

THE RHETORIC OF WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE:
ITS PLACE IN CURRENT COMPOSITION THEORY

By

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ABSTRACT

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Wordsworth and Coleridge were concerned with language use in general and the writing process in particular. Their rhetorical theories reflect an abiding interest in the healthy growth of the personality, as it is promoted through the fruitful union of imagination and language. Through detailing the organic growth of this union, they constructed a theoretical program for the development of the wholly expressive being, the poet; and they argued that their program be made available to everyman, each to his degree. Their attention to the process of growth included, appropriately enough, writing itself. For composition was to them an organic activity. The language and writing theories of Wordsworth and Coleridge have been incorporated in the work of modern composition theorists, among them Gusdorf, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Langer; Britton, Elbow, Moffett, and Judy.

This incorporation, however, has been left largely unacknowledged and unarticulated. My purpose is to acknowledge and articulate the relationship between the poets and recent

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Mark L. Waldo

researchers. After describing the poets' revolt against language convention and discussing their composition training, theory, and practice, I examine the connection between Wordsworth, Coleridge, and current "psycho-rhetoricians" in five areas. First, the poets, like the language researchers who followed them, developed an accurate understanding of cognitive, affective, and language growth and built their compositional philosophy out of that understanding. Second, they prophesied the psychology of personal constructs by asserting the importance of language as a shaper of experience. Third, they argued eloquently for the evolution of a rhetoric of self-understanding prior to and then along with a rhetoric of the world. Fourth, they saw writing as a process, through which substance grows into form, more than a product, in which substance is molded by a predetermined form. Finally, their conceptions of the individual's imagination closely resemble current conceptions of style, especially those of Georges Gusdorf. The dissertation establishes that Wordsworth and Coleridge offer much to the field of composition theory: their insights were, after all, the source of so much of it.

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1982

DEDICATION

To Kate, who calmed me
when I felt busy; and to Aaron,
who busied me when I felt calm.
With love.

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I want to thank Ken Macrorie for writing Uptaught, which initiated my reformation as a teacher of writing. I would also like to thank the members of my Doctoral Committee, especially Stephen Judy, my dissertation director; Jay Ludwig, director of the English Department's writing programs; and Victor Paananen, the nineteenth century connection, for continuing and enriching that reformation. The fullness of my experience with writing theory in the program at Michigan State accounts for the creation of this dissertation, which reflects not only my understanding but my belief.

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INTRODUCTION

The writer of the Book of Genesis describes the creation:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (I, 1-2)

Without form, and void, the earth was chaotic, meaningless-- a jumble of matter strewn about nonsensically. Symbolically at least, the divine imagination, the spirit of God, shaped things into the grand design; and language called them into being in accord with the dictates of that design, realizing the recreative power of the imagination. The importance of words in this process is attested to by many of the verses in the first chapter of Genesis, in which creation is the activity of God's saying and things becoming: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so" (11). As Georges Gusdorf remarks

God speaks, and things are, the Word is in itself creative.... And Jesus Christ, the Son of God who brings about a spiritual rebirth of humanity, is presented as the Word made flesh. He is the Word of God made man, at work on the

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God's act of ordering universal chaos through words, of constructing a world of relationships through the language of his vision, is the initial and ultimate emblem of the composing process. Drawing order out of chaos, discovering meaning in the void, building a relational vocabulary, all of the acts of human composition are microcosmic reflections of that macrocosmic act.

Jesus Christ himself becomes, in Gusdorf's assessment, a direct result of God's composing process; he is "the Word made flesh." Christ's rhetoric brings about a "spiritual rebirth of humanity," setting in motion a revolt against religious convention. And his discourse is an ongoing call for the regeneration of human language, since spiritual, intellectual and emotional rebirth demands the discarding of spiritual cliches and the evolving of a language which fits the individual into the cosmic situation. Metaphorically, language which formerly blinded must recreate vision; language which deadened must resurrect life.

The degree to which a person can use language to resurrect life depends upon a variety of complex factors. And few writers expended more energy detailing them than William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. They were two who characterized the regeneration of language--and the

consequent rejuvenation of the individual and society--as a spiritual quest. Their attention to psychological and language development, to language as a constructor of experience, to the rhetoric of self-exploration and understanding, and to the writing process itself demonstrates their recognition of the importance of the act and result of composition. They made it a large part of their work to present an organic pattern for "poetic" growth because they believed that such growth would do much to triumph over the forces of disintegration active in the world. Like Wordsworth and Coleridge, many of today's composition and language theorists assert the relational significance of expression. They, too, see discourse as recreative and regenerative. I am interested in explaining the connection between the theories of Wordsworth and Coleridge and those of current researchers. Developing this connection will show, I think, the striking relevance of the poets' rhetorical philosophy to today's work in the field.

¹ Georges Gusdorf, Speaking (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.57.

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CHAPTER I

EXPRESSIVE DISCOURSE VERSUS IMITATIVE DISCOURSE: THE COMPOSITION "OF MAN, NO COMPOSITION OF THE THOUGHT"

Contemporary ambivalence about the place of expressive discourse in a comprehensive theory of discourse is reflected by James Kinneavy in his exhaustive work A Theory of Discourse. He declares that if his book had been written a number of years ago, there would have been no chapter on expressive discourse.¹ He implies his attitude toward "expressionism" in the curious observation that he "felt the expressionistic theory of literature to be an unfortunate historical error of nineteenth century Romanticism" (Kinneavy, 394). Next, he offers four reasons for barring expression as a specific aim of discourse: First, the extremists in post-Dewey progressive education, who made self-expression the dominant aim in composition assignments, impelled "many in the field to reject what was valid in the movement" (394). Second, there "was a violent reaction to Romantic expressionism." Third, even if one did admit the existence of expressive discourse as a distinct kind, Kinneavy suggests, "there did not seem to be much to say about it. Most of the theorists who provided for it treated it as equivalent to literature--Romantic expressionism was a

literary phenomenon.... Removed from a literary context, there did not seem to be much to say about emotional discourse. One cannot give a course in 'Advanced Swearing 346.'" Finally, "it is easy to take the expressive component of language for granted precisely because it is so fundamental." What he means by the last is that expressive qualities are necessarily an important part of every form of discourse and often an indistinguishable part of each. In Kinneavy's view, concern for the expressive function of language is a modern phenomenon.

Despite Kinneavy's reservations and qualifications, he observes that expressive discourse is prior psychologically "to all other uses of language." He goes on to make a statement which has a Romantically rebellious flavor itself:

The ignoring, by the disciplines of speech and English, of the very kind of discourse by which an individual or group can express his personal or its societal aspirations, is certainly a symptom, if not an effect, of the impersonality of the university machines of the present day. The high schools are probably even more culpable in this regard. If ignoring the study of persuasion begets a gullible populace, ignoring the study of expression begets rebellion, sometimes justified, sometimes irresponsible. A democracy which ignores expression has forgotten its own roots. (Kinneavy, 396).

It is probable that Kinneavy's description of the consequences--justified or irresponsible rebellion--of ignoring expressive discourse stems in part from the period during which he wrote the book: the late 1960's and early 1970's. But beyond the

historical influence, Kinneavy has made a forceful comment on one of the reasons for promoting expressive discourse in the schools. Since it "gives all discourse a personal significance to the speaker or listener," the expressive component provides the human element in communication. It aids in the development of human beings aware of themselves in their relation to others. Because of this awareness, they become capable of making their positions not only understood but felt by others. This ability to communicate personally, according to Kinneavy, begets an expressively democratic society.

Expressive discourse has been similarly defined by a variety of contemporary language theorists. In Language and Learning, for example, James Britton describes expressive discourse as language close to the self of the speaker or writer; it tells a good deal about the speaker and relies heavily for its interpretation on the situation in which it occurs. It allows the user in his personal way "to call into existence, to draw out from nothingness" the world around him.² Britton, in another work, characterizes such language as informal and casual, loosely structured.³ Janet Emig divides expressive discourse into two general kinds. The first is reflexive, which she labels essentially contemplative: "What does this experience mean?" The second is extensive, in which the user's role is basically active: "How, because of this experience, do I interact with my environment?"⁴ Her model of expressive discourse makes it the

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source from which all other forms of discourse grow. David Holbrook views expressive language as the vehicle through which the child develops his capacity for inner symbolism, builds bridges between the subjective and objective, and tackles "the backlog of psychic problems inherited from the darkest ages of infancy."⁵ With Kinneavy, Holbrook is concerned about the consequences, both to the individual and society, of our general incapacity "to explore and organize experience, from inward sources, symbolically" (Holbrook, 19).

According to Stephen Judy, expressive language helps us work out, confirm, shape our thoughts and beliefs, discover identity, and please ourselves.⁶ Expressive language, he observes, is enormously important in helping people to structure and to order past experiences, to frame a picture of the world and to invest personal meaning in it. John Dixon, whose Growth Through English summarizes the philosophical and practical proceedings of the Dartmouth Conference, asserts that expressive discourse serves to recall experience and get it clear, to give it shape and make connections, to speculate and to build theories, to celebrate (or exorcise) particular moments of our lives.⁷ In Geoffrey Summerfield's terms, expressive discourse fosters an adequate capacity to be on good terms with oneself, and to find an inward order.⁸ He contends that the development and maintenance of a satisfactory sense of self depends on an effort to work by symbolization.

The emphasis on the symbolic function of expressive discourse reflects two fundamental principles of cognitive development. First, the perceiver must create a system by which he is able to make sense of what he perceives; or as Suzanne Langer puts it: "material furnished by the senses is constantly wrought into symbols, which are our elementary ideas."⁹ This conversion into symbols of the matter perceived by the senses must occur, man must attune his ear to the recurrent themes in the monotonous flow, if his universe is to make sense to him.¹⁰ After one is able to create a representation of his world so that he may operate within it, a second order of cognitive activity is open to him: he may operate directly upon the representation itself.¹¹

The point at which man begins to shape his representation of the world is critical to his growth as an individual. It is then that J.W. Patrick Creber would have the language user respond to things individually before his responses became stereotyped.¹² Creber suggests, in a general way, that at this stage the growth of a personal style--the way an individual will see and express what he sees--begins. The language user becomes, to paraphrase Wordsworth's distinction, the "child of Joy," admirably sensible, imaginatively expressive, clear minded; or the "model of a child," who is in every way the pinfold of his master's conceit.

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Style, examined from this point of view, encompasses much more than concern for surface matters in language. It is, as Susan Sontag characterizes it, the essential quality of the self:

The matter, the subject, is on the outside; the style is on the inside. As Cocteau writes: 'Decorative style has never existed. Style is the soul, and unfortunately with us the soul assumes the form of the body.'... In almost every case, our manner of appearing is our manner of being. The mask is the face.¹³

Because of the inclination to associate style with the dressing of language, its decorative aspects, it may be difficult to accept the term as Sontag offers it. In this context, style is the individual, after he has developed the capacity to form the language of his experience. It is the way in which man operates on his representation of the world. It is how he molds experience, how he understands it, how he presents it to others; it is also, in large part, how he experiences, since thought and language and experience flow together in an interconnected process.¹⁴ Given this definition of the term, style and expressive discourse become inextricably bound. The ability to interpret life clearly, coherently, and imaginatively results from a rich, open, and personal encounter with language. The singular style created out of such an encounter will mirror a personality well-integrated and original. The interpretation of life which shows limited awareness of self and experience, stereotyped responses to people and situations, and strict adherence to the conventions of discourse stems from a rigid, controlled,

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debilitating encounter with language. The style created out of this type of encounter demonstrates a personality disjointed and imitative. Style, in short, is the psychology of the individual.

This context for the use of the term style is clearly the one intended by Georges Gusdorf, in his work on the philosophy of language Speaking (La Parole). According to his conception, style expresses the thread of life, "the movement of a destiny according to its creative meaning."¹⁵ He continues, "The struggle for style may here stand as a definition of the whole personality since it is the undertaking of giving an appropriate value to each moment of self-affirmation" (Gusdorf, 75). The being works up his representation of the self in the world, and then he works upon it. Each of us, Gusdorf asserts, "is charged with finding the expression to fit his situation. Each of us is charged with realizing himself in a language, a personal echo of the language of all which represents his contribution to the human world. The struggle for style is a struggle for consciousness" (Gusdorf, 76).

The development of an appropriate style has as one of its requisites the overcoming of language conventions, since the discipline of a style corresponds to a need for precision "that removes the creator from all the ready-made formulas of the established language" (Gusdorf, 89). The transition from a common to an individual meaning sometimes

results in a heroic struggle. But the revolt against conventional language is necessary if one is to know himself:

the life of the mind ordinarily begins not with the acquisition of language, but with the revolt against language, once it is acquired. The adolescent discovers values in the revolt against the language he had until then blindly trusted and which seems to him, in light of the crisis, destitute of all authenticity. Every man worthy of the name has known that crisis of appreciation of language which causes one to pass from naive confidence to doubt and denial. (Gusdorf, 89)

It would be gratifying to think that the adolescent to which Gusdorf refers represents all adolescents, that indeed every man is worthy of the name because every man has experienced "that crisis of appreciation of language," and its consequent doubt and denial.

Such, lamentably, is not the case. The concern of modern discourse theorists¹⁶ that there is too much uniformity of expression and too much stereotyping reflects the need for an environment in which the growth of a language precisely of the self is possible. An environment of this sort rarely exists at present, particularly in American public schools. There are those who argue, in fact, that the educational system is responsive not to the needs of the individual but to the needs of the economic system, and that the educational system will support the ideas of the dominant group in society. Knowledge, they contend, is imparted for profitable use. Teachers of English in America, far from combating this arrangement, actually promote it. Thus the teaching of discourse has helped to instill the rhetoric

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of the bureaucrat and technician rather than the rhetoric of self-expression. If composition training in the past was meant to teach students to think, speak, and write as gentlemen, it is now meant to teach them to do the same as company men.¹⁷ In this atmosphere, a revolt against the "ready made formulas of the established language" could be no less than disastrous. It is therefore aggressively discouraged. Gusdorf's apparent optimism is nonetheless refreshing. And his point about expression creating a style which becomes the being himself is central to the expressive theory of art begun nearly 200 years earlier.

Gusdorf offers the example of the poet as particularly significant "insofar as it carries to its maximum the striving for expression in language":

The writer is a man who speaks in the sense that he must establish himself by the use he makes of speaking, the impersonality of the established tongue giving way to the power of suggestion of personal being. But the language of the poet in his mastery is not a regression to infantile egocentrism, where communication gives way completely to expression. In the case of the poet, it is necessary for expression to have the support of others, and to establish a new communication between an author and his readers. The writer, to be understood, must start with the language of everyone else; but, if he has genius, he will use this language as no one before him has used it. This reconquest of language corresponds to the creation of a style in which the personality of the poet is created at the same time that it is expressed. (Gusdorf, 73-74, his emphasis)

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The poet is a man who "rediscovers speech thanks to a discipline that returns him to himself." He is a man who brings "about the restitution of the word." By offering each word in a new situation, a situation linked to and in essence creating his personality, the poet restores the word to its original power.

The notion of "the tongue giving way to the suggestion of personal being" is at the core of an artistic theory of creation which traces the thoughts and feelings of the writer through the synthesizing processes of his imagination to the composition itself. This way of thinking M.H. Abrams labels the expressive view of art, "in which the artist himself becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged."¹⁸ He summarizes the central tendency of the theory:

A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's mind. (Abrams, 22)

The audience for this art form is meant to receive pleasure and profit from the synthesized flow of thought and feeling the writer produces; and thus a necessarily new form of communication is established between writer and audience. Within this form, the writer creates according to the dictates

of his perception of experience, not according to the pre-ordained rules of mimetic art, the form in vogue through most of the 18th century.

Abrams makes the general distinction between mimetic theory and expressive theory in the following way: the poetry of the former "departs from fact principally because it reflects a nature which has been reassembled to make a composite beauty, or filtered to reveal a central form or the common denominator of a type, or in some fashion culled and ornamented for the greater delight of the reader"; the poetry of the latter departs from fact in that "it incorporates objects of sense which have already been acted on and transformed by the feelings of the poet" (Abrams, 53). Expressive theory, as Abrams traces it, has its partial origins in the ideas on the sublime of Longinus, who suggested five sources of the sublime: "the power of forming great conceptions," "vehement and inspired passion," "figurative language," "noble diction," and "elevated composition." Of the five, the first two are of greatest importance, according to Longinus, because they stem from the psychology of the poet. Though they may produce a flawed product, they are to be preferred "to that impeccable mediocrity which can be achieved by art alone" (Abrams, 73). The tendency in Longinus' theory is to move away from poetry as an imitative art and toward the processes of thought and emotion in its author. The supreme quality of a work turns out to be the reflected quality of its author: "Sublimity is the echo of a great

soul."¹⁹ Because of this movement toward the mental and passionate nature of the writer, Longinus prefigured what were to become familiar themes and methods in romantic criticism.²⁰

Longinian theory was slow to make its presence felt in the criticism of English literary theorists, perhaps because his theory was incorporated into the imitative and pragmatic theory of art which dominated literary criticism through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The mimetic theory of art had at its base the concept of Aristotelian imitation of nature, not nature as she is exactly, but "nature improved to that degree, which is consistent with probability, and suitable to the poet's purpose."²¹ Imitation of nature, of life, was idealized: "the office of genius is but to select the fairest forms of things, and to present them in due place and circumstance, and in the richest colouring of expression, to the imagination."²² Not only was nature imitated in idealized forms; but, because the classic Greek and Roman writers were so admired for their ability to imitate nature through their artistic creations, their works became models for the writers of the eighteenth century. Thus imitation came to mean, in addition to the copying of the objects of nature, the employment of the rhetorical structures and devices used by the ancients. Many writers of the eighteenth century believed that if they followed the models of their elders and betters, they would,

without sacrificing genius, avoid literary vices while attaining virtues. Imitation of this sort, as C. Hugh Holman points out, took several shapes: writing in the spirit of the masters and using their rhetorical forms; fitting contemporary ideas and situations into the ancient models; the use of special "beauties" in thought and expression from the works of the best poets; exercise of paraphrase and free translation. Imitation of classic rhetorical models ranged from dignified to servile.²³ In the poetry of this period, passion, emotion, and imagination were relegated to subordinate positions. Primary were the classical ideals of taste, polish, restraint of emotion, order, logic, correctness and decorum. Literature served a pragmatic purpose, delighting, instructing, and correcting man as a social animal.

"Vehement and inspired passion," one of Longinus' sources of the sublime, played a less than significant role in this controlled and reasoned approach to poetic theory. But it was a presence in the theoretical work of some eighteenth century critics, and it became increasingly important as the century progressed. John Dennis, for example, was the first English critic who applied the fundamentals of Longinus' theory to his own conception of the poet and poetry. In The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, Dennis distinguishes poetry from prose by the former's "Characteristic Mark": "Passion." He asserts, "...the more Passion there is, the better the Poetry...."²⁴ As Abrams shows, Dennis

converted what Longinus had labelled as one of the sources of grand poetry--passion--into the source and mark of all poetry.²⁵

Bishop Lowth also turned to Longinus in developing his poetic theory. Separating prose as the language of reason from poetry as the language of passion, Lowth recalls the distinction made by Dennis between prose and poetry and anticipates one drawn by Wordsworth between poetry and what he calls "Matter of Fact or Science." The distinction is one that is current today: the general division of discourse into the referential and emotive categories. Lowth writes:

The language of reason is cool, temperate, rather humble than elevated, well arranged and perspicuous.... The language of the passions is totally different: the conceptions burst out into a turbid stream, expressive in the manner of the internal conflict.... In a word, reason speaks literally, the passions poetically. The mind, with whatever passion it be agitated, remains fixed upon the object that excited it; and while it is earnest to display it, is not satisfied with a plain and exact description, but adopts one agreeable to its own sensations, splendid or gloomy, jocund or unpleasant. For the passions are naturally inclined to amplifications; they wonderfully magnify and exaggerate whatever dwells upon the mind, and labor to express it in animated, bold, and magnificent terms.²⁶

Lowth's notion of the altering agency of the passions, how they reshape the object perceived and dwelt upon by the mind, suggests the function Wordsworth gave to the imagination fifty years later, though Wordsworth avoided the emphasis on

exaggeration. Lowth did follow the common tendency of the criticism of his day in declaring that poetry is imitation: "whatever the human mind is able to conceive, it is the province of poetry to imitate."²⁷ But he viewed the poem as a mirror of the poet's mind, not of nature.

Hugh Blair, in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, continued to turn attention to the emotive and the imaginative in poetry. Drawing support for his definition from the rudimentary and primitive form of man's expressive language,²⁸ Blair defines poetry as "the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed, most commonly, into regular numbers."²⁹ Blair shifts focus away from poetry's effect on the audience and moves poetry closer to the feelings of the poet himself. Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric is sharply divided between sections that are expressive in orientation and sections that are traditionally rhetorical. Something of that division, and of Blair's desire for a return to the basis of poetic language, is reflected in his comments on poetry in its "ancient original condition."

Poetry was

the language of passion, and no other, for to passion it owed its birth.... In after-ages, when poetry became a regular art, studied for reputation and for gain, authors ...endeavored to imitate passion, rather than to express it; they tried to force their imagination into raptures, or to supply the defect of native warmth, by those artificial ornaments which might give Composition a splendid appearance. 30

His discussion of the rhetoric of prose, predictably, is quite different. In it, for example, he divides discourse into its classically pre-determined parts: "Introduction, Division, Narration, and Explication."³¹ In it, he argues that "no exercise [is] more useful for acquiring a proper style, than to translate some passages from an eminent English author, into our own words."³² In it, he details how proper arguments must follow the pattern made up of invention, disposition and arrangement, forceful style and manner. His treatment of the rhetoric of poetry, on the other hand, implies something different, a negation, at least in part, of the conventional formulas of prose. Poetry has passion as its source; it grows out of the emotional power of its creator. When it does not do so; when it imitates rather than expresses; when it is the product of artificial stimulation; when its appearance is trimmed with ornament and embellishment in order to cover for a lack of genuine feeling; when, in short, it is the head without the heart, it fails to be poetry in its purest form. It becomes, instead, a regular art, studied for reputation and for gain. Rhetorical facility capable of giving the "Composition a splendid appearance" is not adequate to make the composition genuine poetry stemming from native warmth.

With the movement toward passion, emotion, and imagination suggested in the works of such theorists as Dennis, Lowth, and Blair, the shift away from restraint, polish,

control and imitation in poetic theory was initiated. But only when the concept of urgency and overflow of feeling assumed the central role in poetic theory, and not a subordinate role, did the collapse of the neoclassic structure of criticism actually occur. And this event began in earnest with the publication of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads and particularly Wordsworth's "Preface" to them.

That their publication was no less than a revolution in the approach to poetry is attested to by a number of modern critics. T.J. Wise, for example, states that the Ballads "marked a complete change from the style and character of poetical composition then regarded as classic."³³ Oliver Elton asserts that the Ballads "are mostly reflective narratives, of a great variety of forms.... There had been nothing of the sort before; the very faults were new."³⁴ Helen Darbershire calls the publication a "revolt against literature, or the literary element in poetry."³⁵ According to Arthur Beatty, Wordsworth "envisages a new world of thought and feeling; and a new poetic practice."³⁶ Even after Robert Mayo had shown how the Ballads were in some ways conventional, critics continued to extoll their revolutionary nature.³⁷ There existed and continues to exist an unusual stirring of critical excitement over the Lyrical Ballads and their Prefaces. But no one has voiced that excitement better than William Hazlitt, Wordsworth's contemporary, in his description of the subject matter and style adopted by the poets:

They found a new school on a principle of sheer humanity, or pure nature void of art. It could not be said of these sweeping reformers and dictators in the republic of letters that 'in their train walked crowns and crownets'--but they were surrounded, in company with the Muses, by a mixed rabble of Botany Bay convicts, female vagrants, gypsies--of idiot boys and mad mothers, and after them 'owls and night-ravens flew'....According to the prevailing notions all was to be natural and new. Nothing that was established was to be tolerated. All the commonplace figures of poetry, tropes, allegories, personifications, with all the heathen mythology were instantly discarded--kings and queens were dethroned from their rank and station in legitimate tragedy or epic poetry, as they were decapitated elsewhere; rhyme was looked upon as a relic of the feudal system, and regular metre was abolished along with regular government. 38

The exaggerated content of Hazlitt's statement is less important than its spirit, which delights in the overthrow of the old, conventional rhetoric of poetry while singing in the new.

The process leading to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's break with the old rhetoric and establishment of the new involved the type of revolt Gusdorf contends is necessary for the development of an individual style. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge were initially caught up in the political, philosophic, and poetic language of their time; both rejected that language; and both experienced the feelings of doubt and denial Gusdorf says characterize such a rejection. The poets viewed the French Revolution, for example, as a complete failure; in so doing, they read the emptiness of or treachery in the false promises of political rhetoric. The language

which had made up their political ideals, the language through which they had approached, "like other youths, the shield/ Of human nature from the golden side," and for which they "would have fought, even to the death,"³⁹ was severely undercut by the Reign of Terror, under Robespierre. For Wordsworth, the collapse of revolutionary ideals had nearly tragic consequences: he felt a sense of "treacherous desertion," even in the last place of refuge--his own soul (The Prelude, X, 414-415). For Coleridge it became an educational, if sobering, experience. He saw how manipulative rhetoric could overpower the consciences of "those loud-tongued adulators, the mob"; and how, through language, Robespierre "despotized in all the pomp of patriotism, and masqueraded on the bloody stage of revolution, a Caligula with the cap of liberty on his head."⁴⁰ Later, in the same essay, he observes "...at all times, but more especially when public feelings are wavy and tumultuous, artful demagogues may create...opinion" (329).

Wordsworth later read The Rights of Man and Godwin's Political Justice; and, as his faith in the French Revolution crumbled, he turned "more and more to abstract questions and to the general problems of conduct and government."⁴¹ He sought a system which escaped feeling, and theories concerning the reasoning faculty and rationalism grew

into consequence, till round [his] mind
They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
The very being of the immortal soul (The Prelude, XI,
218-22).

But very soon after, sick in heart, he yielded up moral and philosophic questions in despair. Wordsworth's dejection stemmed from the confusion inherent in testing and judging the worth of a variety of cerebral philosophic and political systems. He became, so to speak, decentered, losing touch with the self rooted in the Lake Country. After his recovery from this despair, he was able to determine as one of the causes for his crisis the impotence of abstract theories about man; and he harshly attacked the language out of which those theories are constructed:

And as, by the simple waving of a wand,
 The wizard instantaneously dissolves
 Palace or grove, even so I could unsoul
 As readily by syllogistic words
 Some charm of Logic, even within reach,
 Those mysteries of passion which have made,
 And shall continue evermore to make
 (In spite of all that Reason hath perform'd
 And shall perform to exalt and to refine)
 One brotherhood of all the human race.

(The Prelude, XL, 79-88, 1805)

With Gene Ruoff, I believe Wordsworth made two general discoveries about language during his early adulthood.⁴² First, "syllogistic words," the rhetoric of analysis, destroys and unsouls. Second, the language of men, the rhetoric of expression, unites and reveals the soul. Without his painful experience with the first, he could not have discovered the second.

For Coleridge's part, the writings of George Fox, Jacob Behmen, and William Law kept him free from total

submission to the language of any one philosophic approach:

For the writing of these mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned with the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentment, that all the mere reflective faculty partook of DEATH. 43

Thus Coleridge was equipped, along with Dorothy Wordsworth, to nurture Wordsworth into recovery.

Through their loving influence, and his own return to nature and to men "obscure and lowly," whose language was real and honestly representative of themselves, Wordsworth developed

A more judicious knowledge of what makes
The dignity of individual Man,
Of Man, no composition of the thought
Abstraction, shadow, image;

but of man "whom we behold/ With our own eyes" (The Prelude, XIII, 82-87, 1805). Wordsworth was therefore able to place in perspective the "sanguine schemes" of the thinkers of his time, seek instead "for good in the familiar face of life," and build thereon his "hopes for good to come" (The Prelude, XIII, 60-65).

Wordsworth's and Coleridge's belief in the rhetoric of Republicanism was indeed shattered by the painful realities of men seeking to gain and maintain personal power. And Wordsworth's intellectual spin through the political and philosophical quagmire left him dazed and despairing. But

the collapse of political ideals and the distrust of the language of philosophic concepts, plus the doubts that collapse and distrust instilled, created an atmosphere for growth in human understanding. To put it metaphorically, Wordsworth and, to a lesser extent, Coleridge moved from the mind to the heart of things; from an intellectual perception of systems rhetorically seductive, to a passionate realization of their impossibility given man as he is. They shifted from the abstract to concrete, from "syllogistic words" to the language of men. This painful encounter with language was a necessary part of their growth as writers; it helped lead to a reconquest of language for the poets, and to a rhetoric which was not a "composition of the thought," not imitative, but the thought itself, expressive.

The reconquest of language for Wordsworth and Coleridge took the form of a dramatic revolt against conventional poetic language and the critical theory which supported it. After dabbling, as a teenaged poet, in the traditional forms and figures of poetry,⁴⁴ and after recovering from the crisis in France, Wordsworth rebelled against the "motely masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas" he found in the works of many of his contemporaries. Alexander Pope had done much to form the taste and notions of poetry predominant in the period.⁴⁵ And Wordsworth describes Pope as the most polished and finished versifier of the preceding era in English poetry. But even Pope he criticizes for a "sparkling and tuneful manner [which] bewitched the men of

ers his contemporaries, and corrupted the judgment of
 nation through all ranks of society."⁴⁶ In his "Essay,
 Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), Wordsworth condemns
 "arts" by which Pope was seduced:

The arts by which Pope...continued to pre-
 cure himself a more general and a higher
 reputation than perhaps any English Poet
 ever attained during his lifetime, are
 known to the judicious. And as well known
 is it to them, that the undue exertion of
 those arts is the cause why Pope has for
 some time held a rank in literature, to
 which, if he had not been seduced by an
 overlove of immediate popularity, and had
 confided more in his native genius, he
 could never have descended. He bewitched
 the nation by his melody, and dazzled it by
 his polished style, and was himself blinded
 by his own success. 47

Wordsworth's opinion, Pope sacrificed something of his
 native genius, his personal expressive powers, to the arts,
 the external sparkle and tune. Had he allowed himself, Words-
 worth implies, to write his poetry from the heart in the mind,
 the language of his native genius, he would have ascended
 the heights of true poetry. He would have, in other words,
 expressed the thought itself rather than a "composition of
 the thought." As it was, however, Pope became more the per-
 fect craftsman than the poet of men. What makes Pope's de-
 cision very serious in Wordsworth's opinion is the fact that
 Pope's brilliance at crafting poetry made his poetic forms,
 stylistic devices, and rhetorical techniques nearly sacrosanct
 in the literary world. Thus his poetry became the basis--at
 least in part--for poetic practice and critical law. In

Wordsworth's terms, Pope "corrupted the judgment of the nation through all ranks of society." That "corruption" had shaped the poetry of England at the close of the 1700's. In Pope's hands poetry was, though imitative, "finished," "sparkling," and "tuneful"; in lesser hands it was artificial and debasing. And all of the Popian poets practicing in the late 1700's were, in Wordsworth's view, lesser than Pope. The language and purpose of poetry became, consequently, increasingly perverse.

An example of this perversion may be taken from Erasmus Darwin in his popular and influential theory of poetry, The Botanic Garden:

...the English language serves the purpose of poetry better than the ancient ones; I mean in the greater ease of producing personifications, for as our nouns have in general no genders affixed to them in prose compositions, and in habits of conversation, they become easily personified only by a masculine or feminine pronoun, as

'Pale Melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose.'

Pope's Abelard

And secondly, as most of our nouns have the article a or the prefixed to them in prose writing and in conversation, they become personified even by the omission of these articles, as in the bold figure of Shipwreck in Miss Seward's "Elegy on Captain Cook":

'But round the steep rocks and dangerous strand
Rolls the white surf, and Shipwreck guards the /
Land.' 48

Darwin contends here that a principal purpose of poetry is the production of personifications, and that the English language is better suited technically than ancient languages for personifying nouns. He supports his point by quoting Pope, who personifies "Melancholy," first by animating it through the verb "sits" and then by referring to it with the feminine pronoun "her." Darwin becomes even more particular in his analysis of the suitability of English for the creation of these figures by describing how the mere removal of articles required in prose brings forth personifications in poetry. His example is from one of Anna Seward's poems in which she personifies "Shipwreck" by leaving out the article "a."

The approach to poetry Darwin suggests in this passage is undeniably cerebral and mechanical in its emphasis. That is, Darwin displays a means of manipulating the surface of language through a knowledge of forms and devices in order to achieve a technically pre-determined end. What he illustrates is a tool of the poetic craftsman, and the end he esteems is a rhetorical effect of the poetic trade. Neither the means nor the end need come from the "heart in the mind" of the writer. More often than not, in fact, the use of such devices produced poetic cliches and/or extraordinary, gaudy originality. The poetic cliches appeared because these devices could be achieved by any literate person,⁴⁹ and would often be similar in similar contexts, no matter who the writer was. Extraordinary, gaudy originality became common because the writers, though they followed prescribed forms,

used rhetorical embellishments shockingly extravagant.⁵⁰

Thus one writer, in attempting to call attention to himself and his art, would try to outdo in device another writer.

It is a Darwinian "purpose of poetry" and a mechanical concern for the surface of language which Wordsworth and Coleridge discussed at Alfoxden and which Wordsworth argued against in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800). On personification he states,

The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by doing so I shall interest him. 51

Wordsworth rejects all personification which does not grow out of the passions, which is not the natural result of emotive communication within the self or between human beings. He implies that personifications are part of an artificial language, a language mechanical, unnatural, inhuman. His own intent in the Lyrical Ballads, "to adopt the very language of men," distanced him from those who used personification as a device of style, and completely cut him off from those who considered personification as a purpose for poetry.

In the course of offering a brief history of the development of poetic language, Wordsworth traces the growth "extravagant and absurd diction."⁵² Wordsworth believed that the language of the earliest poets stemmed "from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as such" (Appendix 465). Their powerful feelings produced a language that was daring and figurative. Sounding very much influenced by Hugh Blair in a passage already cited, Wordsworth goes on to describe poets in succeeding times, who, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect without being animated by the same passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connection whatever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the language of men in any situation" (Appendix, 465, his emphasis). This remarkable passage--like Blair's in its suggestion that poets who did not feel themselves imitated feeling, but unlike Blair's in its insistence that a language altogether of art was produced out of this situation--stresses the mechanicality of expression in a language which has no connection to the mental and emotional conditions it describes.

It also prepares for an equally remarkable passage which follows closely thereafter. The circumstance of the

first poets speaking in a language, which, though unusual, was still the language really used by men, Wordsworth repeats:

was disregarded by their successors; they found that they could please by easier means: they became proud of the modes of expression which they themselves had invented, and which were uttered only by themselves. In process of time metre became a symbol or promise of this unusual language, and whoever took upon him to write in metre, according as he possessed more or less of true poetic genius, introduced less or more of this adulterated phraseology into his compositions, and the true and the false were inseparably interwoven until, the taste of men becoming gradually perverted, this language was received as a natural language: and at length, by the influence of books upon men, did to a certain degree become so. (Appendix, 466)

To summarize both of these passages, when poets were no longer connected to the elemental feelings experienced and expressed by their predecessors in a language real, daring, and figurative, they imitated those feelings in a language half invented, half borrowed. This bastardized language, as replete with both extravagance and mimesis as it was, became so used to become, to a degree, natural. Its users, in effect, lost sight of the language of genuine expression. The poets Wordsworth depicts had lost touch with their roots in human feeling and thought. Their diction and style, consequently, could only approximate, exaggerate, and stereotype genuine experience; it could not express it. Even so, their language came not only to reflect but to represent personality and reality because it replaced the language of the real self.

Though the context and terms are different, Wordsworth's observations here seem similar to those of some of the modern composition theorists discussed earlier. James Britton, for example, warns that foreshortening the growth of expressive discourse will create a psychological "short-circuit" in an individual. The result of such short-circuiting will be form without personal substance in writing and in personality.⁵³ As we have seen, Kinneavy suggests that a nation of vague, disjointed, disgruntled people susceptible to a variety of schemes will ensue if expressive discourse is misdirected or left out. Gusdorf asserts that the struggle for style is a definition of the whole personality; knowing one's style is a way knowing oneself. The consequences of adopting an artificial style rather than struggling for an individual one are profound since the personality itself may become, in a metaphoric sense, artificial.

To be sure, Wordsworth's primary focus in these passages is on the artistic character of this language, its artifice. He reserves for other works his detailed description of the effects of growing up the "model of the child," as I shall examine latter. Here the psychological implications are secondary. Even though that is the case, he draws an intriguing psychological portrait of the reader receiving pleasure from knowing and emulating the poet through his "extravagant and absurd diction." The self-love of the reader, Wordsworth argues, is flattered "by bringing him nearer to a sympathy with [the poet]; an effect which is

accomplished by unsettling ordinary habits of thinking and thus assisting the Reader to that perturbed and dizzy state of mind in which if he does not find himself, he imagines that he is balked of a peculiar enjoyment which poetry can and ought to bestow" (Appendix, 466). The reader is drawn into sympathy with the poet, not into sympathy with his own elemental feelings and thoughts. He is also brought to a "perturbed and dizzy state of mind," far from the clearer perception of self poetry can provide; and he actually feels cheated if he does not achieve this state. "Ordinary habits of thinking"--which, according to Wordsworth, are themselves disconnected from the real self--are unsettled and replaced by even more extraordinary intellectual habits. The reader, in his desire to use poetry as a vehicle for escape, becomes caught up in poetic artifice, and moves closer to the contrived character of the poet. Because the reader wants to experience the dizziness and because the poet wants the emulation, abusive poetic diction perpetuates itself.

That ordinary habits of thinking are disconnected from the elemental self, that the reader wants to escape through outside stimuli his own situation in life, and that Wordsworth conceived of his own time as the best and the worst for combating these conditions through art, he makes clear in a passage from the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1800). The service of producing or enlarging the discerning activity of the human mind, "without the application of gross and

violent stimulants," Wordsworth views as one of the principal purposes of the poet. He continues,

...this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions have conformed themselves. (Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 43-44).

The theatrical and literary productions of the time are part of the gross and violent stimulants which draw men away from themselves. They aid in numbing the mind. Thus art becomes a means not for man's regeneration but for his degradation. That poetry is a part of the problem and not the solution is a bitter pill for Wordsworth, who wants to return to poetry the role of increasing the discriminating powers of the mind and who wishes to reconquer for style its place in the language of man.

Coleridge was less adamant than Wordsworth in his condemnation of the conventional poetic practice of the eighteenth century, the practice which shaped that in his own time. Even so, he found much to criticize in that poetry. He considered Pope a master of his "kind" of poetry; but because he undervalued the kind, he "withheld from its

masters the legitimate name of poets" (Biographia Literaria, I, 18). Along with Wordsworth, he objects to the artificiality of the matter and manner of the poetry:

I saw, that the excellence of this kind [of poetry] consisted in just and acute observations of men and manners in an artificial state of society, as its matter and substance: and in the logic of wit, conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets, as its form. Even when the subject was addressed to the fancy, or to the intellect, as in the Rape of the Lock, or the Essay on Man; nay, when it was a consecutive narration, as in that astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity, Pope's Translation of the Iliad; still a point was looked for at the end of each second line.... (Biographia Literaria, I, 18, his emphasis).

In Coleridge's opinion the best products of this poetry--the works of Pope, for example--consist of artificial situations and characters. It is tightly structured and predictable. A reader always knows that a point is to be looked for at the end of each second line. Coleridge characterizes this poetry not as poetic thoughts but as thoughts translated into the language of poetry, which means, within this context, that it does not grow out of the processes of native genius, the language capturing the thought as it springs out of the passions; rather it is intellectual perception systematized in poetic language.

Darwin's Botanic Garden, which Coleridge laments was greatly extolled by both the reading public and men of genius, he labels "painted mists" and a "Russian palace of ice,

glittering, cold and transitory" (Biographia Literaria, I, 18). It is a theory of poetry which remembers the intellect without the emotions, the head without the heart. This theory and the style of poetry out of which it grew Coleridge traces to "the custom of writing Latin verses, and the great importance attached to these exercises, in our public schools" (Biographia Literaria, I, 20). What makes this exercise particularly repugnant in the hands of most practitioners is that they cannot, because they can no longer think in Latin, rely on themselves for the "force and fitness" of their phrases. Rather they must rely on the authority of the author--Virgil, Horace, Ovid--from whence the phrases came. Coleridge, with Rousseau and, for that matter, Wordsworth, believed in language training in the mother tongue.⁵⁴

Coleridge adduced the metre and diction of the Greek poets such as Homer and Theocritus, but especially of the elder English poets from Chaucer to Milton, in his defence of

the lines running into each other, instead of closing at each couplet; and of natural language, neither bookish nor vulgar, neither redolent of the lamp, or of the kennel, such as 'I will remember thee'; instead of the same thought tricked up in

---Thy image on her wing
Before my FANCY'S eye shall memory bring,
(Biographia Literaria, I, 21)

He would not go so far as Wordsworth in insisting that poetic diction adopt exclusively the language of, and express the thoughts and feelings of humble men in common life. In fact he offered compelling arguments against such a practice.⁵⁵

But he certainly favored the middle style for poetic diction: between the bookish and the base. He therefore held up for praise in a later chapter of the Biographia Literaria, "the neutral style, or that common to Prose and Poetry," which he saw exemplified by Herbert, Chaucer, and Wordsworth himself (See Chapter 20).

In his view, England's older poets, from Donne to Cowley, wrote "the most fantastic out-of-the-way thoughts, but in the most pure and genuine mother English. Contemporaries, on the other hand, wrote "the most obvious thoughts, in language the most fantastic and arbitrary." He explains,

Our faulty elder poets sacrificed the passion, and the passionate flow of poetry, to the subtleties of intellect, and to the starts of wit; the moderns to the glare and glitter of a perpetual, yet broken and heterogeneous imagery, or rather to an amphibious something, made up, half of image, and half of abstract meaning. 56
The one sacrificed the heart to the head, the other both heart and head to point and drapery.
(Biographia Literaria, I, 23-24)

The metre of contemporary writers, he complains,

...is either constructed on no previous system, and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer's convenience; or else some mechanical movement is adopted, of which one couplet or stanza is so far an adequate specimen, as that the occasional differences appear evidently to arise from accident, or the qualities of the

language itself, not from meditation and an intelligent purpose. (Biographia Literaria, XIV, 24)

The diction, he observes, may be "too faithfully characterized, as claiming to be poetical for no better reason, than that it would be intolerable in conversation or in prose" (XIV, 24). Though Wordsworth and Coleridge disagreed about what the nature of poetic metre and diction should be, they were united in their opinion that contemporary trends were deplorable and that true poetic expression stemmed from passion--the intellect stimulated by the emotions. That flow, they felt, was tampered with only at tremendous expense to work, writer, and reader.

They revolted, each to his degree, against a poetic rhetoric devoted to "point and drapery," against a rhetoric which was enamoured of itself and ignored--lost sight of--"the plain humanities of nature." They promoted, and in an important sense invented, a rhetoric of the self. The development of this rhetoric was not achieved without considerable struggle on the part of the poets, particularly Wordsworth, and not without substantial pain suffered as a result of the struggle. The intensity of the struggle is implied in Coleridge's description of the criticism which met the Lyrical Ballads: "criticism which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round" (Biographia Literaria, XIV, 5). He

notes that the "Preface" was greeted with "aversion to [its] opinions" and "alarm at [its] consequences." For his part, Wordsworth anticipated an attack on the form and content of his poetry: "They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title."⁵⁷ Despite the casual sarcasm in this prediction, Wordsworth was very sensitive to criticism and took negative criticism bitterly.⁵⁸ Yet his proposals for the restoration of poetry led him into a literary harm's way. In forming an individual style, in creating a particular meaning that was theirs, Wordsworth and Coleridge experienced a type of "heroic struggle" which Gusdorf contends is the consequence of the revolt against linguistic convention. Their revolt was not to end in doubt and denial, however, but in a rhetoric which was itself to become a tradition.

The sources and substance of this rhetoric, for each of them, makes up the content of the next two chapters of this study. What they rebelled against and what they proposed, however, is succinctly summarized by Wordsworth in the following passage, again from the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads:

It has been said that each of these poems has a purpose. Another circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation of the feeling. 59

In other words, Wordsworth's poetry grows from the inside out; action and situation, external elements of the artistic product, are created out of the feeling developed by the poet. They result necessarily from the poet's process of creation. Coleridge, too, supports this idea, explaining that the organic form of composition is innate; "it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form."⁶⁰ The popular poetry of the day, on the other hand, is written from the outside in, action and situation determining feeling (if feeling exists at all). The rules of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry stem from their perceptions of the operations of the mind and imagination. The rules for the poetry of the day, in contrast, reflect a concern for manner, balance, and language rarified. The form of such poetry is mechanic; the shape of the material is predetermined, and the matter is made to fit the form (Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, 223).

Kinneavy's declaration that "Romantic expressionism was a literary phenomenon" needs qualification. The phenomenon did begin within a literary context: the theory of

organic composition was initially applied to the poetic process, and expressionism meant either that the poet was the primary source and subject matter of the poem or that aspects of the external world were converted from fact to poetry through the combined workings of the poet's intellect and emotions. But its implications soon stretched beyond poetry and the poet.

We find Wordsworth suggesting that every man may ripen into a poet, at least metaphorically, if he is allowed to develop his innate gifts: "Why is this glorious creature to be found / One only in ten thousand? What one is, / Why may not millions be?" (The Prelude, XIII, 86-89). He makes no distinction between the poet and other men, except in degree: "The sum of what was said is, that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men ("Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads, 457, my emphasis). A poet, Wordsworth declares, is a man speaking to men. Men may become as poets through the wholesome growth of their full expressive powers.

As William Walsh points out, Coleridge insists that an essential means of attaining reflective self-knowledge is

through an active understanding of language.⁶¹ He quotes Coleridge:

Reflect on your thoughts, actions, circumstances and--which will be of especial aid to you in forming a habit of reflection--accustom yourself to reflect on the words you use, hear or read, their truth, derivation and history. For if words are things, they are living powers, by which things of most importance to mankind are activated, combined, and humanised.

"The best part of human language," according to Coleridge, "is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself." This reflection, he notes, is of critical importance to the development of the whole being; and he argues for the central place of reflective use of language in the schools. To Coleridge's way of thinking, abundant self-knowledge and accurate self-expression are not just qualities necessary for the poet. They are necessary for everyman. Thus Kinneavy's claim does not capture the breadth of expressive theory, which, rising out of its literary foundation, represents organic growth not only in written and oral communication, but in the psychology of the individual himself.

NOTES

¹James Kinneavy, A Theory of Discourse (New York: Prentice Hall, 1971), 394.

²James Britton, Language and Learning (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), 168-179.

³James Britton, "The Composing Processes and the Functions of Writing," in Research on Composing, ed. Charles Cooper and Lee Odell (Urbana: NCTE), 18.

⁴Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders (Urbana: NCTE, 1971), 37.

⁵David Holbrook, Children's Writing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 19.

⁶James Miller, Jr., and Stephen Judy, Writing in Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 20.

⁷John Dixon, Growth Through English (Urbana: NCTE, 1975), 7.

⁸Geoffrey Summerfield, Creativity in English (Urbana: NCTE, 1968), 2.

⁹Suzanne Langer in Britton, Language and Learning, 21.

¹⁰George Kelly, A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), 52.

¹¹James Britton, Language and Learning, 20.

¹²J.W. Patrick Creber, Sense and Sensitivity (London: University of London Press, 1965), 24.

¹³Susan Sontag in Walker Gibson, Persona (New York: Random House, 1969), 84.

¹⁴Stephen Judy, Writing in Reality, 115.

¹⁵ Georges Gusdorf, Speaking (LaParole) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 75.

¹⁶ See, for example, Emig on the "fifty-star theme" in The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders, 97; Dixon on the need for a variety of language experiences and contexts in Growth Through English, 15; Holbrook on the necessity of parroting in order to survive academia in The Exploring Word (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 102; Creber on stereotyping in Sense and Sensitivity, 24.

¹⁷ Richard Ohman, English in America (New York: Oxford 1974), 301. See also Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity (New York: Delacorte, 1969), 14.

¹⁸ M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 22.

¹⁹ Longinus in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 73.

²⁰ Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 73.

²¹ James Beattie in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 36.

²² Richard Hurd in James Malek, The Arts Compared: An Aspect of Eighteenth Century British Aesthetics (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 85.

²³ C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1975), 267-268.

²⁴ Dennis in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 75.

²⁵ Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 75.

²⁶ Bishop Lowth in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 77.

²⁷ Lowth in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 77.

²⁸ Blair in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 95.

²⁹ Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783), Vol. II, ed. Harold F. Harding (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 312.

- ³⁰ Blair in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, 96.
- ³¹ Blair from the title to Lecture XXXI, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 156.
- ³² Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, vol. I, Lecture XIX, 405.
- ³³ T.J. Wise, A Bibliography of the Writings of William Wordsworth (London, 1916), 31.
- ³⁴ Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830. 4th imp. (London, 1933), II, 64.
- ³⁵ Helen Darbershire, The Poet Wordsworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 35.
- ³⁶ Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art In Their Historical Relations (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 20.
- ³⁷ Mayo's important and influential article is "The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads," in PMLA, LXIX (1954), 486-522. For critics who continued the revolutionary fervor see, for example, M.H. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp, 53: the publication of the Lyrical Ballads is "a convenient index to a comprehensive revolution in the theory of poetry, and of all the arts"; or Margaret Drabble, who calls the poems "a revolution in poetry; they were completely new....They were different in language, in intention, and in subject matter, Wordsworth (London, 1966), 20-21.
- ³⁸ Hazlitt in Darbershire, The Poet Wordsworth, 7-8.
- ³⁹ William Wordsworth, The Prelude: A Parallel Text, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), Book X, Lines 414-415. All quotes will be from the 1850 text unless otherwise dated.
- ⁴⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lecture XVI in The Friend, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 329.

⁴¹Raymond Dexter Havens, The Mind of a Poet: A Study in Wordsworth's Thought With Particular Reference to the Prelude (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), 129.

⁴²Gene Ruoff, "Wordsworth on Language: Toward A Radical Poetics for English Romanticism," in The Wordsworth Circle (III), 4, Fall, 1972. Ruoff's comment is "Whatever other discoveries The Prelude shows Wordsworth to have made, it demonstrates that he found that there were two ways of using language, one which destroys and unsouls, another which unites and reveals the soul. The binding property of language is manifested in the language of ordinary conversation, the language in which men speak to men" (209).

⁴³Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, vol. I (London: The Scholar Press, 1971), IX, 144.

⁴⁴Helen Darbershire remarks: "What survives of Wordsworth's youthful verse is of two kinds: formal exercises, like his lines written in Popian couplets for the centenary of the foundation of Hawkshead School, and some translations from the classics; secondly, freer verse either in ballad-form or in octosyllabics with subject matter partly natural, partly romantic" (The Poet Wordsworth, 13).

⁴⁵Biographia Literaria, I, 17.

⁴⁶Essay upon Epitaphs, II, in Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 113.

⁴⁷"Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), in Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 1971.

⁴⁸Darwin in Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relations, 62.

⁴⁹See John E. Jordan, Why the Lyrical Ballads? The Background, Writing, and Character of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads (Berkeley: UC Press, 1976), for a description of the "flood of verse"--nearly every literate person dabbled in poetry--appearing in the late 1700s.

⁵⁰Here are two examples of this extravagance, one from Erasmus Darwin in his The Economy of Vegetation. It is called "The Birth of KNO₃":

Hence orient Nitre owes its sparkling birth,
 And with prismatic crystals gems the earth
 O'er tottering domes the filmy foliage crawls,
 Or frosts with branching plumes the mould'ring walls;
 As woos Azotic Gas the virgin Air,
 And veils in crimson clouds the yielding fair.

The other from Mary Robinson's sonnet "The Temple or Chastity":

High on a rock, coeval with the skies,
 A temple stands, reared by immortal powers
 To Chastity devine! Ambrosial flowers,
 Twining round icicles, in columns rise,
 Mingling with pendant gems of orient dies!
 Piercing the air, a golden crescent towers,
 Veiled by transparent clouds; while smiling hours
 Shake from their varying wings celestial joys!

In The Stuffed Owl: An Anthology of Bad Verse, ed. Wyndham Lewis and Charles Lee (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962).

⁵¹ "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads in Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 44-45.

⁵² William Wordsworth, "Appendix to the Preface" (1802), in William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 466.

⁵³ James Britton, Explorations in Children's Writing, ed. Eldonna Everetts (NCTE, 1970), 48.

⁵⁴ A. Charles Babenroth, English Childhood, (New York: Columbia University, 1922), 171. Babenroth details the conflict between the traditional forces of classic education--the Latinists--and the forces of a more child-centered approach such as Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

⁵⁵ See the Biographia Literaria, XVII, 36.

⁵⁶ Coleridge's amusing example of this "amphibious something" is the following couplet by a young tradesman:

"No more will I endure love's pleasing pain,
 Or round my heart's leg tie this galling chain."

⁵⁷ "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1802), in Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, 40.

⁵⁸ Wordsworth was, for example, disappointed by Southey's criticism of the Lyrical Ballads. Since Southey knew that Wordsworth had published the Ballads because of his need for money, Southey should not have, Wordsworth felt, reviewed them at all, let alone negatively.

⁵⁹ "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (1802), in Selected Poems and Prefaces, 448.

⁶⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Thomas Raysor (London: Constable and Co., 1930), I, 223-224.

⁶¹ William Walsh, The Use of the Imagination (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), 61.

CHAPTER II

"THE EXCELLENCE OF WRITING": "A CONJUNCTION OF REASON AND PASSION"

Wordsworth's practice and theory of composition rose out of his rejection of the political, philosophical, and poetic rhetoric of the late 1700s. But it had its base in his own education, particularly at Hawkshead Grammar School and in the surrounding Windermere countryside. In The Prelude, he praises that education in the highest terms, while condemning the traditional analytic education to which the majority of English school children were subjected:

yet I rejoice,
And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out
Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
Safe from an evil which these days have laid
Upon the children of the land, a pest,
That might have dried me up, body and soul.¹

Not only did Hawkshead provide a background in the letters and sciences,² but it also stimulated what to Wordsworth was essential to growth, "right, sound, active, vital feeling." James Fotheringham, in his work on The Prelude as a study of education, focuses on the principle of the "vital soul":

In a phrase...that is in true sympathy with the best naturalism of his age, the "vital soul" is the ground of all real education, and the expansion of the "vital soul" is the true end of education.... In The Prelude ...and in other poems of his great period it is a leading idea. There is no real and right growth for the human mind without depth and cordiality of feeling. The culture that does not give this is barren, and in large degree a failure.³

It is the growth of the emotive quality of the personality with the intellectual which Wordsworth found so praiseworthy in his education at Hawkshead. Customs such as granting abundant time for wandering freely in the countryside; having the students live in the homes of the villagers instead of at school; emphasizing companionship between the boys, but allowing for solitary pursuits; providing time for school projects and for individual projects; encouraging intellectual and emotional independence; all helped to foster affections and human sympathies, and placed in the context of the whole being the use of the intellect.

Thus is Wordsworth brought to characterize the pupils, "with whom he herded," as

A race of real children; not too wise,
Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, virtuous, modest shy;
Mad in their sports like withered leaves in winds;
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth.

(The Prelude, V, 411-425)

The qualities which "a race of real children" possesses are those Wordsworth considered essential to the fruitful development of the vital soul. The young must be allowed full play physically and emotionally. Feelings of love and hate are to be promoted in experience rather than repressed; the entire range of emotive possibilities, in fact, should become realities in the children's lives. Of particular importance are pain, doubt, and fear, similar to Holbrook's "backlog of psychological problems inherited from the darkest ages of infancy,"⁴ because drawing them out is the first step in helping to order the darkly mysterious aspects of personality. With these qualities of the heart go

Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
May books and Nature be their early joy!
And knowledge rightly honoured with that name--
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

(The Prelude, V, 411-425)

While these children grow with and experience the passions inherent to their membership in the race of men, their intellect is stimulated by "good books, though few"⁵ and by nature. Feeling is not cultivated separately from the intellect. Each matures with the other. As feeling ripens the intellect, it in turn interprets feeling and explores the environment. In these children, there is no mimetic or grandiose style. Their expression, in effect, is the image of themselves: "Simplicity in habit, truth in speech." This personal and verbal style, because it so honestly represents thought and feeling,

assumes the function of the "daily strengthener of their minds." Through self expression, they are able to define and shape experience; they use language, Wordsworth implies, to know and become themselves. Since the vital soul is sustained by their "education," they learn without losing themselves in the process. They consequently gain knowledge without "loss of power."

The product of the typical school education, the "model of the child," is, on the other hand, a specimen "Full early trained to worship seemliness." Copying the attitudes and qualities which would please the adult, he manipulates and receives approval by adopting the virtues thought culturally appropriate: He never shows selfishness, is never afraid ("except in dreams"), recognizes immorality in the world, feigns innocence and can in fact "read lectures" upon the subject. His training is cerebral: memorization and analysis become his principal tools:

he can read
The insides of the earth, and spell the stars;
He knows the policies of foreign lands;
Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,
The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;
All things are put to question; (The Prelude, V, 317-323).

Like the modern psychologists who followed him, Wordsworth insists that the child is not to be blamed for this "unnatural growth." Rather blame the "trainer." Every time the innate emotive qualities arise in the child "to lead him toward a better clime,/ Some intermeddler still is on the watch/ To

drive him back, and pound him, like a stray, / Within the pinfold of his own conceit" (The Prelude, V, 334-337). The child is obliged to assume the colorless character of those who mold him.

Because the tendency to express thoughts and feelings in truthful language is blocked, those genuine thoughts and feelings become repressed. These two "developments" occur simultaneously, to Wordsworth's way of thinking, one because of the other. Each person, Wordsworth observes, is born with the "poetic spirit," a condition which unites feeling and "the growing faculties of sense" with the facility to represent and to shape the environment. In his ability to perceive, to represent, and to shape, the child assumes a God-like role; he receives an object through the senses, and then brings it into being--creates it--for himself by placing it in relation to the other things of his perception and experience. In this operation, he systematizes and synthesizes the objects of his environment according to the pattern that makes sense of the world for him. He performs the function microcosmically, which God has performed macrocosmically.

Wordsworth puts it this way:

For feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds. (The Prelude, II, 255-260)

The "first poetic spirit," a giving-receiving process, is Wordsworth's label for the initial operations of the imagination.

As the mind matures, it projects life, meaning, and value onto the external world,⁶ and language, important from the start, takes on progressively greater consequence.

All youth are poets to begin with; they draw into being the world around them and eventually locate themselves within it mainly through language. As long as language growth occurs naturally; as long as they are able, to use Gusdorf's phrase, to find the expression to fit their innate situation, they may ripen into fully attuned human beings. Unfortunately, as Wordsworth so emphatically declares, this expressive capability is quickly and decisively wrested from the children by outside agents in their homes and in the schools: "the first / Poetic spirit of our human life, / By uniform control of after years [is], / In most, abated or suppressed" (The Prelude, II, 260-263). As a result, "Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy."⁷ The child soon loses contact with his "poetic" self and adopts a variety of roles to meet expectations and receive support:

Filling from time to time his "humourous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation. ("Intimations," 103-107)

Sadly, this process of distancing the individual from his genuine self grows in complexity until that self eventually disappears and the imitative self becomes, in a sense, the "real" self.

The process of losing the self in imitation is very like the process Wordsworth describes as having occurred to poetic diction. That is, the poets of the eras preceding his, unable to produce a language which stemmed from their own powerful feelings, mechanically appropriated the figures without the feeling of that language. Gradually, it became difficult to tell the natural language from the adulterated, and the adulterated was subsequently taken for the natural. The real voice of men in poetry, thus displaced, was buried under successively thicker layers of contrived diction and metre. The language parallel in the child to whom Wordsworth refers is important. Should the child be obliged, in meeting his psychological needs, to assume linguistic roles other than those which reflect his true expressive growth, that expressive capacity will be swallowed up in automatic, mechanical, stereotyped responses to environment and experience. Along with producing a "little Actor," this transformation creates, at the least, a less than full life and, at the most, numerous psychological problems.

Conventional education practice both at home and in the school, according to Wordsworth and Coleridge, was at the core of this superimposition of character. Coleridge laments that he saw

...how many examples of...young men the most anxiously and expensively be-school mastered, be-tutored, be-lectured, anything but educated; who have received arms and ammunition, instead of skill, strength, and courage; varnished

rather than polished; perilously over-civilized, and most pitiably uncultivated! And all from inattention to the method dictated by nature herself...that as the forms in all organized existence, so must all true and living knowledge proceed from within; that it may be trained, supported, fed, excited, but can never be infused or impressed.

Attaining knowledge is a process which grows from within, as the individual grows; it cannot be imposed on the learner through models--not, that is, with any positive results. He continues with the same theme:

It was a great error to cram the young mind with so much knowledge as made the child talk much and fluently: what was more ridiculous than to hear a child questioned, what it thought of the last poem of Walter Scott? A child should be child-like, and possess no other idea than what was loving and admiring. 8

Traditional education of the late 1700s and early 1800s consisted partially of cramming into its object, the pupils, facts about natural science, mathematics, and English verse, which students often translated into Latin. The major emphasis was on the acquisition of classical languages, taking up an abundance of instructional time morning and afternoon. Training in the use of the mother-tongue was limited basically to horn books containing the alphabet, words for spelling, some grammar, and stories with religiously moral content intended to improve the character of the reader.

This was education, as Coleridge points out, from the outside in. It did nothing for the maturation of the boy's

personality, the growth of his intellectual and emotional being. Rather it stunted and perverted, in the opinion of the poets, painting the shell of the individual without cultivating his internal nature. The result was a child who talked much and fluently about matters connected to him only in a very superficial way. Expressions of fear, desire, frustration, and joy, presumably, were nowhere a part of his conversation; since the language of the self was unused because it was discouraged, the aspects of personality it shapes and explains were left unexplored. The individual subjected to this education was consequently incomplete, his language artificial, and his character disjointed.

One of the reasons why Wordsworth selected from "the language really used by men" for the Lyrical Ballads was his thorough distaste for the contrived condition of the language of the "educated." And one of the purposes for selecting situations from "low and rustic life" for the content of the Ballads stemmed from his conviction that too many of the educated had lost touch with their expressive base:

Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and, more forcibly communicated.

Wordsworth implies here that emotive development is far healthier in a rustic atmosphere than it can be in the atmosphere typical of most formal educational environments. The basis for this claim lies in Wordsworth's observation that rustics grew into maturity relatively untampered with by institutions outside of nature and their loved ones, and that their "organic growth" is reflected in the clarity and power of their language. He continues shortly thereafter:

The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of the language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. 9

Wordsworth chooses the language of these men because it is the language closest to nature and, more relevantly, because it is a language unadulterated by rhetorical tricks, passionless analysis, or pressures on the individual to conform to societal conventions. It is, in short, a language purely, simply, and forcefully of its users, whose style reflects the elemental and genuine quality of their personalities. These are the poets of the mind, whom Wordsworth describes in The Excursion:

men endowed with highest gifts,
 The vision and the faculty divine;
 Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,
 (Which, in the docile season of their youth,
 It is denied them to acquire...) 10

It is clear from the passages in the "Preface" quoted above that Wordsworth perceived the interrelationship between cognitive and language development. He distinguishes between the individual who expands psychologically at the pace innately appropriate to his character, and the individual whose growth is influenced by the agencies of social vanity. The one is able to communicate his thoughts and feelings in "simple and unelaborated expressions." The other employs a language which veils feelings and exposes, in Coleridge's terms, the varnish of the overly civilized. The distinction Wordsworth draws is between the illiterate and the literate, the illiterate faring far better because of his freedom to mature as he is. That the illiterate's rhetoric was to become one of the sources for a new poetic language has, of course, been cause for considerable critical controversy from Wordsworth's own era to the present. I think, however, if Wordsworth had more systematically qualified his position or if critics had taken into account more than the comments in the "Preface," some of the controversy's heat would have been cooled.

Even in the "Preface," for example, Wordsworth declares, however parenthetically, that he had purified the language of the rustics, removing from it the dialectic

idiosyncracies and base phrases which might make it incomprehensible or offensive to readers. The language is, by Wordsworth's qualification, a cleansed and correct form of the real thing. But it is not exactly the real thing. More importantly, Wordsworth does not hold up illiteracy for emulation. He holds up, instead, a psychological condition of being which is represented dynamically in oral speech; the speech displays the full and fruitful status of the personality of its user. Wordsworth implies that the vast majority of school-educated and literate people have, unfortunately, lost their capacity to find and express themselves in language because of, in good part, their literacy training. Not undertaking the training and not being constrained to fit a mold, illiterates have the advantage over literates in that they speak the language really used by men. But it is much more the training which he condemns than the literate individual himself. After all, the "glorious creature" of Book XIII of The Prelude, the "one only in ten thousand," is simultaneously literate and expressive; if he is a rustic, then he is one who reads and writes:

--my theme

No other than the very heart of man,
 As found among the best of those who live,
 Not unexalted by religious faith,
 Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few,
 In Nature's presence. (XIII, 240-245)

Such an individual does not paint matters of the outside world with rhetorical eloquence, thereby looking for praise from his reader or listener. Rather he is his own upholder, and expresses "liveliest thoughts in lively words / As native passion dictates" (XIII, 256-265). This individual is "a sensitive being, a creative soul" who retains and refines the poetic spirit most lose as they grow older. Wordsworth's description of the sustenance of this spirit in man exactly parallels that in the genuine poet; the same types of problems exist in the discourse of both men and poets who abided by the traditions of the eighteenth century: extravagance, imitation, analysis. The rhetoric of the self can be everyman's rhetoric, but only if conditions exist which allow for the organic growth of the personality in conjunction with the same growth in expressive power.

What are these conditions? Simply and idealistically put, the reading of good books, living in nature's presence, and undertaking an education which granted the freedom to grow intellectually and emotionally as an individual. But there were also certain practical matters which permitted Wordsworth to formulate the writing theory and follow the writing practice he did. In 1780, when he was ten years old and had been a year at Hawkshead, Wordsworth began to appreciate "the charm / Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet / For their own sakes, a passion, and a power" (The Prelude, V, 552-556). He describes the experience of strolling along a lake path with a dear friend, "repeating favorite verses

with one voice" (The Prelude, V. 564). The experience lifted them "above the ground by airy fancies, / More bright than madness or the dreams of wine" (V, 567-568). As a discerning thinker and maturing writer, who had discovered the vacuity and vanity of conventional rhetoric, he looks back upon the quality of the poetry he read and judges it negatively:

though full oft the objects of our love
 Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,
 Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
 Working within us,--nothing less, in truth,
 Than the most noble attribute of man,
 Though yet untutored and inordinate,
 That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
 Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
 Of human life. (V, 569-577)

More often than not, Wordsworth confesses, the poetry was of the sort he condemns in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads for its absurd and extravagant diction. The corruption of the poetry was not, however, the corruption of Wordsworth and his companion; while there may have been a vulgar power working in the poems, there was none working in the young readers. And the sound and rhythm in these poems helped to stimulate and sustain what in the infant was the "first poetic spirit," in the youth is "untutored and inordinate" creative sensibility, and in the adult will become the Imagination, "Right reason in its most exalted mood."

That Wordsworth did not find the poetry of the eighteenth century initially offensive and that his own training in the classical languages had influenced his development are

reflected in the poetry of his grammar school and Cambridge days. At Hawkshead, he wrote one piece, which has not survived, about his summer vacation of 1784; another piece, which did survive, was written in honor of the school. At fifteen, Wordsworth was asked, along with some of the other poetically inclined boys, to compose a poem celebrating Hawkshead's bicentenary. He wrote over one hundred lines of heroic couplet, personifying the Spirit of Education as a goddess who addresses the pupils on the merits of the modern, scientific approach to knowledge. The poem, written in conventional rhyme and metre and employing the common rhetorical devices such as an abundance of personifications, shows the sway of the classics on the young poet's mind and demonstrates his ability to imitate the Popian style.¹¹ Composed before his revolt against rhetorical convention, which Gusdorf says typifies the development of an individual style, the poem displays Wordsworth as an imitative more than original artist--generally offering stereotypes rather than self-expression.

Nonetheless, the creation of this early work is quite important, primarily for two reasons. First, as it helped to promote his craft and to suggest his calling as a poet, writing these technically adroit pieces also brought him close to the rhetoric of poetry he would subsequently attack. He came to know his enemy, so to speak, by living in the trenches with him. Second, and more significant, he received much support for his efforts, both from his headmaster

William Taylor and from his fellow pupils. He states, in fact, that "School Exercise" was "much admired, far more than [it] deserved, for [it was] but a tame imitation of Pope's versification and a little in his style."¹² What bound Wordsworth to becoming a poet stemmed from two sources in his youthful education: his introduction to the literary and intellectual culture of his age and the sympathetic and encouraging reception for his writing from his audience, "a prototype of those smaller enclaves of trust and dedication he would seek to find at Nether Stowey and Grasmere."¹³ This audience support was inestimable to his career as a writer. Without it, he may never have become a poet. With it, he was heartened to write fairly constantly from 1785 onwards. In a manuscript book covered in brown leather, he says, he began to compose verse, "and so got into the habit of reducing to shape the thoughts which had been vaguely haunting his brain, like to body-waiting souls, which wandered to the Lethean pools."¹⁴

Wordsworth apparently used private writing as a means of ordering his experience, giving it a shape from which he could make sense of it. His public writing, however, continued to reflect eighteenth century influences. In an interesting and telling analysis of a portion of "An Evening Walk" (1787), Ben Ross Schneider points out Wordsworth's consistent use of Latinisms:

(displaced modifier)	<u>Brightening</u> the cliffs between where the sombrous pine, And yew-trees o'er the silver rocks <u>recline</u> , (suspended verb) I love to mark the quarry's moving trains Dwarf pannier'd steeds, and men, and numerous wains:
(no verb)	How busy the <u>enormous hive within</u> (inversion)
(personifi- cation)	While <u>Echo</u> dallies with the various din! Some, <u>hardly heard their chissel's</u> <u>clinking sound</u> , (ablative absolute) Toil, small as pygmies, in the gulph profound;
(displaced modifier)	Some, <u>dim</u> between the aerial cliffs <u>descry'd</u> ; O'erwalk the viewless plank from side to side; These by the pale-blue rocks that ceaseless ring
(displaced modifier)	Glad from their airy baskets hang and sing. (suspended verb) 15

By using displaced modifiers, verbless and suspended sentences, and numerous participial phrases, inversions and personifications, Wordsworth followed the poetic fashion of adhering to classic niceties, a fashion he was to heartily condemn ten years later.

Even so, Wordsworth's classical studies, as Schneider shows, probably helped more than hindered his poetic development.¹⁶ In the Aeneid, for example, Wordsworth found the idea that beneath nature's appearance lies "something far more deeply interfused"; he also discovered there the concept of the Soul which, after rising in glory at birth and through childhood, becomes dulled and imprisoned by life's "shades of the prison house." In Horace he read, among other things,

that only the "highest good" was expedient, that man's duty was to live agreeably with nature, and that the best way to live in harmony with nature was to live in the country. Reading Tacitus, whose comparison of the upright and virtuous behavior of the primitive German tribes to the sophisticated and licentious behavior of the haughty Romans put the latter to shame may have amplified Wordsworth's already unfavorable impression of Cambridge culture when compared to that of the north country. From De Moribus Germanorum, he may have learned about the sources of British freedom. And Cicero would have suggested to him how nature provides the means for developing frictionless human relationships by cultivating (1) the instincts--of self-preservation, gregariousness, independence, hunger for and love of beauty; (2) the reason--by which one can foresee the consequences of an act and judge its rightness or wrongness; and (3) the moral sense--by which one can detect the propriety of an act. Wordsworth's summary in The Prelude best clarifies his discerning powers as a poet and student of the classics: he was, by his own account, a "better judge of thoughts than words" (VI, 124). Indeed such seems to be the case. For the words which Wordsworth wrote were stylistically affected, replete with "quaintnesses" and "heiroglyphics." They presented a style he was to despise later. Many of the "thoughts," however, were approved of by the mature poet and found way into his best poetry.

In the poems of the late 1780s, the rendering of the object was blurred by the frippery of the diction and syntax. In the early 1790s, on the other hand, a dramatic change took place in Wordsworth's style and in his approach to description. He began, as Paul Sheats observes, "to discipline his language on behalf of the object, attempting to clarify the relationship between word and thing and in general to render the linguistic surfaces of his style as unobtrusive as possible."¹⁷ Instead of connotative and general, nouns became denotative and concrete: "winter's shock" gave way to "driving snow," and the "bird" saluting the rising moon in 1788 became an "owl" in 1794. Wordsworth moved toward simpler words: a "dilated" sun became a "big" sun. He remade or removed images in order to clarify structural and perceptual relationships:

1788: Cross the calm lakes blue shades the cliffs
aspire

1794: Beyond the lake the opposing cliffs aspire

He corrected some of the inversions and absolutes--faults he would later label as the worst that poetry can have¹⁸-- in "An Evening Walk":

1788: Some, hardly heard their chissel's clinking
sound
Toil, small as pigmies, in the gulph profound.

1794: Some in the gulph profound like pigmies ply
Their clinking chissel hardly heard so high.¹⁹

In each revision, Wordsworth shows a shift toward his style of 1798, demonstrating an increasing ability to look steadily at his subject, and an expanding awareness of the language really used by men.

Coming at the time it did, the sharp change in style and diction is not surprising. Wordsworth had returned from France despairing over the Reign of Terror and over Britain's declaration of war against France. His political ideals had collapsed. His courtship with Godwinism went unfulfilled. This crisis, thorough and profound, brought about "the soul's ebb; / Deeming our blessed reason of least use / Where wanted most" (The Prelude, XI, 307-309). This crisis also initiated Wordsworth's revolt against the political and poetic rhetoric of his contemporaries, which he blamed in great part for his breakdown. Little wonder then that upon his return to Dorothy and to the countryside of his youth he began, in his early twenties, the reformation of his poetic voice in particular and the reformation of poetic rhetoric in general.

The major elements in Wordsworth's youthful education--his training at Hawkshead in the classics, in mathematics and Newtonian science (which provided him with a vision of universal, if mechanical, order); his free play among the woods and mountains; his open capacity to feel and express feeling; his reading and writing of poetry from an early age, and the support for both; his continued study at Cambridge, rejection of the class-conscious culture there, and distaste for the University's emphasis on analysis;²⁰ his support for the ideals of the French Revolution and for a rationally ordered political and philosophic system; his discovery of the

emotional vacuity of the rhetoric of such a system; and his return to and affirmation of his expressive roots at Windy Brow with Dorothy and at Alfoxden with Dorothy and Coleridge--all combined to cause in Wordsworth a growth from the "first poetic spirit" to the "philosophic mind." A crucial event in this pattern occurred when Wordsworth, as he climbed the ladder of abstraction, recognized the need for a firm base in the language of the self. He had, in his own opinion, explored the highest levels of abstract thought; and, after they proved to be more form than substance, he was able to recover his strayed sensibility through the adoption of a rhetoric in which thought grew out of feeling. He was one of those who, in a grand way, repaired what James Britton has termed the unfortunate "short-circuit" between the expressive and the expository modes.²¹

During Wordsworth's extremely productive decade, from 1797 to 1807, nearly everything he wrote reflected his vigour and personality, and was expressed in a language at once personal and public. The poetry is undeniably expressive. But even the prose of the Prefaces, in which he explained the complex functions of the poet and poetry, has the unmistakable style of a man who has found his voice. He became what he defines as "poet":

...a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased

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with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.

The poet, according to Wordsworth, is distinguished from other men in his acuteness of apprehension and feeling. Because of his greater self-understanding, he is capable of a larger vision of the human experience than are other men: he makes his own part in life represent the whole, his individual soul becoming "comprehensive." He delights in the exercise of choice for which life provides ample opportunity and revels in the interplay of passions within the individual, and between man and nature. Where he does not himself discover "volitions" and "passions," he creates them through the processes of his imagination.

With regard to creating what he does not himself see or experience, Wordsworth continues

To these qualities [the poet] has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves:--whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement. (Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.453)

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Clarity of perception, sharpness of memory, and discipline of meditation produce in the poet the ability to place himself not only in the heart of his own experience but also in human situations in which he has played no part. Wordsworth's choice of the term "conjuring" is significant. The term means, in this context, to raise or call up emotional states of being which may not exist within the personal experience of the writer. But it also carries the added weight of a magical connotation. A wizard working with the materials of the real world, the poet creates out of nothing but words the substance and form of human experience. Though the written representations of the absent passions are not equal in power to the passions themselves--because words never exactly or fully capture what they are meant to²²--they come closer to being equivalent in the poet's work than they can be in the mind of the ordinary person. The poet's art, consequently, is justified, even when the poet plays no more than an imagined spectator's role in the "real events" which generate the passion, because that art leads the readers to--at the least--an approximation of thoughts and feeling they could not otherwise achieve. Because of this disposition to be "affected more than other men by absent things" and because of "practice," the poet possesses greater ability than ordinary men to express what he thinks and feels, especially if those thoughts and feelings arise in him during the course of quiet reflection.

The poet's capacity to transfer his intellectual and emotional attention to events, objects, and individuals outside himself and to color them within the bounds of reality is one of the primary functions of the imagination as Wordsworth views it. He describes his principal goals in the Lyrical Ballads, for example, as the following:

...to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the laws of our nature.

(Selected Poems and Prefaces, 447).

Thus was Wordsworth able to assume the attitude of Betty Foy, who has just found her lost son, her beloved "Idiot Boy," and to color that reunion with the emotional pathos and energy (the "laws of our nature" in such a situation) which will excite an empathic response in the reader:²³

She looks again--her arms are up--
She screams--she cannot move for joy;
She darts, as with a torrent's force,
She almost has o'erturned the Horse,
And fast she holds her Idiot Boy. 24

Thus was he able to adopt the psychological and linguistic state of the "simple Child" in "We Are Seven," for whom the imagined connection between herself and a dead brother and sister makes those siblings living presences in her life; and who cannot acknowledge the matter-of-fact statements of the adult questioning her:

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But they are dead; those two are dead!
 Their spirits are in heaven!
 'Twas throwing words away; for still
 The little maid would have her will,
 And said, 'Nay, we are seven!'²⁵

The poet is also capable, of course, of focusing imaginative attention on his own experience. Thus was Wordsworth able, in reflecting on the pattern of his growth in "Tintern Abbey," to establish and shape the relationship between nature and self at what, in his assessment, were the three important stages in his life. As a child fostered by beauty and by fear, Wordsworth bounded

Wherever nature led--more like a man
 Flying from something that he dreads than one
 Who sought the thing he loved. ²⁶

Wordsworth's projection into this period in his past, the age of sensation, suggests his sense of the child's unity with his natural surroundings. Nature was to him, at that point, "all in all." He had no discriminating or abstracting powers, nor did he need them. Indeed such powers would have been out of place:

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.

From childhood he matured into Youth, the age of simple ideas, ideas which are drawn from impressions of sensation and reflection. He learned

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To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless [childhood], but hearing often times
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue.

Human communication and continued communion with nature evolve in him the condition in which he exists at the time of writing the poem. He has reached maturity, the age of complex ideas, and has become a moral being:

And I have felt
 The 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 the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

This condition of being, in which the intellect and sensibilities are fused and act upon the world (while being acted upon by the world) to give everything a comprehended unity, is, really, the highest achievable in the Wordsworthian pattern of psychological growth. Arriving at this height, the individual may be termed a "philosophic Mind" ("Intimations Ode") or a "creative soul" (The Prelude, XII, 207). His imagination is, "but another name for absolute power / And clearest insight, amplitude of mind, / And Reason in her most exalted mood" (The Prelude, XIV, 190-192).

The pattern of psychological development expressed in "Tintern Abbey" suggests two interesting aspects of the

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imaginative function: one concerns the structuring of the pattern itself; the other concerns the synthesizing power of the imagination described in the passage above. In order to structure the pattern, Wordsworth had to generalize the events of his past, combining a wide variety of similar and sometimes very personal experiences--which he details in The Prelude--into a blend of experience on successive levels. Through the imaginative lense, life's seemingly disjointed occurrences assume a meaningful progression--in Wordsworth's case from the "first poetic spirit" to the "philosophic Mind", from concrete sensations to abstract ideas. In The Prelude, he recalls "spots of time"--specific moments in the course of his life which exercised a profound influence on shaping who he became, moments which upon recollection renovate the depressed spirit and elevate the buoyant one--and weaves many of them into the intricate account of his development as a human being and writer. Through the imagination's coloring agency, the events take on a significance they could not otherwise have had; through its synthesizing faculty, they are linked with a multitude of other influences to create an image of the whole being. No detail within The Prelude seems to be unnecessary to the growth of the poet's mind, to the representation of the complete person. "Tintern Abbey," which may be viewed as a before-the-fact summary of The Prelude, offers not so much individual moments of growth as a unified portrayal of the result. The imagination, then, operates in

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two principal ways: it shapes, modifies, and amplifies moments in the life of the writer or aspects of his subject; and it provides a vision of the whole into which these moments and aspects evolve, "a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused."

Wordsworth defined the imagination succinctly in a conversation with Christopher Wordsworth:

The imagination is that intellectual lens through the medium of which the poetical observer sees the objects of his observation, modified both in form and colour; or it is that inventive dresser of the dramatic tableaux, by which the persons of the play are invested with new drapery, or placed in new attitudes; or it is that chemical faculty by which elements of the most different nature and distant origin are blended together in one harmonious and homogeneous whole. 27

Imagination is the necessary ingredient in the writing of poetry: "...by the imagination the mere fact is exhibited as connected with that infinity without which there is no poetry ...that imagination is the faculty by which the poet conceives and produces--that is, images--individual forms in which are embodied universal ideas or abstractions".²⁸ But it is important to reiterate that the imagination is not something Wordsworth sees as limited to the poet: his wish--more than wish, his demand--was that the expansion of the imaginative faculty be promoted in everyman. Believing that education was a vehicle particularly suited to the stimulation of the imagination, he complains in a letter about one of the

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"innovative" proposals for educating Britain's youth: "where-in does it [the Bell System of education] encourage the imaginative feelings, without which the practical understanding is of little avail, and too apt to become the cunning slave of the bad passions."²⁹ Wordsworth's immediate concern, as Jack Stillinger asserts, was to show that the imaginative operation, man's creative sensibility, was not mystical but psychological. Even in Wordsworth's relation of those significant "spots of time"--the climbing of Mount Snowdon in Book XIV, for example--no direct religious experience is involved.

As potentially a powerful part of each person's life, the imagination "images" the part within the whole: it fosters in the individual the capacity to envision the pattern of his growth, and it centers him in a universal context. It can only perform these functions, however, if it is allowed to grow organically from the initial "poetic spirit" to the full "creative soul." It expands as the intellectual and emotional qualities expand, and those qualities increase in fullness as linguistic capability develops. All of these processes are interrelated, and interference with any one of them has a potentially debilitating effect on another. Thus, to return to a theme discussed earlier, an individual whose cognitive, emotive, and expressive growth is least interfered with by the mechanical, analytical, and imitative forces in society is likely to develop into a deeply imaginative human being.

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Again, imagination in the humble folk is a potent characteristic:

a Man so bred
(Take from him what you will upon the score
Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes
For noble purposes of mind: his heart
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days;
His eye distinguishes, his soul creates. 30

Noble purposes of mind, a distinguishing eye, and a creating soul result from an "organic education," an education in which the child is nurtured by love, by beauty, and by fear, in accord with his innate pattern of maturation. Such an education grants the principle that substance should ripen in stages into form, rather than form artificially influencing the process of development from the outside. Such an education also recognizes that the child will create an impression of his environment as he receives it. His mind operates, in other words, both passively and actively; perceptions are received through the senses, but what is seen is also shaped by the individual's way of seeing. It is, consequently, of great importance to the individual that his expressive powers be stimulated fully since those powers are the primary means through which the individual forms a self and world view.

Wordsworth has written in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads that the genuine poet is "endued" with a greater capacity to know and feel, and to imagine than is "supposed common among mankind." Yet Wordsworth's own qualifiers are again appropriate. The poet is better equipped only in degree.

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Each person, given leave to express thought and feeling to his potential, can become a poet; language assumes a role which is at once pleasing, because it delights with the color it gives experience; and practical, because it shows a way of manipulating experiences to make them fit a coherent scheme. The rustics of The Prelude, the prefaces, and The Excursion are magnificent for what they showed Wordsworth: that language need not draw men away from their roots in noble passion; rather it can be honestly, forcefully, and therapeutically representative of that passion. But as his disclaimers indicate, literacy is a profoundly missed attribute of the rustic's personality. When one combines self-expression (and the inherent self-knowledge) with the ability to write, one indeed has power. One sings "a song in which all human beings join with him," rejoicing "in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion."³¹

In order to exercise this power well, Wordsworth acknowledged his need for practice, and practice he did often with a painful diligence. Viewing the process of writing itself as an organic activity, Wordsworth realized "that an artist reveals his true power":

In that considerate and laborious work
That patience which, admitting no neglect
By slow creation, doth impart to speech
Outline and substance even, till it has given
A function kindred to organic power
The vital spirit of a perfect form. 32

Writing, like the healthy personality itself, grows from the inside out. The excellent product results from a patience

with and consideration for the process which admits no neglect. Through the manifold labors of the writer, whose nurturing of the substance provides the piece's "vital spirit," the composition develops in stages into "a perfect form." There is no sense in the above of form being imposed upon substance, nor should there be. For such an imposition would contradict the models of growth which Wordsworth conceived of as exemplary--from the development of organic sensibility to the maturing of plants.

To be sure, Wordsworth has left the impression--now a Romantic cliché--that the composing of poetry occurs in fiery spontaneity. The most famous source of this impression is his observation in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads: "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." And he supports this notion elsewhere. In the first book of The Prelude, for example, he declares "poetic numbers came / Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe / A renovated spirit singled out, / Such hope was mine, for holy services" (51-54). He writes in a letter to James Montgomery that "...at no period of my life have I been able to write verses that do not spring up from an inward impulse of some sort or other; so that they neither seem proposed nor imposed."³³ In a conversation recorded by Christopher Wordsworth, the poet remarked, "Many of my poems have been influenced by my own circumstances when I was writing them. "The Warning" was composed on horseback, while I was riding from

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Moresby in a snow storm. Hence the simile in that poem, 'While thoughts press on and feelings overflow, / And quick words round him fall like flakes of snow.'³⁴ To Haydon, he writes "What I send is not 'warm' but piping hot from the brain, whence it came in the wood adjoining my garden not ten minutes ago, and was scarcely more than twice as long in coming."³⁵ Indeed Wordsworth was a firm believer in following the initial impulses to write, both poetry and prose. He knew the value of capturing the idea, feeling, or experience almost as each occurred--the freshness, vitality, and closeness to the object that such a practice would consistently supply.

The danger lies in thinking that Wordsworth's writing process ended with spontaneity. Later in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads he qualifies his statement about poetry being the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings:

I have said that 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. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on.

Here he has drawn an excellent procedure for preparing for the writing of almost any short piece of poetry or prose whose substance has as its source human experience. The series of

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stages begins with one not mentioned in the passage: the poet's observational powers are in operation everywhere. A devoted watcher of the world, the poet is constantly gathering potential material for his work. The second stage requires an atmosphere suited to meditation; and once this atmosphere--appropriately calm and undisturbed--has been achieved, the emotion which is to be the matter of the whole or part of the work may be called forth. Focused attention on the emotion gradually displaces the meditative state, leaving the writer's imagined conception of the emotion in the forefront. In this way, Wordsworth contends, the emotion is actually made to exist in the mind of the writer. The preparation described in the passage is effective to the degree that its user is able to assume a quiet, almost void, state of mind, and is able in that state to bring forth the object of contemplation with sufficient color and vividness to make it, in a sense, an animated presence in his mind. Though Wordsworth's work attests to the success he had with this process, it is by no means limited to him; nor is it limited to the calling up of emotions³⁶ or to the writing of poetry.

As to the writing itself, spontaneity is a part of but certainly not the whole of composition. Wordsworth's remarks and those of others confirm that point. In his response to Gillies' implication that the first writing on a subject is best because it is the most natural and energetic, Wordsworth affirms that "this is not a rule to be followed without

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cautious exceptions. My first expressions I often find detestable; and it is frequently true of second words as of second thoughts, that they are best."³⁷ Justice Coleridge comments on Wordsworth as a poet and writer:

he was a severe critic on himself, and would not leave a line or an expression with which he was dissatisfied until he had brought it to what he liked. He thought this due to the gift of poetry and the character of the poet. Carelessness in the finish of a composition he seemed to look on almost as an offence. I remember well, that after speaking with love and delight of a very popular volume of poetry, he yet found great fault with the want of correctness and finish. Reciting one of the poems, and pointing out inaccuracies in it, he said 'I like the volume so much, that, if I was the author, I think I should never rest till I had nearly rewritten it.'³⁸

Perhaps somewhat surprising is Wordsworth's devotion to correctness and finish, which increased in strength as he grew older but was with him from his start as a "professional" writer.

His own practice of revision was laborious and taxing. Described as working like a "slave" from morning to night correcting The Prelude, he apparently pored over the manuscript by candlelight.³⁹ In a letter to Moxon, he explains, "the labour I have bestowed in correcting the style of these poems now revised for the last time according to my best judgment no one can ever thank me for, as no one can estimate it."⁴⁰ He remarks, again to Moxon, "the value of this Edition [1836-37] in the eyes of the judicious...lies in the pains which

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has been taken in the revisal of so many of the old Poems, to the re-modelling, and often re-writing of whole Paragraphs which you know have cost me great labour and I do not repent of it."⁴¹ Finally, Henry Taylor describes Wordsworth's revisions as a process of perfecting the complete piece:

At this time he has been labouring for the last month, seldom less than six or seven hours in the day, or rather one ought to say the whole day, for it seemed always in his mind--quite a possession; and much...he has done to it [The Prelude], expanding it in some parts, retrenching it in others, and perfecting it in all. I could not have imagined the labour that he has bestowed on all his works had I not been with him at this time. 42

Important is the fact that while spontaneous composition was a part of Wordsworth's writing practice, it played a much less significant role than has been commonly thought. Though first drafts of shorter poems appear to have been rapidly composed, they were often meticulously revised, organically shaped, perfected. Longer poems he planned and proportioned in advance: "Much is to be done by rule; the great outline is previously to be conceived in distinctness, but the consummation of the work must be trusted to resources that are not tangible, though they are known to exist."⁴³ Those longer poems, particularly The Prelude, underwent a grueling series of drafts and revisions; and the intellectual operations--the focus on the object through contemplation during the prewriting stage and the exercise of the imagination while writing--were continually being engaged.

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Also important are the habits of writing which Wordsworth practiced himself and offers to others through his commentary on writing. They focus on the process rather than the product, emphasizing the organic power inherent in the creation of a "vital spirit" and its consequent "perfect form." Writing is much like cognitive development itself: if allowed to develop in accord with the dictates of its substance, the composition will grow towards perfection. And it is no accident, of course, that the developmental pattern which leads to the "creative soul" in the literate individual also leads to the making of a poet.

Wordsworth felt ambivalent about prose composition. He thought himself unpracticed in prose and therefore less skilled in its writing than in the writing of poetry. Even though that is the case, he saw no essential difference between the language of prose and the language of verse:

We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; Poetry⁴⁴ sheds no tears 'such as Angels weep,' but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of both. 45

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According to Wordsworth, the process for writing prose is the same as that for writing poetry: "They both speak by... the same organs." Their subject matter reflects--or should reflect--the same style: both are written in the language really used by men: both result from looking steadily at the subject; and both represent some worthy purpose.⁴⁶ Perhaps the most important similarity is that the matter of prose and poetry is the same: "The bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance." This idea is more eloquently and strikingly expressed in a quotation from "Epitaph 3":

Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil, to be trifled with; they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not...an incarnation of the thought, but only a clothing for it, then surely they will prove an ill gift.... Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve. From a deep conviction then that the excellence of writing, whether in prose or verse, consists in a conjunction of Reason and Passion, a conjunction which must be of necessity benign; and that it might be deduced from what has been said that the taste, intellectual power and morals of a country are inseparably linked in mutual dependence, I have dwelt thus long upon this argument. 47

In this remarkable passage, Wordsworth summarizes his attitude toward language, his conviction that writing can have extraordinary consequences for good or evil, and his philosophy of

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composition. For a variety of reasons, his comments would make an ideal opening for a contemporary text in composition theory. First, Wordsworth anticipated Vygotsky's discovery that words are not mere clothing for, but the incarnation of thought. Second, he determined that language not grounded in sincerity or stemming from self-understanding can falsify experience, thereby undermining not only individuals but eventually whole societies. Finally, Wordsworth prophesied the contemporary call for writing which does not short-circuit the connection between personality and exposition but rather combines the two. Excellence in writing, he declares, "consists in a conjunction of Reason and Passion." Thus does Wordsworth, sounding like the inspired teacher of composition he apparently was, unite poetry with prose and call for writing which mixes the expressive with the transactional, the personal with the public.

Wordsworth began with a quality immeasurable: his innate genius. Even so, the representation of his growth as a writer offers many insights to lay-writers and to writing theorists alike. He described a pattern of literacy education, for example, which has as its major premise the insistence that language be used to define, shape, and represent emotional along with intellectual experience--that language training not be limited to analytical endeavors but include a full range of human encounters with their concomitant modes of expression. This range he thought important

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because he recognized that language is not only a means of representing what is seen, but is also a way of seeing. Language users order their world through their particular way of structuring experience. They need, consequently, as versatile and abundant a linguistic background as their development warrants. Observing that expansion of the imaginative faculty occurs principally in youth, he suggested it be encouraged through the reading of good books,⁴⁸ through allowance for independent pursuits in school and its environs, and intense verbal and physical contact with peers. Though he does not present it as a writing maxim, Wordsworth noted the value of having a receptive audience for his early work. Audience support strengthened his desire to write and increased his later productivity. His own method of contemplating, composing, and revising showed him the merit of viewing writing as a process through which substance evolves into form rather than a product whose substance is made to fit a predetermined form. Finally, he realized the necessity of writing practice. One might say, in fact, that he was among the first to announce that "you learn by write by writing." Wordsworth did indeed view himself as a "Poet." But his definition may be well capsuled in Gusdorf's characterization of the healthy discourser as one who has found "the expression to fit his situation." If so, then we are all, as Wordsworth claims, poets in potential.

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NOTES

¹William Wordsworth, The Prelude: A Parallel Text, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), Book V, 224-229. All quotes will be from the 1850 text unless otherwise noted.

²For an excellent account of Wordsworth's education at Hawkshead see Mary Moorman's William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 22-86.

³James Fotheringham, Wordsworth's "Prelude" as a Study of Education (1899), 31-33.

⁴David Holbrook, Children's Writing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p.19.

⁵The Prelude, XIII, 244.

⁶Jack Stillinger, "Introduction," William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), XIII.

⁷William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," In Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.187.

⁸Coleridge quoted in Peter Coveney, The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p.88.

⁹"Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads, Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p.41.

¹⁰William Wordsworth, The Excursion, Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.25.

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¹¹Here are some lines from Wordsworth's "School Exercise":

While thus I mused, methought, before mine eyes,
The Power of Education seemed to rise;
Not she whose rigid precepts trained the boy
Dead to the sense of every finer joy;
Nor that vile wretch who bade the tender age
Spurn Reason's law and humour Passions' rage;
But she who trains the generous British youth
In the bright paths of fair majestic Truth;
Emerging slow from Academus' grove
In heavenly majesty she seemed to move,
Stern was her forehead, but a smile serene
'Softened the terrors of her awful mien.'

Poems, Volume I, ed. John O. Hayden (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p.37.

¹²Wordsworth quoted in Moorman, William Wordsworth: The Early Years, p.56.

¹³Paul D. Sheats, The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p.1.

¹⁴Told to Aubrey de Vere quoted in Moorman, William Wordsworth: The Early Years, p.57.

¹⁵Ben Ross Schneider, Jr., Wordsworth's Cambridge Education (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 68-69.

¹⁶See Schneider for a detailed analysis of these influences, "Apprentice Poet" in Wordsworth's Cambridge Education.

¹⁷Paul D. Sheats, The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, p.100.

¹⁸The complete quote is "This kind of distortion is the worst fault that poetry can have; for if the natural order and connection of the words is broken, and the idiom of the language violated, the lines appear manufactured, and lose all that character of enthusiasm and inspiration, without which they become cold and insipid, how sublime soever the ideas and the images may be which they express." The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), p.13.

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¹⁹Wordsworth quoted in Sheats, The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 100. Wordsworth's final revision of the lines is even less convoluted:

Some (hear you not their chisels' clinking sound?)
Toil, small as pigmies in the gulph profound;

in Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.6.

²⁰For a thorough account of Wordsworth's dislike for university life see Schneider, "Open Sights" and "Strong Disease" in Wordsworth's Cambridge Education.

²¹James Britton, Explorations in Children's Writing, ed. Eldonna Evertts (NCTE, 1970), p.48.

²²Wordsworth writes about words in The Prelude:

This is, in truth, heroic argument,
This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
With hand however weak, but in the main
It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
(The Prelude, III, 184-187)

Shelley, while praising the worth of inspiration, implies the inadequacy of words in the following passage from A Defense of Poetry: "...when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the Poet."

²³In a letter to Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth remarks, "...the voice...of my Poetry without Imagination [in the reader] cannot be heard." The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, V, 21, 1807, Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

²⁴"The Idiot Boy," Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.67.

²⁵"We Are Seven," Selected Poems and Prefaces, 50-51.

²⁶"Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.109.

²⁷The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, p.61.

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²⁸Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, vol. I, ed. Edith J. Morley (London, 1938), p.191.

²⁹The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, XII, 11, 1828.

³⁰The Excursion, Oxford Wordsworth, IV, 828-33.

³¹Letter to Lady Beaumont, The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, V, 21, 1807.

³²Wordsworth quoted by de Selincourt in "Introduction" to The Prelude, (Oxford, 1926), pxliii.

³³The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, I, 24, 1824.

³⁴The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, p.23

³⁵The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, VI, 11, 1831.

³⁶That is, the technique may be used to focus upon images and ideas as well.

³⁷The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, XII, 22, 1814.

³⁸Justice Coleridge in The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, p.24.

³⁹Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, p.139.

⁴⁰The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, late XII, 1836.

⁴¹The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, I, 28, 1837.

⁴²Henry Taylor in The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, p.140.

⁴³Letter to Captain Pasley, The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, III, 28, 1811.

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⁴⁴ Wordsworth's own note here is appropriate and interesting:

"I here use the word 'Poetry' (though against my own judgement) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of a more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a strict antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even if it were desirable."

⁴⁵ "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads, Selected Poems and Prefaces, 451-452.

⁴⁶ Wordsworth describes his own writing process as a shaping into purpose:

Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a purpose.

⁴⁷ "Epitaph 3," The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, 159-160.

⁴⁸ Among the books he recommends are Mother Goose, Beauty and the Beast, Fortunatus, The Seven Champions of Christendom, Robinson Crusoe, and the Arabian Nights. Included for older children are Biblical narratives and epic adventures.

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CHAPTER III

COLERIDGE'S "NOMENCLATURE OF COMMUNICATION": AN AMBIVALENCE OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Oh! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend!
If in the season of unperilous choice,
In lieu of wandering, as we did through vales
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
Each in his several melancholy walk
Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,
Led through the lanes of forlorn servitude;
(William Wordsworth, The Prelude, V, 232-241)

In this passage, Wordsworth celebrates the boyhood which he and his beloved friend Coleridge had enjoyed, wandering freely through the physical and fanciful countryside. Unlike the majority of their peers, who were obliged to follow the dictates of their masters, Wordsworth and Coleridge benefitted from a poetic childhood, growing in the language of self-awareness through stimulation from nature's beauty, human interaction, and books. Wordsworth praises the "poet's" education, and offers up himself and Coleridge as examples of its worth. There is strong reason to observe, however, that this account is subjective, giving Coleridge a Wordsworthian education which he did not actually experience.

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It is true that Coleridge describes, in his letters about his childhood to Thomas Poole, a special affinity for nature. He recounts, for example, a winter walk home with his father from a farmhouse:

[My father] told me the names of the stars-- and how Jupiter was a thousand times larger than our world--and that other twinkling stars were suns that had worlds rolling round them-- and when I came home, he shewed me how they rolled round--. I heard with profound delight and admiration, but without the least mixture of wonder or incredulity. 1

This walk represents one of the initial indications of Coleridge's desire to perceive a reality beyond that offered to the senses. Habituated to the vast, his mind apparently sensed, even at the age of six, the universal unity of which nature is the principal emblem. But this description carries little of the frantic and full delight Wordsworth experienced through his boyhood connection with nature. It is instead rather cerebral and scientific.

As a young reader, Coleridge enjoyed books as varied as Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-Killer, Robinson Crusoe, Belisarius, the Adventures of Philip Quarll, and the Arabian Nights. That such works proved fruitful ground for the growth of the imagination is testified to by his remarks about reading one of the tales in the Arabian Nights: "(the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin) made so deep an impression on me (I had read it in the evening while my mother was mending stockings), that I was haunted by spectres,

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whenever I was in the dark: and I distinctly recollect the anxious and fearful eagerness with which I used to watch the window in which the books lay, and whenever the sun lay upon them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask and read."² One of Coleridge's favorite pastimes, when not reading, was to transmute himself into those characters of whom he had been reading. He acted out scenes that had taken hold of his imagination: "cutting down weeds and nettles, as one of the seven champions of Christendom."³ His inclinations toward reading, intense dramatic play, and conversation (particularly with adults) outweighed the appeals of the natural environment.

Coleridge's reputation for a childhood love of nature stems, in part, from his commentary on the consequences of his father's death. He bewails the fact that, after that event, he was wrenched from the countryside he knew and sent to school in London, where, in 1782, he began nine years of serious schooling. He had, he laments, "a weeping childhood, torn by early sorrow from [his] native seat."⁴ He was a "depressed, moping, friendless, poor orphan, half starved," who crept to the cold rooftop of his sterile urban school and imagined himself gamboling through the fields of his rural home.⁵ Wordsworth, too, supports this characterization, calling Coleridge "a liveried schoolboy, in the depths / Of the huge city."⁶ These descriptions, however, melodramatize his condition because, as one biographer points out, "he

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possessed a highly developed capacity for bemoaning the loss of which he had never enjoyed."⁷ As a child, Coleridge was much more a dreamer, talker, and reader of books than he was a joyous truant flying through the vales, forests, and streams; his expressions of sorrow about the loss of nature and his early life in London, therefore, acquire a rhetorical rather than realistic flavor.

This observation is evidenced in self-revealing comments he makes to Thomas Poole about his life in the country before he was eight years old:

So I became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful, and inordinately passionate, and as I could not play at anything, and was slothful, I was despised and hated by the boys; and because I could read and spell and had, I may truly say, a memory and understanding forced into an almost unnatural ripeness, I was flattered and wondered at by all the old women. And so I became very vain, and despised by most of the boys that were at all near my own age, and before I was eight years old I was a character. Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth, and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then manifest. 8

If the passage is itself not overly melodramatic (it contains some hyperbole, but most of the statements are confirmed by other autobiographical materials⁹), then it presents the image of a prodigy--adult-like in language and thought, child-like in shape and behavior. Coleridge does, in fact, remark elsewhere that he had "all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits. I never

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thought as a child, never had the language of a child."¹⁰

It is unclear whether his memory and understanding "were forced into almost an unnatural ripeness" by his own doing or by the training of others. Probably it was a combination of both. It is clear, however, that his expressive talents and intellectual capability were remarkable, given his age, and far beyond those qualities in his peers. That Coleridge lived in the country seems almost incidental to the creation of his youthful "character."

Whereas Wordsworth credits the influence of good books though few, growth in nature's presence, and free expression of thought and feeling with the blossoming of the "first poetic spirit" into the healthy imagination, Coleridge claims adamantly that his sensibility and imagination were nurtured by his reading:

From my early reading of fairy tales and genii, etc., etc., my mind had been habituated to the Vast, and I never regarded my senses in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age. Should children be permitted to read romances, and relations of giants and magicians and genii? I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know of no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole. 11

On the positive side, the reading of fairy tales allowed Coleridge to pass out of the confines of the physical senses and to view the world from a variety of conceived perspectives.

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He was able, in other words, to lose himself in adopting the roles of imagined characters, to develop a love of the "Great and the Whole," and to initiate the perception of the individual in relation to the universal. On the negative side, when Coleridge's father discovered the effects works such as the Arabian Nights were having on his son--particularly those of haunting Coleridge with spectres and sending him into raptures of imagination--he burned the books. This dramatic form of rebuke, which promoted ambivalence about imaginative expression, was later refuted by Coleridge's own theory of child development. And though the elder Coleridge's discipline was cut off by his death, a different and more enduring form replaced it through Coleridge's education at Christ's Hospital, London, where he spent the years between ages seven and seventeen.

Because of his stellar performance as a student of classical languages, Coleridge rapidly advanced from the Under to the Upper Grammar School, where he became the pupil of the upper grammar master, the Reverend James Boyer. Though some biographers express the opinion that Boyer's domineering instruction provided Coleridge with much needed direction--by knocking some of the "dreamy nonsense" out of his head¹²--it is clear that certain of Boyer's "educative" techniques were severe. He was, for example, a believer in the use of the birch rod as a corrective both for behavioral and academic

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transgressions. More than once, Coleridge was to suffer from Boyer's correctives.

Most important for the purposes of this study was the deep impression made on Coleridge by Boyer's composition teaching and theory. Coleridge learned from him, for example,

that Poetry, even that of the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more, and more fugitive causes. 13

The logic of poetry surpasses that of science in subtlety and complexity because it is based on the substance of a poem and not on observable law. Because it stems from the poem's substance, this logic becomes increasingly illusive as the subject matter becomes more fugitive. Nonetheless, according to Boyer, the logic does exist; and it exists in proportion to the discipline the writer shows in structuring the work:

In truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word; and I well remember, that availing himself of the synonymes to the Homer of Didymus, he made us attempt to show, with regard to each, why it would not have answered the same purpose; and wherein consisted the peculiar fitness of the word in the original text. (BL, I)

Boyer's teaching of the internal logic of a poem helped to shape Coleridge's own organic theory. But his reading drills were to have a less positive influence.

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The analytical exercise of determining the fitness of word and phrase concentrates much more on the product than the process of creation. Emphasizing why particular synonyms are more exactly suited than others to particular contexts directs attention to the parts rather than the whole of a work. As a reading practice, it produces a consciousness of the rhetorical elements which make up the surface of a piece without necessarily stimulating the operation in the reader of that faculty which operates in the writer: the "shaping spirit," the "synthetic and magical power" of the imagination. And since "the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling" is as important to the reader's evocation of a work as it is to the writing of it,¹⁴ Boyer's practice could have a debilitating effect on the process of conceiving a whole piece. This aspect of Boyer's teaching may be said, in fact, to violate one of Coleridge's later maxims concerning poetry: "Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art."¹⁵ And Boyer complemented the analytical attention he gave to reading with a mechanical approach to the teaching of writing, both of poetry and prose.

In dealing with the students' writing of poetry, Boyer accents the worth of the middle style:

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In our own English compositions (at least for the last three years of our school education) he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. Lute, harp, and lyre, muse, muses and inspirations... were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming 'Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? your Nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh! aye! The cloister-pump, I suppose!'

A harsh and sometimes humiliating critic, who would ridicule a student's poetic effort in front of the entire class, Boyer obliged the boys to adopt a pragmatic and unelaborated voice in their poetry, thus his condemnation of language "unsupported by sound sense" and his belittling of the traditional poetic trappings. Boyer's insistence on plainness, force and dignity in writing is admirable, and Coleridge was certainly to maintain the worth of those qualities in his future literary criticism. The problem lies in Boyer's technique of showing "no mercy" to phrase, metaphor, or image of which he did not approve. The pupils, one might say, had their linguistic wings clipped before they were exercised; and instead of discovering the worth of a plain, forceful, and dignified style themselves through language growth, they had it thrust upon them through red-pencilling and derision.

Boyer's method with prose compositions was equally, if not more, rigorous. Coleridge describes one custom which he found upon reflection "imitable and worthy of imitation." Perhaps he thought it so because of the apparent discipline it instilled:

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He would often permit our theme exercises, under some pretext of want of time, to accumulate, till each had four or five to be looked over. Then placing the whole number abreast on his desk, he would ask the writer, why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis: and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the irrevocable verdict followed, the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day. (BL, I).

This method again forced the writer into steady and almost microscopic analysis of the surface of his piece: the task was meant to ensure that every sentence within a theme belonged there based on the theme's thesis. Because of the stern penalties for failure, the drill did provide significant motivation for the students to examine their writing lessons with some care.

But it also carried with it at least three serious faults which Boyer either failed to realize or chose to ignore. First, it taught a mechanical approach to writing, and almost any early writer, including Coleridge, whose concentration is on the relation of sentence to thesis must commonly produce mechanical essays.¹⁶ Second, if the writer knows that his audience is focusing principally on one aspect of the work, in this case the thesis/sentence connection, and is further aware that his audience will offer the "irrevocable verdict" based on this aspect, then most of the other qualities hoped for in a piece of expository prose--informed content, personable, interesting, appropriate style--may be forgotten, or at least less attended to. Clearly, making the kinds of

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connections Boyer insisted upon is important, but not if doing so means sacrificing other essential attributes or sacrificing enthusiasm for writing itself. Indeed, there is much that is valuable to be said for connections being drawn as a result of the substance of a piece growing into its mature form, and Coleridge addresses that point in his criticism. But at this stage in his academic and literary career Coleridge submitted to, and by his account, benefitted from this form of rhetorical training. In his praise of Boyer, he suggests the third fault with his teacher's exacting technique, the instilling of an enfeebling fear of error and imprecision: "The reader will, I trust, excuse the tribute of recollection to a man, whose severities, even now, not seldom furnish the dreams, by which the blind fancy would fain interpret to the mind the painful sensations of distempered sleep; but neither lessen nor dim the deep sense of my moral and intellectual obligations" (BL, I.). And so, Coleridge lauds Boyer for providing discipline he felt he needed both as a reader and a writer; yet he also alludes to one of the effects of that discipline: an anxiety which entered into his life even in sleep. It is an anxiety which, as I shall discuss later, may have stemmed from the abrupt and troubled transition Coleridge experienced between the freedom of his oral style and the severe limitations placed upon his initial written style.

The education provided by Boyer and Christ's Hospital was not exactly ideal as far as Coleridge was concerned. While he developed a greater sense of discipline through it, the system of achieving correctness or receiving punishment did not always stimulate him:

And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book: 17

And he most assuredly did not wish for Hartley, his son, the same education he had received himself. He intended for Hartley an education much like that Wordsworth describes in

The Prelude:

My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars,
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that external language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! He shall mold
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask. 18

Hartley, Coleridge declares, shall have that which he never had: the opportunity for innate growth in nature's presence. Unlike Coleridge's education, which was urban and analytical, treating its object as a passive receptor of rules and forms, Hartley's education was to provide "far other lore." God,

whose language is reflected in the unity of all things within nature, was to become Hartley's "universal Teacher," a teacher who shall encourage Hartley to grow through the rhetoric of spirit, thought, and feeling. More than merely a receptacle for sensation and information, Hartley's mind will assume an active role in its own growth, shaping as it is shaped; thus the reference in the last line of the passage to Hartley as a questioning spirit.

Coleridge's description of the education he intended for Hartley, conceived as he sat before the fire with his cradled son, is idealized; Hartley was to experience it only in part. But it does suggest the element which Coleridge thought was essential to the educational process. Education "was to educe, to call forth; as the blossom is educed from the bud, the vital excellencies are within; the acorn is but educed, or brought forth from the bud. In proportion to the situation in which the individual is likely to be placed, all that is good and proper should be educed."¹⁹ Education, Coleridge observes, should be an active process, cultivating--among other good and proper qualities--love and admiration, imagination, and self-understanding. Drawing out the vital excellencies requires an awareness of the cognitive and language levels of the individual:

There is a period in which the method of nature is working for [our children]; a period of aimless activity and unregulated accumulation, during which it is enough if we can preserve them in health and out of

harm's way. ...there is a period of orderliness, of circumspection, of discipline, in which we purify, separate, define, select, arrange and settle the nomenclature of communication. There is also a period of dawning and twilight, a period of anticipation, affording trials of strength. And all of these, both in the growth of the sciences and in the mind of the rightly educated individual will precede the attainment of the scientific METHOD. 20

Coleridge asserts that while the child should be protected, he should also be left to acquire language through "unregulated accumulation" during the first years. He viewed this as a period of "aimless activity," during which profuse imaginative adventure is appropriate. Coleridge's focus on the development of language skills during early adolescence, the age at which individuals begin to become conscious of themselves and their relationship to others, is quite interesting. He notes that during this period the individual establishes, through a complex process of definition, selection, and arrangement, a system of language by which he can define himself, order his experience, and contemplate and communicate his connection to society. Using language relationally is a necessary first step in building a "nomenclature of communication." When the individual matures to the point that he is able to think relationally, to use language to make the pertinent connections, he takes a tremendous step. He may then initiate his personal reconstruction of reality and contemplate his place in that reconstruction. Coleridge suggests

that at this stage in life--late childhood and early adolescence--education should be directed toward relational understanding and the language which promotes it. Ultimately, Coleridge argues, language use must be a unifying activity, connecting not separated facts, "not things only or for their sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the relations of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state of apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyse these relations with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable is to teach the science of method."²¹

In order to promote the mature language of relationship, the attainment of the scientific method, Coleridge espouses "awakening the principle and method of self-development." Influenced by Plato, Coleridge argues

that the EDUCATION of the intellect... was the proposed object, not any specific information that can be conveyed into it from without: not to assist in storing the passive mind which various sorts of knowledge most in request, as if the human soul were a mere repository or banqueting-room, but to place it in such relations of circumstances as should gradually excite the germinal power that craves no knowledge but what it can take up into itself, what it can appropriate, and re-produce in fruits of its own. To shape, to dye, to paint over, and to mechanize the mind, [Plato] resigned, as their proper trade, to the sophists, against whom he wages open and unremitting war. 22

Coleridge's allusions to organismic teaching and learning-- "germinal power," "take up into itself," "re-produce in fruits"-- are not surprising. His is, after all, "the method dictated

by nature herself, to the simple truth, that as the forms in all organized existence, so must all true and living knowledge proceed from within; that it may be trained, supported, fed, excited, but never be infused or impressed."²³ Coleridge viewed learning as sound only when it was an organic activity; the tutor is akin to a gardener who discovers what best assists in a plant's growth into full, flowering form. Nurturing techniques must match the appropriate stage in the plant's maturation process. So too must the child's cognitive levels be understood; his intellect drawn out through support, nourishment, and excitement. Educating according to what is already there in seed, or according to what can be innately appropriated, allows the individual to develop a language system which is genuinely representative of his thought and feeling. Thus, claims Coleridge, the human soul is able to "reproduce [knowledge] in fruits of its own."

Coleridge, like Wordsworth, thoroughly opposed education which mechanized the mind. Such education produced beings whose language was ingenious and specious, disconnecting their intellect from "that better light which lifts and transpierces it"--felt commitment to values. These youth Coleridge labeled

prodigies of self-conceit, shallowness, arrogance, and infidelity. Instead of storing the memory, during the period when memory is the predominant faculty, with facts for the after exercise of judgment, and instead of awakening by the noblest

models the fond and unmixed love and admiration, which is the natural and graceful temper of early youth; these nurslings...are taught to dispute and deride, to suspect all but their own lecturer's wisdom, and to hold nothing sacred from their contempt but their own contemptible arrogance; boy-graduates in all the technical, and all the dirty passions and impudence of anonymous criticism. 24

Instead of stimulating a "nomenclature of communication" which shapes the events of the past into a coherent order and from which the individual can construct a system of values as a basis for the exercise of sound judgment, this "adult" education creates sophists. Their language is a tool for disputation and derision, used as a means of dismantling their opponent's point of view without having any moral or personal commitment to their own. Instead of encouraging sensibility, feeling becoming intelligible through language, the "adult" education manufactures rhetorical technicians whose language imitates that of their lecturer and whose thoughts, far from having any basis in self-knowledge, reflect the "wisdom" of the tutor who controls them. Sounding much alike in form and content, their communications are analogous, according to Coleridge, to the anonymous critics who crucify poets and poetry (Wordsworth's for example) for no apparent reason other than delighting to do so.

Coleridge recognized that language will be self-expressive, if not self-revelatory, even when the writer may not want it to be. In the course of explaining meaning, he

describes how words suggest both the author's meaning and his disposition: "I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object, but likewise all the associations it recalls. For language is framed to convey not the object alone, but likewise the character, mood and intentions of the person who is representing it."²⁵ Because language conveys aspects of character and purpose through the way an object is represented, it is virtually impossible for a writer to avoid showing equivocation, double-meaning, or sophism if his training in language has allowed for, or taught, those practices. Ultimately, careful analysis of such a writer's work will evidence its lack of foundation in self-understanding and its absence of a self-determined set of values.

Separating Coleridge from the sophists and distinguishing his own writing is his propensity to express through the union of intellect and emotion. Such a combination is the ideal which Wordsworth held up as essential for the good writer--an ideal realizable through full use of language to aid in growth, and an ideal toward which both poets struggled. Coleridge comments, "I feel strongly, and I think strongly; but I seldom feel without thinking, or think without feeling. Hence tho' my poetry has in general a hue of tenderness, or Passion over it, yet it seldom exhibits unmixed and simple tenderness or Passion. My philosophical opinions are blended with, or deduced from, my feelings: and this, I think, peculiarizes my style of writing." Though Coleridge makes specific

reference to his poetry in the passage, the observation is applicable to his conversation--a significant source of all his written discourse--and to much of the literary criticism, the letters, and the Biographia, in which the history of his philosophic quest appears.

Coleridge's peculiarity of style, in which the highest levels of abstract thought are expressed through the filter of his sensibility, is one marked out by Britton, Moffett, Emig, and Judy as an eminently desirable goal of literacy training. The union of thought and feeling yields, in Britton's terms, expository writing with the vigor, the personality of the writer.²⁷ According to Moffett, it allows for writing about decentered topics with a well-developed sense of the writer's ego-centered origins.²⁸ Janet Emig might characterize the combination as signalling the ability to write in "extensive" discourse modes from a "reflexive" point of view.²⁹ And Stephen Judy might describe it as a healthy application of "private" language versatility to the forum of public discourse.³⁰

Coleridge (with Wordsworth) appears to be among the first to advocate that literacy training include self-expressive forms, among them the writing of poetry, during the years when language assumes the principal role of modifying, shaping, coloring, and unifying an individual's personal and social experience.³¹ Such training offers the individual the advantage of carrying a strong self-conception into the practical,

professional, and philosophical environment he must face as an adult. He adopts, so to speak, a rhetoric of human affairs based upon a rhetoric of the self. Knowing his own values, attitudes and commitments, and having the language to express each, his discourse displays a style energetic, personable, and sincere. Not an equivocator, he makes his audience work no harder than the substance of his discourse demands; yet he is aware of sophism, stereotyping, and equivocation when exposed to it in the discourse of others. This language user is, admittedly, part of an ideal world and the product of an ideal system. In a Boyerian teaching world, establishing an individual style necessitates, as Gusdorf remarks, a rediscovery of speech "thanks to a discipline that returns [one] to himself." And that rediscovery requires a painful revolt against the language convention which has been drilled into him over the course of many years.

Coleridge is one who seems to have made that rediscovery and to have achieved one of the prime outcomes for language development: a self-understanding thorough enough to particularize the discourse devoted to subjects far from the self. For Coleridge, pursuit of all manner of philosophic systems became the matter of personal experience. In search of universal coherence, his intellect played upon a wide range of abstractions; the more agile his mind became through the growth of his linguistic prowess, the more complex became the ideas he pursued. Coleridge may be said, however, to have

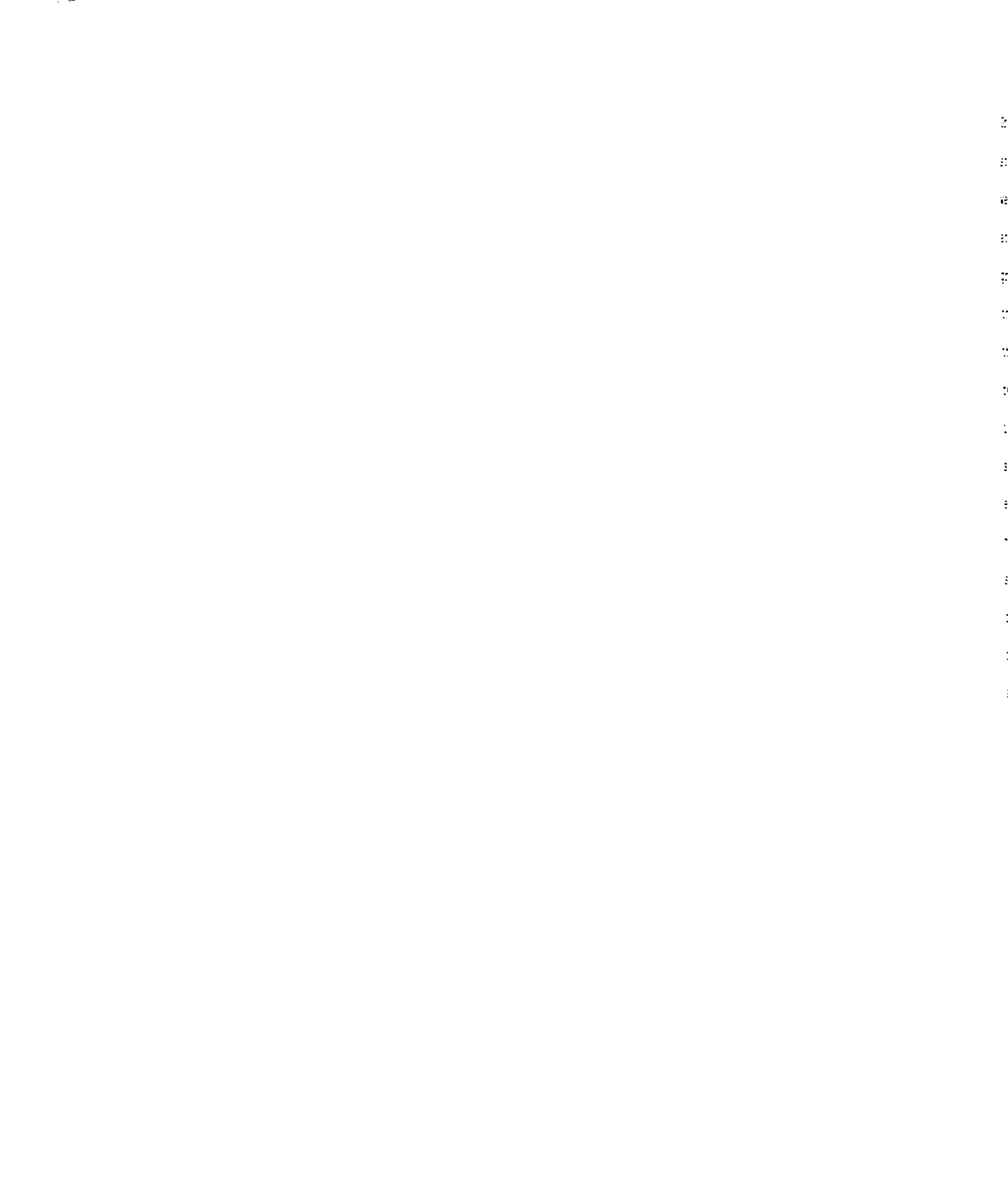
undertaken this pursuit and developed his style in spite of, and not because of, his formal education, which little resembled in practice what he later proposed in theory. His education was early filled with drills in reading and writing, and he was, by his own account, often numbed into semi-attentiveness by the activities of the classroom.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, he believed that education had the potential, theoretically at least, to draw out the "vital excellencies" within. If that potential were to be realized, however, reading and writing needed to be thought of as the primary means, and not the ends, of the educational process: "for it was not merely a degradation of the word Education, but an affront to human nature, to include within its meaning, the bare attainment of reading and writing; or of Latin and Greek."³² In his opinion, reading and writing skills should help stimulate and direct the mind's creative energies. They should increase the individual's ability to pursue knowledge actively, for "To know is in its very essence a verb active."³³ When the mind is passive, it is unable to place the multitude of human experiences, "the confluence of innumerable impressions in each moment of time," into any cohesive pattern. Moments fall into inconsequence because of their blurred and monotonous smallness. When it is active, on the other hand, the mind, "combining many circumstances into one moment of consciousness, tends to produce that ultimate end of all human thought and feeling, unity."³⁴ To put

the matter in construct psychologist George Kelly's terms, without the creative capacity to represent experience, to construct patterns, "the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it."³⁵

According to Coleridge, the main unifying power the individual possesses is his imagination. The imagination, as he explains in his famous passage in the Biographia, is composed of two parts. The primary imagination Coleridge holds to be "the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am."³⁶ In some important respects this imaginative function is similar to Wordsworth's "first poetic spirit." The very act of perception becomes an act of creation for each individual. The perceiver is both the receiver and the creator of the object. A bringing into existence of the external world, his act of creation repeats in the finite mind the cosmic act of creation. And through language the perceiver is able to give life, shape, and relationship to the things of the world. The use of words is, therefore, intimately connected to the development of the primary imagination.

For Coleridge, words are not mere denotative cyphers: "is thinking impossible without arbitrary signs? and--how far is the word "arbitrary" a misnomer? Are not words...parts and germinations of the Plant? And what is the Law of their



Growth?--In something of this order I would endeavor to destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things, elevating, as it were, words into Things, and living Things too."³⁷ Words are at once vital parts of the individual as he grows and of the growing process itself. They "live" because they are more than mere representations of things; they are, to the mind, things themselves. Initially, the mind matures as it balances reception with creativity; but it takes a crucial step when it is able to see through the medium of words. It may then, so to speak, image its own place in the stream of perceptions, establish a base, and determine an order of importance in what might otherwise be a devastatingly complex environment. And so, the primary imagination is at first the mind's activity of operating on and being operated upon by the world. It increases in power with the adoption of a language which provides a particular--or "peculiar"--means of seeing.

Language manipulates the perception of experience. The more highly elevated the manipulation the more deeply evolved becomes the imagination until what Coleridge terms the secondary imagination is achieved: "The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to

unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead (BL, XIII). The major differences between the primary and secondary imagination seem to stem from the differences in the degree to which cognition and language have developed. Coleridge's syntax suggests that, while the secondary imagination serves the same kind of function as the primary, it is more powerful in the degree of its operation and different in its mode because it is exercised consciously. It is a willed activity. If the purpose of the primary imagination is to "create" the world for the individual, the main purpose of the secondary imagination is to recreate that impression through purposefully breaking down its elements and restructuring them into a new and vital unity.

The writer who employs the secondary imagination, as Coleridge describes him 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. (BL, XIV)

More than Wordsworth, Coleridge connotes the magical quality in the power of the poet to use imagination to break down and then to reunite the aspects of his vision, and to express that operation in a tone and spirit which brings the audience to penetrate beneath the transitory surface of the material world,

to see into the life of things, and to experience "the intimate relationship between the perceiving mind and the objects of its contemplation" in a way similar to that of the poet. This power is revealed particularly

in the balance or reconciliation of discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. (BL, XIV)

As far as Coleridge was concerned, this reconciliation of opposites is the ultimate end of language development. It reflects the highest level of the manipulation of perception. The versatility shown in the ability to balance the general with the concrete, judgment with enthusiasm, self-possession with feeling, the individual with the representative gives the writer command of the expression to fit any situation. This balance also leads to rhetorical values, subordinating art to nature and presentation to substance. The manner of a piece of discourse is, in fact, determined by its matter, which, for its part, has as its source the union of writer with thing written about. Thus, the manner or style results from the imaginative and composing processes, not from the mechanical application of forms, figures, and rules.

The primary imagination, according to Coleridge, is the birthright of every man. As John Spencer Hill points out, "perception--or the Primary Imagination as [Coleridge] later called it--is integrative, poetic, and necessarily correlate with feeling; it is a creative activity in which images, ideas and feelings are fused and blended by the mind. This power is supremely human and is a part of everyman's birthright, and it makes each of us in a way a poet."³⁸ Coleridge's own qualifiers are, however, appropriate: "We all have obscure feelings that must be connected with something or other--the Miser with a guinea--Lord Nelson with a blue Ribbon--Wordsworth's old Molly with her washing Tub--Wordsworth with the Hills, Lakes and Trees--/ all men are poets in their way, tho' for the most part their ways are damned bad ones."³⁹ That all men are poets in their way but for the most part "damned bad ones" suggests the difficulty in realizing the potential of the secondary imagination, which depends on an individual's capacity to perceive through and to express the union of deep feeling and profound thought.

In potential, Coleridge was greatly endowed with this capacity. One of the events which helped him to realize it, as he explains in the fourth chapter of the Biographia, was his listening to the recitation of Wordsworth's "Guilt and Sorrow." Listening caused, by his account, a sudden revolution in his attitudes toward language, imagination, and

the connection between the two: what had "made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgment...was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, and dried up the sparkle and the dew drops."⁴⁰ What Coleridge "discovered" was how the mundanely real could be vitalized through the language of the imagination, which represents the object in a way that makes it identifiable in the world of things while at the same time modifying, coloring, and shaping it so that it becomes part of a universal pattern. This language belongs at once to the writer, because it manifests his personal process of thinking, meaning, and composing; and to his readers, because he is able either to tap into their nomenclature of communication or to expand it to include his own.

If Coleridge's poetic soul had "fair seed time," it was fostered by his reading, imaginative reading in general and the reading of poetry in particular. As to his own growth as a poet he comments: "A youth might devour with avidity without comprehending the excellencies of Young and Gray; I recollected the innocent and delightful intoxication

with which I read them; the feeling was as necessary to a future Poet, as the bud to the flower, or the flower to the seed."⁴¹ Very important to the natural process of this development, however, is the avoidance of the dissection of a poem to determine the "excellencies" of its parts--its themes, figures, and form. Instead, a poem should be read for the delight and insight it provides the readers, given their age levels and interests. In fact, Louise Rosenblatt's application to the reader of the role which Coleridge gives to the writer would no doubt have been approved of by the poet. She observes that a reader, like the writer, must face a unique task of selection, synthesis, and interpretation. "As 'information theory' studies remind us, there is an element of experiment, trial and error, in construing even the most banal verbal communication. In the reading of a literary work of art, this activity is raised to the level of a creative adventure. In this sense, the 'shaping spirit,' the 'synthetic and magical power,' of the imagination, which Coleridge attributed to the poet, can also be claimed for the reader."⁴² For Coleridge, reading was an active, synthesizing process, stimulating an awareness of perspective. Literature was not meant to be dissected, but to be responded to personally and creatively. Far from being part of the educational assault on the child--through which drill and exercise produce the rhetoric of "goodness,"⁴³ reading should stimulate imaginative perspective, carrying "the

mind out of itself" and showing "the possible of the good and the great in the human character."⁴⁴

William Godwin, an admired contemporary, expresses opinions similar to those of Coleridge (and Wordsworth). He attacks educators who teach children things which can be learned at any age, while failing to cultivate that most important quality--the imagination. Such cultivation, he argues, must begin in childhood:

Without imagination there can be no genuine ardour in any pursuit, or for any acquisition, and without imagination there can be no genuine morality, no profound feeling of other men's sorrow, no ardent and persevering anxiety for their interests. This is the faculty which makes the man, and not the miserable minuteness of detail about which the present age is so uneasy. Nor is it the only misfortune that these minutenesses engross the attention of children; I would proscribe them from any early share, and would maintain that they freeze up the soul, and give a premature taste for clearness and exactness, which is of the most pernicious. ⁴⁵

Imagination lends the originality, energy, and personality to any project or commitment. It provides a way of perceiving; at the same time its language shapes, orders, and interprets perception. As Cocteau, Sontag, and Gusdorf characterize the term style in their works on language, Godwin observes that imagination "makes the man." Without imagination, or one might say "with an imagination for correctness," the individual is prone to see things minutely and to express himself mechanically. Prematurely, his taste is for clarity and precision. His soul, the spirit and expression of the self,

is frozen up; and what remains is form without substance, both in discourse of the individual and perhaps in the personality itself. Such is the result Wordsworth implies when he laments that shades of the prison house close upon the growing boy and the effect Coleridge intends when he describes the sophistic prodigy. These types are poets, but "damned bad ones." Their style is uniform and predictable; or, if it is flamboyant, it is so mainly to call attention to themselves. Their imaginations focus on the world in its parts and they group according to predetermined stereotypes rather than according to vital, fresh recreations of parts into a coherent whole.

The exercise of the process of recreation through the secondary imagination, or in Gusdorfian terms the development of a highly individualized style, is a difficult and contentious activity. Coleridge implies something of the contentiousness first hand in his brilliant and telling description of the power of the secondary imagination. That power "untamed" provides a vision of all things, of which he is a part, dynamically fused:

O! the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere--
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument. 46

After pausing to give these thoughts, "uncalled and undetained," their personal context, he continues with a paragraph which modifies and interprets the passage just quoted:

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
 That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
 Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
 At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

Coleridge's composition reflects the function of the secondary imagination in that it has bound the minute to the universal and has animated all with its own expression. This activity and its outcome, however, may be viewed as exceeding customary boundaries--or revolting against convention--since it imparts a pantheistic view or, worse, the poet's assumption of a divine role.

The latter is what Coleridge's immediate audience for this composition, his wife Sara Fricker, apparently accuses him of when she reproves him for "such thoughts." And Coleridge seems to accept the reproofs as justified, given the depth of his imaginative transgressions: "Well hast thou said and holily dispraised / These shapings of the unregenerate mind." Because Coleridge himself labels his thoughts "unregenerate" (meant, presumably, in the spiritual sense), it seems that he is aware of the potentially egoistic heights to which such self-expression can lead and is frightened by the consequences. He, therefore, assures Sara that he will return to the humble fold:

[The Incomprehensible] with his saving mercies
 healed me,
 A sinful and most miserable man,
 Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
 Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honored Maid!

In the confines of this poem, Coleridge disciplines his re-creative capability and settles into an expression of the relationship of man to God which is certainly less disturbing to his audience and perhaps less frightening to himself.

A few more examples will suffice to suggest the nature of the controversy stemming from the expression of insights shaped through the secondary imagination. In the poem "Christabel," the poet Bracy has a vision which indicates metaphorically the union between innocence (the pure Christabel) and experience (the corrupt Geraldine):

I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers! 47

Within the plot of the poem, Bracy's dream foretells disaster; Christabel will be bewitched by Geraldine and presumably pursue ways of evil. Within a context inspired by the secondary imagination, however, the union is potentially quite positive, representing a fusion of opposites to recreate a complete being. Christabel's need for Geraldine reciprocates Geraldine's need for Christabel because of the one-dimensional quality of innocence without experience. Dual difficulties arise, however. First, Bracy does not seem to understand the deeper meaning of the dream; or, if he does understand it, he fears its implications, since this reconciliation of discordant

elements is clearly extraordinary. Second, whether he recognizes the dream's significance or not, his report has no effect on the less imaginative Sir Leoline. Leoline's shallow and sentimental way of perceiving things causes him to mistake Geraldine's appearance for reality, and he only "half-listens" to the prophetic warnings of the bard. The first difficulty stems from the poet himself: he fails to interpret his vision, either out of inability or anxiety. Thus he becomes the medium for the message without having full command of it or its expression. The second difficulty is with the listeners (in this case Leoline): because of their generally narrow and stereotypical point of view they rarely read beyond the surface, into the heart of things.

Something of this same type of relationship between the poet, his vision, its expression, and the audience exists in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The Mariner is inspired, one might rather say forced, to recite the account of his experience to one who he knows is in need of such teaching. The act of pouring forth his tale displays the therapeutic function of language, which brings to the surface and structures into coherence painful experiences that might otherwise debilitate us psychologically:

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
 With a woeful agony,
 Which forced me to begin my tale;
 And then it left me free. 48

As might be expected, his expressive capability increases when he recounts the experience:

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

Despite the apparent benefits of this operation, it has an oddly mechanical flavor to it. It may be likened to the playing of an animated--if aged--phonograph, which wrenches itself on, voices the appropriate recording, and shuts down with a sigh when the message is delivered. Appropriate to this comparison is the Mariner's seeming lack of alteration of the narrative to fit his mood or the character of the audience. The substance, form and mode of delivery appear to remain constant; only the audience changes.

It is true that the Mariner's tale reflects some of the insights of the secondary imagination. He is able not only to exist in relation to the ebb and flow of other things (e.g. to bless the watersnakes "unaware"), but to become conscious of his existence in that relationship (e.g. to realize that he had blessed the watersnakes). His recitation also shows an awareness of the harmony between the general and the concrete, the representative and the individual. The sounds of the spirits darting about him on ship board, for example, are at one time mixed and then individual: "And now, 'twas like all instruments, / Now like a lonely flute" (363-364).

These insights, however, seem to have little impact on the Mariner beyond his relief in relating them. The moral he offers as a result of this profoundly moving experience smacks of the "goodyness" Coleridge once complained was the consequence of instilling the mechanics of virtue:

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

There is little at the end of the poem to indicate that the Mariner has evolved much more than a trite understanding of what has happened to him. And his almost mechanical repetition of the narrative tends to support the observation that he has not grown much, in a sense redefining the adage that until man fully comprehends his errors he is bound to repeat them. For the wedding guest's part, his response seems little more than a cliché: "A sadder and a wiser man, / He rose the morrow morn" (624-625). Perhaps these peculiarities result from Coleridge's clamping an orthodox moral on the conclusion "of a work of pure imagination."⁴⁹ In any case, the conclusion does constrict the imaginatively complex substance of the poem into an easily manageable moral channel, thus initiating a "correct" response from the Mariner's immediate audience, the wedding guest, and a more accepting reading by the public. It may be, as Walter Jackson Bate remarks, "one of the merits of the poem that, instead of having the Mariner mount the chariot of prophecy, Coleridge to the end keeps

decorum."⁵⁰ Keeping the decorum expected by an audience and shaping the creative imagination to fit the patterns of written discourse are, however, difficult and often frustrating compositional tasks--tasks at which Coleridge struggled.

Finally, in "Kubla Khan" the fusion of opposites--manifested in the image of order, "the sunny pleasure dome" united with chaos, "those caves of ice"--illustrates the potentially tense relationship between the writer and the public. The composition of this piece, Coleridge explains, took place in a visionary sleep, opium induced: "The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On waking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved."⁵¹ This composing process was unfortunately interrupted when "a person on business from Porlock" arrived and detained Coleridge for about an hour. When he returned to his work, he found that "though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away...."

Coleridge was rarely to experience the visionary power and creative energy which directed the composition of "Kubla Khan." The closing lines of the poem, in fact, call for a magical protection of the poet who is in the midst of just such inspired composition:

Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
 That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
 And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honeydew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise. (41-55).

To achieve the maximum height of inspired self-expression, to bring out of a devalued language the "restitution of the word"⁵²--to "build that dome in air, / That sunny dome! those caves of ice!"--the writer requires isolation from the distractions of the mundane world. When composition occurs in a quiet, contemplative atmosphere and through the modifying focus of the secondary imagination, the writer becomes a magical and even dangerous human being: magical in the sense that his language reconstructs perception so that others may share in his unique vision; dangerous because doing so gives him almost divine (or demonic) status. Blasphemously, his creative process parallels microcosmically god's creative process in the universe. Consequently Coleridge seems to

suggest, in the lines about protecting the poet, an equal protection for those outside the circle; it is they, after all, who appear to have weaved the circle, not the poet. This may again hint at Coleridge's ambivalence about maintaining decorum yet exercising full expressive power. He does not know whether to insulate the poet so that the organic process of creation may operate undisturbed, or to cage him so that the process and its product will not antagonize others who view things more narrowly and commonly.

Something of this ambivalence is reflected in Coleridge's theory of composition juxtaposed to his actual practice. As with his theories of education, Coleridge viewed composition as ideally an organic activity. M.H. Abrams points to how Coleridge's concept of the creative process and his observations on plant growth are strikingly similar. The origination of a plant in a seed suggested to Coleridge the primacy of the whole over the parts. And he says of non-biological phenomena: "Depend on it, whatever is grand, whatever is truly organic and living the whole is prior to the parts."⁵³ In Shakespeare Coleridge discovered "Growth as in a plant." "All is growth, evolution, genesis--each line, each word almost, begets the following...." Abrams observes that

Partial or passing comparisons of a completed discourse or poem to an animal body are to be found as early as Plato and Aristotle, but a highly developed organismic theory, such as Coleridge's, differs from such precedents in

the extent to which all aspects of the analogy are exploited, and above all in the extraordinary stress laid on this attribute of growth. Coleridge's interest is persistently genetic--in the process as well as the product; in becoming no less than in being. That is why Coleridge rarely discusses a finished poem without looking toward the mental process which evolved it; this is what makes his criticism so characteristically psychological.⁵⁴

The plant "effectuates its own secret growth," organizing itself into its own proper form. Though an artifact must be made rather than (as with the plant) making itself, the evolution of a "free and rival originality" in the mind will, according to Coleridge, stimulate the organic compositional process and its consequence--an innate form to any work: "The organic form...is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form."⁵⁵

A plant evolves into a structure which is an organic unity. The parts are "so far interdependent that each is reciprocally means and end"; "dependence of the parts on the whole" is reciprocated by "the dependence of the whole on its parts." In Coleridge's terms, this organic notion translated into the language of poetic invention becomes the following: "The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers...must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one,--and what is organization, but the connection of parts to a whole, so that each part is at once end and means."⁵⁶ So, the organization of a piece grows

out of the process of composing; the growth of its substance creates its unity, which Abrams asserts is "a self-evolved system constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole."⁵⁷

This idealized version of the processes of composition does not, however, perfectly match Coleridge's actual practice which, to put it mildly, was fraught with growing pains. Critics expend much energy attempting to understand in Coleridge "what strange impediments there were to the junction of the two ends of power and performance."⁵⁸ Leigh Hunt suggested that a lack of writing exercise made Coleridge's performance lazy and slothful. De Quincey credited opium addiction with Coleridge's compositional problems. Others blamed a combination of physical ailments and the opium meant to relieve them; still others argued that domestic discord and lack of money affected his productivity.⁵⁹ To this group I shall add one more: a general anxiety about and sometimes loathing for writing, probably influenced by the jarring transition between oral and written discourse which Coleridge experienced.

As a boy, Coleridge was a devout and brilliant talker, who astonished adults and intimidated his peers with the creative intelligence of his patter. Oral discourse allowed him a free, vital, spontaneous mode of communication, a vehicle open to full imaginative play. As is now known from the work

of such language researchers as Vygotsky, the transition from oral to written discourse is difficult under any circumstances, since written discourse is deliberate, not spontaneous; has none of the immediate advantages of an oral context; and requires conscious analytical action (the child taking cognizance of the sound and structure of each word).⁶⁰ Difficult under any circumstances, it is particularly so in cases such as Coleridge's. Already growing accustomed to the stylistic freedom of talk, he was thrust into a writing situation fraught with rules and limitations. Topics for his youthful prose compositions tended to be distanced from childhood in general and from his own interests in particular.⁶¹ His audience was, by his account, far more prescriptive than descriptive in the judgment of pieces. The environment for the transition from oral to written discourse was, in short, difficult, and must have prompted his feelings of comfort with the former and discomfort with the latter.

This discomfort, at times extreme, was to remain with him throughout his career. Coleridge's friends remarked on his avoidance of composition and his delight with talk. Charles Lloyd, who lived with Coleridge for several months, observed in a letter to his brother: "If he is excited in company, he will pour forth, in an evening, without the least apparent effort, what would furnish matter for a hundred essays--but the moment that he is to write--not from present impulse but from pre-ordained deliberation--his powers fail

him; and I believe there are times when he could not pen the commonest notes."⁶² "In the same proportion in which he had been felicitous as a talker," De Quincy commented, "did [Coleridge] come to loathe and recoil from the subject [as a writer]."⁶³

His own assessment, in a letter to John Thelwell in 1796, reveals his attitude toward writing: "I compose very little, and I absolutely hate composition, and such is my dislike that even a sense of duty is sometimes too weak to overcome it."⁶⁴ In Chapter XI of the Biographia, Coleridge warns against pursuing writing as a career: "Never," he emphatically declares, "Never pursue literature as a trade." If one writes for pleasure rather than profit, he affirms, the "writing desk with its blank paper and all its other implements will appear as a chain of flowers...not a chain of iron." His frustration with being a professional is shown in a letter to his publisher, Joseph Cottle: "So I am forced to write for bread; write the flights of poetic enthusiasm, when every minute I am hearing a groan from my wife.... My happiest moments for composition are broken in upon by the reflection that I must make haste.... Oh, wayward and desultory spirit of genius! Ill canst thou brook a task master."⁶⁵ At times apparently the groans were so loud, the need for haste so pressing, that he reports being unable to sit at his writing desk for three minutes together.⁶⁶

Coleridge particularly appreciated the range of expressive possibilities in oral speech--the complete stylistic involvement: "It is not in written words, but by the hundred modifications that looks make and tone, and denial of the full sense of the very words used, that one can reconcile the struggle between sincerity and diffidence."⁶⁷ N.H. Coleridge, the nephew of the poet, observed of him, "more than once has Mr. Coleridge said, that with pen in hand he felt a thousand checks and difficulties in expressing his meaning; but that ...he never found the smallest hitch or impediment in the fullest utterance of his most subtle fancies by word of mouth. His abstrusest thoughts become rhythmical and clear when chaunted to their own music."⁶⁸ When his audience was small, receptive, and friendly, his talk encompassed a multitude of subjects with eloquence, imagination, and warmth. Within this context, he felt fully himself. The same was generally true when he perceived of the audience for a work of poetry or prose as limited and sympathetic. When he thought of himself as writing to a large, impersonal "public," however, he experienced the greatest checks.

The preparation of lengthy manuscripts, Raymond Howes notes, Coleridge approached with little enthusiasm, "for his method of putting together, like parts of a puzzle, fragments written under different conditions, in different moods, and at different stages in his own intellectual development, was sheer drudgery, the crudest sort of joiner's work, not creative

writing. He knew that it would be almost if not quite impossible to fuse such material into a work having unity of thought, emotion, and effect."⁶⁹ Unlike Wordsworth, who considered revision a part of the organic growth of a piece, Coleridge thought of revision as irksome and often numbing. He held his lack of constant practice responsible for his need to revise: "An author's pen, like children's legs, improves by exercise.... A man long accustomed to silent, and solitary meditation in proportion as he increases the power of thinking in long and connected trains, is apt to lose or lessen the talent of communicating his thought with grace and perspicuity."⁷⁰ The reality of writing represented to Coleridge the task of confining a vast river of consciousness to sharply controlled channels. Achieving such control--the unity of thought, emotion, and effect--was sometimes more exercise than Coleridge could bear.

In order to avoid the painful composing and revising processes, and to capture some of the conversational flavor of his ideas, Coleridge often dictated large portions of his works. Dorothy Wordsworth reported, for example, that Coleridge wrote whole numbers of The Friend "more than once in two days. They are never re-transcribed, and he generally dictates to Miss Hutchinson, who takes down the words from his mouth."⁷¹ He also dictated sections of the Biographia and some of his later philosophical essays. But he never felt

comfortable with this practice since his oral discourse would often overwhelm the written form it was meant to fit. By way of contrasting his own with Southey's sentence structure he states, "I envy dear Southey's power of saying one thing at a time, in short and close sentences, whereas my thoughts bustle along like a Surinam toad, with little toads sprouting out of back, side, and belly, vegetating while it crawls."⁷² And while the custom of sprouting phrase out of phrase, clause out of clause, image out of idea was acceptable to a listener--especially since physical movement and tone of voice helped to define meaning and since the listener had some control over the conversation--distant readers tended to respond to such syntax negatively.

As a writer for publication, then, Coleridge seems to have been frustrated by a number of barriers. Ill health, domestic problems, drug addiction, and financial difficulties are among them. But there are also the self-imposed barrier between writing for a local audience or for an anonymous public, the pulling together of materials from too many distant sources, and finally (and perhaps most importantly) the disinclination to adjust his rich, effusive, vegetative oral style to the restrictions imposed by written discourse. The printed page appeared to him too confining, Howe asserts, "a prison in which his winged words, unable to soar, too often languished and died."⁷³ Coleridge seems to have been caught in a conflict between the compositional ideal and the real.

He believed theoretically that the creative process was "organic," that a piece of writing should shape as it develops itself from within. The degree of its development necessarily leads to the degree of perfection in its outward form. His conversational style might, indeed, have lent support to the notion that substance grows into form, like the Surinam toad sprouting little toads on its back. He was able to describe a theory of organic growth and to apply it to the writing of others. But he was often unable to meet its requirements himself. In the ideal writing world of vegetable genius, the fully realized final form of the piece appears as the writer writes, after it has grown in both the conscious and unconscious mind. In the real world of writing, on the other hand, meaning is usually perfected through a series of drafts and revisions, and the growth occurs through interplay between the mind and the page; final shaping at the point of utterance rarely occurs. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge had great difficulty walking the bridge between theory and practice by adopting the view that drafting is itself an organic process.

When he did reconcile theory to practice or when the writing did not require drafts, Coleridge found his voice in the shape of such works as "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," both written for publication in the Lyrical Ballads; his abundant letters, which he considered "talk" with friends and acquaintances more than writing; the poems he termed the "Conventional Poems,"⁷⁴ which were dominated by and expressed

personal experiences; and the portions of the criticism written with the fluidity and personality of conversation but with the control of formal prose. The case of writing the "Mariner" and the first part of "Christabel" is interesting because these poems were, as Howe puts it, "distinctly written things." Their subject matter was supernatural as opposed to personal or "common." They were meant for an anonymous and presumably critical public. As such, their writing should have given Coleridge much trouble. Yet he was able to throw off his distaste for the task of writing professionally in order to complete them. Why was he able to do so?

Conditions, it seems, were exactly right to link theory with practice. First, Coleridge had the constant support and stimulation of Dorothy and William Wordsworth's company. Second, he was living in Nether Stowey, in countryside he had grown to love. Third, he organized his day to promote productivity, "From seven to half past eight I work in my garden; from breakfast until twelve I read and compose, then read again, feed the pigs, poultry, etc. till two o'clock; after dinner work again till tea; from tea to supper, review. So jogs the day, and I am happy."⁷⁵ Finally, for the writing of these works, he viewed composing and revising as necessary steps in the growth of the pieces. Wordsworth comments on Coleridge's writing during this period: "when he was intent on a new experiment in metre, the time and labour he bestowed were inconceivable."⁷⁶

During the months at Nether Stowey, in 1797 and 1798, Coleridge apparently made creative theory and compositional practice, mind and method, work in conjunction. Such was not always, or even typically, the case. What part, if any, Coleridge's own language and composition training played in this ambivalence of theory and practice is, of course, a matter of speculation. This much is certain: Coleridge did experience a brusque and difficult transition from oral to written discourse. His frustrations must have been compounded by the fact that he had already, by the time he was eight, developed a highly creative and individual oral style. Instead of evolving the expression of that style in writing, Coleridge's training prescribed a traditionally "adult" rhetorical format and levied heavy punishments if that format was not adhered to. Coleridge recognized in his theoretical material the debilitating effects of literacy training which "followed, hourly watched, and noosed" its victims. Whether or not he viewed himself as a victim of that noose, his mature style reflects an ongoing struggle to snap it.

NOTES

¹The Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vol. I, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895), p.16.

²Letter to Thomas Poole, vol. I, p. 12.

³James Gillman, The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, vol. I, 1838, p.10.

⁴Coleridge, "Sonnet: On Quitting School for College," quoted in Hanson's The Life of S.T. Coleridge: The Early Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 17.

⁵Charles Lamb, Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago, quoted in Hanson, p.17.

⁶William Wordsworth, The Prelude, VI, 276-277.

⁷Hanson, The Life of S.T. Coleridge, p.17.

⁸The Letters, vol. I, p. 12. (Coleridge's emphasis)

⁹See letters to Poole, October 9, 1797 and February 19, 1798, vol. I, pages 11 and 19.

¹⁰Coleridge in Gillman, The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, p.10.

¹¹Letter to Thomas Poole, vol. I, p.16. (Coleridge's emphasis)

¹²See Hanson, p. 19; or Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), p.6.

¹³Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (Yorkshire: The Scholar Press, 1971), Chapter I, p.8. All subsequent entries by Chapter.

¹⁴Louise M. Rosenblatt, The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p.51.

¹⁵Coleridge quoted in Rosenblatt, p.52.

¹⁶In his article, "Romantic Prose and Classical Rhetoric," John R. Nabholz describes the influence of classical rhetoric on Coleridge's training in Latin and English composition. One of the essays still preserved from his period at Christ's Hospital certainly reflects a formulaic approach to writing: It opens with a statement of the theme--"Temperance is the first step towards making our life happy." Then follows the Reason: "For from Health, which is the natural effect of this Virtue, do we derive the enjoyment of all advantages." Coleridge then provides an example: "The most exquisite viands become tasteless, and disgusting to one labouring under the gout, or any other painful, but usual effect of excess. Whilst Appetite renders the most simple food a delicacy to the temperate Husbandman." The two succeeding paragraphs present further reasons for the proposition, by citing the bodily and mental results of temperance. The fourth paragraph then presents the Contrary: "But it is impossible, that Reason should dwell in the mind of the Luxurious; over whom the Passions have absolute Command. For how could it preserve its necessary authority, when the Body is debilitated by Disease, and unruly Appetites inflamed to Madness by Wine!" The essay concludes with a Similitude: "Thus, like a Ship driven by Whirlwinds, the intemperate man drives on from one excess to another, till at last he splits on the Rock of Infamy, or falls sacrifice to Poverty and Despair. Whilst Temperance, like a skilful Pilot, guides her followers safe from all these Misfortunes to Honour, Peace, and Happiness." Wordsworth Circle, 11 (2), p.113.

¹⁷Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.242.

¹⁸"Frost at Midnight," p.242.

¹⁹Coleridge, "The New System of Education," from the Athenaeum quoted in Inquiring Spirit: A New Presentation of Coleridge from His Published and Unpublished Prose Writings, ed. Kathleen Coburn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p.84.

²⁰Coleridge, "Of Children," from The Friend quoted in Inquiring Spirit, p.76.

- ²¹Coleridge, The Friend quoted in William Walsh's The Use of Imagination (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 64.
- ²²Coleridge, "The Art of Method," from The Friend quoted in Inquiring Spirit, p.80.
- ²³Coleridge, "Of Children," in Inquiring Spirit, p.76.
- ²⁴Coleridge, Essays on His Own Times, from the Courier quoted in Inquiring Spirit, p.82.
- ²⁵Biographia Literaria, XXII.
- ²⁶Letter to John Thelwall, December, 1796.
- ²⁷James Britton, "Progress in Writing," in Explorations in Children's Writing, ed. Eldonna L. Evertts (NCTE: 1970), p.48.
- ²⁸James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968).
- ²⁹Janet Emig, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders (NCTE: 1971).
- ³⁰Stephen Judy and James Miller, Writing in Reality (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).
- ³¹See Coleridge, "Preface," Aids to Reflection; William Walsh "Coleridge and the Age of Childhood," in The Use of Imagination, 11-29.
- ³²Coleridge, "The New System of Education," in Inquiring Spirit, p.84.
- ³³Biographia Literaria, I.
- ³⁴Coleridge in The Use of Imagination, p.64.
- ³⁵George A. Kelly, A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), p.9.

³⁶Biographia Literaria, XIII.

³⁷Imagination in Coleridge, ed. John Spencer Hill
(New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), p.26.

³⁸Hill, "Introduction," in Imagination in Coleridge,
21-22.

³⁹Coleridge, Imagination in Coleridge, p.22.

⁴⁰Biographia Literaria, IV.

⁴¹Coleridge, "A New System of Education," in Inquir-
ing Spirit, p.85.

⁴²Louise Rosenblatt, The Reader, The Text, The Poem,
p.52.

⁴³Coleridge comments on books which were meant to im-
plant "virtue" in their young readers: "I infinitely prefer
the little books of "The Seven Champions of Christendome,"
"Jack the Giant Killer," etc., etc.--for at least they make
the child forget himself--to your moral tales where a good
little boy comes in and says, "Mama, I met a poor begger man
and gave him the sixpence you gave me yesterday. Did I do
right?"--"O, yes, my dear; to be sure you did." This is not
virtue, but vanity; such books and such lessons do not teach
goodness, but--if I might venture such a word--goodyness."
Quoted in Raymond Havens, The Mind of a Poet, p.389.

⁴⁴Coleridge, Imagination in Coleridge, p.165.

⁴⁵William Godwin quoted in The Mind of a Poet, p.390.

⁴⁶Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp," in Poetical Works,
ed. E.H. Coleridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁴⁷"Christabel," in Poetical Works, p.232.

⁴⁸"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," in Poetical
Works, p.208.

⁴⁹See note to "The Ancient Mariner," in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, ed. M.H. Abrams, et al (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), p.306.

⁵⁰Walter Jackson Bate, Coleridge (New York: MacMillan, 1968), p.65.

⁵¹Coleridge, "Kubla Khan," in Poetical Works, p.296.

⁵²Georges Gusdorf, Speaking (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.74.

⁵³Coleridge quoted in Abrams The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.171.

⁵⁴Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p.171.

⁵⁵Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, I, 223-224.

⁵⁶Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, I, p.223.

⁵⁷Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p.175.

⁵⁸George Saintsbury, A History of Nineteenth Century Literature (London, 1920), p.59.

⁵⁹See Richard Armour and Raymond Howes, Coleridge the Talker (New York: Cornell University Press, 1940), 8-9.

⁶⁰Vygotsky, Thought and Language (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 98-101.

⁶¹In addition to the benefits of temperance, topics for compositions included the necessity of giving up the follies and errors of youth, and the attendant self-punishment which follows "the pleasures of riotous mirth."

⁶²Lloyd quoted in Coleridge the Talker, p.9.

⁶³De Quincy quoted in Coleridge the Talker, p.10.

- ⁶⁴ Letters, I, p.181.
- ⁶⁵ Letters, I, 154-155.
- ⁶⁶ Armour and Howes, Coleridge the Talker, p.12.
- ⁶⁷ Letters, II, p.643.
- ⁶⁸ H. N. Coleridge quoted in Coleridge the Talker, 12-13.
- ⁶⁹ Coleridge the Talker, p.25.
- ⁷⁰ Coleridge, The Friend, in Coleridge the Talker, p.26.
- ⁷¹ Dorothy Wordsworth quoted in Coleridge the Talker, p.26.
- ⁷² Coleridge, Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets, ed. T. Ashe (London, 1908), p.29.
- ⁷³ Armour and Howes, Coleridge the Talker, p.36.
- ⁷⁴ Among them may be included "The Eolian Harp," "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison," "Frost at Midnight," "Fears in Solitude," "The Nightingale," "Dejection," and "To William Wordsworth."
- ⁷⁵ Letters, I, 219-220.
- ⁷⁶ Wordsworth quoted in Coleridge the Talker, p.41.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING THE EXPRESSION TO FIT THE SITUATION: A PSYCHO-RHETORICAL APPROACH

In an essay in The Teaching of English, Mary Galvin coins a term which seems particularly suited to a group of rhetorical theorists whose concern is with how language activity relates to cognitive and affective development. These "psycho-rhetoricians," as she terms them, include Jean Piaget, James Britton, and James Moffett. They see language as growing directly from human experience, and thus make rhetorical definitions and judgments in terms of individual human beings rather than discourse modes.¹ Focusing on the psychological stages of growth in the individual, they assess the language practices and capabilities manifested at each stage in an effort to determine how we make use of language--to represent the world, and then to shape the representation; to give objects a concrete identification, and then to construct them into progressively abstract unities; to shape the environment and the personality, and then to understand the relationship between the two. They are concerned not with preparing students to speak or write in any one of the formal rhetorical patterns, or with drilling into them the rules of Standard English, but rather with giving them the opportunity

for developing a firm grounding in the language of the self so that they may move to "ever widening and increasingly differentiated social contexts"² in a way natural to their development. These theorists have at their disposal a growing amount of research on which to base their proposals for the direction of literacy education. And as James Britton comments, "There lies ahead [of us] the enormous task of translating what we know of language acquisition, language development, and the nature of learning into structures by which teaching and learning may be organized."³ Indeed there is much to be incorporated into writing curricula from the works of linguists, psychologists, and composition theorists alike. The task may be "enormous." But it has deep and nourishing roots in the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, who are among the first "psycho-rhetoricians." And it appears as if much could be incorporated from their work. Much, in fact, already has been.

The remainder of this chapter explores the major connections between the language and writing theories of Wordsworth and Coleridge, who translated what they knew "into structures by which teaching and learning may be organized," and those of modern theorists. The poets studied the psychological treatises available at the time and systematically modified them through their own observations of human behavior; by so doing they were able to develop a coherent and generally accurate--by today's standards--view of cognitive,

affective, and language growth. Their conviction that the way in which an individual uses languages becomes in good part the way in which he constructs patterns of the world is a theory of personality recently elaborated. Their belief that language should be used as a vehicle for self-understanding and self-expression, before it is engaged as a tool for exploring the impersonal world, is one of the tenets on which Britton, Moffett, Judy and Emig build their compositional philosophy. That writing should be viewed as a process, through which substance is evolved into form, is of extreme importance to the poets, who thought of inspired composition as they did of the maturation of the healthy personality itself--organic growth. Finally, modern commentary on style, particularly that of Georges Gusdorf, parallels in some important ways Wordsworth's and Coleridge's discussion of the imagination.

The model of cognitive growth adopted by Wordsworth and Coleridge was termed associational or sensational psychology. Founded on the Lockean notion that all mental states have their source in experience, and expanded into a complete psychological theory by David Hartley, this model insists that there are no innate ideas, that the mind is a tabula rasa upon which is drawn ideas successively complex in nature. Ideas come into existence as products of sensation or experience. Through the process of association, according to Hartley, primary sensations are transformed, through chemical

interaction, into simple ideas and then into more advanced states of mentality. The hierarchy of mental states unfolds in the following general order: (1) Sensations, which arise from impressions of external objects. (2) Simple ideas of sensation, or "sensible" ideas, which survive after the objects causing them have been removed. The first step in the "purer" forms of thought, this stage requires the development and application of language to represent and to classify experience. (3) Complex ideas, formed out of the association of the simpler ideas. The developmental periods of life at which each of these stages manifests itself correspond to the three ages of man: the first is infancy through early childhood, which is the age of sensation; the second is childhood through youth, the age of simple ideas; and the third is maturity, the age of intellectual, complex ideas.⁴ In associationist psychology, the individual's progress is toward moral sense and spiritual perfectibility, the ultimate end of cognition.

One of the most interesting aspects of the associationist theory is its basis in the movement from ego-centered to decentered. The pattern explicated by Hartley corresponds to that observed by current theorists: from simple to complex, from concrete to abstract, from a personal orientation to an impersonal or multipersonal orientation, from activity without thought to thought with less activity, from conception of objects themselves to conception of their properties,

from literal to symbolic, from absolute to relative.⁵ Hartley is attentive to the place and importance of language in this process: "Since Words...collect Ideas from various Quarters, unite them together, and transfer them both upon other Words, and upon foreign Objects, it is evident, that Use of Words adds much to the Number and Complexness of our Ideas, and is the principal means by which we make intellectual and moral Improvement."⁶ But he focuses less on the details of language development and the consequences of that development than do Wordsworth and Coleridge.

It may be argued (and has been, in fact, in the case of Wordsworth) that the poets outline the ages of man in relation to the evolution of language. They anticipate, in some significant ways, the conclusions drawn by Piaget, Vygotsky, Luria, and Langer. Childhood language grows from the first poetic spirit--the creating of objects through perception, the possessing of objects through words; to the first configurations of thoughts with feelings--the use of language to ground the self in the flow of perceptions. This latter step marks the discovery of the disparity between the self and the outer world, and signals at once a potential loss and a gain. The loss comes with the awareness that changes within the individual do not always coincide with those in nature in "kind, degree, or point of time, that the object is not always responsive to the subject."⁷ In short, the self and the environment are no longer indistinguishable.

The gain comes through initiating the ability to manipulate experience, to establish a relational awareness, to represent the environment in increasingly complex patterns, and to cope with its abstractions.

At first, the child experiences, as Britton points out in connecting Wordsworth to Piaget, nothing other than the "me, here, at this moment" which depicts for him an undissociated whole, one that makes no clear distinction between the self, the mother's self, and the environment.⁸

Wordsworth's infant is one who is,

Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
 Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
 Drinks in the feelings of the Mother's eye!
 For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond
 Of Nature that connect him with the world.

(The Prelude, II, 236-244)

From this absolute unity, this "intercourse of touch," the child's language activity expands, "working...in alliance with the words / Which [the child] beholds." This is the stage Wordsworth terms "infant sensibility," during which feeling is turned into language. The child, Wordsworth observes, "fills the air / With gladness and involuntary songs." The individual, language, and the environment are fused; one is not distinguished from the other. This fusion is, of course, one of the qualities which makes the child a poet

and father to the man. A critical step occurs when the language user becomes conscious of his separation from the things around him.

Language may then assume a negative role by broadening the separation through multiplying distinctions and by lessening one's capacity "to know the world in coherence with the self."⁹ The step is critical because the individual's style is just beginning to take shape; and "the uniform control of after years" can, as Wordsworth argues, move swiftly to pervert the first poetic spirit. Such control may lead, if begun and sustained through the years of development, to mechanical and stereotyped responses to experience, to a lack of self understanding or the means to attain it, and to a rhetoric reflecting a model individual, the pinfold of his master's conceit, not a genuinely human being. Wordsworth believed this misdirection to be the rule rather than the exception; thus he held up the rhetoric of the rustics, and the growth which evolved that rhetoric, for emulation.

But Wordsworth did not contend that we should remain within the childhood of language, even if that were possible. Without the maturation of language there can be no maturation of the imagination, no ability--ultimately--to perceive the self in relation to the experience of the environment. There would exist no opportunity to grow into the "philosophic Mind," to construct for oneself a spiritual, emotional,

and intellectual unity in the universe; without language man is incapable of "absolute power / And clearest insight, amplitude of mind, / And Reason in her most exalted mood" (The Prelude, XIV, 190-192). The development of Wordsworth's language, his rhetoric of the self, was possible, he declares, because he recognized

In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. 10

The pattern of his language growth allowed him to sustain and augment the infant sensibility, and The Prelude itself displays (II, 269) how the poetic spirit may be nurtured into the full potential of imaginative power.

Wordsworth's perceptions of language development, as drawn from the poetry and prose, suggest a progress from nonverbal communion to verbal naming, from commentary accompanying activity to speech which narrates past actions and anticipates future ones--speech which stands in the place of things. Initiating the aptitude to construct a representation of reality, this speech patterns experience in order to explain it to the individual. Out of this level of discourse--when the language user begins to work and shape the representation--germinates the ability to verbalize abstractions, to formulate, analyze and synthesize concepts, a natural outcome of language development but also a dangerous one. For it is during this period, Wordsworth asserts, that

the "sensitive being," the "creative soul," may be lost in the lifeless mechanics of "syllogistic words" (The Prelude, XII, 84). The individual may become snared, as Wordsworth had been, by the language of "abstract science," cutting the heart off from the sources of its former strength.

The major danger with achieving the capability to think in and to express abstractions lies in the likely separation of the emotions from the intellect. "Our meddling intellect," Wordsworth declares,

Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things;--
We murder to dissect. 11

The language of dissection is a consequence of the division between head and heart, a division too often favoring the head and promoted by language training. As de Selincourt points out, Wordsworth directed his chief protests against his contemporaries in education and language theory, "who, stimulated by the enthusiasm for education kindled by Rousseau, but without his genius, devoted their lives to 'child study,' substituted for the old-time classics of the nursery, such as Robin Hood and the Arabian Nights, etc., edifying tales designed to inculcate scientific information or moral truth, and invented systems which, under a show of developing the latent powers of the child, fettered that development at every turn, and produced not the Child of Nature, but the self-conscious prig."¹² Fettered and methodically controlled linguistic development leads to the style of the

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self-conscious prig. It promotes the production of little adults, de-emphasizing the process through which language integrates the self and experience. It fortifies the analytical while weakening the relational powers. Too often language training destroys the poet in the individual, crushing the potential for perception and expression through the creative imagination, limiting the capacity to explore the self, mechanizing the vision of the universe. But such is not necessarily the outcome. And without language training there exists no opportunity for rising to the last level of growth, the "philosophic Mind," which unites through words an inward understanding with a sense of outward unity.

Coleridge focuses less specific attention on the language and cognitive development of young children than does Wordsworth. He believed that there was "a period in which the method of nature is working for [our children]; a period of aimless activity and unregulated accumulation, during which it is enough if we can preserve them in health and out of harm's way."¹³ In the infancy of childhood, Coleridge observes, "the first knowledges are acquired promiscuously." Mental growth "is not formed by the selection of the objects presented to the notice of the pupils; but by the impositions and dispositions suited to their age, by the volatile and desultory activity of their attention, and by the relative predominance or the earlier development of one or more faculties over the rest."¹⁴ Coleridge emphasizes

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the need for children to be stimulated by material appropriate to their mental, emotional, and physical levels. But he argues against presenting selected materials; rather the choice, outside of imaginative works, should be left very much to the explorations of the child. And the language growth which attends and spurs cognition, Coleridge implies, is best stimulated by the child's "unregulated accumulation."

Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge devotes little commentary to the effects of close human relationships on the maturation of words and thought. His concentration is instead on childhood as a passage from unreason to rationality. Innately, the dominating faculty of childhood is "happy delirium":

the healthful fever of the physical, moral and intellectual being--nature's kind and providential gift to childhood. In the best good sense of the words, it is the light-headedness and light-heartedness of human life! there is indeed 'method in 't', but it is the method of nature which thus stores the mind with all the materials for after use, promiscuously indeed and as it might seem without purpose, while she supplies a gay and motely chaos of facts, and forms, and thousand-fold experiences, the origin of which lies beyond the power of choice!....Promiscuously, we have said, and seemingly without design: and yet by this seeming confusion alone could nature ...have effected her wise purpose, without encroachment on the native freedom of the Soul and without either precluding, superseding, or overlaying the inventive, the experimentative, combinatory and judicial powers. 15

The greatest peril to an individual's healthy reception and recreation of nature's chaos of facts and experiences stems

from "encroachment on the native freedom of the Soul." Such encroachment ignores what language development is--"a chaos grinding itself into compatability," and attempts to fore-shorten the process, forcing the "comparing power, the judgment" into a mind not yet prepared to receive it. This almost always leads to a gap between sensibility and intellect and to a discourse style which reflects sophism, "selfish views, debtor and creditor principles of virtue, and an inflated sense of merit."¹⁶

Coleridge clearly recognized the linguistic and intellectual limitations of the young and indicated where they lay with a precision which anticipates the psycho-rhetoricians:

Reflect on the simple fact of the state of a child's mind while with great delight he hears or listens to the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. How could this be if in some sense he did not understand it? Yes, the child does understand each part of it--A, and B, and C; but not $ABC = X$. He understands it as we all understand our dreams while we are dreaming, each shape and incident or group of shapes and incidents by itself--unconscious of, and therefore unoffended at, the absence of the logical copula or the absurdity of the transitions. ¹⁷

What the child lacks is the capacity to think and express himself relationally. He lacks the "pertinent connectives" which make possible directed and socialized thought. Not yet conscious, as Vygotsky put it, of his mental operations,

the child cannot transfer such operations from the plane of action to that of language, cannot recreate them in the imagination so that they can be expressed in words. Because Coleridge argued steadfastly that education should educate rather than dictate, should gradually nurture and refine relational aspects of language through stimulation of the imagination rather than impress them through force of analytical arms, he may be said to have viewed the difference between child and adult thinking as qualitative rather than quantitative.

Thus was he emphatically aware, along with Wordsworth, of what many of his contemporaries refused to believe--that the child was not a miniature adult and his mind was not the mind of an adult on a small scale. Coleridge foresaw Piaget's argument that an individual's development and his instruction tend to be entirely separate, incommensurate processes, that the function of instruction is too much to introduce adult ways of thinking and speaking (and eventually writing) --ways which conflict with the child's own and may eventually supplant them.¹⁸ Piaget points to the process of mechanical manipulation and indoctrination which is often the means and sometimes the end of language training in the schools. And one cannot help but think that Piaget would heartily support Coleridge's recommendation that schools observe the "laws of nature in the Education of Children; the ideas of a child were cheerful and playful; they should not be palsied by

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obliging it to utter sentences which the head could not comprehend nor the heart echo; our nature was in every sense a progress; both body and mind."¹⁹ Drill in syntax, coerced adoption of causal connectors, memorization of the ideas of adults, all serve to supplant the child's development and to divorce his language from his innate level of conception. The result of such practices is a rhetoric which reflects little self-understanding or fulness of feeling, and which arises almost not at all from our personalities as a "progress."

Piaget and Vygotsky disagree about certain details in the pattern of development of thought and the verbal forms which accompany it. According to Piaget, as with Wordsworth before him, the pattern begins with autistic nonverbal thought, which does not differentiate between the self and surroundings and obeys a set of laws fully its own. From that level, it moves to egocentric thought, through which, if allowed, we give free rein to our imaginations. Egocentric thought mainly satisfies our personal needs, but it also begins to serve an adaptive function. Egocentric speech is characterized by the monologue which accompanies action and perception, as though the child were thinking aloud. The next stage, marked by progressive levels of complexity, is socialized thought, which is directed and adaptive. Between the ages of seven and nine, children start to think logically; using causal connectives, they develop the ability

to perceive relationships. The speech attending this cognitive stage, termed "socialized speech" by Piaget, presents information adapted to communicate to an audience; the child "really exchanges ideas with others."²⁰ He begins to adopt the point of view of his hearer, a step crucial to the promotion of communication. And he initiates the use of language to unify scattered impressions; his imagination organizes discrete elements of experience into groups, working on his representation of the world and creating a basis for later generalizations. Piaget asserts that, "As we pass from early childhood to the adult stage, we shall naturally see the gradual disappearance of the monologue, for it is a primitive and infantile function of language."²¹

On this point--the disappearance of egocentric speech, the monologue--Vygotsky disagrees with Piaget. According to Vygotsky, the child learns to speak in the to-and-fro of talk with those about him. Once he has learned to speak he uses speech to serve his own development--as an aid to activity and a cataloguer of perception. Social speech gets progressively more sophisticated while speech for oneself becomes less communicative, more individualized, "better able to serve the particular purposes and particular interests of the particular child."²² Social speech and egocentric speech develop in opposite directions. The monologue does not fall out of use and fade away as Piaget contends; instead it becomes inner speech, the "instrument of

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thought in the proper sense--in seeking and planning the solution."²³ Inner speech in the adult represents his thinking for himself rather than adapting to social situations; it serves the same function as egocentric speech in the child. It also shares the same structural characteristics; that is, it omits to mention what is obvious to the speaker, changing eventually into an abbreviated and individuated code. A decreasing vocalization of egocentric speech denotes a developing abstraction from sound, the child's new faculty to "think words" instead of pronouncing them, and this process results in the code (Vygotsky, 135). Inner speech turns into inward thought (purely for oneself); external speech is thought turned into words through the operations of the imagination. Each activity is related and influences the other.

Though they differ on significant details of the pattern, Piaget and Vygotsky agree on the general direction of cognitive and language development and the reciprocity of each. Interdependent, each evolves into progressively higher levels of abstracting capability. Piaget and Vygotsky also concur on the process of mastering speech. A child, they observe, starts with one word, then connects two or three. From simple sentences he builds increasingly complex ones, speech growth proceeding from the parts to the whole. Semantically, on the other hand, the child starts from the whole, and only later begins to master the separate

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semantic units, the meaning of words, and to divide his formerly undifferentiated thought into those units (Vygotsky, 126). How are Piaget's and Vygotsky's empirical observations and the conclusions based on them similar to the commentary of Wordsworth and Coleridge? First, perhaps in the main because of Hartley's influence, Wordsworth and Coleridge describe cognitive and affective development as progressive and active, evolving from the simple and ego-centered to the complex and socially centered. Second, perhaps in part because of Hartley but in the main because of their own interest, they paid considerable attention to the development of language and its reciprocal relationship to thought. Wordsworth concentrated more on the language of early childhood, Coleridge on that of later childhood. But each recorded the distinguishing power of words, each observed a form of the running commentary, and each noted the advent of relational language, marking the ability to think conceptually. Third, the poets discussed the kind of distinction between perception and language drawn by Piaget and Vygotsky. That is, the infant sees the environment as undifferentiated until words break perception into semantic units, a movement from the whole to the parts. For its part, language moves from naming aspects of the environment to connecting them--from the parts to the whole. Wordsworth and Coleridge, like Piaget after them, argue convincingly that everything possible should be done to insure the integrity

of the self during these dramatic periods of disintegration and reintegration. Fourth, because of their focus on the growth of language and mind during the years from infancy through young adulthood, they may be said to recognize, along with modern developmental psychologists, the extreme importance of these years not only to the rhetoric but to the very character of the adult. Finally, acknowledgement of this extreme importance led Wordsworth and Coleridge, as it would later Piaget, Britton, Moffett, Judy and Emig, to elaborate theories of language training which allowed for the examination and expression of the self with the expansion of the intellect. Why is this connection between Wordsworth, Coleridge and these twentieth century language developmentalists significant? It is significant because it lends much deserved empirical credibility to the observations and theories of the poets; and, of greater consequence, it provides a firm foundation from which to build a viable compositional philosophy.

Language begins to shape environment when words come to rely less and less on present situations. The stage at which this occurs corresponds to Hartley's age of simple ideas, when ideas survive though the objects producing the sensations are absent. Words start to serve a symbolic function, as "material furnished by the senses is constantly wrought into symbols which are our elementary ideas."²⁴ Because this stage opens itself naturally to imaginative

activity and because such activity is so consequential to human development, Hartley, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and a host of modern theorists all place emphasis on initiating it in early childhood and enriching it into adulthood. Hartley remarks,

The pleasures of the imagination are the next remove above the sensible ones, and have, in their proper place and degree, a great efficacy in improving and perfecting our natures. They are to men in the early part of their adult age, what playthings are to children; they teach them a love for regularity, exactness, truth, simplicity; they lead them to knowledge of many important truths relating to themselves, the external world, and its author; they habituate to invent, and reason by analogy and induction; and when the social, moral, and religious affections begin to be generated in us, we may make much quicker progress towards the perfection of our natures by having a due stock of knowledge, in natural and artificial things, of relish for natural and artificial beauty. 25

It is clear that Hartley viewed imagination as a vehicle for self-understanding. And though some of Hartley's pedantic and mechanical--one might say utilitarian--functions for the imagination may have been disagreeable to Wordsworth and Coleridge, his insistence on its importance in the growth toward spiritual perfection would certainly have been supported by the poets. In its enlightening power--which leads people to essential truths relating to themselves, the environment, and God--and in its power to aid in generating what Hartley calls the higher mental orders, the imagination is one of the most potent influences in the shaping of human life.

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Hartley acknowledges a connection between imaginative language and subsequent intellectual developments:

It deserves particular notice here, that the language used in respect of the ideas, pleasures, and pains of the imagination, is applicable to those of moral sense, with a peculiar fitness and significancy, as vice versa, the proper language of the moral sense does, in many cases, add great beauty to poetry, oratory, etc., when used catachrestically. 26

Here he refers to the appropriateness of the language of the imagination to the faculty of moral sense, and he suggests how the language of moral sense elevates the products of imagination: poetry, oratory. One senses, however, that Hartley's impression of the language expressing the operations of the imagination is rhetorical rather than representational. That is, while he saw the imagination as a quality of mind and a significant and pervasive condition of healthy cognitive development, he characterized its language as a passive "thing" which may be applied in various verbal situations, rather than an active process which recreates perception. Apply this tool, he seems to suggest, to treatises on or stemming from the higher levels of being. And he exposes a certain bias and rigidity in his use of the term "catachrestically." The language of the moral sense, though effective in the works of the imagination, is misused in such works. Its application to them, he implies, somehow lessens its dignity.

Such attitudes were clearly not shared by Wordsworth and Coleridge, especially after they developed their mature styles. Though Wordsworth has been accused of remaining Hartleyan throughout his career,²⁷ Havens' comments about Hartley's influence are probably close to the truth: "[Associationist] conceptions were held when Wordsworth began to write, and were presumably accepted by him before 1797. But when he found himself he turned against them as completely as he did against analytical reason. Indeed, the two seem to have been closely connected in his mind since he regarded analytical reason...as passive and hence greatly inferior to man's noblest attribute, imagination, the distinguishing quality of which is activity, creativeness."²⁸ What Wordsworth very much supports in Hartley is his notion of life as a progress through succeeding complex states of being.

This progress can be hindered or interfered with much to the detriment of the healthy maturation process, the process which leads to the "philosophic Mind." Thus does Wordsworth, in Book V of The Prelude, argue against the adult mind meddling with the mind of the child and forcing its alien interpretation on the child's experience. And thus does he insist on preserving the integrity of youth:

To expect from youth these virtues and habits, in that degree of excellence to which in mature years they may be carried, would indeed be preposterous. Yet has youth many helps and aptitudes for the discharge of these difficult duties, which

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are withdrawn from the more advanced stages of life. For youth has its own wealth and independence, it is rich in health of body and animal spirits, in its sensibility to the impressions of the natural universe, in the conscious growth of knowledge, in lively sympathy and familiar communion with the generous actions recorded in history, and with the high passions of poetry; and above all, youth is rich in the possession of time, and the accompanying consciousness of freedom and power. 29

Full and fruitful cognitive development depends on guidance and stimulation appropriate to the stage the individual happens to be in. Bullying a child into youth or a youth into the semblance of maturity through the gross application of educational weapons such as adult language and virtue drills is debilitating both to the subject and to society. As a consequence of this understanding, Wordsworth adopted Hartley's theory of development in so far as it represented a coherent model for the organic growth of the mind.

In so far, however, as it is a passive theory, in which the individual has no control over who he becomes but is created--"act of thought and attention" and all--out of a blind mechanism, Wordsworth grew to disagree. He acknowledges Hartley's influence in his description of the child:

For feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds. (The Prelude, II, 255-260)

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But even in the same passage he adds to the association of feelings the child's ability to create through perception and later through language. This creative capacity Wordsworth terms the "first poetic spirit"; it is the imagination in its initial form, and it evolves into the mind's ultimate constructing process, "carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence."³⁰ In its most advanced form, imagination is the mind's "absolute power" and "clearest insight." As it turns thought into meaning through language it becomes the personal impression and expression of the individual's relation to the world. As such it is much more than the passive result of chemical associations; it is the way a person perceives and the rhetoric he employs to restructure perception.

Coleridge, even more than Wordsworth, objected to the passive character of Hartley's theory. Effectively sarcastic, Coleridge disputes the Hartleyan notion that personality manifests itself through the peculiar association of elements by using, as an example, the composing of his own argument against that notion:

Yet according to [Hartley's] hypothesis the disquisition, to which I am presently soliciting the reader's attention, may be as truly said to be written by Saint Paul's church, as by me; for it is the mere

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motion of my muscles and nerves; and these again are set in motion from external causes equally passive, which external causes stand themselves in interdependent connection with everything that exists or has existed. Thus the whole universe cooperates to produce the minutest stroke of every letter, save only that I alone, have nothing to do with it, but merely the causeless and effectless beholding of it when it is done. 31

Carried to the extreme Coleridge ridicules here, Hartley's theory allows for no act of will on the part of the individual. Everything is set in motion by external causes; the only action the individual can take is to behold the results. Coleridge's writing and discourse in general, reduced to this level of absurdity, become the product of interdependent forces "in the whole universe"; the discourser is merely the vessel--the "motion of muscles and nerves"--for the communication of the message. Nothing of the substance of the piece, under this system, may be shaped by the writer.

But Coleridge, of course, rejected the passivity inherent in Hartley's theory. Coleridge held that man was much more than "a lazy Looker-on on an external World." "If the mind be not passive," he writes to Thomas Poole, "if it indeed be made in God's Image, and that too in the sublimest sense--the Image of the Creator--there is ground for suspicion, that any system built in the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system."³² The mind is indeed active, "combining many circumstances into one moment of

consciousness," and its natural means of expression, language, "tends to produce that ultimate end of all human thought and feeling, unity." What the imagination coadunates between the mental operations and their expression is not isolated facts, "not things only or for their sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the relation of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state of apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyse these relations with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable is to teach the science of method."³³ Developing the skill to perceive and express relationally, ripening the imagination, is to understand oneself and to take an active part in shaping one's experience in the universe.

Several modern language theorists assert the importance of language as a shaper and determiner of experience. Sapir remarks, for example, that "Language is heuristic... in that its forms predetermine for us certain modes of operation and interpretation. ...While it may be looked upon as a symbolic system which reports or refers or otherwise substitutes for direct experience, it does not as a matter of actual behavior stand apart from or run parallel to direct experience but completely interpenetrates with it."³⁴ Suzanne Langer argues that "the transformation of experience into concepts, not the elaboration of signals and symptoms, is the motive of language."³⁵ She views the "primary world of reality" as "a verbal one. Without words our imagination

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Elementary to language is its function of allowing the user to hold on to an object by means of its symbol: "A word fixes something in experience, and makes it the nucleus of memory, an available conception." But Langer observes the broader function of language:

For language is much more than a set of symbols. It is essentially an organic, functioning system, of which the primary elements as well as the constructed products are symbols. Its forms do not stand alone, like so many monoliths each marking its own isolated grave; but indeed, they tend to integrate, to make complex patterns, and thus to point out equally complex relationships in the world, the realm of their meanings.³⁶

The model of language as an "organic, functioning system" which interpenetrates experience is excellent for representing the essential connection between an individual's cognitive growth, his perception, and the rhetoric with which he represents and reconstructs the two as they expand in complexity.

Construction of reality begins with the naming of things. Cassirer points out that the "eagerness and enthusiasm to talk do not originate in a mere desire for learning or using names; they mark the desire for the detection and conquest of an objective world."³⁷ In early language growth, objects are possessed as they are differentiated. Naming brings them into existence for children.³⁸ Once children have learned to speak, they use language to serve their own

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development--their running commentary aids in their exploratory activities. Around the age of three, the child's ability to understand and to use words comes to rely less and less on cues offered by the present situation: words begin to stand in the place of things. Luria reports how "narrative speech," recounting the past, and "planning speech," anticipating action, arise from the running commentary.³⁹ This transitional stage is critically important because it initiates the use of language as a manipulator of experience.

Once man creates--through language--a representation of his world, another order of activity is open to him: he may operate directly upon the representation itself. That is, he may go back over past events and interpret them; he may then predict things to come based on his interpretations. This operation marks the initiation of a personal style, an individual way of making sense of, finding recurrent themes in, the monotonous flow of the universe.⁴⁰ Personal construct psychologist George Kelly comments on the process of making sense of the universe:

Man looks at the world through transparent patterns or templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. The fit is not always very good. Yet without such patterns the world appears to be such an undifferentiated homogeneity that man is unable to make any sense out of it. Even a poor fit is more helpful to him than nothing at all.

Let us give the name constructs to these patterns that are tentatively tried on for size. They are ways of construing the world. They are what enables man, and lower animals too, to chart a course of behavior, explicitly formulated or utterly inarticulate, consistent with other courses of behavior or inconsistent with them, intellectually reasoned or vegetatively sensed. (Kelly, 8-9)

The human construction of experience is very much dependent upon language, which permits man to create and communicate "his own way of seeing the world in which he lives." Kelly advocates the psychology of personal constructs because it is not passive; "it emphasizes the creative capacity of the living thing to represent the environment, not merely to respond to it" (Kelly, 8).

Kelly's theory is particularly viable because it confirms and complements the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, Luria, Sapir, and Langer. As children grow into adolescents, they develop increasingly complex representations of reality and they construct those representations into relational patterns which chart their course in the flow of experience. Like Kelly, Wordsworth and Coleridge determined and described the human being's creative power to represent the environment. They realized, as Sapir did later, that language does not stand apart from experience but interpenetrates with it while its forms predetermine modes of observation and interpretation. With Suzanne Langer, the poets viewed language as "an organic, functioning system" whose structures,

as they mature, integrate the self with the other, and "point out equally complex relationships in the world." And they certainly preceeded Langer in asserting the essentiality of words as the distinguishing and binding expression of the imagination. The connection between Wordsworth, Coleridge and the modern language theorists is quite important. As its core is the basis for creativity itself; for if our reality is principally a verbal one and if our cognitive and language growth rely upon and interpenetrate each other, then the way in which we reconstruct through words what we perceive through the senses is both our process of creation and our affirmation of self. If our reconstructions are rigidly controlled and uniformly structured by those who have direct influence over our life in language, we are likely to reflect such control and structure in our vision of the relational patterns of experience. If, on the other hand, our reconstructions take a variety of forms and, rooted in first hand experience, mature through the stimulation provided by adopting various roles,⁴¹ we can expect to develop an open, sensitive and capable relational vision.

The expression of this relational vision is, really, the rhetoric of the self. It is language used to define, understand, modify, and recreate the self as it experiences the environment. One of the foremost rhetoricians of the self is, of course, William Wordsworth; and one of the greatest formulations of that rhetoric is The Prelude. Wordsworth

writes, in summarizing his representation of the growth of his mind, that

[Imagination] hath been the feeding source
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed:
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and the face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

(The Prelude, XIV, 193-205)

That Wordsworth uses the writing of The Prelude to define, understand, modify, and recreate the self and its relation to the world is obvious. The poem is one of the ultimate manifestations of what Kelly calls a personal construct: its writing displays the process of the poet creatively representing a unified image of his maturation. All is envisioned in distinction and cohesion. Each detail merges in coherence with the development and depiction of the whole being. The Prelude is, therefore, at once the act and the result of language arranging the imagination's lense on experience. Yet as personal as The Prelude is, it is clear that the poem was written to connect with an audience.

Wordsworth supported the growth of a natural language--a rhetoric of human experience--in everyman. Command of such a rhetoric is a principal quality of the "poet," whether he writes prose or verse. As Wordsworth states in the "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads, "among the qualities...principally

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conducting to form a poet, is implied nothing different in kind from other men, but only in degree." And in The Prelude he argues eloquently for the universal nurturance of the poetic spirit, asking

Why is this glorious creature to be found
One only in ten thousand? What one is,
Why may not millions be? what bars are thrown
By Nature in the way of such a hope?
Our animal appetites and daily wants,
Are these obstructions insurmountable?
(XII, 87-92)

Man's basic needs met, there is nothing necessarily to hinder the individual's growth into a fully expressive, wholly integrated human being. Nothing necessarily. But an atmosphere of healthy emotional, mental, and moral evolution is impossible without the rejuvenation of language, a throwing off of the stale, conventional imitative forms and the adoption of an expression to fit one's situation.

Asserting the need for reflection and revelation, Coleridge, too, called for a rhetoric of the self:

Reflect on your thoughts, actions, circumstances and--which will be of especial aid to you in forming a habit of reflection--accustom yourself to reflect on the words you use, hear or read, their truth, derivation and history. For if words are not things, they are living powers, by which things of most importance to mankind are activated, combined and humanized. 42

"The best part of human language so called is," Coleridge declares, "derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself"; attention to the relational aspects of language provides

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access to the mind's operations and promotes an integrated sense of self. Achieving a unified sense of whole and parts is the quality which separates the educated from the uneducated mind:

...the intercourse of uneducated men is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power by the greater disjunction and separation in the component parts of that, whatever it may be, which they wish to communicate. There is want of prospectiveness of mind, that surview, which enables man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organised whole. 43

The "educated" individual is marked by his nomenclature of communication--his personal rhetoric--which exhibits his capacity to foresee and express the organized whole of things. Unlike "uneducated men," whose language indicates their lack of connective reflection because of its propensity to disjoin and separate, the educated person subordinates and arranges, according to their merits, the component parts of a subject so that they may be conveyed, according to his prevision, as an "organised whole." He has found the expression to fit the situation.

After Wordsworth and Coleridge, many composition theorists have called for the development of a rhetoric of the self as an integral part of the growth of the individual. John Dixon, for example, observes that young people, like

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adults, "need to talk over new experiences, returning to them again and again maybe, finding new elements and connections. The potential meaning of an experience is not always clear at once. It needs to be worked over, "realized" again through language, shared and modified perhaps in the way we apprehend it.... Talking it over, thinking it over, and (as confidence is gained) writing, can be natural parts of taking account of new experience (cognitively and affectively.)"⁴⁴ Responding to the comments of Edgar Friedenberg concerning the tendency in America to make adolescence vanish and to allow for the establishment of a self that is no more than "skin deep," Stephen Judy remarks, "But even Friedenberg fails to emphasize strongly enough the role that language plays in the process of personal development. With words students can establish and talk about themselves. In the school, [young people] are too often pushed toward the language forms of adulthood...rather than being encouraged to explore the language of the self."⁴⁵ James Britton attributes to pushing young people toward the language forms of adulthood the consequence of producing "men and women with the efficiency of machines."⁴⁶ Though the rhetoric of the self begins its exploratory and constructive tasks in youth, its function is indispensable throughout life. As David Holbrook remarks, "The adult, though he may have completed most of the processes whereby the personality is developed in childhood, needs to go on working at [self-expressive] processes to maintain an adequate sense of identity, a degree of inward order, and outward effectiveness."⁴⁷

The languaging processes take a significant step with the onset of writing. When the child's memory has progressed enough to enable him to memorize the alphabet, when his thinking has matured to the point where he can grasp the connection between sign and sound, Vygotsky contends, then writing may begin.⁴⁸ Writing complements speaking; and it develops, according to Britton, along the same lines. As with talk, children learn to write by writing. They also learn by writing--shaping their experience in order to make it available to themselves to learn from. Writing adds a dimension to the oral language of experience because it is fixed. It constitutes the act of working up one's construction of experience and remains accessible to the individual for review. As with speech, writing should progress from that which is close to the self, the "language of being and becoming," to that which is in the transactional modes, "the language to get things done."

This is not to suggest that writing of and for the self should ever stop. It should not. It merely means that instituting the writing of "quasi-academic essays and paragraphs on abstract topics" before the individual is cognitively and affectively prepared for them can produce unpleasant results: among them, "the form of expository writing without the vigour, the personality of a writer";⁴⁹ and "wordfear," an anxiety over representing oneself in writing. Of great consequence to the quality of one's writing, and to the response it receives from an audience, is the benign

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conjunction of what Wordsworth calls reason and passion and what Coleridge terms blended thought and feeling. If the conjunction is to be realized, a person's writing experience, from the start, should reflect what matters to him and be directed toward an audience that matters to him. Reflecting what matters means matching the complexity of writing with the maturing of the personality; writing to an audience that matters suggests the need for a sense on the writer's part of a concerned, empathic, interested reader--one who will share in the growth of a piece, and react to its voice and substance rather than judge its mechanics and form.

Britton details a significant group of benefits to young writers of composing what matters to an audience that matters:

1. When a child writes autobiographically he offers his experiences as a basis for forming a relationship with the reader he has in mind, a relationship of mutual interest and trust. (Martin Buber might have said that the child offers a version of the "I" in search of a relationship of "we" with the reader.) His satisfaction in the writing, if he succeeds, lies in the rewards of that relationship.
2. When a child writes [expressively], he exposes, by what he chooses to write about and the way he presents it, some part of his system of values, his feelings and beliefs about the world; and his satisfaction lies in having his evaluations corroborated, challenged, or modified....
3. In offering his evaluations the child is in fact presenting himself in the light he would like to be seen in. Acceptance of what he offers confirms for him that picture, and this is probably the deepest kind of satisfaction to be had from the whole process.

4. There is finally the sheer satisfaction of bringing into existence a pleasing verbal object. ("What the child desires," wrote Martin Buber, "is its own share in the becoming of things: it wants to be the subject of this event of production.") 50

Given the opportunity and audience, the young writer will find satisfaction in presenting aspects of himself, whether in prose or poetry, facts or fictions. His creations will indicate his "quest for the integration of identity, towards realism in dealing with the outer world."⁵¹ Written and oral self-expression externalizes the structure of the imagination's distinguishing and relational vision.

While both forms of expression serve that function, they are also different. As E.D. Hirsch points out, the former, unlike speech, has no situational context; the context must be supplied by the writer.⁵² The abstract quality of written speech, Vygotsky writes, is the main stumbling block. Since the interlocutor is not present as he or she is in dialogue, the young composer may view writing as somewhat pointless.⁵³ Writing requires deliberate analytical action on the child's part (he must take cognizance of the sound and structure of each word). It demands conscious work; it follows the individual's inner speech--his coded language of thought--and presupposes its existence. But unlike inner speech it is maximally detailed. The writer is required to work messages from inner speech into understandable units of communication which do not have the advantages of an oral

context. Thus, Vygotsky concludes, written discourse falls behind oral speech development--the former is deliberate, the latter is spontaneous (Vygotsky, 98-101).

Though the transition from oral to written discourse can be quite difficult, primarily because of the apparent conflict between spontaneity and deliberation, it can be made more smoothly if certain primary considerations are taken. Two of them have already been discussed: writing something that matters to the writer, to someone who matters to the writer. The third requires viewing writing as a process more than a product. Vygotsky observes that in written discourse communication must be achieved through words and their combinations, demanding that the speech activity take complicated forms--hence the use of drafts. The evolution of draft to final copy reflects our mental process (Vygotsky, 144). Since we are accustomed in speech to shaping language at the point of utterance, Britton remarks, to abandon that practice when it comes to writing and to try to shape the utterance in any sharp way before it occurs suggest a misunderstanding of the way language works.⁵⁴ Such a practice (trying to write the final copy in the first draft) is also very frustrating because it neglects the fact that writing grows into fulness of meaning. It does not customarily appear in that fulness at first.

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge perceived of composing as an organic activity. Wordsworth, as was shown in the

second chapter, considered the habit of reflection, composition, and revision--the reality of the drafting process--as itself the organic growth of the vital spirit of a piece. For him substance grew into form through this process. And meaning developed out of writing just as writing developed out of meaning. Drafting, then, was more than the mere editing of diction and syntax: it was the evolution of the expression to fit the situation. Models of the composing process offered by two current writing theorists (who are themselves writers and teachers) exemplify the organic growth, development, and change which is characteristic of the operations of the imagination and its vehicle, language.⁵⁵ One of them is Peter Elbow's developmental writing process, marked by its "growing" and "cooking" metaphors. The other is Donald Murray's "internal revision," which represents writing as a process of discovery.

Peter Elbow rejects what he calls the traditional model of composition, in which one figures out one's meaning and then puts it into writing. The model is wrong, he asserts, because it posits meaning, control, and coherence as starting points: "meaning is not what you start out with but what you end up with. Control and coherence are not what you start out with but what you end up with."⁵⁶ Instead, writers should regard the writing experience as organic, and write into their meanings. One way to accomplish this is to "grow" pieces in stages, "cooking" their meanings. Beginning

spontaneously, the writer might freewrite everything he can think of relating to his topic. This requires that he "start writing and keep writing," and, since the writer pays no attention to matters of control and coherence, the practice often leads to the next stage: "disorientation and chaos." But drafting and rescanning stem the initial panic by showing the writer "emerging center(s) of gravity" within the piece; and the work takes shape around this focus or theme. Taking shape evolves into the final stage, editing, within which Elbow posits the total procedure in the traditional model, meaning into words. During the editorial stage, writes Elbow, the writer determines specifically what he means to say, gets it clear in his head and clear on paper, unifying it into a coherent whole. Finally, he fashions it to fit its intended audience. This model, I believe, is remarkably close to a literal rendering Coleridge's metaphoric notion of organic form, composition shaping as "it develops itself from within."

During the course of growing a piece of writing, Elbow recommends that a writer "cook" the meanings of words in order to serve up the appropriate expression. His description of this activity is an entertaining example of practice matching preaching: The mass of words, he says, comes together into one pile and interacts in that mess. Words then come apart into small piles according to emerging patterns. These piles consolidate and shakedown into their own best organization. The words come together again in a big pile,

interact, and reemerge in different patterns. These patterns eventually consolidate in the final, fitting form (Elbow, 24). Growing and cooking are integrated acts both occurring simultaneously in the course of working on the piece.

Based on the assumption that writing is language used to discover meaning in experience and to communicate that meaning, Murray's model unfolds in three general stages. The first he terms "prevision," which includes all activity preceding the first draft: receptive experience, "such as awareness (conscious and unconscious), observation, remembering"; and exploratory experience, activities such as researching, reading, interviewing and notetaking. There is also the selecting, connecting, and evaluating of material provided by the receptive and exploratory experience. The second stage, "vision," is the writing of the first draft--the discovery draft--during which the writer "stakes out territory to explore." Like Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow" and Elbow's "free-writing draft," Murray's "vision" is a way of entering the topic. Murray's model of revision, however, is more interesting than the early stages, and closely resembles Wordsworth's conception of organic compositional growth.

Generally, Murray defines revision as "what the writer does after a draft is completed to understand and communicate what has begun to appear on the page."⁵⁷ More particularly, revision is divided into two steps: internal and external revision. The least important is external revising, which

is the equivalent to Elbow's editing and occurs when writers are prepared to present what they have discovered to another audience. They proofread, paying attention to the form and language of the piece. They polish its "external appearance," with an eye to appealing to its intended audience. The concerns of external revision engage far less of the writer's time, though they occupy much more of a "writing text's" content, than do the concerns of internal revision. Under that heading Murray includes "everything writers do to discover and develop what they have to say, beginning with the reading of the first draft. They read to discover where their content, form, language, and voice have led them. They use language, structure, and information to find out what they have to say or hope to say. The audience is one person: the writer" (Murray, "Internal Revision," 91). The key is the use of writing to find meaning. Through the process of composing a series of drafts, writers bring order to chaos, relation to disjunction; and order and relation bring the writer toward meaning. Probably referring to this aspect of rewriting in particular and language use in general, Donald Hall says, "The attitude to cultivate from the start is that revision is a way of life."⁵⁸ Wordsworth and Coleridge anticipated this attention to the writing process, the discovery and growth of meaning. And though they might not have found Theodore Roethke's comment "you will come to know how, by working slowly, to be spontaneous" very palatable, they would have accepted its basis in reality.

What needs to be accented in each of these areas-- language development, language as a constructor of experience, the rhetoric of the self, and the process of writing-- is the organic nature of each and the interdependence of them all. Each is a growth and a progression; each is, ideally, a working toward perfection. The general development of language is from the ego-centered to the decentered, from the individual to the social, from the first poetic spirit to the philosophic mind. Language restructures experience in accord with the power of the imagination to monitor the operations of the mind. That power is enriched by freedom and variety: the freedom to express fully one's thoughts and feelings, the opportunity to do so in a variety of formats. Along with and because of language development, the structuring of experience increases in complexity as the individual matures. The rhetoric of the self is the expression of an individual's relational awareness--the verbalized connection between personality and experience. This rhetoric becomes more abstract as language and experience become more and more decentered; but it should not, as Wordsworth insists, ever lose its base in the "vital soul," which humanizes all experience and the discourse representing it. Finally, conceiving of writing as a process of "slow creation" during which "laborious work" eventually leads to perfect form is clearly more relevant, more natural than viewing writing as a product, a form into which pre-determined meaning is poured.

That Wordsworth and Coleridge devoted considerable attention to these matters is a tribute to their foresight and an indication of their devotion to their profession as writers. That their observations appear to be strikingly consistent with those of the experts 150 years later attests to the accuracy of their observational powers and the depth of their imaginative penetration. They offer much to the field of composition theory, if only because their insights were the foundation of so much of it.

NOTES

¹Mary Galvin, "Language," in The Teaching of English, ed. James Squire (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p.186.

²Gordon Brossell, "Developing Power and Expressiveness in the Language Learning Process," in The Teaching of English in America, p.45.

³James Britton, "Language and the Nature of Learning: An Individual Perspective," in The Teaching of English in America, p.37.

⁴Summarized from Arthur Beatty, "Wordsworth, Hartley, and English Philosophy," in William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relations (Madison, 1927), 97-127.

⁵Brossell, "Developing Power and Expressiveness in the Language Learning Process," p.44.

⁶David Hartley, Observations on Man, His Fame, His Duty, and His Expectations (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1966), p.287.

⁷Jonathon Ramsey, "Wordsworth and the Childhood of Language," in Criticism, 18, p.245.

⁸James Britton, Language and Learning (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), p.50.

⁹Ramsey, p.255.

¹⁰William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," in Selected Poems and Prefaces, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), Lines 107-111.

¹¹William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," Lines 27-28.

¹²de Selincourt quoted in Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.550.

¹³Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Of Children," in Inquiring Spirit, ed. Kathleen Coburn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p.76.

¹⁴Coleridge quoted in The Use of Imagination (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p.25.

¹⁵Coleridge in The Use of the Imagination, p.25.

¹⁶Coleridge quoted in Imagination in Coleridge, ed. John Spencer Hill (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), p.165.

¹⁷Coleridge in Inquiring Spirit, p.204.

¹⁸Piaget in Vygotsky, Thought and Language, trans. Eugenia Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1962), p.116.

¹⁹Coleridge in Inquiring Spirit, p.89.

²⁰Jean Piaget, Language and Thought of the Child, trans. Marjorie Gabain (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p.9.

²¹Jean Piaget, Language and Thought of the Child, p.17.

²²Vygotsky in Britton, Language and Learning, p.57.

²³Vygotsky, Thought and Language, p.16.

²⁴Suzanne Langer in Britton, Language and Learning, p.21.

²⁵Hartley, Observations on Man, part II, p.244.

²⁶Hartley, p.244.

²⁷See Beatty, for example, 97-117.

²⁸Raymond Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941), p.322.

- ²⁹Letter to Mathetes quoted in Beatty, p.92.
- ³⁰William Wordsworth, "Preface" to the Edition of 1815 in Selected Poems and Prefaces, p.483.
- ³¹Biographia Literaria, VII.
- ³²Coleridge in Imagination in Coleridge, p.35.
- ³³Coleridge in The Use of Imagination, p.64.
- ³⁴Sapir quoted in Suzanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.126.
- ³⁵Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p.126.
- ³⁶Langer, p.135.
- ³⁷Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 132-133.
- ³⁸Britton, Language and Learning, p.40.
- ³⁹Luria in Britton, Language and Learning, p.65.
- ⁴⁰George Kelly, A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: W.W. Norton & Comp., Inc., 1963), p.22.
- ⁴¹Thus do such a large number of writing theorists--led by Wordsworth and Coleridge--advocate talk and drama as a central part of language growth and instruction.
- ⁴²Coleridge quoted in The Use of Imagination, p.61.
- ⁴³Biographia Literaria, XVIII.
- ⁴⁴John Dixon, Growth Through English (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.29.
- ⁴⁵Stephen N. Judy, The ABCs of Literacy: A Guide for Parents and Educators (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.198.

- ⁴⁶James Britton, Language and Learning, p.152.
- ⁴⁷David Holbrook, The Exploring Word (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p.4.
- ⁴⁸Vygotsky, Thought and Language, p.94.
- ⁴⁹See Judy, The ABCs of Literacy, p.198; and Britton, Explorations in Children's Writing, ed. Eldonna Evertts (Urbana: NCTE, 1970), p.48.
- ⁵⁰Britton in The Teaching of English in America, 36-37.
- ⁵¹David Holbrook, Children's Writing (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p.3.
- ⁵²E.D. Hirsch, The Philosophy of Composition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 21-22.
- ⁵³Vygotsky, Thought and Language, p.99.
- ⁵⁴Britton, Explorations in Children's Writing, p.34.
- ⁵⁵There are many other models. Janet Emig, James Britton, Mina Shaughnessy, and Richard Young all offer them. The choice of Elbow and Murray is based on their emphasis on language use--writing--as a way of discovering what to say and how to say it.
- ⁵⁶Peter Elbow, Writing Without Teachers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.15.
- ⁵⁷Donald Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," in Research on Composing, ed. Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell (Urbana: NCTE, 1978), p.87.
- ⁵⁸Donald Hall quoted in "Internal Revision," p.92.

STYLE, IMAGINATION, AND
THE STRUGGLE WITH THE FORCES OF DISINTEGRATION

Should each of the four aspects of discourse described in the previous chapter mature in ideal perfection, there would be little need for a rediscovery of language, a GUSDORFIAN revolt against language convention. Individuals would grow with the language of the self rather than "reconquer" it. We would all, to the degree our potential allows, become "poets," without the need to rediscover speech "thanks to a discipline which returns [us] to [ourselves]."¹ All along, speech would have been reflecting on the self, examining the world, discovering the connection between the two, and communicating that connection with an unfolding vitality and coherence. Bringing about "the restitution of the word" would be unnecessary, since the word will retain its unpruned, original power. Our "captivity at the heart of a dead tongue" would no longer be a threat; growth with and through a "living tongue" would leave to language its innate recreative energy. We would avoid the ambiguities and vagaries of everyday speech, by being aware of each word, by giving "attention to the real and to oneself." We would have, in short, made a life, literally and figuratively, of finding the expression to fit the situation.

And the perfect integration of self, language, and the world would reflect the recreative power of a fully evolved imagination. As the active agency which both filters the impressions stimulating the mind's operations and reconstitutes those operations in language, the imagination links perception to representation. It is, in Gusdorfian terms, our style--our expression of "the thread of life, the movement of a destiny according to its creative meaning." The notion of the imagination giving the objects and events of life a new significance in their relation to the self may be seen as the "outcome of the struggle for style," which, for Gusdorf, stands "as a definition of the whole personality since it is the undertaking of giving an appropriate value to each moment of self-affirmation" (p.75). The particular unifying vision constructed by an individual's imagination constitutes that person's "originality." This term is not meant in the sense of "attracting attention to oneself by any means whatsoever." To be an original is rather, observes Gusdorf, "to be an origin, a beginning, and to stamp the situation with one's mark."

Originality

corresponds to the concern for the proper expression, to honesty in self-expression. In this sense, it behooves each to give himself his language, to find his style. Each person's Weltanschauung is a view that belongs only to him; style signifies the task given to man of becoming aware of perspective. Each of us, even the most simple of mortals, is charged with finding the expression to fit his situation. Each of us is charged with realizing himself in a

language, a personal echo of the language of all which represents his contribution to the human world. The struggle for style is a struggle for consciousness (p.76).

Gusdorf's "style," like the process of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's imagination, represents the development of a relational vision, the building of a cohesive philosophy of life. Language is at the center of this process for through it, the struggle for a rhetoric of personal perspective, one comes to realize himself.

The problem with Gusdorf's characterization of style lies in its implication that the revolt against language convention will always occur, that the reconquest of language is a certainty, that the "restitution of the word" is a matter of fact. He suggests, optimistically, that each of us has a Weltanschauung, that each of us will become aware of perspective, that each of us will realize ourselves in a language. Though it was a hope of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's that language, intellectual, and emotional development would lead to a poetic being, they could not be said to share Gusdorf's optimism. In their opinion, the revolt was the exception, not the rule. Wordsworth and Coleridge considered the usual developmental experience to be "a pest" which dried its victims up, "body and soul." The stylistic product of this development was commonly the "pinfold of his master's conceit," whoever that master might be, and his language too often reflected institutional prejudices, stereotypes,

dishonesties, and sophisms. His was not a rhetoric of self-understanding but a rhetoric designed to meet needs.

Wordsworth and Coleridge recognized the seriousness of an individual's drive to have psychological needs met. And they anticipated modern therapists in outlining the consequences of obliging the child to seek love, acceptance, self-esteem, independence through channels unnatural to the order of healthy growth. The consequences to style are delineated in a strikingly relevant way in psychiatrist David Shapiro's study, Neurotic Styles. In that work, Shapiro describes the four major neurotic styles: obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, hysterical, and impulsive. He explains the term "neurotic styles" in the following way:

By 'style,' I mean a form or mode of functioning--the way or manner of a given area of behavior--that is identifiable, in an individual, through a range of his specific acts. By 'neurotic styles,' I mean those modes of functioning that seem characteristic, respectively, of various neurotic conditions. I shall consider here, particularly, ways of thinking and perceiving, ways of experiencing emotion, modes of subjective experience in general, and modes of [expression] that are associated with various pathologies. 2

Shapiro illustrates how, generally, the neurotic's attitudes and interests will be of the sort "that guarantee the next neurotic act--which from an objective standpoint may sustain and continue the neurotic process--will appear as the only plausible next thing to do" (Shapiro, p.19).

Shapiro's discussion is relevant principally for two reasons. First, in his explanation of style he is not speaking of a quality much different from that which Gusdorf elucidates. A person's style reflects his attitude toward being and the way in which he expresses that attitude. The obvious difference between Shapiro and Gusdorf stems not from how they view style but from what they suggest it shows: a self-deluding process as opposed to a self-realizing process. The second area of relevance is Shapiro's attention to the reconstructive function of neurotic style. Shapiro's numerous examples support the point that the individual structures his impressions of the world according to the pattern his neurotic drives dictate. Each of his actions will be determined by a vision of himself and his relationship with others which seems to satisfy his needs or to cause him the least pain. Yet each act will, depending on the extent of his illness, lead him progressively further from reality. His imagined context has indeed provided him with an expression, but the expression fails to fit a situation which connects him to an audience in the real world.

In his article "Poetic Creativity: Process and Personality," psychiatrist Robert Wilson offers "a complex of capacities" which he discerns as essential to the writing personality. The first of these he terms the "capacity for experience," with a stress upon the individual's "sensitivity, awareness, and enthusiasm."³ The second is the capacity for

ordering experience: "the writer desires to shape and objectify experience, but first and most vitally to somehow capture it. Paramount in this drive for order and experiential conquest is a kind of detachment which complements the deep attachment to the experience itself. It is as if one had to move away from, and precisely represent, the idea, image, or feeling which has occurred." Third, there is the capacity for exploring and using one's personality. "Honesty toward the self, and a desire to probe the secrets of the self," writes Wilson, "are essential." Fourth, the writer has the capacity for the use of language: "A special attachment to language, an intensity about words, is closely bound up with the capacity for ordering experience. Involvement with words is a concomitant of, and in part an expression of, the desire to entrap and mold experience." Finally, Wilson wants to attribute the urge to write either to a harmoniously organized personality or to an imbalance of personality.

All of these capacities are consistent with Wordsworth's and Coleridge's views of healthy language use in general and the composing process in particular. And the characteristics are consistent with what modern researchers and theorists describe as the result of fruitful language development. All, that is, except the last one. In his effort to determine very general personality traits which increase the desire to write, a task made especially difficult by his setting up an either/or dichotomy, Wilson ignores one of the most compelling capacities of the writer. That is, his capacity to communicate

his style, the wholeness of his vision, to an audience. Wilson merely hints at the writer's connection with an audience; and, in so doing, he implies the importance of the harmoniously organized personality: the writer "is regarded as triumphant over the forces of disintegration, precisely because he produces and in producing creates an esthetic whole which is the obverse of the neurotic's self-defeatism." It is the neurotic's self-defeatism and isolation, the imaginative constructs meant to cope with those conditions, and the consequent personal code--a code which often only he can penetrate, which lessen the possibility of creating shareable communications. The writer is one who shares his "triumph over the forces of disintegration" by giving to an audience a coherent representation of some aspect of his relation to reality. It is the broad realization of this triumph for which Wordsworth and Coleridge argued and for which they, unlike Gusdorf, despaired.

NOTES

¹Georges Gusdorf, Speaking (La Parole), trans. Paul T. Brockleman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.74.

²David Shapiro, Neurotic Styles (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965), p.1.

³Robert N. Wilson, "Poetic Creativity: Process and Personality," Psychiatry (1954), p.174.

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