mind. Thus we can understand why, in the lines immediately following, Wordsworth characterizes this moment of imagination's birth as one in which "the light of sense/ Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed/ The invisible world."³⁸ Imagination has risen out of the "mind's abyss," those depths of sublime self-awareness in which the subject directly intuits its own transcendent energies. Such an unmediated intuition leads to an abrupt loss of the phenomenal world. It is a moment in which, Wordsworth asserts, "doth greatness make abode."³⁹ It is a moment in which apperception overwhelms perception. And to stress the seemingly gratuitous way in which ordinary consciousness is thus snatched away, Wordsworth describes imagination as having coming upon him like "an unfathered vapour." Visionary con-

sciousness is suddenly there, without apparent reason or justification; and the mind has moved beyond the world of ordinary sensation.

Immediately after this visionary act of apperception Wordsworth makes his descent through the "narrow chasm" of Simplon Pass. There he comes upon a landscape riddled with opposites:

The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light--
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.⁴⁰

It would seem that in this abyss provided by nature Wordsworth's imagination discovers a dwelling-place or a "sensuous incarnation" for the visionary thrust of his own sublime self-consciousness--that structure of awareness elicited in him just prior to his descent through the Pass. Thus nature's abyss becomes simultaneously a mental abyss; the contradictory phenomena of the chasm appear to be "all like workings of one mind." Indeed, we might take Wordsworth's act of descending as in itself suggestive of that labor of imagination whereby the visionary mind, in which the light of sense has gone out, reestablishes contact with the phenomenal world. Through the mediating energy of imagination the transcending consciousness at the same time descends from the "invisible world" into the depths of nature, there only to discover itself now made immanent and nature herself becoming symbolic of the "invisible

world" of visionary consciousness. The apocalyptic features of Simplon Pass are therefore to be taken as generally expressive of the dialectical relationship that imagination sustains between sublime self-consciousness and the phenomenal world. Putting this more precisely, we might say that the discordant phenomena of Simplon Pass are expressive of one mind working in two dialectically opposed directions. First of all, they are expressive of the movement of consciousness beyond the phenomenal world; thus they appear to be "Characters of the great Apocalypse" and "types and symbols of Eternity." Second, they are expressive of imagination's labor of preserving that phenomenal world for consciousness--of infusing the act of apperception into the world of perception: imagination saves nature, in other words, by creating an underworld.

This double direction of consciousness is suggested in complex images of flux and stasis, destruction and preservation, height and depth. The "immeasurable height/ Of woods" appear to be "decaying," passing toward that obliteration which sublime self-consciousness imposes upon the phenomenal world. Yet at the same time these woods are "~~never~~ to be decayed"; they are expressive of how imagination sustains nature. Waterfalls plunge downward into the chasm, yet their "blasts" appear to be "stationary"--as if to suggest imagination's rescue of the world from an annihilating plunge into the abyss of immanent visionary consciousness. Likewise, "torrents" of winds are "shooting" downward from "the clear blue sky" into the underworld which has been opened up by imagination's infusion of the act of apperception into the world of perception. Yet in the "narrow rent" of the Pass, winds

are "thwarting winds"; and presumably the destructive movements of these winds and torrents (expressive of the destructive thrust of visionary consciousness) are thereby checked and fixed into a precarious stasis. Nature seems indefinitely suspended in the movement toward apocalypse. Nature hangs over the abyss.⁴¹

There is a further complexity in the fact that the descending traveller himself feels the threat from that structure of visionary consciousness which he is displacing into nature through the agency of imagination. Rocks mutter close upon his ears, and "Black drizzling crags" speak as "if a voice were in them." The imagery suggests how, to the extent the apocalyptic act of apperception is confined in the world of perception, that world in itself takes on an appearance of being dangerous. The paradox of course is that it is nature which is herself endangered. The descending traveller also feels a threat at "the sick sight/ And giddy prospect of the raving stream." The underworld of displaced visionary consciousness opens beneath his feet. Yet Wordsworth maintains his astonishing balance; the dialectical relationship between sublime self-consciousness and the phenomenal world is somehow sustained by imagination. The poet remains poised between the abyss below and the "unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens" above--an emblem of that "invisible world" of pure, transcendent vision from which his consciousness has been descending as it becomes progressively more displaced into nature. And the chasm grows progressively more contradictory as it comes to appear more and more as a mental abyss: the tumult and darkness of a world moving toward destruction are mingled with the peace and light of

pure visionary consciousness.

Finally, Wordsworth comes to stand at the very center of an organic universe, the phenomena of which, no matter how contradictory and discordant, are all like "blossoms upon one tree." In Coleridgean terms we might say that the world of essences has been elaborated into an intuition of absolute existence. The dialectical relationship that imagination has sustained between sublime self-consciousness and the phenomenal world permits the poet to see a universe in which the discrete events of nature are inextricably mingled with, and unified in terms of, an intuition of one transcendent mind. All the discordant phenomena of nature exhibit themselves as expressions of a single structure of consciousness, that structure of consciousness in which the subject has an intuition of the activity of his own mind as the ground of being of the phenomenal world--but an intuition which simultaneously poses the ultimate threat to the continued existence of that world. This paradoxical vision sustained by imagination is extraordinary: in order that the universe might be seen as an organic whole it must be brought to the very brink of apocalypse. Consciousness by the ego of its own metaphysical sublimity is indeed a consciousness "Of first, and last, and midst, and without end"--a consciousness of, again in Coleridgean terms, a "boundless or endless allness." Such sublime self-awareness is indeed an intuition of a dynamic "something" universally interfused. But it is only by the miracle of imagination's triumph that nature can be sustained as symbolic of this intuition and thus transformed. Imagination preserves nature as a "face" expressive of a single transcendent mind.

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

¹The most helpful general treatment of the Coleridgean sublime is Clarence DeWitt Thorpe's "Coleridge on the Sublime" in Wordsworth and Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (New York, 1962), pp. 192-219. This chapter covers much of the same evidence Thorpe examines. But my focus is much narrower than his in that I am primarily concerned with working out the phenomenological implications of the fact that for Coleridge, as Thorpe himself points out, sublimity is inherently subjective. Thorpe's article should be consulted for the sake of the broader perspective he brings to bear upon the whole question of the Coleridgean sublime.

²Ibid., p. 212.

³J. Shawcross, "Coleridge Marginalia," N&Q, IV (October 1905), 342. Words in brackets suggested by Shawcross to fill a hiatus in the ms.

⁴The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Three: The Phenomenology of Knowledge, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, 1957), p. 143.

⁵"Unpublished Fragments on Aesthetics by S. T. Coleridge," ed. Thomas M. Raysor, NCUSP, XXII (1925), 533.

⁶Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. Thomas M. Raysor (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 11-12.

⁷It might be argued that the statement "I am nothing!" should be taken to mean very simply: "I feel very small when confronted with the infinity and vastness suggested by a Gothic cathedral. By comparison I feel very small." The reading, however, is at odds with the spatial implications of Coleridge's statement that he feels himself, his "whole being," expanding "into the infinite." More importantly, this reading is at odds with Coleridge's observation discussed later in this chapter that the experience of sublimity suspends the comparing powers of the mind.

⁸The Friend, 4th ed. (London, 1850), I, 134-135.

⁹In this matter Coleridge echoes Burke who in his Enquiry speaks of "the force of a judicious obscurity" in evoking feelings of sublimity, and who also remarks that "there are reasons in nature why the obscure idea . . . should be more affecting than the clear. It is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites our passions The ideas of eternity, and infinity, are among the most affecting we have, and yet perhaps there is nothing of which we really understand so little, as of infinity and eternity" (op. cit., p. 59, p. 61).

¹⁰"Unpublished Fragments on Aesthetics," op. cit., 532-533.

¹¹Another way of putting all this is suggested by Coleridge's general description of a symbol as characterized "above all by the

translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal /The Statesman's Manual, in Works, ed. W. G. T. Shedd (New York, 1884), I, 437/. The sublime circle might be said to exhibit a translucence of the shapeless through and in the shapely. But the "shapeless" which becomes translucent in this instance is, paradoxically enough, the obscure and indefinite idea of eternity.

Perhaps we can come closer to an understanding of this paradox if we generally characterize the Coleridgean symbol in Miltonic language as a kind of "darkness visible." For Coleridge the idea of the "eternal" would always have to be an "obscure" idea since it is inevitably an "indefinite" idea. Extending his metaphor of "translucence," therefore, we might say that the symbol is characterized by a shining of the darkness of the idea of the eternal through and in something temporal and visible. Now it seems to me that these paradoxes partially grow out of the habit of British empirical psychology after Locke of discussing thinking as a kind of seeing, and therefore of discussing ideas as if they were somehow objects of sight. (See n. 11 of the preceding chapter.) Coleridge himself, in his attack on Hartley in the Biographia, complains of the "despotism of the eye" and of how "under this strong sensuous influence, we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision; and metaphysical systems, for the most part, become popular, not for their truth, but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being seen, if only our visual organs were sufficiently powerful" (op. cit., I, 74). Yet when Coleridge uses the term "translucence" in his explanation of the symbol, it would seem as if he has not quite escaped the Lockean habit. Or perhaps--to put this more precisely--we might say that his metaphor of "translucence" is an attempt to mediate between the Lockean way of discussing ideas as if they were objects of sight and his own belief that certain ideas cannot be so explained, that certain ideas ought not to be submitted to the "despotism of the eye." In phenomenological terminology, we might say that consciousness, when it is directed toward a Coleridgean symbol, simultaneously intends two ideas in a single act: one idea may be discussed in terms appropriate to an object of sight (as, for example, the idea of a circle); the other cannot be so discussed (as, for example, the idea of eternity). One idea might be said to have a "shape," the other is "shapeless." According to Coleridge, therefore, the symbol-making power of the mind implicitly refutes a basic methodological assumption of Lockean epistemology; but his use of the term "translucence" almost conceals this refutation.

Likewise, when I speak in my text of how the "image of the circle as objectively shapely recedes, as it were, into the obscurity of the idea of eternity," I engage in a somewhat Lockean manner of speaking: attempting to discuss a certain act of consciousness in language appropriate to the act of seeing. Since, finally, this act cannot be fully analyzed in such language, my phrasing becomes as implicitly paradoxical as Coleridge's use of the term "translucence."

¹²Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, op. cit., p. 164.

¹³Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E. L. Griggs (London, 1932), I. 117.

¹⁴In this sentence I explicitly fall back upon spatial metaphors in an attempt to make myself clear. Sometimes it seems impossible to discuss these matters without such verbal strategies. The methodological problem is recognized by Coleridge himself in his comments on Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode": ". . . the ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable, and alien, but which yet can not be conveyed save in symbols of time and space" (Biographia Literaria, op. cit., II, 120).

¹⁵The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York, 1962), I, 921.

¹⁶"Coleridge Marginalia," op. cit., 341.

¹⁷Thorpe, op. cit., p. 215.

¹⁸The Friend, op. cit., III, 192-193.

¹⁹Ibid., 200, 193.

²⁰Op. cit., II, 47.

²¹Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York, 1955), pp. 368-369.

²²The Friend, op. cit., III, 202. Coleridge himself finally grounds the intuition in God himself: "And the manifesting power, the source and the correlative of the idea /i.e., the intuition/ thus manifested--is it not God? Either thou knowest it to be God, or thou hast called an idol by that awful name" (196). I do not mention this in my text because my concern has not been to present Coleridge as an idealistic metaphysician but as a student of the kinds of experiences available to consciousness. I pursue the emphasis Coleridge himself pursues in this essay: a description of the intuition as a phenomenological reality rather than as means of establishing metaphysical postulates. Thus the question of whether finally the "source" and the "manifesting power" of the intuition of "absolute existence" is called "God" by Coleridge is a question not relevant to my interests. It might be argued that my approach has been suggested to me by what seems to be a premise of German idealistic philosophy after Kant: namely, that the analysis of consciousness will reveal a true metaphysical knowledge of reality. In any case, I prefer to read Coleridge--here obviously under the sway of Schelling--simply as a phenomenologist; and I choose to ignore the metaphysical claims. My treatment of Coleridge, in other words, is similar to my treatment of Wordsworth elsewhere. I am concerned with showing how certain statements which might be taken as statements of doctrine about the nature of things can be more meaningfully taken as statements about the phenomenological structure of certain conscious experiences.

²³Ibid., 201.

²⁴Coleridge's notion that the experience of sublimity suspends the comparative powers of the mind seems to be a refinement of the commonplace assertion by eighteenth-century theorists that one of the principal effects of the sublime is a feeling of "astonishment." Burke describes this "state of the soul" as one in which "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason upon that object which employs it" (Enquiry, op. cit., p. 57). We might also say, therefore, that Coleridge's intuition of absolute existence provokes astonishment; it is an intuition which "admits of no question out of itself."

²⁵Cited by Shawcross in the notes to his edition of the Biographia, op. cit., II, 309.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Further corroboration of my assertion that the intuition is derived from a special form of introspection is implied in the following. Coleridge is wondering about the origin of the intuition: "In vain would we derive it from the organs of sense: for these supply only surface, undulations, phantoms. In vain from the instruments of sensation: for these furnish only the chaos, the shapeless elements of sense. And least of all may we hope to find its origin, or sufficient cause, in the moulds and mechanism of the understanding, the whole purport and functions of which consist in individualization, in outlines and differencings by quantity and relation. It were wiser to seek substance in shadow, than absolute fulness in mere negation. . . . To no class of phenomena or particulars can it be referred, itself being none; therefore, to no faculty by which these alone are apprehended. As little dare we refer it to any form of abstraction or generalization; for it has neither co-ordinate nor analogon; it is absolute one; and that it is, and affirms itself to be, is its only predicate" (op. cit., III, 194).

²⁹Ibid., 193.

³⁰Ll. 416-434 (1805 version).

³¹Literary Criticism, p. 199, p. 173.

³²Ibid., p. 18, p. 28. Italics mine.

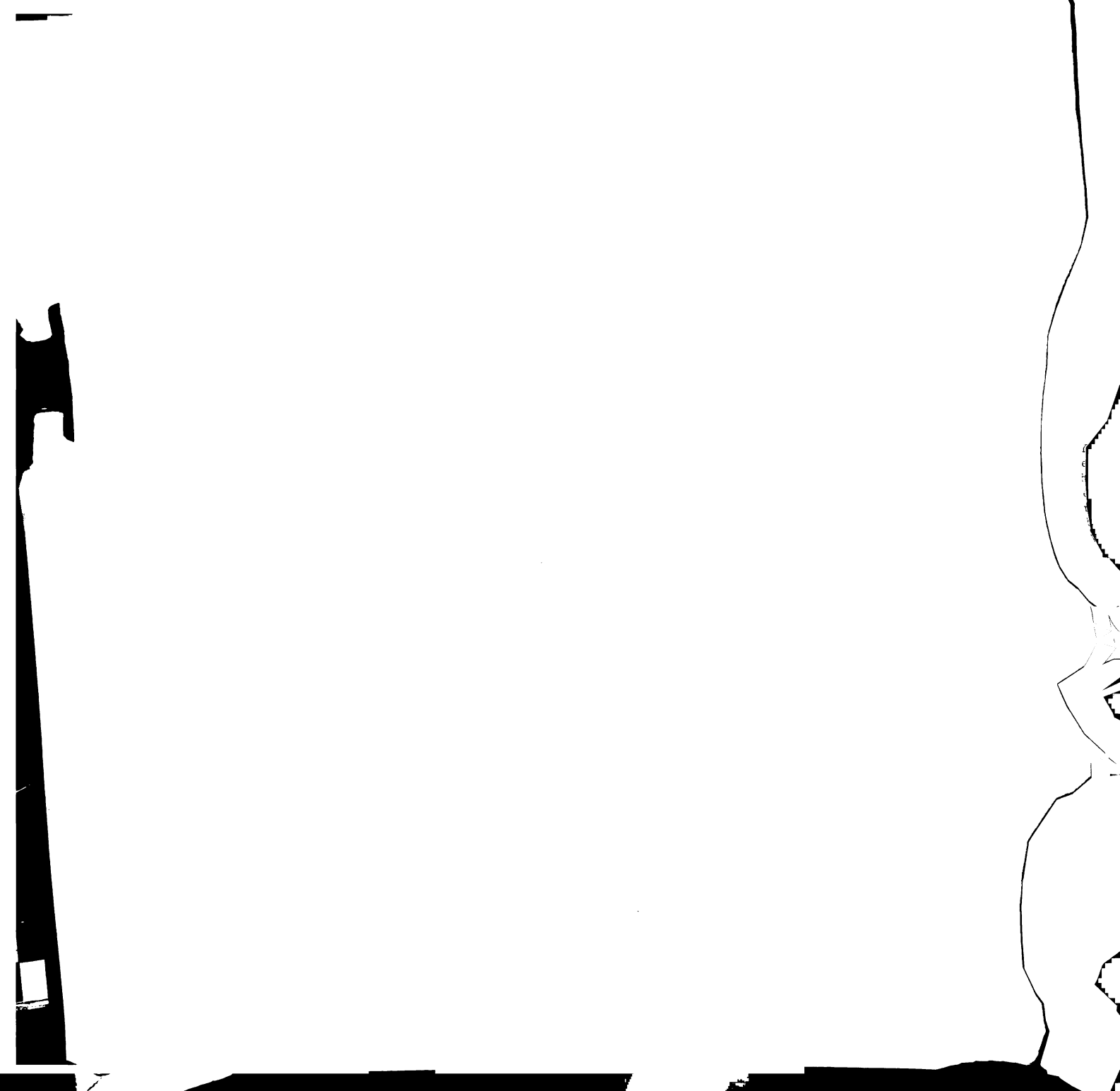
³³Notebooks, op. cit., II, 3158.

³⁴Op. cit., I, 202.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Notebooks, op. cit., II, 2057. The "Recluse" of course is Wordsworth.

³⁷Ll. 592-596.



38L1. 600-602.

39L. 602.

40L1. 624-640.

41Another significant moment of "hanging" can be found in Book I of The Prelude. And here again, I believe, we have a description suggestive of a dangerous balance between the phenomenal world and visionary consciousness:

Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that 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 ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth--and with what motion moved the clouds!
(ll. 330-339)

It is significant that such experiences should have been part of the education of the mind of that poet whose imaginative task is, as he himself defines it, to provide "sensuous incarnation" for the "ether-eal and transcendent." Wordsworth's hanging here "on the perilous ridge" can be seen as emblematically analogous to the grasping by the boy of the Fenwick note on the "Immortality Ode" to a wall or tree to preserve himself from the abyss of idealism. The task of imagination is to preserve the phenomenal world from the destructive thrust of visionary consciousness.

CHAPTER V

SOME CONCLUSIONS

It might be said that this essay has faced throughout a single question: what is the "something" Wordsworth claims to have felt, with a "sense sublime," in "Tintern Abbey"? The answer to this question was stated in the opening chapter: the "something" is nothing else than Wordsworth's own consciousness directly intuited in an act of apperception. In subsequent chapters my task has been not simply to defend the correctness of this answer, but to explore its full meaning as well. In this exploration I turned first of all to the poem "Tintern Abbey" and tried to show how it was essentially a meditation concerned with the perplexities created for the poet by his failure or unwillingness to recognize the immanence of his consciousness in nature. Then I examined certain theories of the experience of the sublime, invoking for this examination the unifying concept of a phenomenological archetype and progressively trying to refine with the help of this concept the meaning of such terms as "apperception" and "sublime self-consciousness." Finally, in this exploration I have developed a description--especially in the last chapter--of the relationship between such a form of consciousness and the vitalizing act of imagination. This relationship was seen to be inevitably oxymoronic: the mind experiences an open-ended sense of its own ubiquitous activity within the limited forms and shapes provided by the phenomenal world. An absolute "something" is intuited as indwelling within the finite. The "shapeless" is discovered to be immanent in the "shapely"; the "sentiment of Being" is

felt as "spread" universally, and the world comes to exhibit "one life."

In this final chapter I propose to sketch out a number of conclusions which I hope will prove suggestive for future students of Wordsworth. My intention now is not to proceed in the lingeringly analytical manner of the preceding chapters: I assume, perhaps too easily, that the answer to my single question needs no such further elaboration. Instead, my intention now is to range freely across a number of Wordsworthian problems on a deliberately high level of provocative generality. I shall attempt to show how we might edge these problems toward their solution by setting them within the phenomenological context developed in this essay. The specific questions I face are three: 1) What is the form of Wordsworthian space--that very special kind of space which his mind and nature come simultaneously to inhabit through the power of imagination? 2) What is the form of Wordsworthian time? Another way of asking this same question: how does the act of imagination, proceeding as it does from an act of sublime self-consciousness, transform the temporal reality of the phenomenal world? 3) What is the relationship between the structure of Wordsworth's imaginative act and his explicitly formulated poetic program?

It should be understood that in what follows there is no attempt to provide complete answers to these enormously complicated questions; no insistence that these problems, once they have been caught in the light of my analysis of the structure of Wordsworth's imaginative consciousness, have been in any final way "solved." What follows is to be taken as nothing more than a set of relatively abstract sketches--

a drawing out from my thesis of some sets of coordinates which may or may not help other readers of Wordsworth to achieve a critical purchase upon a specific problem in a specific poem. In other words, I now offer, as economically as possible, certain hypotheses which are intended to suggest how the somewhat narrow focus of this essay might be significantly broadened.

--2--

What is the form of Wordsworthian space?

The poet asserts that in "nature everything is distinct, yet nothing defined into absolute independent singleness."¹ The space occupied by any individual phenomenon is likewise not an absolutely closed space. Though things may be distinctly located in space, they cannot claim exclusive possession of their location. As Alfred North Whitehead observes in his Science and the Modern World, Wordsworth's "theme is nature in solido, that is to say, he dwells on that mysterious presence of surrounding things, which imposes itself on any separate element that we set up as an individual for its own sake. He always grasps the whole of nature as involved in the tonality of the particular instance."² It is of course the power of imagination which creates this oxymoronic "tonality," this sense of an individual phenomenon as somehow having "involved" in itself, or rolled up into itself (L. involvere, to roll into), or contained within itself the whole of nature. For imagination is the faculty, according to Wordsworth, whereby "things are lost in each other, and limits vanish."³ Not only do phenomena in themselves tend to become intermingled, their presences interfusing with one another; but their spatial "limits" as well tend

to be obliterated. The individual form comes no longer to be seen as a "punctual Presence,"⁴ existing at a defined point in space which excludes all other points in space. Rather, the place of any one thing exhibits the potential of including all other places.⁵ The locations of Wordsworthian space are thus somewhat deceptive: though they are special places seemingly isolated from the rest of the world, they can also be, at the same time and in a certain way, so interfused with the presence of all surrounding things that these special places tend to be radically open-ended, indeed sometimes functioning almost like a point of view, rather than a point of space, through which the mind might pass toward a vision of the totality of things. The places of Wordsworthian space are thus capable of being transformed by imagination into a series of mutually immanent locations, each of which simultaneously contains and is contained by the other. "Surrounding things" are at the same time "involved" or rolled up into the "tonality of the particular instance"; they can in some way be both around and within.

An example of such a peculiarly immanent place or location is the hill-enclosed lake in the vale of Grasmere:

Behold the universal imagery
Inverted, all its sun-bright features touched
As with the varnish, and the gloss of dreams;
Dreamlike the blending also of the whole
Harmonious landscape; all along the shore
The boundary lost, the line invisible
That parts the image from reality;
And the clear hills, as high as they ascend
Heavenward, so piercing deep the lake below.⁶

Wordsworth's imperative "Behold" directs the eye toward a single phenomenon, the lake of Grasmere. But we immediately discover that contained in that lake is "the universal imagery/ Inverted." The "clear

hills" surrounding the lake are simultaneously immanent within the lake, and in that state of immanence assume a suggestively visionary appearance: they seem to be "touched" with the "varnish, and the gloss of dreams." We cannot assume that this appearance of "varnish" and "gloss" is merely the result of the phenomenal difference between the hills when seen directly and the hills when seen "Inverted" or reflected upon the surface of the lake. For, as Wordsworth tells us, the "line" which "parts the image from reality" is "invisible," not *only* indicating the invisibility of the lake's shoreline but also suggesting the difficulty of making phenomenal distinctions between the hills in themselves and their reflected image. The hills, at the same time ascending into the sky and "piercing deep" into the lake, are seen in both actions as "clear Hills." Is it, then, simply this "blending" of image and reality--simultaneously a doubling of appearances--which accounts for Wordsworth's assertion that the overall impression is "Dreamlike"? I suspect that a better reason for Wordsworth's characterization can be developed if we recall that for the poet the act of imagination fuses that open-ended sense of self experienced in the act of apperception with the phenomena of nature revealed by the act of perception. Here in the lake of Grasmere Wordsworth beholds almost a paradigm of that oxymoronic fusion--an emblem of imaginative consciousness. We notice that the lake, through its reflection of the hills which "ascend/ Heavenward," is endowed with an open-ended space; for the hills also appear to be "piercing" heavenward into its depths. Not only is the lake indistinguishable along its shoreline from the surrounding and ascending landscape, it is also inwardly dilated and

deepened by its reflection of that ascending landscape. Thus the lake takes on the appearance of a potentially infinite expansion in all directions. It is precisely in this expansion that the lake becomes suggestively emblematic. Just as in the experience of imaginative consciousness, the spatial limits of the self are felt to be dissolving, so the spatial limits of the lake appear to be dissolving. Yet also here, as for imaginative consciousness, the phenomenal world is not lost. The blending of the "whole/Harmonious landscape" into an open-ended focus does not lead to an apocalyptic confusion or destruction of that landscape. Though the "universal imagery" may be "inverted" in a lake which appears to be bottomless, that "imagery" is not obliterated in that space: the hills remain "clear." Thus, taking this scene as emblematic, we might say that the phenomenal world has been tranquilly married to the "abyss of idealism." The sense of the infinite is quietly discovered to be immanent in the sense of the finite.

What all this generally suggests, I believe, is that the mutual immanence of the special locations in Wordsworth's landscape are to be taken as expressive of the ubiquitous energy of consciousness interfused by the power of imagination throughout the phenomenal world. No single location can be "defined into absolute independent singleness" because each location, as an object of perception, is potentially exposed to the dilating power of the act of apperception. Imagination, Wordsworth observes, deals "with objects not as they are, but as they appear to the mind of the poet."⁷ The places in Wordsworth's landscape are thus dependent for their poetic appearance upon a mind which is capable of acts of sublime self-consciousness, acts in which all limits,

spatial or otherwise, are felt to be vanishing. All places have the potential for mutual immanence to the extent that the "sentiment of Being" spreads through phenomenal space. The mind's perception of any specific location can be transformed into an experience of the mind's simultaneously moving beyond that location insofar as the act of apprehension, the Coleridgean "I AM IN THAT I AM" latent in any act of perception, becomes explicit. For in this structure of self-consciousness, when experienced in its purest form, the mind feels itself to be confined to no particular place. Also, the oxymoronic appearance of the "particular instance," into which according to Whitehead the whole of nature has been somehow "involved," is expressive of imagination's gathering into a single focus in phenomenal space of that ubiquitous activity of consciousness which, as we saw in "Tintern Abbey," "rolls through all things." When the sense of unlocalized self is fused, through imagination, with a location in the phenomenal world, that fixed location begins to take on the appearance of being filled, in some barely describable way, with other locations.

According to the Wanderer of The Excursion, there is an "active Principle" which "subsists/ In all things." This "Spirit" is one which

knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the world.
This is the freedom of the universe⁸

The mind, in moving toward an intuition of this "Spirit," achieves a sense of its own spatial "freedom" as well as of the spatial "freedom" of the phenomenal universe in which there comes to appear "no insulated spot." Wordsworth re-interprets the principle of the continuity of the Great Chain of Being into a principle of immanence: a single ubiquitous

"Soul" strangely "circulates" through the links of the Chain. The "active Principle" disclosed in sublime self-consciousness is the force which breaks down all limits and tends to destroy all sense of isolated points in space. The "freedom of the universe" depends upon the power of consciousness to escape the tyranny of feeling itself confined to a "punctual Presence." And Wordsworth's preoccupation with special places in the landscape, a preoccupation which Hartman refers to as the "spot-syndrome" and which he traces through the poetry of Wordsworth's major period, is, in the terms of this essay, a preoccupation with the immanence of apperception in perception, an immanence which can be brought to a peculiarly visionary focus in phenomenal space by the power of imagination.⁹ There are indeed "Souls of lonely places."¹⁰

--3--

What is the form of Wordsworthian time?

The question is closely related to one of Wordsworth's major themes: the problem of human hope. The despondent Solitary in Book III of The Excursion raises the problem in "bitter language of the heart":

what good is given to men,
More solid than the gilded clouds of heaven?
What joy more lasting than a vernal flower?--
.
.
.
Oh! tremble, ye, to whom hath been assigned
A course of days composing happy months,
And they as happy years; the present still
So like the past, and both so firm a pledge
Of a congenial future, that the wheels
Of pleasure move without the aid of hope:
For Mutability is Nature's bane:
And slighted Hope will be avenged; and, when
Ye need her favours, ye shall find her not;

But in her stead--fear--doubt--and agony!¹¹

The Solitary's words are interesting, not because of the traditional complaint about nature's mutability which they echo, but because of the special warning he directs toward those who live a life of "happy years" in which the present is "So like the past" that both seem to "pledge" an equally happy or "congenial future." In such a state there appears to be a virtual identity between past, present, and future; indeed, such a state might almost be called changeless or timeless. The virtue of hope, irrelevant in a world which is felt to be pleasantly changeless, is therefore never practiced. And when the inevitable reality of destructive change erupts into such a world--as it did for the Solitary--hope, the virtue that was slighted because there seemed no need for it, will be found lacking. In other words, the experience of human changelessness is both dangerous and ironic. The fact is that the "good . . . given to men" is only as substantial as the fool's gold of the "gilded clouds of heaven"; and if we experience too many identical days in which "the wheels/ Of pleasure move without the aid of hope," we will fall into despair when mutability intrudes with its baneful reality. To live without hope, even when appearances seem to permit such a life, is to prepare oneself for the "agony" of hopelessness.

The Wanderer, in one of his many attempts in the poem to "correct" the Solitary's despondency, projects a vision in Book IV

Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired;
That hath been, is, and where it was and is
There shall endure,--existence unexposed
To the blind walk of mortal accident;
From diminution safe and weakening age;
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays;
And countless generations of mankind
Depart; and leave no vestige where they trod.¹²

The Wanderer does not urge hope upon the Solitary by denying the reality of change. For that would be to urge the same trap which the Solitary had already warned against, and into which he had fallen. Hope cannot be purchased by a refusal to face mutability. Indeed, the Wanderer stresses the sad facts of the "blind walk of mortal accident." Man not only stumbles blindly ahead in time, not knowing what "accidents" of violent change he will encounter in his journey. He also is "blind" to those who have lived before him: decay and death so absolutely overtake "countless generations" of homines viatores, that "no vestige" of their human existence is left "where they trod." Time and change, it would seem, enforce upon man a sense of irremedial discontinuities.

In the case of the Solitary it was a number of experiences of such discontinuities--of violent snappings of the expectations which had bound him hopefully to the future--which occasioned his despair. How, then, is the Wanderer advocating hope in these lines? By suggesting that there is available to man a vision of an "existence unexposed" to mutability, a vision which transcends the blindness of the "walk of mortal accident." This vision is not of a frozen eternity standing outside the temporal world, nor even of a state of timelessness to be somehow achieved within this world. It is rather of a dimension of reality where "Life" is "continuous" and "Being" remains "unimpaired." In this dimension there is a past, a present, and a future. And "Being" presumably appears to "become" in the sense that it is seen as moving from a past through a present and into a future. But this becoming is characterized by a continuous endurance of what "Being" essentially is as it moves through time: "That hath been, is and, where it was and is/

There shall endure." The Wanderer seems to be suggesting, then, that hope is possible in an apprehension of a becoming distinguishable from, indeed "unexposed" to, change. The feeling of destructive discontinuity which occasions despair can be overcome if man somehow grows aware of the temporal process in such a way that the sense of becoming can be disengaged from the sense of a change. Hope is possible when the flow of time is no longer seen as exclusively producing the "bane" of mutability. Within the very flow of time itself, upon the surface of which is scattered undeniable evidence of man's "diminution" and "weakening," there can be intuited, in Wordsworth's words, "the great moving spirit of things."¹³ Hope is to be rooted in the enduring heart of the temporal process--in a vision of a duration which subsists beneath all discontinuities.

How is this saving vision to be achieved? We recall from Chapter III of this essay how the Wanderer (there discussed under his other name in the poem, the Pedlar) was "endowed" by an early and prolonged exposure to the sublime forms of nature with the "vision and the faculty divine"; that is, with the power of sublime self-consciousness.¹⁴ We might say, then, that his vision of a duration which subsists beneath all discontinuities--a vision which is also Wordsworth's--is the result of imagination's infusing the perceived world of mutability with that sense of time experienced in the act of apperception. This structure of awareness not only releases consciousness from the sense of being confined to a particular location in space, it also releases consciousness from the sense of being confined to a particular moment in time. The subject in directly intuiting itself achieves a structure of consciousness which

absolutely lacks any principle of limitation--any means, with respect to time, whereby the self might define itself as existing exclusively at this particular moment. The sense of the self's expansion outward into space is paralleled and accompanied by a sense of the self's "expansion" backward and forward in time. Consciousness feels itself, therefore, not only interfusing all space but also interfusing all time. As Wordsworth observes in The Prelude, after having recalled the particularly visionary quality of his first encounter with London:

Such is the strength and glory of our Youth.
The Human nature unto which I felt
That I belong'd, and which I lov'd and reverenc'd
Was not a punctual Presence, but a Spirit
Living in time and space, and far diffus'd.
In this my joy, in this my dignity
Consisted¹⁵

Sublime self-consciousness evokes a sense of a self which is "far diffus'd" throughout time as well as space; in both dimensions consciousness feels itself to be much more than a "punctual Presence."

We might thus say that the perceived moment of the world of mutability, once it has been invaded by the act of apperception through the mediation of imagination, becomes an immanent moment. It now appears to be filled with both past and future. The sense of the self's diffusion throughout time is displaced or focused by imagination into the phenomenal moment and redeems it, as it were, from being merely an exclusive instant in the world of mutability, that world of absolute and frequently violent discontinuities. Such an exclusive instant would in itself appear to be absolutely discontinuous, severed from past instants and future instants, resembling nothing more than a mathematical point without extension. A succession of such mutually exclusive instants constitutes the

time in which despair flourishes. But the moment invaded by sublime self-consciousness appears at the same time to be invaded by moments of the past and moments of the future. There is thus possible a vision of a continuous duration "whose heterogeneous moments," in the words of Bergson, "permeate one another."¹⁶ This is the characteristic intuition of a man who leads, in Wordsworth's terms, a "life where hope and memory are as one."¹⁷ All of which is to say that hope is a function of an intuition of an essentially continuous flow of time within the often fragmented time of the world of mutability. Imagination, by projecting into this fragmented time a sense of the self's simultaneous existence at all moments of time, endows the temporal process with the appearance of possessing a continuous duration. Consciousness is now enabled, in the words of Poulet, "to travel through time in order to feel its continuity." It is in this feeling--what Poulet might call the "romanticism of experienced continuity"--that hope resides.¹⁸ The heart, having overcome the oppressive sense of time's irremedial discontinuities, can now begin to hope. The heart can now project its desire into a seemingly limitless future. It is no wonder, then, that Wordsworth's remembering in Book VI of The Prelude of his Alpine encounter with imagination's power causes him to feel a "hope that can never die."¹⁹

We are now in a position briefly to consider the function of memory in Wordsworth's poetic process. According to the well known formulation of the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads (1800)," poetry "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is

gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind."²⁰

I have argued in this essay that Wordsworth's act of imagination proceeds from an act of apperception. How are we to reconcile this position with Wordsworth's assertion here that poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity"? Can we say that the "spontaneous overflow"--which appears to be the result of a "species of reaction" by the mind to its originally tranquil and contemplative memory of an emotion--is likewise the result of an act of apperception? The answers to these questions obviously depend on our interpretation of this "species of reaction." What is this kind of reaction by consciousness to its own activity which according to Wordsworth triggers the "overflow" of emotion into poetic form?

Let us first of all notice that the metaphor of "overflow," one of the constituting metaphors of Wordsworth's expressive theory of art, is suggestive, when taken merely as an image and not as a metaphor, of an act of spreading or diffusion of some liquid substance in space. We can next recall how the song of the Solitary Reaper, producing in Wordsworth an intense imaginative reaction, is described as "overflowing" the "Vale profound" in which the harvesting girl is seen.²¹ In this image of a spatialized sound, a sound which spreads and expands like a growing body of water, there is to be detected, I believe, another instance of that spreading and expansion so characteristic of sublime self-consciousness. Can we also detect in Wordsworth's metaphor of the "overflow of powerful feelings" an echo of the act of apperception? Are we permitted to say that the metaphor is but another version of those metaphors of apperception we have already seen: of a self "far diffus'd" in

time and space; of the "sentiment of Being" spreading throughout the phenomenal world?

We should also notice that these "powerful feelings" which "overflow" are "kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation." That is, they resemble that original "emotion recollected in tranquillity." It might be asserted, then, that the contemplative act which leads to poetry also leads to a "re-feeling" of a past emotion. Can we not go further and say, therefore, that Wordsworth's contemplative act brings back a feeling from the past into present consciousness, and that in this respect the psychological genesis of poetry for Wordsworth is an act of consciousness in which the mind overcomes any sense it might have of feeling itself confined to the emotions of the present? The emotions of the past can be made to rise up again in present consciousness; and in this experience--what we would now call the act of "affective memory"--consciousness discovers itself no longer confined to an emotive "punctual Presence." The invasion of the present by feelings from the past seems to provoke, in other words, a sense of the self as "far diffus'd" in time. The "powerful feelings" which "overflow" into poetry proceed from a "far diffus'd" subjectivity which has discovered, through affective memory, its ability to transcend its location in the present. Apperceiving consciousness in turn powerfully "spreads" itself into poetry. Just as such a structure of awareness becomes interfused throughout the phenomenal world, so language becomes, in Wordsworth's terms, "an incarnation of the thought."²²

I cannot insist upon the inescapable correctness of this interpretation both of Wordsworth's unexplained "species of reaction" and of the key metaphor in his formulation of an expressive theory of art.

The language of Wordsworth's description of the psychological origins of poetry is finally more provocative than definitively and precisely illuminating. But the power of the affective memory to induce an act of sublime self-consciousness is clearly suggested in a passage from Book II of The Prelude where, recalling how as a child he would wander through nights "blackened with a coming storm," Wordsworth observes:

Thence did I drink the visionary power;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.²³

The value Wordsworth finds in memories of certain "fleeting moods/ Of shadowy exultation" is that they enable the "soul" to retain "an obscure sense/ Of possible sublimity." This introspective and potentially visionary traffic with the past--and here Wordsworth makes a curious distinction--depends upon the soul's remembering, not "what she felt," but "how she felt." The special concern of this act of memory seems to be not so much with the exact content of a certain past feeling, but with what we might almost call the "feeling" of that past feeling--a "feeling" detached from any of the specific circumstances of the past surrounding the original feeling. To put this more precisely: what is to be recovered from the past is a "how," a mode of pure subjectivity; not a "what," a subjectivity defined with respect to any specific past object of consciousness. The feeling is to be re-felt, not to be re-called.²⁴

The feeling is to be dislodged from its location in a remembered past

and therefore permitted to be re-felt in the present. The labor of memory which accomplishes this recovery is in itself an open-ended activity: there always remains "something" of the subjectivity of the past "to pursue." This labor of memory also and significantly induces a form of self-consciousness in which the soul feels its "faculties" or powers to be "growing" in a similarly open-ended fashion: the subject intuits itself in such a way that its powers seem to be potentially infinite. The language of Wordsworth's account of this act of affective memory subtly weaves together both a description of an infinite regression by consciousness into its past subjectivity and a description of a simultaneously intensifying act of self-consciousness in which the soul comes to a progressively incremental sense of its own powers. Indeed, Wordsworth's loose and open syntax, permitting him to pass almost unnoticeably from a discussion of an act of memory into a discussion of an act of self-consciousness, finally suggests that both acts are in essence identical. The "point" which the powers of the soul may "gain" can be taken to refer both to a stage in the retrospective apprehension of a past mode of subjectivity and to a stage in the intensification of self-consciousness. And for both acts there remains a "something" to be pursued, a provocative "something" which is latent--or can we say interfused?--in the mind's "obscure sense/ Of possible sublimity." In other words, these lines seem to suggest that for Wordsworth one of the principal means for inducing sublime self-consciousness is the act of affective memory.

Thus it should not be surprising that Wordsworth uses metaphors of depth and of immanence to describe the act of memory. In one of the

more elaborate similes of The Prelude, Wordsworth characterizes the activity of his mind in writing that autobiographical poem:

As one who hangs down-bending from the side
Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast
Of a still water, solacing himself
With such discoveries as his eye can make
Beneath him in the bottom of the deep,
Sees many beauteous sights--weeds, fishes, flowers,
Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth
Of the clear flood, from things which there abide
In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam
Of his own image, by a sun-beam now,
And wavering motions sent he know not whence,
Impediments that make his task more sweet;
Such pleasant office have we long pursued
Incumbent o'er the surface of past time²⁵

The act of memory is here compared to an exploration of an immanent space--a comparison produced by Wordsworth's spatialization of time: "past time" has a "surface." Thus the act of looking backward into time is analogous to the act of looking downward into space. Just as in "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth's memory playing over the surface of the landscape gradually brings his consciousness down into the heart of the landscape, there to postulate the presence of an unseen hermit, so here memory is depicted as a search for "such discoveries" as can be made in the "bottom of the deep." But what is discovered in the "deep" of this simile is not a direct vision into the "life of things," but a world remarkably like the world created by the power of imagination, one of whose functions, we have already observed, is to produce a state of appearances in which "things are lost in each other, and limits vanish." Here, in the depths of this "still water" of time, "shadow" cannot be parted from "substance"; and the "rocks and sky,/ Mountains and clouds" cannot be distinguished "from things which there abide/ In their true

dwelling." In other words, images from the present are confused with images from the past. The suggestion is that Wordsworth's act of memory elicits in him the power of imagination, the power which presumably enables him to write The Prelude and which in this simile is implicitly described as mingling perceptions from the past with perceptions from the present. But if imagination is stirred by memory, then memory must also in some way provoke that act of sublime self-consciousness out of which imagination proceeds. Here imagination's mingling of past and present within the "deep" of retrospection might be taken as an expression of the implicit presence of that structure of consciousness which knows no location in time. And the simile as a whole suggestively projects an image of the extraordinarily complex relationship in Wordsworth's psychology of creation between the act of memory, the act of imagination, and that latent act of apperception which collapses hard and fast distinctions between past and present.

Perhaps nowhere in Wordsworth is the power of memory to elicit imaginative consciousness more clearly recognized than in his comments on the "spots of time." These "locations" in the past--again Wordsworth spatializes his sense of time--are special memories to which he explicitly repairs for the purpose of inducing in himself a certain state of self-consciousness: a sense that the mind is "lord and master" of the phenomenal world, and "that outward sense/ Is but the obedient servant of her will."²⁶ But is not such a state of self-consciousness exactly that required for the activity of imagination as it "dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates, in order to recreate" the world into art?²⁷ Thus we might say that the "spots of time" are certain remembered perceptions

in which there is a latent content of apperception, a content which is recoverable by the affective memory. These locations in the past are the "hiding-places of man's power"--mysteriously immanent places in which there lurks the presence of visionary consciousness. The mind, in repairing to these "spots of time," seeks a "vivifying Virtue," the power ultimately of transforming the universe into a vision of vital wholeness.²⁸ The mind seeks for itself a sense of "how" it felt rather than a sense of "what" it felt. It pursues an explication of that "obscure sense/ Of possible sublimity" buried in certain haunting images from the past.

One such "spot of time" in The Prelude is the famous boating episode of Book I. Wordsworth recalls how after his terrifying vision of a "huge Peak" uprearing "its head" above the "horizon's bound," a vision of a "grim shape" which seemed to stride after him "with purpose of its own," there ensued a period of "many days" in which his mind

Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.²⁹

This encounter with an almost numinous presence, suddenly and provocatively rising up out of the depths of the phenomenal world, seems to have provoked a sustained act of apperception in which there was a total loss, or apocalypse, of the phenomenal world: "No familiar shapes/ Remained." Subjectivity was thrown back upon itself in an intuition of "unknown modes of being." The intuition itself is char-

acterized as a "dim and undetermined sense"; that is, consciousness was unable to define its intentionality with respect to any precisely intended object of consciousness. In Coleridgean terms, the "shapeless" had overwhelmed the "shapely." The sustained condition of apperception was for Wordsworth a "solitude/ Or blank desertion." And the poet's language gropes incrementally through a series of negations to express that same structure of consciousness which in "Tintern Abbey" he attempts to define through the use of the metaphor of dwelling-places.

But what I believe to be most significant about this "spot of time," haunting as it is when taken by itself, is the "species" of Wordsworth's reaction to his remembering of this episode within the context of that unfolding act of memory which is The Prelude. For immediately after his recounting of this episode, we find the poet reacting--as he does frequently in the poem--to what his memory has just brought forth. Here, suggestively enough, he breaks out into an apostrophe to the

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion³⁰

I interpret this apostrophe as evidence of a recovery, through an act of affective memory, of the content of apperception latent in the remembered perceptions of the boating episode. Suddenly Wordsworth addresses a "Soul" which is both an "eternity of thought" and a power which endows the "forms and images" of the phenomenal world with a "breath." The act of apperception both induces a sense of the self's presence throughout all time and almost de-substantializes nature, endowing it through

the agency of imagination with the appearance of "Spirit" (L. spiritus, breath). I believe, in other words, that the boating episode, when read in conjunction with Wordsworth's immediately succeeding apostrophe, is to be taken as a significant gloss upon the theory of the psychological origins of poetry set forth in the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads." The highest function of recollection for Wordsworth is to induce a state of sublime self-consciousness out of which the creative activity of imagination might proceed. Memory is the means whereby the poet might recover a vivifying sense of his identity as a poet, a means of returning through the past to his visionary possibilities in the present. Wordsworth concludes his apostrophe with testimony of a renewed recognition of the "grandeur in the beatings of the heart."³¹ The sense of possible sublimity has been transformed into a sense of actual sublimity.

And, as we have already seen, it is precisely in this transformation of self-consciousness that hope resides. The intuition of a "grandeur" in the depths of one's subjectivity is also potentially an intuition of a continuous duration in the phenomenal world--a vision of a presence eternally interfused by imagination throughout the images of despair, the bleak evidences of discontinuity, which are strewn across the surface of time. Hence one of Wordsworth's most persistent and poignant fears is that the passing of time will introduce an irremedial break between his present consciousness and those memories which contain "power," those "spots of time" out of which he can educe a sense of himself as "far diffus'd" throughout all of time.

But he fights against this fear by conceiving of poetry as a

means of insuring the possibility of continuing hope. The poet writes, according to the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," out of a "deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind."³² The eternity of consciousness is somehow to be given "incarnation" in the language of poetry; and poems themselves can thereby become dwelling-places for the "something" which knows no fixed location in time. To the extent that they become such embodiments of sublime self-consciousness, they serve the end of "future restoration." Affective memory, Wordsworth discovers, is not sufficiently reliable; and language is to be summoned to its aid:

The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life: the hiding-places of my power
Seem open; I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration.³³

The writing of poetry is for Wordsworth a human strategy designed to overcome both the sense of temporal discontinuity and ultimately the sense of despair which such discontinuity provokes. If affective memory is someday to fail--here Wordsworth suggests how his very "approach" to the immanent spaces of the past causes them paradoxically to "close"--then perhaps the content of apperception latent in the perception of the past can somehow be enshrined in language for the end of "future restoration."³⁴ Thus to write poetry is for Wordsworth to cultivate a "life where hope and memory are as one." It is also to cultivate the possibility of future poetry. And it is finally to make an implicit confession of the genuine danger that his sense of self may someday be

confined to a "punctual Presence," and that the expectations which bind him hopefully to both past and future may be broken in an irretrievable loss of the power of visionary apperception.

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What is the relationship between the structure of Wordsworth's imaginative act and his explicitly formulated poetic program?

If in the "lonely places" of nature there can be detected "Souls" which permit the mind to transcend the isolation of these places, and if at any single moment in time there can be experienced a sense of the self's diffusion throughout all moments in time, then it should not be surprising that even in the "meanest flower that blows" there can be discovered thoughts that "lie too deep for tears." The visionary act of apperception not only can alter dramatically Wordsworth's sense of time and space, it can also invade and transform any phenomenon, even the most insignificant, into a source of possible sublimity. Thus the poet is entitled to discover visionary possibilities in whatever he chooses to look at, even in a lowly daffodil. As imagination fuses sublime self-consciousness with the "meanest flower that blows," that flower begins to take on an appearance of immanence and thereby can begin to serve as a source of thoughts that "lie too deep for tears."³⁵ The finite and mortal world can be made to reveal a dimension of reality in which the "tears" produced by the mortality of things are made irrelevant: sublime self-consciousness, a structure of awareness which lacks any principle of limitation, an intuition of "existence" without any principle of "essence"--this act of self-consciousness induces in the subject a sense of itself as an "eternity of thought"; the idea of

the possible death of the subject is thereby absolutely excluded.³⁶ And when this sense of self is projected by imagination into the phenomenal world, even the mortality of that world appears to have been somehow overcome. The "noisy years" come to seem but "moments in the being/ Of the eternal Silence."³⁷ And any phenomenon within those "noisy years," even the humblest flower blossoming toward its own extinction, can become mysteriously suggestive of the "eternal Silence" discoverable in the depths of subjectivity.

That a single phenomenon can serve as an oxymoronic emblem of mortality and immortality is an expression of what Meyer Abrams has called the "central paradox" lurking "in the oracular passages of Wordsworth's major period: the oxymoron of the humble-grand, the lofty-mean, the trivial-sublime"³⁸ This paradox is also implicit in both Wordsworth's descriptions of the poetic mind and his own formulations of his mission as a poet. In the "Essay Supplementary to the Preface (1815)," he discusses the difficulty some readers might have in appreciating his poetry, and observes that "if we consider . . . how remote is the practice and the course of life from the sources of sublimity, in the soul of Man, can it be wondered that there is little existing preparation for a poet charged with a new mission to extend its kingdom, and to augment and spread its enjoyments."³⁹ In the words "extend" and "spread" we see still another echo of those metaphors used to describe sublime self-consciousness: the sense of sublimity encountered by the poet in his own soul is to be "spread" through the language of poetry into the minds of his readers. But first of all the poet, whose mission is "to extend the kingdom" of the sublime, must interfuse

his own visionary self-consciousness with areas of experience where previously there was not even an obscure sense of possible sublimity. The poem thus becomes the expression, the verbal image of this paradoxical transformation of the phenomenal world. And as such it can serve as a hiding-place of the power whereby the reader himself can begin to discover possible sublimity where once none was thought to exist--but only on the condition that he does not pursue a "practice" and a "course of life" which makes it impossible for him to recover the "sources of sublimity" in his own soul. The ideal reader of Wordsworth, in other words, has to be potentially capable of an act of apprehension similar to that which the poet presumably experienced in endowing, by a "certain colouring of imagination," the humblest "incidents and situations from common life" with an "unusual aspect."⁴⁰ The ideal end of the poem is to induce in the reader that structure of consciousness which makes it possible for the mean and the trivial to appear sublime.

Wordsworth's ambition is staggering, not only with respect to his readers, but also with respect to the entire universe of perception, every last phenomenon of which can become transfigured. But this ambition ought to be seen as an explication of his own experience of imaginative consciousness; the programmatic result, we might say, of his undeniable encounter with the facts of his own consciousness. It is his own power of imagination which he describes, in his note to "The Thorn," as "the faculty which produces impressive effects out of simple elements"⁴¹ And because of this power, the supernatural powers of earlier orthodoxies no longer need be invoked. Imagination, he

writes in a letter to Southey, "does not require for its exercise the intervention of super-natural agency, but . . . may be called forth as imperiously, and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents . . . in the humblest departments of daily life."⁴² And Wordsworth's experience of the act of apperception latent in every act of perception is the ultimate source of that hope for a vision of a paradise to be regained in the "common day," a hope which he describes in the "Prospectus" to The Excursion:

Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields--like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main--why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.⁴³

No divine intervention is required for the "common day" to be transfigured into a vision of paradise. And the poet's labor is to sing of "this great consummation" in words which "speak of nothing more than what we are."⁴⁴ Thus we might also say that the paradox of humilitas-sublimitas extends even into Wordsworth's conception of the language appropriate for poetry--a language which ought to be derived, according to the well-known argument of the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads," from the "real language" of humble and rustic men "in a state of vivid sensation."⁴⁵ Wordsworth's attack on "poetic diction" might be seen as an inevitable corollary of his ambition to transform the light of "common day" into the light of paradise. Such gaudy and "inane phraseology" is the analogue in language of those gaudy fictions "of what never was," those fictions of possible sublimity which are now to be

dismissed.⁴⁶ The poet, through the power of his own unaided mind, no longer needs to rely upon either discredited myth or discredited language from the past. Just as he can endow the humblest phenomenon with the appearance of sublimity, so he can use the humblest, most commonplace words in order to project his vision of a new Elysium of the here and now. Indeed, such language is far more appropriate for such a task since presumably in its very plainness it speaks "of nothing more than what we are." The vision of the new paradise of the "common day" requires a poet who will use the language of that day. Ideally, any word whatsoever, the "simple produce" of the common tongue, can become an "incarnation of the thought," an expressive embodiment of the act of sublime self-consciousness. For imagination has the power to produce "impressive effects" out of the simplest of words.

In The Prelude, the story of the education of Wordsworth's mind at the hands of nature, the poet attributes to nature herself the power which he feels in his consciousness to make the humble sublime:

Nature for all conditions wants not power
To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life.⁴⁷

These lines are but another result of that displacement of consciousness into nature which is so characteristic of Wordsworth and which we have already examined in "Tintern Abbey." The unrecognized immanence of mind in nature allows Wordsworth to speak as if nature herself functioned in much the same way as his own creative mind. Nature can be taken as almost paradigmatic of poetic consciousness; and therefore, in a curious reversal, Wordsworth can explicitly hope that the effect of his poetry

will be similar to the effect that nature has upon those who "have eyes to see"--the effect which the displacement of his own consciousness into nature makes possible in the first place! Shortly after these lines in The Prelude he tells Coleridge of his desire that a work of his

Proceeding from the depth of untaught things,
Enduring and creative, might become
A power like one of Nature's.⁴⁸

Wordsworth hopes for a poetry, in other words, which has that power, "like one of Nature's," to breathe "Grandeur upon the very humblest face/ Of human life." But this breathing, this transforming function both of nature and of poetry, ultimately proceeds "from the depth of untaught things" inside the poet himself. That is to say, the paradox of humilitas-sublimitas takes its origin in that "depth" of subjectivity, that abyss of idealism, which is immediately intuited in the act of apperception. And such an intuition by its very nature can never be taught.

Not only is Wordsworth preoccupied with those "unassuming things, that hold/ A silent station" in the world⁴⁹--a concern prompted by his mission to extend the kingdom of the sublime--he is also preoccupied with the human virtue of humility as in itself a necessary condition for the transfiguring act of the creative mind. The vision of a paradise of the here and the now is, to be sure, the result of the power of imagination projecting into the finite world the sublimity discovered "in the soul of Man"; but the very possibility of that discovery seems in turn dependent upon the humility with respect to himself that the poet manages to sustain. Wordsworth, like St. Bernard, seems to believe that

humility is "the way which leads to truth"⁵⁰ and that the pursuit of vision depends, first of all, upon a continuing moral act. Hence Wordsworth's sustained fascination with those "among the walks of homely life" who are "men for contemplation framed"⁵¹--a group which includes the Wanderer of The Excursion, the leech-gatherer of "Resolution and Independence," and the blind beggar of Book VII of The Prelude. All these "Meek men" seem to Wordsworth to possess, or in some way to embody, that attitude toward the self which makes the act of vision possible. For, as he observes,

How oft high service is performed within
When all the external man is rude in show,--
Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel, that protects
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.⁵²

Again we see Wordsworth using images of dwelling-places--by now we have come to understand them as essentially images of immanent space--but here to characterize the humility of those natural visionaries, men always of lowly station, who populate his poetic landscape. For these meek men, totally devoid of any "pomp" about themselves, are able to engage in acts of "high service" within the mountain chapels of their own minds:

Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them⁵³

Humility seems to be the necessary condition for acts of sublime self-consciousness, acts in which the mind intuitively apprehends an infinite reality which transcends the limits of language itself. The "joy" of such a structure of consciousness is "silent" when that structure is not mediated by

imagination's power to incarnate the "thought" of the visionary mind in the inevitably limited and finite bodies of words themselves. But why should humility so dispose the mind toward vision? Perhaps because the act of apperception is one in which the self, no longer constituting itself as an object of thought, becomes absolutely unconscious of any specific identity in terms of which the self might define itself as distinct or separate from other identities. Pride therefore is not only the antithesis of humility, it is also the antithesis of apperception. The proud man clings to himself as the special object of his own thought; he is fascinated with the "temple" of self which is "rich with pomp and gold." And in this fascination with an objectified self, he perpetually prevents the active presence of his own consciousness from diffusing itself into the meanest flower that blows in the phenomenal world. Pride cuts the mind off from possible sublimity.

Thus we might say that Wordsworth's astonishing ambition as a poet is ultimately rooted in an equally astonishing act of self-forgetfulness. The poet shall gain his own life, and indeed a vision of the one life pervading the entire phenomenal world, only by losing his life, only by giving up any sense of himself as a distinct and separate life among other lives. The echoes of centuries of Christian teaching upon the paradoxical means of self-transcendence are obvious. But what finally marks Wordsworth as distinctly beyond Christianity in both his poetic and human hopes is his insistence upon the absolute isolation in which the visionary mind must work. The revelation of the new paradise must be won without the help of divine intervention, without the ministry or sacraments of any church, without finally the help

of his fellow man. As Wordsworth exclaims in the last book of The Prelude,

Here must thou be, O Man!
Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;
Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:
No other can divide with thee this work:
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all.⁵⁴

The act of visionary apperception is by its very nature beyond the helpful intervention of any "secondary hand." And only insofar as the poet intuits the "prime and vital principle" in the isolated "recesses" of his own mind, can he begin that work of transforming the humblest of appearances into a vision of a new paradise. In that work he also displays the autonomy of his own mind, a mind which by itself can undertake the labor of redemption without the "extraordinary" call of a Christian vocation. For poets, according to Wordsworth, are men who

build up greatest things
From least suggestions, ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them, in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthrall'd,
But quicken'd, rous'd, and made thereby more fit
To hold communion with the invisible world.⁵⁵

In "Tintern Abbey" we saw Wordsworth puzzling over the meaning of certain remembered acts of "communion with the invisible world"--attempting to derive the proper conclusion from the undeniable fact of his having encountered a "something far more deeply interfused." In the oracular passages of the concluding book of The Prelude we find Wordsworth insisting upon the power of unaided consciousness to elicit

such "communion" out of the "least suggestions" provided by the world of perception. But, as this essay has argued throughout, this "communion" must finally be understood as indeed a form of self-communion whereby the poet apperceives the presence of his own consciousness at the very heart of every act of perception. Wordsworth is therefore by "sensible impressions not enthrall'd." His freedom is the freedom of a solitary mind to discover in the depths of his own subjectivity an infinite reality which far transcends the reality revealed in the act of perception. Like the hermit at the center of the landscape of "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth's visionary mind sits alone, in a solitude of sublime self-consciousness which is both the ultimate threat to the world of perception and the exclusive source of that world's transfiguration.

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NOTES: CHAPTER V

¹Literary Criticism, p. 191.

²Science and the Modern World (New York, 1948), p. 80.

³The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years (1821-50), ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford, 1939), I, 134-135.

⁴The Prelude (1805), VIII, 763.

⁵I here assume an identity between the "place of any one thing" and the spatial limits of that thing. Its spatial limits, in other words, define its place. For the sake of clarity I concentrate in this section upon the question of the nature of the "location" in Wordsworthian space. But my remarks, mutatis mutandis, can be applied to the spatial limits of phenomena within that space.

⁶Poetical Works, V, 332.

⁷The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1876), III, 464.

⁸Poetical Works, V, 286-287; Book IX, ll. 3-5, ll. 13-16.

⁹Hartman, op. cit., pp. 84-87, 120-123, et passim.

¹⁰The Prelude, I, 466.

¹¹Poetical Works, V, 88-89; l. 462, ll. 437-439, ll. 452-461.

¹²Poetical Works, V, 133; ll. 755-762.

¹³The poet's task, Wordsworth writes in a letter to John Wilson, is "to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things" (Literary Criticism, p. 7). The poet thus helps men to sustain hope.

¹⁴Poetical Works, V, 10; Book I, ll. 78-79.

¹⁵Book VIII (1805), 760-766. Significantly, the emotional quality of this same entry into London is characterized in an elaborate simile describing an entry into a mysterious cavern; see ll. 711-751. Again, as so often in Wordsworth, the act of apperception is described in terms suggesting an encounter with an abyss or open-ended space.

¹⁶Time and Free Will, trans. R. L. Pogson (London, 1910), p. 128.

¹⁷Poetical Works, V, 87; The Excursion, III, 400.

¹⁸Studies in Human Time, trans. Elliott Coleman (New York, 1959), p. 29.

¹⁹L. 606. See also n. 22 of Chapter II.

²⁰Literary Criticism, pp. 34-35.

²¹Poetical Works, III, 77; ll. 7-8.

²²Literary Criticism, p. 129. See also Section 4 of Chapter I for a consideration of some of the implications of Wordsworth's international theory of language.

²³L. 307, ll. 311-322.

²⁴I here echo Madame de Staël ("It is to re-feel, not recall") who is cited by Poulet in his discussion of romantic affective memory, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁵Book IV, 256-272.

²⁶The Prelude (1805), XI, 272-273.

²⁷Biographia Literaria, op. cit., I, 202.

²⁸The Prelude (1805), XI, 260.

²⁹L. 378, l. 381, l. 383, ll. 391-400.

³⁰Ll. 401-404.

³¹L. 414.

³²Literary Criticism, p. 17.

³³The Prelude (1805), XI, 334-343.

³⁴The paradox might be explained in this way: the purpose of affective memory is, as we have seen, to re-feel, not to recollect the past; to recover the "how" of what was felt, not the "what" of what was felt. But the only way to move toward the "how" is through the "what." To recover a mode of past subjectivity requires, therefore, a constitution of the past self as an object of remembering consciousness. Thus the very search through the past for a sense of subject qua subject stands in paradoxical opposition to the means of this search. That Wordsworth felt he could, and indeed did, overcome this paradox is indicated by his testimony to the "vivifying Virtue" of the "spots of time."

³⁵Italics mine. The quotation, of course, is from the last two lines of the "Immortality Ode," Poetical Works, IV, 285.

³⁶See n. 48 of Chapter III for a discussion of the relationship between the sense of immortality experienced by sublime self-consciousness and the sense of immortality experienced, according to Cassirer, by mythical consciousness.

³⁷"Immortality Ode," ll. 155-156; Poetical Works, IV, 284.

³⁸"English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," Romanticism Reconsidered, ed. Northrop Frye (New York, 1963), p. 64.

³⁹Literary Criticism, p. 199. One such poorly prepared reader seems to have been Anna Seward, who characterized Wordsworth's poetry as the "egotistic manufacture of metaphysical importance upon trivial themes." Cited by Samuel H. Monk in his "Anna Seward and the Romantic Poets: A Study in Taste," Wordsworth and Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (New York, 1962), p. 132.

⁴⁰Literary Criticism, pp. 13-14. The notion of the poet's mission to extend the kingdom of the sublime is implicit in Wordsworth's description of genius: "Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet" (ibid., p. 198)?

⁴¹Poetical Works, II, 512.

⁴²Ibid., II, 331.

⁴³Ibid., V, 4; ll. 45-55. For a discussion of the "terrestrial paradise" in Wordsworth see Hartman's The Unmediated Vision (New Haven, 1954), pp. 26-35.

⁴⁴Poetical Works, V, 5; ll. 58-59.

⁴⁵Literary Criticism, p. 11.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁷Book XIII, 283-287.

⁴⁸Book XII (1805), 310-312. Book XII of the 1805 version becomes Book XIII in the 1850 version.

⁴⁹Book XII (1805), 51-52.

⁵⁰The Steps of Humility, trans. George Bosworth Burch (Notre Dame, 1963), p. 123.

⁵¹The Prelude, XIII, 266-267.

⁵²Book XIII, 269, 227-231.

⁵³Book XIII, 271-275.

⁵⁴Book XIV, 209-218.

⁵⁵Book XIII (1805), 98-105.

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¹The publication date given here is of the paperback edition. Where a paperback edition is cited either in the body or the notes of this essay, the publication date of that edition is given in the bibliography.