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PATTERNS OF MOTION IN WORDSWORTH'S *PRELUDE*

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of English

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Eleanor J. James

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Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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Chairman

April 19, 1974
Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is gratefully and affectionately dedicated to Dr. Ralph M. Wardle.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth is best known as a poet of Nature, a painter of verbal landscapes glorifying clouds, flowers, trees, lakes, and mountains. And as a contemporaneous review of one of his works notes, "In his poetry, nothing in Nature is dead."[1] The Wordsworthian landscape is alive with the motion of winds, rivers, and vapors and of mountains which seem to rise up majestically before the viewer's eyes. Whether he is viewing a panoramic scene of lakes and mountains or observing "the meanest flower that blows," Wordsworth exhibits an acute awareness of motion. The motion may be as unobtrusive as a wisp of smoke rising from a cottage chimney in an otherwise static setting or it may pervade every element of a scene, but Wordsworth's poetry contains few descriptions of Nature in which some kind of motion is not present.

The example of motion in Wordsworth's natural settings which most readily comes to mind is the "fluttering and dancing" of the flowers in the well-known "Daffodil" poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," in which the recollection of the flowers' motion animates the poet's flagging spirits.[2] Motion is even more pervasive in the early descriptive poem "A Night-Piece,"

[1]Charles Lamb, review of The Excursion, Quarterly Review, 12 (Oct., 1814), reproduced in The Romantics Reviewed (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972), Part A, 2, 826.

[2]The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 2, 214. Hereafter cited as PW.

which attains an almost visionary effect through its description of the motions of the night sky, motions far more intense than the fluttering and dancing of the daffodils. The poem juxtaposes the effect of the "dull, contracted circle" of the moon obscured by clouds with the clear view of the night sky when "the clouds are split / Asunder," revealing

> The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
> There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,
> Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
> And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
> Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away,
> Yet vanish not![3]

Motion in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and "A Night-Piece" is communicated to the reader by visual appeal. Wordsworth often suggests motion by appeals to the ear instead of the eye. These aural suggestions of motion usually emanate from an unseen body of water or from the wind, as in the opening line of "Resolution and Independence": "There was a roaring in the wind all night."[4]

Wordsworth also conveys motion in passages which do not rely upon aural or visual appeal but upon the "feel" of motion, an anatomical appeal to the sense of movement which is termed "kinesthetic appeal." A strong physical response may be evoked by such passages as,

> When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
> Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
> Into the soul its tranquillizing power.[5]

[3] PW, 2, 208.

[4] PW, 2, 235.

[5] William Wordsworth, The Prelude, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2d ed. rev. Helen Darbishire (1926; rept. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 137. Subsequent references to The Prelude are cited parenthetically within the text by book and line number and refer to the 1805 text unless the reference is followed by the identification "1850."

Although the verb "spreads" suggests motion, it does not wholly account for the "feel" of motion in the passage. The sense of inner expansion is heightened by the use of the words "deep" and "power," but the response is to the entire image rather than to individual words. The kinesthetic appeal of the passage is thus difficult to account for in objective terms.

A more common and more readily identifiable type of kinesthetic appeal is brought about by the use of meter to suggest motion. Wordsworth employs this technique in the brisk first line of "The Tables Turned": "Up! up! my friend and quit your books."[6] Meter echoes tone and content to suggest motion in lines from the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood":

> Ye that pipe and ye that play,
> Ye that through your hearts today
> Feel the gladness of the May.[7]

These lines from the "Intimations" Ode reflect the joyous motion of childhood. The depiction of the child in terms of motion is characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry. The motion of the child is especially prevalent in his recollections of his own childhood--the "glad animal movements" and "dizzy raptures" of the "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"[8] and the vividly recalled childhood episodes in the first two books of The Prelude. But motion in human subjects other than children is characterized by the use of somewhat neutral verbs and a general lack of kinesthetic appeal. Although the human characters in Wordsworth's poems seem

[6] PW, 4, 57.

[7] PW, 4, 284.

[8] PW, 2, 261.

to do a great deal of walking about, their motion is generally not described, and such references to motion as are found are in most cases notable for their lack of vividness.

It was this dichotomy in the use of motion in Wordsworth's poetry that inspired the present study, which examines motion in Wordsworth's "spiritual autobiography," The Prelude, considering motion as an exponent or motif which contributes to the meaning of the work. This "exponential approach" to the study of a work of literature is one of several described by Wilfred L. Guerin in A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature. Guerin explains the rationale of this approach:

> Regardless of which critical approach a reader may favor, he will always be concerned with the themes of a literary work and the ways in which he can follow those themes. Such thematic statements are frequently less explicit than implicit, if only because they are often made by the communicative and evocative power of symbols and images. One of the basic steps in the full appreciation of a work, then, is the recognition of such images and symbols. A related--and more important--step is to consider not only the isolated instances of these devices but more especially the artistic weaving of these instances into patterns. . . . Whether we call this approach the exponential or the symbolic or coin a word like 'motival' for it, we are doing what any close reader of literature does. We are recognizing patterns of images and symbols that lead us to a constantly deepening appreciation of literature.[9]

The exponential approach need not be limited exclusively to imagery. Among the examples of the types of patterns which may be revealed by such an approach, Guerin cites the three separate sets of images in Shakespeare'e sonnet "That Time of Year" (Sonnet 73) which share the quality of "almost," the diverse discussions and images of sailing and cetology in Moby Dick which are linked together in the motif of the mysteries of the universe, and the motif of accidental occurrence which relates separate episodes in

[9]Guerin et al. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 151-52.

The Return of the Native to the theme of chance.[10] Such an approach is, then, ideal for the study of motion in Wordsworth's poetry, since motion is found in widely varying contexts, and instances of motion include both the literal and the metaphorical.

Guerin suggests that the approach of identifying patterns might be termed the symbolic approach, and my study of motion seeks to determine the symbolic relationship of patterns of motion with major themes which are found throughout Wordsworth's poetry. In seeking a symbolic relationship, I do not view motion as a sign which stands for something else. Motion, as Wordsworth uses it, is not used as the lily is used as a symbol of purity; it is rather like the device of synecdoche, the substitution of a part for the whole, in that it focuses upon an inherent property of a form, thus endowing the form with associative and emotive meaning.[11] Wordsworth's use of motion as a symbol embodies the function of symbolism identified by Susanne Langer, who observes that the tendency of semanticists to think of a symbol as a sign which stands for something else has led to a failure to recognize the function of symbols, which, she says,

> is to formulate experience as something imaginable in the first place--to fix entities of thought called 'fantasies.' This function is articulation. Symbols articulate ideas.[12]

It is Wordsworth's use of motion as an integral symbol in the articulation of ideas with which my study is primarily concerned. Motion in The Prelude is examined both in terms of how it functions as a symbol and of what it means.

[10]Guerin, pp. 164-65.

[11]Wordsworth uses the term "form" to refer to external physical configurations, and his use of the term is adopted in this study.

[12]Problems of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 132.

The study focuses primarily but not exclusively upon The Prelude, because the scope and subject matter of this long poem permit the examination of major themes found throughout the Wordsworthian canon within a single, unified framework. The value of The Prelude as a vehicle for the study of Wordsworth's ideas has long been recognized by literary critics. Its value as a vehicle for my own study is increased by the fact that not only the ideas dealt with but also the use of motion in the expression of these ideas is consistent with that found in much of Wordsworth's most significant poetry.

Although The Prelude is an autobiographical poem, it is not a chronological narrative of external events. It is rather the type of introspective self-analysis relating isolated events to the process of mental development which is found in such twentieth-century works as Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist. It is told, as M. H. Abrams observes, as "a present remembrance of things past,"[13] isolating "spots of time" which are integrated by the powers of the poetic imagination into the inseparable whole of inner and outer reality.

Wordsworth began writing The Prelude in 1798, at a time when he and the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge enjoyed a close friendship. Addressed to Coleridge, The Prelude traces the course of Wordsworth's imaginative development. It was to have served as an introduction to a longer three-part epic, The Recluse, related to the longer work as an ante-chamber is to "the body of a gothic church."[14] By the time it was completed, the ante-chamber

[13]"The Prelude as a Portrait of the Artist," Wordsworth Bicentenary Studies, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 183.

[14]The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Alexander Grosart (1867; New York: AMS Press, 1967), 2, 138. Hereafter cited as Prose Works.

assumed monumental proportions, extending in the earliest completed manuscript to thirteen books ranging in length from just under four hundred lines to nearly a thousand. Although Wordsworth continued to revise The Prelude throughout his lifetime, he had no intention of permitting its publication until after his death. The final version was published posthumously in 1850 by his widow, who gave it the title The Prelude and subtitled it "The Growth of a Poet's Mind."[15]

Although The Recluse was never completed, the second of its three proposed parts, entitled The Excursion, was published in 1814. The value of this work in interpreting Wordsworth's shorter poems is acknowledged in Wordsworth's preface to the poem, where he continues to explain the interrelatedness of his poetry using the Gothic cathedral metaphor:

> Continuing this allusion he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.[16]

The Prelude, of course, had not been published. A comparison of The Prelude with The Excursion reveals that the two deal in different ways with similar subjects. Many of the themes that are expressed by implication in The Prelude are expressed more clearly and completely in The Excursion. But in its handling of motion, The Excursion more nearly resembles Wordsworth's later poetry, composed after his almost universally recognized decline in poetic power, rather than that written at the height of his poetic power during the years between 1798 and 1805, when he was also occupied with writing

[15]Ernest de Selincourt, "Chronology of the Composition of The Prelude," in introductory notes to the de Selincourt edition of the poem, pp. xliii-liv.

[16]Prose Works, 2, 138.

the first complete text of The Prelude. The difference between the treatments of motion in these two poems is primarily a matter of tone. Although long catalogs of the motion of Nature are found in The Excursion, the passages take on a mechanical quality; they lack the tone of mysticism which accompanies motion in The Prelude and in many of the earlier, greater short poems. The Prelude thus shares with The Excursion the wider applicability of ideas in interpreting Wordsworth's lyric poetry and has the added advantage of similarity to these lyric poems in its treatment of motion.

Since the earliest extant text of The Prelude, completed in 1805, was composed at the height of the poet's creative power, it offers greater insight into the most significant portion of the Wordsworthian canon than does the much-revised 1850 version, which incorporates both technical revisions and changes of ideas. Until 1926, however, the early text was generally unavailable for study. In that year, it was published in a critical text edited by Ernest de Selincourt in collaboration with Helen Darbishire. The critical edition of The Prelude prints the 1805 text and the 1850 text on facing pages, facilitating a comparison of the two. Deviations from either of these texts in earlier or intervening drafts are provided in the notes to the completed versions and are often helpful in the interpretation of the poem. My study focuses upon the 1805 text, drawing upon the 1850 text and the noted deviations as well as upon the shorter poems composed between 1798 and 1805 whenever these other sources offer a significant contribution to the discussion.

The abundance of motion in Wordsworth's poetry has by no means been overlooked by Wordsworthian critics. Although my review of criticism has concentrated primarily upon the works of twentieth-century critics, it has brought to light Charles Lamb's review of The Excursion, which was alluded

to in the opening paragraph of this chapter and which goes on to observe that "Motion is synonymous with life." A second nineteenth-century critic who observes this characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry is Walter Pater, who notes in an essay on Wordsworth,

> And so it came about that this sense of a life in natural objects, which in most poetry is but a rhetorical artifice, is with Wordsworth the assertion of what for him is almost literal fact. . . . An emanation, a particular spirit, belonged, not to the moving leaves or water only, but to the distant peak of the hills arising suddenly, by some change of perspective, above the nearer horizon, to the passing space of light across the plain, to the lichened Druidic stone even, for a certain weird fellowship in it with the moods of men.[17]

In recognizing the motion in Wordsworth's poetry, these critics seem to take for granted its association with a pervasive sense of life and to assume that this is the only major significance of motion in the poetry.

The subject has received little more attention in the twentieth century. Contemporary criticism related to the subject falls into three categories: (1) studies which recognize the sense of life which pervades Wordsworth's natural descriptions without identifying motion as a characteristic of this life; (2) studies which recognize the prevalence of motion in Wordsworth's poetry but do not explore the subject in depth; and (3) a single study which explores Wordsworth's use of motion in his descriptions of the natural landscape.

The number of studies which fall into the first category is legion. Few if any critics have found it possible to write a comprehensive survey of The Prelude without discussing at length the sense of life which pervades the poem. Often, motion is strong in the passages cited as examples of

[17]"Wordsworth," From the Fortnightly Review, April, 1874, and Appreciations, 1889; repr. Selections from Walter Pater, ed. Edward Everett Hale, Jr. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1901), p. 31.

this life, but it is not specifically pointed out as one of the means by which Wordsworth attains an animated effect in describing inanimate forms and objects.

In the second category are studies which merely allude to the motion of Wordsworth's poetry as well as studies which examine the subject more closely. An example of the former may be found in Josephine Miles' comment that Wordsworth possessed a strong "bodily sense"[18] and her passing observation of "the motion, activity, and spirit Wordsworth has interfused into the nineteenth-century world of aspects."[19]

Slightly more attention to the subject is found in Charles J. Smith's study of paired opposites in Wordsworth's poetry. Among the pairs he examines is the contrariety of motion and stillness, which he finds to be linked to emotion and tranquility and, in turn, to mutability and permanence. While Smith's observations are relevant and valid, the scope of his study does not permit a comprehensive analysis of other symbolic associations of motion.[20]

In her book Wordsworth, a collection of lectures on the poet, Helen Darbishire calls attention to Wordsworth's use of the word "motion":

> 'Motions of delight' is an arresting phrase, and Wordsworth's use of the word 'motion' is worth watching. Physical movement was to him, as it is perhaps to every imaginative mind, stimulating to a high degree. In Nature he was alive to the perpetual energy of motion.[21]

[18]Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1965), p. 142.

[19]The Pathetic Fallacy in the Nineteenth Century (1942; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1965), p. 67.

[20]"The Contrarieties: Wordsworth's Dualistic Imagery," PMLA, 69 (1954), 1181-99.

[21](1950; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 127.

Her discussion of Wordsworth's use of the word "motion" is brief but perceptive, pointing the way toward a more detailed analysis of the subject. Although her allusion to the stimulating effect of motion upon Wordsworth implies a recognition of the motion depicted in descriptive passages, she limits her discussion primarily to his use of the word itself.

A work which does not fall neatly into either of the first two categories of critical recognition of motion in Wordsworth's poetry is Charles J. Piper's The Active Universe, which is a study of the Romantic imagination dealing primarily with the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The title of his study is from Wordsworth and implies recognition of motion. In his discussion of the concept of a world-soul animating the universe, he cites two contemporaneous reviews of The Excursion which call attention to the motion of Nature in the poem. In his exposition of the philosophical antecedents of the Romantic concept of a living universe perceived through the imagination, he quotes Priestley's concept of God as motion[22] and Coleridge's belief that thought is a form of motion,[23] but he relates these philosophies directly only to Coleridge's poetry, in spite of the fact that they seem equally applicable to Wordsworth's. He does cite Ruskin's aesthetic principle that "the test of the beauty of any form was whether or not it was the result of an informing energy or spirit," stating that the principle could be a summary of The Excursion as he saw it[24] (whether "he" refers to Wordsworth or to Ruskin is not clear). Because motion is so clearly singled out in the discussion of philosophical antecedents, it

[22](London: The Athlone Press, 1962), p. 36.

[23]Pp. 30-31.

[24]P. 153.

appears that Piper takes for granted its relation to Wordsworth's active universe, but he fails to make the connection explicit.

The general lack of recognition which Wordsworth's use of motion has received is substantiated by the review of literature in the only study which has dealt extensively with the subject, the doctoral dissertation of Sister Mary Ruth Geres, which traces the history of kinesthetic perception in English poetry from Thomson through Wordsworth. In her study, the poetry of Wordsworth is found to be the culmination of a tradition in English poetry which perceives the natural landscape in kinesthetic terms. She concludes that, for Wordsworth, the natural landscape serves as objective correlative for psychological experience, the depiction of the inner state of mind in terms of the motion of external forms. In her concern with the kinesthetic properties of Wordsworth's landscapes, she naturally deals with the motion of Nature in Wordsworth's poetry. She approaches the subject by considering the motion of winds, waters, and mists separately. The kinesthetic description of stationary objects is considered separately from that of moving objects, and the motion of human beings is not studied at all, although it is alluded to as an example of Wordsworth's kinesthetic sensitivity.[25]

In summary, a review of related criticism reveals no study which deals extensively with the motion of both man and Nature in Wordsworth's poetry. The subject of Nature's motion has received some attention, although this attention comprises a minute portion of the vast body of Wordsworthian criticism. The ground for my study, which attempts to relate patterns of

[25]Kinesthetic Image: The History of a Perceptual Mode from the Seventeenth Century Through Wordsworth, Diss., St. Louis University 1968.

motion in man to patterns of motion in Nature, appears to be largely unbroken. And as Sister Geres' study confirms, there appears to be little precedent for a study of motion in the works of any poet.

In identifying passages which are characterized by motion, I have endeavored to eliminate purely idiosyncratic responses to kinesthetic appeal by considering only passages in which the presence of motion is somehow indicated in concrete terms. The motion may be clearly indicated by verbs which denote motion or by various words which clearly connote it. References to flowing waters or to winds are considered to be motion, for example, because motion is an inherent property of these natural forces. Mists and vapors are considered only if they are identified as moving by such adjectives as "rising," "rolling," or "churning." Adjectives such as "dizzy" are deemed to connote motion because dizziness is by definition the illusion of motion. Motion is also defined in my study as internal bodily sensations such as throbbing, pulsation, or vibration. Specific references to breath or respiration are also included, because, while the physical motion accompanying actual respiration is slight, Wordsworth uses the terms in contexts which suggest a living organism surrounding the _persona_, magnifying the sense of motion. In a poem of _The Prelude_'s length and scope, the poetic treatment of a single property is so diverse as to defy a single, objective definition, but some objectivity has been attained by identifying as examples of motion only those passages which can be shown semantically to denote or clearly to connote motion.

My study is an examination of the text of _The Prelude_ which seeks to determine symbolic associations of motion on the basis of internal patterns rather than to relate motion to traditional or archetypal symbols. Since, however, Wordsworth's use of motion is in some instances consistent with its

traditional symbolic associations, the traditional symbolism of motion merits some examination.

When Wordsworth refers to "hallow'd and pure motions of the sense" (I.578), he places his personal stamp upon an association of motion and sense which finds literary precedent in Elizabethan psychology. Hamlet's words spoken to Queen Gertrude, "sense, sure, you have, / Else could you not have motion,"[26] reflect the notion that "Sense and motion are functions of the middle, or sensible soul, the possession of sense being the basis of motion."[27] For Wordsworth, the term "sense" represents a special kind of consciousness, the fusion of sensory perception and imagination[28] in a characteristic merging of the inner and outer worlds. While he thus differs from the Elizabethans in his definition of "sense," he retains the verbal association of sense and motion.

A second traditional use of motion in Wordsworth's poetry is pointed out by Helen Darbishire:

> The word [motion] in the sense of impulse or emotion was used by Shakespeare and by Milton, but was moribund in Dr. Johnson's day. Wordsworth's revival of it was necessary to his thought. It illustrates that fusion of physical with mental life, that direct, startling passage of image into thought or feeling, which he so freely expressed in his first draft of _The Prelude_.[29]

Professor Darbishire's discussion also draws upon the association of motion with life, an association recognized in Lamb's review of _The Excursion_ and acknowledged implicitly by Wordsworth himself in his discussion of

[26] _Hamlet_, III.iv.71-72.

[27] Hardin Craig, _The Complete Works of Shakespeare_ (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1961), p. 927n.

[28] William Empson, "Sense in _The Prelude_," _The Kenyon Review_, 13 (1951), 302.

[29] _Wordsworth_, p. 128.

fancy and imagination in the Preface to the 1815 edition of the Lyrical Ballads, where he cites an example of the power of the imagination to divest the animate of properties of "life and motion."[30] The symbolic association of motion with life is central to the sense of life in Nature which pervades The Prelude and is a salient feature of many of the shorter poems.

Although I am primarily concerned with the contribution of motion to the ideas contained in The Prelude rather than with its strictly rhetorical functions, some notice should be taken of the value of kinesthetic appeal in eliciting an empathic response to a passage of literature. Comprehensive surveys of the psychological theories of empathic response in both Sister Geres' dissertation[31] and in Richard H. Fogle's study of the imagery of Keats and Shelley[32] point to the association of kinesthetic stimulation with empathic projection, although Fogle finds kinesthetic appeal to be the sole means of inducing an empathic response while Sister Geres states that such a response may be brought about either by visual or by kinesthetic perception.

An unparalleled example of the use of both visual and kinesthetic appeal to stimulate the reader's empathy is found in The Prelude's account of an event during Wordsworth's childhood in which he stole a boat and rowed in it to the center of a lake:

[30]Prose Works, 2, 138.

[31]P. 276.

[32]The Imagery of Keats and Shelley (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p. 151.

The Moon was up, the Lake was shining clear
Among the hoary mountains; from the Shore
I push'd, and struck the oars and struck again
In cadence, and my little Boat mov'd on
. . . .
She was an elfin Pinnacle; lustily
I dipp'd my oars into the silent Lake,
And as I rose upon the stroke, my Boat
Went heaving through the water, like a Swan;
When from behind that craggy Steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Uprear'd its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature, the huge Cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
With measur'd motion, like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling hands I turn'd,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the Cavern of the Willow tree. (I.383-414)

The rhythmic rowing in the beginning of the scene induces little empathy. The "elfin pinnacle" takes on a mystical, disembodied quality. Kinesthetic appeal is increased when the boy rises lustily upon the stroke, causing the boat to heave through the water like a swan;[33] the reader is gradually drawn into the scene and prepared for the effect of the huge cliff which suddenly appears. The sudden, strong kinesthetic appeal of the image is brought about by the verb "uprear'd," which suggests violent motion through both its sound and its connotation. The use of this verb where "raised up" would have satisfied the metrical requirements, and its placement at the beginning of a line, invite the reader to share the sense of shock felt by the boy. The failure of a reader to project himself into the scene at this point can surely be accounted for only by insensitivity either to poetry or to kinesthetic appeal or by an anti-Wordsworthian bias. The motion of the scene,

[33]This apparently incongruous type of motion in the swan is more clearly accounted for in "An Evening Walk": "The swan uplifts his chest, and backward flings / His neck, a varying arch, between his towering wings," _PW_, 1, 23.

which has been progressively intensified to the point at which the dark, threatening presence looms above the boy, is sustained and brought to life by the image of the dark hill pursuing the boy in the boat "like a living thing." The immediacy of the boy's panic subsides, and motion is almost suspended, but the mood is one of nervous stillness rather than of the ethereal calm with which the scene begins.

For the next twelve lines, in which the poet describes the return of the boat and his subsequent state of mind, there is no motion. The stillness is broken again by the vivid images of "huge and mighty forms that do not live / Like living men" which "mov'd slowly" through his mind and were a trouble to his dreams (I.425-27).

The boat-stealing scene is one in which motion functions simultaneously as a rhetorical device and as a symbol. It serves to promote the reader's empathic participation, to indicate the strong emotional response of the *persona*, and to endow the inanimate mountain with qualities of life. In this respect, the motion of the scene is representative of Wordsworth's general use of motion, which seldom serves an exclusively rhetorical function.

The Prelude contains four scenes which critics seldom mention without affixing to their designation the adjective "well-known." They are the scene just discussed, the skating scene from Book I, the Simplon Pass episode, and the Snowdon episode. Motion is vividly depicted in all of these scenes. Whether their special appeal results from their power to elicit an empathic response or whether motion contributes only to the vividness of the imagery, the fact that motion is so pronounced in all of them suggests the value of motion in setting apart climactic passages. Except for their intense motion, the first two of these passages contain little that would

cause them to be remembered in preference to other childhood episodes in The Prelude. The last two may be remembered because they are climactic spiritual events in the poet's life rather than because of the motion they contain; if so, the relationship of motion to climactic events is even more closely drawn.

The format of the ensuing discussion reflects the subject matter of The Prelude and the way that motion is used to express the subject matter. The Recluse, of which The Prelude was to have been a part, was to have expressed Wordsworth's views on "Nature, Man, and Society."[34] Because all three are credited with roles in Wordsworth's creative development, the motion of all three is considered. Chapter II of this study deals with the motion of man and society, classifying the motion of individual human beings on the basis of sex and age. Such a straightforward categorization is not adaptable to the discussion of the motion of Nature, which is treated in two separate chapters analyzing the motion of Nature of the basis of its symbolic contribution to the development of two major themes of The Prelude: the poetic imagination and the living universe. The third chapter of my study analyzes the role of natural motion as metaphor and symbol related to sources of poetic inspiration and as a symbol of the imagination itself. Chapter IV analyzes the relationship of motion to the closely allied themes of animism and religion. The final chapter provides a summary which examines the organic interrelatedness of the themes. The primary objective of the study is to examine instances of motion in The Prelude "as parts, but with a feeling of the whole" (VII.912).

[34]DeSelincourt, p. xiv.

CHAPTER II

HUMAN MOTION IN *THE PRELUDE*

The first two books of *The Prelude* are alive with the vigorous motion of the child. The child's running, leaping, swimming, skating, and rowing in *The Prelude* have received so much attention from literary critics that the absence of strong kinesthetic appeal in descriptions of other human subjects in the poem has been largely overlooked. Except for the recollections of Wordsworth's childhood in these two books, Nature in the poem seems to be more alive than does man.

Wordsworth himself calls attention to this characteristic in the 1815 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which he cites a passage from "Resolution and Independence" as an example of the power of the poetic imagination to breathe life into the inanimate while divesting the animate of some of its properties of life:

> As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
> Couched on the bald top of an eminence,
> Wonder to all who do the same espy
> By what means it could thither come, and whence,
> So that it seems a thing endued with sense,
> Life a sea-beast crawled forth, which on a shelf
> Or rock or sand reposeth, there to sun himself,
>
> Such seemed this Man; not all alive or dead
> Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age.
> . . . .
> Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
> That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
> And moveth altogether if it move at all.

Commenting on these lines, Wordsworth says,

> The stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the seabeast; and the seabeast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison. After what has been said, the image of the cloud need not be commented upon.[35]

The operations of the imagination, he says, either endowing the inanimate with the qualities of the animate or vice versa, cause the mind to perceive the object as "a new existence."[36]

In this example, Wordsworth suggests that the man is divested of "the indications of life and motion" in order to emphasize his age and loss of youthful vitality. This interchange of the characteristics of the animate and the inanimate, however, is prominent in much of Wordsworth's poetry and is considered by Lindenberger to be central to _The Prelude_.[37] Since _The Prelude_ does not deal extensively with the subject of old age, it is difficult to account for the de-animation of its human subjects solely as a metaphorical treatment emphasizing the characteristics of old age. Nor does such a treatment account for the fact that some of the human subjects in Wordsworth's poetry are divested of "life and motion" while others are not.

Generally, motion is associated in Wordsworth's poetry with women and children, while it is noticeably weak or lacking altogether in most men, including the _persona_. In addition to this general pattern of motion in

[35]_Prose Works_, 2, 138.

[36]_Prose Works_, 2, 137.

[37]Herbert Lindenberger, _On Wordsworth's Prelude_, (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 44.

individual human characters, another pattern is found in the descriptions of urban life in <u>The Prelude</u>, which are marked by the frequent use of intense motion. The ensuing discussion considers the quality and the amount of the motion associated with human subjects, examining separately the motion of the child, the man, the woman, and urban aggregations of humanity; identifying a pattern of motion in these characters; and relating them to the theme of imaginative development.

Motion in the Child

Books I and II of <u>The Prelude</u>, which deal with Wordsworth's childhood, attest to Wordsworth's sensitivity to human motion and his skill at depicting it. Recounting the exhilarating, animalistic motions of his childhood, the poet tells of having "cours'd / Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves / Of yellow grunsel" (I.296-97). Like a wild Indian child, he runs "abroad in wantonness, to sport / A naked savage, in the thunder shower" (I.303-4). Kinesthetic appeal is strong in Wordsworth's recollection of kite flying, in which he can still almost feel the kite "Pull at its rein, like an impatient Courser" and see his kite "breast the wind, then suddenly / Dash'd headlong; and rejected by the storm" (I.520-25). Skating in the winter, he "wheel'd about, / Proud and exulting, like an untired horse" (I.459). Recalling the joyous motion of the "tumultuous throng" of skaters, he says,

> oftentimes
> When we had given our bodies to the wind,
> And all the shadowy banks, on either side,
> Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
> The rapid line of motion; then at once
> Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
> Stopp'd short. (I.478-84)

After these sudden stops, he recalls, the earth appeared to move until his dizziness subsided, and he watched his disappearing companions "Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep" (I.489).

The alternation of motion and stillness in the skating scene is representative of a structural pattern in Books I and II of The Prelude which consists of alternating moments of motion and stillness. Thus, the kite-flying scene, which ends with a storm image, is followed immediately by an apostrophe to "Ye lowly Cottages in which we dwelt" (I.525), an image evocative of security and tranquility. A scene in which Wordsworth and his schoolmates spend an afternoon in vigorous play during an outing at an inn on the eastern shore of Windermere is followed by a description of the journey home across the lake, when, after a member of the group is left at a lonely island,

> the calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> . . . and the sky . . . sank down
> Into my heart, and held me like a dream. (II.176-80)

In these alternating patterns of motion and stillness, Wordsworth balances the "rude animal pleasures" of childhood with "joys of subtler origin," when he felt

> Not seldom, even in that tempestuous time,
> Those hallow'd and pure motions of the sense
> Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
> An intellectual charm, that calm delight
> Which, if I err not, surely must belong
> To those new-born affinities that fit
> Our new existence to existing things. (I.577-83)

Clearly implied in the passage is the notion that outer, physical motion and the inner "motions of the sense" are mutually exclusive. Bodily consciousness seems to preclude spiritual contemplation, and, since these moments of

contemplation are important factors in Wordsworth's concept of natural goodness, the suspension of physical activity in the child is necessary to Wordsworth's philosophy.

Inevitably, perhaps, some critics have interpreted the intense motion of the child in The Prelude as an expression of sexuality. G. Wilson Knight observes that the child image in The Prelude is "almost erotically conceived."[38] Richard J. Onorato, noting the Dionysian nature of the "aching joys, dizzy raptures, and wild ecstasies" of the child in Wordsworth's poetry, observes that "Joy, rapture, ecstasy, and loss of self could . . . characterize the sexual union of lovers, as indeed they always have."[39] Wallace W. Douglas calls attention to the "massive irruptions of energy" which make up the first two books of The Prelude and suggests that the apparently aimless movement by which this energy was discharged was a means of reducing anxiety.[40]

Wordsworth himself may have instinctively recognized a tinge of compulsive guilt and anxiety in the "glad animal movements" of childhood. In "Tintern Abbey" he describes the vigorous motions of his childhood as having been "more like a man / Flying from something that he dreads than one / Who sought the thing he loved."[41] This passage appears to offer textual substantiation for the psychological interpretations of the child's intense

[38]The Starlit Dome (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1960), p. 49.

[39]The Character of the Poet: Wordsworth in The Prelude (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 53.

[40]Wordsworth: The Construction of a Personality (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 80.

[41]PW, 2, 261.

motion in The Prelude. But these interpretations bear more directly on the poet than on the poem, and the text of The Prelude itself offers a means of interpreting this motion which is more appropriate to the approach taken in my study.

When the stages of mental development in The Prelude are analyzed, several distinct phases of imaginative growth may be identified. Melvin Rader identifies five such phases, the first of which is childhood, the stage of sensation, in which the child focuses upon his own mind and body. During this stage of development, according to Rader, "Nothing clouds these early sensations, because the mind interposes no false barriers between itself and its objects."[42] The literal descriptions of the child's motion re-create these unclouded sensations, enabling the reader not only to understand but to identify with the child's perceptions and sensations.

Rader identifies the period of boyhood--the years from ten to seventeen--as the stage of emotion, in which Nature comprises the major influence. Although the keen sensations of childhood are not dulled, they are modified by a broadening awareness of Nature.[43] Since motion is traditionally associated with emotion, images of motion are appropriate to this stage of development also. In keeping with the increased sensitivity to Nature and the corresponding decrease in pure sensation during this phase, fewer literal descriptions of human motion are found in Book II of The Prelude, which deals with the second stage of development, than in Book I, and those which do occur are depicted less vividly than in Book I.

[42]Melvin M. Rader, Presiding Ideas in Wordsworth's Poetry (New York: Gordian Press, 1968), p. 11.

[43]Rader, Presiding Ideas, p. 12.

In these childhood books of The Prelude, the motion of the child is clearly an expression of sensuous delight, unsurpassed in its joyous intensity by any other examples of motion in Wordsworth's poetry.

Motion in the Man

Although the only major role assigned to a human character in The Prelude is that of Wordsworth himself, the poem contains a sufficient number of minor characters to permit the establishment of a pattern of motion in the adult which may be confirmed by examples from other poems.

Wordsworth seldom describes adult males in strongly kinesthetic terms, either in The Prelude or in other works. Although many of Wordsworth's conversations with male companions in his poetry take place while the two are walking together, little motion is attributed either to the *persona* or to his companions on these occasions. Wordsworth recounts, for example, his absorption of the principles underlying the French Revolution from Michel Beaupuy while the two were "footing many a mile, / In woven roots and moss smooth as the sea" (IX.442-43). In view of the description of the terrain, the verb "footing" seems somewhat inappropriate in its lack of kinesthetic appeal.

Among the men found in The Prelude is an old soldier encountered by Wordsworth during his summer vacation from Cambridge. During one of his frequent walks, the poet is lost in sensation, his mind randomly forming pictures, his body feeling "A consciousness of animal delight, / A

[43]Rader, *Presiding Ideas*, p. 12.

self-possession felt in every pause / And every gentle movement."[44] Rounding a bend in the road, he sees the "uncouth shape" of an old soldier leaning motionless against a milestone. His solitude and his stillness disturb Wordsworth, who says, "I wished to see him move" (IV.429). At Wordsworth's greeting, the old soldier rises from his resting place and accompanies the youth along the road, telling "in simple words, a Soldier's Tale." Describing the old man's motion with an apparently deliberate lack of kinesthetic appeal, Wordsworth says,

> as it appear'd to me,
> He travell'd without pain, and I beheld
> With ill-suppress'd astonishment his tall
> And ghastly figure moving at my side. (IV.465-68)

After having found the man food and lodging for the night and received his blessing, Wordsworth says, "I . . . sought with quiet my distant home" (503-505). The quietness is not only that of silence but also of tranquility and stillness, suggesting that the bodily consciousness which precedes his meeting with the soldier has been replaced by a more spiritual level of contemplation.

The old soldier is one of many such solitary figures found in Wordsworth's poetry. A second solitary in The Prelude is a blind beggar encountered while the poet is absorbed in observing the mass of turbulent humanity in a London street. When Wordsworth first sees him, the man is propped against a wall. At the sight of the beggar leaning motionless against the wall wearing a note on his chest which tells "The story of the Man, and who he

[44] IV.385-95. The portion of the episode describing Wordsworth's consciousness of his bodily movements is deleted from the 1850 revision, perhaps because such concentration upon his own physical sensations is more appropriate to the stages of childhood than to that represented here.

was," the poet's mind turns round "As with the might of waters" (VII.609, 616). The paper seems to him to be

> a type
> Or emblem, of the utmost that we know
> Both of ourselves and of the universe. (VII.617-19)

Wordsworth gazes at the man "As if admonish'd from another world" (VII.622).

Analysis of the motion in the encounters with the old soldier and the blind beggar reveals certain similarities. In each case, the solitary figure is first perceived while the poet is walking about absorbed in sensation. Both of the solitaries are motionless when they are first encountered, and in both cases, their stillness is juxtaposed with motion from other sources. In the case of the soldier, the motion which contrasts with his corpse-like stillness is that of Nature and of the _persona_; in that of the blind beggar, it is the frenzied human activity of the city street. Both episodes result in an inner, imaginative reaction on the part of the poet. Both of these solitary figures thus appear to represent an undefined symbol evoking a similarly undefined spiritual response.

The treatment of the solitary in _The Prelude_ is similar to that found elsewhere in Wordsworth's poetry. "Resolution and Independence," the poem which Wordsworth cites as an example of the power of the imagination to interchange the qualities of the animate and the inanimate (_Supra_, pp. 24-25), begins also with vividly expressed motion which contrasts with the stillness of the old leech-gatherer who is the subject of the poem.[45] "The Old Cumberland Beggar" likewise contains external motion which contrasts with the absence of kinesthetic appeal in the title character's description. The latter poem differs, however, from most poetic accounts of Wordsworth's

[45] _PW_, 2, 235-40.

encounters with solitaries in its inclusion of a stated moral. The beggar is pointed out as an object lesson illustrating the spiritual benefits of bestowing charity upon the indigent.[46] The poem's lack of kinesthetic appeal suggests that Wordsworth felt little empathy with the character, nor, apparently, did it occur to him to attempt to elicit an empathic response from the reader. The elderly beggar is thus treated as a distant object, and the moral seems more selfish than humanitarian.

Wordsworth's failure to use kinesthetic appeal to elicit an empathic response to the beggar appears more pronounced when it is compared to one of Southey's poems on a similar theme, "The Soldier's Wife." Although Southey's poem is somewhat maudlin and is poor poetry, his approach to the theme of charity does employ kinesthetic appeal to evoke empathy with the soldier's widow, "Travelling painfully over the rugged road." Addressing the widow, he says, "Sorely thy little one drags by thee barefooted; / Cold is the baby that hangs at thy bending back."[47] The use of such imagery in this context suggests that the use of kinesthetic appeal to induce the reader to "feel with" the subject is both natural and conventional for the period. In spite of the shortcomings of Southey's poem, it does avoid the tone of detached observation found in "The Old Cumberland Beggar," and its emotional appeal seems more consistent with Wordsworth's professed love of mankind than does Wordsworth's intellectual argument in favor of permitting begging.

The lack of kinesthetic appeal in the descriptions of Wordsworth's solitaries seems, then, to indicate some lack of empathy with these characters.

[46]PW, 4, 234-40.

[47]Robert Southey, Poetical Works (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1839), p. 129.

But this characteristic cannot be attributed wholly to Wordsworth's failure to identify closely with the subjects, since the motion of the solitaries is similar to that attributed to the persona of The Prelude, who is indisputably identified as the author himself.

De Quincey estimated that Wordsworth had in his lifetime walked "a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles--a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever be the animal spirits."[48] This addiction to physical exercise is only hinted at in Wordsworth's poetry. Although The Prelude covers a period during which Wordsworth traversed half of Europe by foot, he might well have traveled by magic carpet for all the muscular exertion attributed to the persona. In the account of his travels in the Alps, for example, Wordsworth says that he and his companions "clomb / Along Simplon's steep and rugged road" (VI.562-63, 1850). Even if so neutral a verb as "clomb" was deliberately chosen to focus attention on the landscape rather than on the human characters, the impression of steepness and ruggedness might have been enhanced by the choice of a more colorful verb. After the ascent, they "paced the beaten downward way" (VI.568, 1850). "Paced" seems not only a colorless verb but an inappropriate one to describe the natural motion of walking downhill.

In another mountain-climbing scene, the account of the ascent of Mount Snowdon, some kinesthetic appeal is found in the description of the journey up the mountain. Wordsworth observes, however, that although he "panted

[48]Martin Tucker, ed., Moulton's Library of Literary Criticism (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966), 3, 178.

up / With eager pace" (XIII.31-32), his physical exertions were matched by "no less eager thoughts," thus drawing attention back from the body to the mind.

In spite of the location of the Snowdon episode near the end of The Prelude, the event occurred chronologically before Wordsworth's European journey. He was probably twenty-one years old at the time of its occurrence.[49] Wordsworth seems less reluctant to ascribe motion to the persona in episodes which occurred during his youth than to the more mature persona. Book IV, which describes events which took place during his summer vacation from Cambridge, contains several instances of motion in the persona. In addition to the motion of his own body which he was enjoying prior to his encounter with the old soldier, Wordsworth includes in Book IV an amusing account of his relationship with his dog, in which the poet would saunter along the public road, "like a river murmuring and talking to itself," accompanied by his terrier, which would "jog on before." To express his exultation at producing in his mind "Some fair enchanting image," he would spring toward the dog, caressing it again and again "with stormy joy." When the dog warned of the approach of another traveler, Wordsworth recalls that he "hush'd / My voice, composed my gait, and shap'd myself / To give and take a greeting"--a course which was designed to save him from a reputation for eccentricity (IV.100-120).

In accounts of events which occurred after the period of time covered in Book IV, the persona is not associated with strong physical motion. The mature persona "paces" along a public road or "wanders" beside a stream,

[49]Raymond Dexter Havens, The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1941), p. 607n.

but he appears to be almost disembodied by the absence of muscular imagery. In relation to his chronological age, the last attribution of strong physical motion to the persona is found in Wordsworth's account of his attitude shortly after arriving in France in November of 1791,[50] when he was twenty-one years old:

> Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
> I ranged at large, through the Metropolis
> Month after month. (IX.18-20)

Even this image, although its kinesthetic appeal is strong, is more descriptive of a state of mind than of literal physical movement. After this point in Wordsworth's life, neither actual motion nor the imagery of motion in the animate is associated with the persona of The Prelude. The pattern of motion in the persona, therefore, declines gradually from early childhood to early manhood, then stops altogether. Adulthood, it seems, descended suddenly upon the poet, and its depiction in his poetry is marked by the repression of physical motion.

Although the primary role played by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in The Prelude is that of an auditor to whom the poem is addressed, Wordsworth includes occasional recollections of the times that he spent with Coleridge. Neither literal nor metaphorical motion is found in these accounts of their relationship (Infra, p. 68). The poetic treatment of Coleridge is thus consistent with that of the other adult males discussed so far.

An apparent exception to the absence of motion in the adult male in The Prelude is found in Book VIII, where Wordsworth describes the shepherds who inhabit the Lake region in which he was reared. Among their activities, he recounts their winter task of hauling food for their flocks,

[50]De Selincourt, p. 585n.

bearing from the stalls
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
To strew it on the snow. (VIII.364-66)

During warmer weather, the shepherd leaves his home at "day-spring," pausing to breakfast with his dog, then,

when he hath stay'd
As for the most he doth, beyond his time,
He springs up with a bound, and then away!
Ascending fast with his long Pole in hand,
Or winding in and out among the crags. (VIII.379-83)

The shepherd is described as "A solitary object and sublime" (VIII.407), but, unlike the other solitaries in Wordsworth's poetry, he is associated with physical motion, when, according to Wordsworth,

Mine eyes have glanced upon him, few steps off,
In size a giant, stalking through the fog,
His Sheep like Greenland Bears; at other times
When round some shady promontory turning,
His Form hath flash'd upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun. (VIII.400-405).

Except in these descriptions of the shepherds, kinesthetic appeal is almost entirely lacking in the adult males of The Prelude. There is, however, another category of adult males in Wordsworth's poetry which is not found in The Prelude--that of the licentious, insensitive man. Wordsworth's apparent reluctance to associate motion with the adult male does not extend to the characters in this category. In "Peter Bell," for example, the title character, who is initially insensitive to Nature, is described in strongly kinesthetic terms. He had "a dark and sidelong walk, / And long and slouching was his gait." He "had danced his round with Highland lasses" and "had trudged through Yorkshire dales."[51] In the poem "Ruth," the "lovely Youth" who woos the heroine, takes her to the New World, and then deserts her is

[51] PW, 2, 342, 340.

associated also with motion.[52] The effective use of motion in these descriptions shows that Wordsworth was not insensitive to kinesthetic appeal. The presence of motion in descriptions of adult males whom Wordsworth clearly did not admire and its corresponding absence in the *persona* of *The Prelude* suggest that physical motion is linked to some quality that he did not find, or did not wish to find, in himself.

Disregarding for the moment these apparent exceptions to the pattern of motion in the adult male in Wordsworth's poetry, the absence of motion in men conforms closely to the pattern of motion which has been established in the child and the youth. According to Rader's schematization of the stages of development outlined in *The Prelude*, the last two stages of development are those of early manhood and of maturity. The first of these stages is identified by Rader as the "Stage of Reason as a Faculty of Judgment;" the second, as the "Stage of the Imagination and the Grand and Simple Reason."[53] These phases of development represent what Wordsworth calls the "years that bring the philosophic mind,"[54] during which sensation no longer has a place in mental development. The absence of physical motion in characters who have attained this stage of development suggests that human motion serves as a symbol of purely sensory reaction to external stimuli.

The pattern of motion in the primitive shepherds of the Lake region and in the licentious male may be seen to conform closely to this developmental sequence. In amount and kind, the motion of the shepherds is not unlike

[52] *PW*, 2, 227-35.

[53] Rader, *Presiding Ideas*, p. 12.

[54] "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," *PW*, 2, 284.

that of the youth. The shepherd, who is perhaps representative of the naturally good but not highly philosophical rural dweller, does not attain the mature state of imaginative development which Wordsworth believes to be Nature's gift to a select few (Infra, p. 80). Yet, in his natural wisdom, he surpasses the child's sensory level of development, beyond which the licentious male has not progressed. Thus, the motion of the licentious male is like that of the child because he is seen to be like a child in his mental and imaginative development.

This pattern of development leaves the absence of motion in Wordsworth's male solitaries unaccounted for. The elderly beggar, the leech-gatherer, and the blind man can hardly be expected to have attained the state of imaginative development which Wordsworth attributes to the poet. In order to integrate these subjects into the pattern of motion in the male, it is necessary to take note of Wordsworth's habit of using similar imagery in the depiction of external stimulus and inner reaction. The significance of these characters lies not in their own stage of development but in their stimulus to the imagination, which to Wordsworth is the highest faculty of the mind. It is their stillness which sets them apart from the mainstream of humanity and causes them to assume a symbolic function related to the stage of development attained by the observer. Thus, the old soldier brings about a transition from the sensory enjoyment of the poet's physical movements to a stillness of the inner mind, and the "spot of time" marked by the encounter is an abrupt, and perhaps a temporary, transition to a more mature phase of imaginative development.

The encounter with the blind beggar brings about a similar transition from the physical to the mental level of reaction to external stimuli. This

transition is marked by a progression from the observation of physical motion preceding the encounter to the image of natural motion associated with Wordsworth's inner response to the motionless figure. Motion thus functions as a key to the significance of these solitary figures in Wordsworth's poetry as well as to the technique of isolating "spots of time" in The Prelude, which identifies mental growth as a process of sudden transition from one plateau to another rather than as a steady progression upward. This concept of mental growth is remarkably consistent with twentieth-century theories of learning and emphasizes the relevance of The Prelude in the twentieth century, a value of the work which has only recently begun to be recognized.

The motion of the adult male in Wordsworth's poetry, then, conforms to a pattern of mental growth in which the power of the senses is gradually extinguished by the power of the mind. The pattern is one which encompasses both the external stimulus and the inner reaction and, as such, is characteristic of Wordsworth's habit of merging the external with the internal.

The Motion of Female Characters

References to women in The Prelude are relatively few. In order to establish a pattern of motion in women and girls, it is necessary to turn to some of the shorter poems of the period which provide some insight into the significance of motion in the female.

Perhaps the most important female character in The Prelude is Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, who is alluded to in three widely separated passages (Infra, pp. 52-54). While metaphors of the motion of Nature are used consistently in portraying Dorothy as a tempering influence and a source of inspiration,

little physical motion is used in descriptions of Dorothy herself. Because of the significance of Dorothy Wordsworth as a source of poetic inspiration, the metaphors of motion associated with her are analyzed in Chapter III of my study, where their contribution is more relavant than in the present discussion.

Among the female characters of The Prelude are two who seem to be variants of Wordsworth's solitaries. Their descriptions, unlike those of the male solitaries, rely heavily upon kinesthetic appeal. One of these female solitaries is "a hunger-bitten Girl / Who crept along, fitting her languid self / Unto a heifer's motion" (IX.511-13). The girl, who is encountered in France during a period when Wordsworth is struggling to assimilate within himself the true ideals of the French Revolution, is pointed out by Beaupuy as a symbol of what the Revolution seeks to eradicate. The languid motion of the girl, who knits in a desultory fashion as she walks along the road, serves as a symbol of the hopeless plight of the peasant in pre-Revolutionary France and brings about another of the sudden leaps from one phase of mental development to another which, I have suggested, result from Wordsworth's encounters with the male solitaries.

A second female solitary in The Prelude, who gains added significance by serving as an example of those "spots of time" which somehow "retain / A vivifying Virtue" (XI.258-60), is encountered during an episode recalled from Wordsworth's childhood when the poet, having become separated from his companions, stumbles upon the site of a hanging which has occurred years before. After fleeing the supposedly haunted place, he sees a young girl carrying a pitcher on her head who seems "with difficult steps to force her way / Against the blowing wind" (XI.307-8). The girl, "her garments vex'd

and toss'd by the strong wind" (XI.315-16), contributes to the "visionary dreariness" the poet feels as he wanders lost on the moors. In later years, Wordsworth returned repeatedly to the site, recalling "The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam" (XI.323). The significance of the incident is not clear. It seems to have been left deliberately obscure, an example of the "mystery of Man."

These two encounters, vastly different in their significance, have one characteristic in common: the integral use of motion in the physical descriptions of the subjects. In this respect the descriptions are representative of many other passages of Wordsworth's poetry dealing with feminine subjects, where a general tendency to use motion more frequently in women than in men may be noted.

The motion of young women in Wordsworth's poetry is not unlike that of the child. In the poem "Louisa," for example, the title character is described in the acts of running and leaping in animalistic enjoyment of the rural setting. Even her smiles are described in kinesthetic terms:

> Smiles, that with motion of their own
> Do spread, and sink, and rise;
> That come and go with endless play.[55]

Nature's decree regarding Lucy in "Three Years She Grew" could serve as a summary for the childhood books of The Prelude:

> She shall be sportive as the fawn
> That wild with glee across the lawn
> Or up the mountain springs;
> And hers the silence and the calm
> Of mute insensate things.[56]

[55] PW, 2, 28.

[56] PW, 2, 214-16.

"She Was a Phantom of Delight" contains some of Wordsworth's most skillfully developed kinesthetic appeal and provides some insight into his apparent attitude toward motion in the female. The first two lines,

> She was a Phantom of delight
> When first she gleamed upon my sight,

are remarkable for their synesthesia, fusing light with kinesthetic appeal in a particularly vivid image suggesting worship from afar. In the second stanza, the lines, "Her household motions light and free / And steps of virgin liberty" suggest that motion, at least in this instance, is associated with innocence. This association of "light and free" motion with "virgin liberty" raises some question as to the validity of theories which associate childhood's unrestrained motion with sexuality in the poet's conscious mind (<u>Supra</u>, p. 23), regardless of its unconscious associations. A tribute to the intimacy of the spiritual relationship between the poet and his wife is found in the reference to "the very pulse of the Machine" in the poem's third stanza, an image of motion which is very different from those in the preceding stanzas.[57]

The use of motion in "She Was a Phantom of Delight" to portray three different stages of Wordsworth's relationship with his wife, who is clearly respected, suggests that no clear pattern of motion related to female sexuality can be established. This assumption is substantiated by the portrayals of two very different types of women in <u>The Prelude</u>, neither of whom is associated with physical motion. One of the women is a childhood friend of the poet's identified only as Mary of Buttermere, a virtuous rural maiden who marries an insensitive "spoiler," is deserted and dies in childbirth (VII.320-61). The story serves as a foil for the description of a painted

[57]<u>PW</u>, 2, 213-14.

city woman who exposes her child to the corrupting influence of "dissolute men and shameless women" at the theater, where the innocent child is surrounded by "oaths, indecent speech, and ribaldry" (VII.366-410). The absence of human motion in the accounts of these two women, one the epitome of virtue and the other a symbol of corruption, suggests that the pattern of motion in men which associates licentiousness with physical motion does not apply to women.

Wordsworth's use of motion in women appears to conform somewhat to the pattern of motion in men which is related to phases of mental development. Both of the female solitaries discussed in my study are apparently very young girls, as is the title character of "Louisa." Although the wife described in "She Was a Phantom of Delight" appears to possess a calm maturity, she is also described as "A Creature not too bright or good / For human nature's daily food." Thus, she may not have attained the mystical heights of imaginative development which Wordsworth attributes to himself. Even Dorothy Wordsworth, who profoundly affected her brother's mental and imaginative growth, seems to have contributed to his sensory appreciation of Nature rather than to his intellectual development. Thus, it appears that women in Wordsworth's poetry are associated with physical motion because they have not attained the state of mature mental development attributed to those singled out by Nature to be poets. While this pattern is undoubtedly distasteful to the feminists of any age, Wordsworth's obvious admiration for the childlike girl and the mature woman who maintains stability in her household cannot be condemned as a consciously anti-female point of view.

A useful framework for the categorization of human characters in Wordsworth's poetry--and one which is perhaps less distasteful to the feminine

reader--is Florence Marsh's classification of "light" and "dark" characters in Wordsworth's poetry. In her discussion of the imagery of human beings in Wordsworth's poetry, Marsh includes the categories of the child, the young girl, the joyous irresponsible, the suffering woman, and the enduring old man. The solitary and the wanderer are discussed as separate categories which overlap some of the others. The child, the young girl, and the joyous irresponsible are "light" characters, while the suffering woman, the enduring old man, the solitary, and the wanderer are identified as "dark" characters."[58] From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that the "light" characters in Wordsworth's poetry are associated with motion and the "dark" characters with stillness.

Wordsworth is generally assumed by critics to have identified himself with the solitary and the wanderer in his poetry. A mere similarity in the treatment of motion in the *persona* and in the solitary and the wanderer does not prove that Wordsworth projected himself into these characters. The lack of motion in the mature *persona* does, however, place him in the category of "dark" characters, suggesting that some affinity with such characters existed, whether or not Wordsworth wholly identified himself with them. This affinity is even more strongly suggested by the fact that motion is present in the female solitaries and absent in their male counterparts.

The pattern of motion in individual human beings in *The Prelude* is closely related to the stated theme of "the growth of a poet's mind." In addition to revealing the roles of various human characters in this developmental process through the merging of stimulus and response, this pattern serves as a reliable index to the stage of imaginative growth attained by

[58]*Wordsworth's Imagery* (London: Archon Books, 1963), pp. 65-85.

the characters, an index which is especially valuable in identifying the stage of mental development which the persona has reached in a particular episode. In The Prelude, which is essentially achronological, such an index is helpful in establishing the chronological progress of the poet's mental and imaginative growth.

The Motion of Collective Humanity

Wordsworth's attitude toward urban aggregations of mankind is summarized in the reference to London in the 1850 Prelude as "a monstrous anthill on the plain / Of a too-busy world" (VII.149-50, 1850). The ant metaphor is repeated in the description of the "hissing Factionists" in Revolutionary Paris, who gather "In knots, or pairs, or single, ant-like swarms" (IX.59). A similar distaste for the urban environment pervades most of Wordsworth's descriptions of both London and Paris.

When the youthful Wordsworth arrives in London, his initial impression, contrary to expectations fed by fantasies derived from stories such as that of Dick Whittington, is that of a "quick dance / Of colours, lights and forms, the Babel din / The endless stream of men, and moving things" (VII. 157-59). In the streets, he finds a "thickening hubbub" (VII.227).

Not only does Wordsworth depict the undifferentiated mass of humanity in kinesthetic terms, he also uses motion frequently to describe the individual attractions found there. In contrast to the "exhibitions mute and still" in museums (VII.244-79), the city contains such attractions as Sadler's Wells--attractions "of wider scope, where living men, / Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes, / Together join'd their multifarious aid" (VII.280-309). In spite of its tawdry appointments, the theater, Wordsworth says, "Wanted

not animations in my sight." On the stage, a "beauteous Dame / Advanced in radiance . . . like the Moon / Opening the clouds." A "sovereign King" advanced, "winding round" with his entourage. A "romping Girl / Bounced, leapt, and paw'd the air." A mumbling Sire "hobbled in, / Stumping upon a Cane." In spite of his professed distaste for the attractions of the city, Wordsworth's vividly kinesthetic descriptions of the theatrical performance convey a mood of exhilaration.

The audience, too, is of interest to Wordsworth, who observes the "many-headed mass / Of the Spectators." "Each little nook," he notes, "had its fray or brawl" (VII.466-68). The motions of the crowd initiate similar motions in the poet's mind:

> how eagerly
> And with what flashes, as it were, the mind
> Turned this way, that way! sportive and alert
> And watchful, as a Kitten when at play,
> While winds are blowing round her among grass
> And rustling leaves. (VII.468-74)

In addition to the pleasures found at the theater, Wordsworth takes pleasure in the city's street scenes

> Full-form'd, which take, with small internal help,
> Possession of the faculties; the peace
> Of night, for instance, the solemnity
> Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
> When the great tide of human life stands still,
> The business of the day to come unborn,
> Of that gone by, lock'd up as in the grave;
> The calmness, beauty of the spectacle,
> Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty streets, and sounds
> Unfrequent as in desarts; at late hours
> Of winter evenings when unwholesome rains
> Are falling hard, . . .
> when no one looks about,
> Nothing is listen'd to. (VII.626-41)

Wordsworth's distaste for the city is not based, then, entirely on the absence of trees and grass, mountains and streams but seems to stem equally

from the fact that the city is full of people and they are all moving. When they are removed from the scene by the hour or the weather, the city becomes tolerable, even attractive. An attitude similar to that expressed in The Prelude is found also in the sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802," a poem which admires the morning stillness of the city as it is viewed from afar:

> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> . . . .
> Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
> The river glideth at his own sweet will:
> Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
> And all that mighty heart is lying still![59]

But these moments of visionary calm are less typical than

> times, when half the City shall break out
> Full of one passion, vengeance, rage or fear,
> To executions, to a Street on fire,
> Mobs, riots, or rejoicings. (VII.645-48)

As an example of such an occasion, Wordsworth cites Saint Bartholomew's Fair, "a hell / For eyes and ears," "a dream, Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound" (VII.660-61). The kaleidoscopic impressions of the fair are summarized as "blank confusion! and a type not false / Of what the mighty City is itself" (VII.695-96). Individuals in this urban maelstrom are slaves, "living amid the same perpetual flow / Of trivial objects" (VII.701-2). The motion here represents life, but it is life corrupted, perverted by man, an excess which is contrasted with "The mountain's outline and its steady form" which "Gives movement to the thoughts, and multitude, / With order and relation" (VII.722, 728-29).

[59] PW, 3, 38.

Juxtaposed to the account of Saint Bartholomew's Fair is Wordsworth's description of a country fair, viewed at a distance from Helvellyn's slopes. The orderly crowd of country folk and their well-controlled livestock "move about upon the soft green field: / How little They, they and their doings seem" (VIII.49-50). Wordsworth obviously feels that it is the proximity to Nature of the simple country people which makes the country fair so attractive, but his distance from the scene also seems to be a significant factor in his attitude.

Perspective plays an important role in Wordsworth's attitude toward collective humanity. When the poet is removed from the people he is observing, he does not find them objectionable. Even viewed from a theater seat, which offers a fixed point from which one need not be swept along by the crowd, humanity is tolerable and provides some interesting specimens for observation. It is only when Wordsworth finds himself in the midst of a moving mass of humanity that he exhibits an almost pathological distaste for mankind.

Wordsworth reacts with unreasoning fear at the prospect of exchanging the role of observer for that of participant. Even the anthill metaphors suggest observation from a distance. This pattern can be seen in the childhood episodes in The Prelude, in which a pattern of active participation alternating with withdrawal and observation has been noted (Supra, pp. 27-28). By the time Wordsworth has reached early manhood, the periods of participation described in The Prelude have virtually disappeared, leaving only the withdrawal and the contemplation.

An apparent error in the 1805 Prelude provides an example of the attitude which has caused Wordsworth to be called "the most isolated among the

English poets."[60] After dining at a French inn in the company of French patriots and sharing their elation at the beginning of the Revolution, Wordsworth and his friend, along with their French companions, "rose at a signal giv'n, and form'd a ring / And, hand in hand, danced round and round the Board" (VI.406-7). Later, the group dances around the table a second time. In describing the first time the group dances, Wordsworth says, "*We* rose," but in the account of the second dance, he says, "round and round the Board *they* danced again" (VI.413. My italics). "They" is changed to "we" in the 1850 version, indicating that Wordsworth apparently did join in the second dance. The use of "they" in the earlier version thus looks very much like what has come to be called a "Freudian slip," and it suggests that even in his physical participation in the activity, Wordsworth felt very much apart from the other members of the group.

Wordsworth's isolation was recognized by Coleridge, who stated that Wordsworth felt *for*, not *with*, the common man.[61] His professed love of man has, as Onorato points out, "an abstractness about it that seems almost . . . exclusive of actual people."[62] This discrepancy between what Wordsworth said he felt toward his fellow man and what his poetry reveals may simply be a posture, and Wordsworth's detractors would undoubtedly interpret it as such. There is no evidence, however, that the ambivalence reflected in the poetry does not represent the sincere effort of an idealistic man to feel what he believed that he ought to feel.

[60] Geoffrey H. Hartman, "The Romance of Nature and the Negative Way," *Romanticism and Consciousness*, ed. Harold Bloom (1954; New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), p. 305.

[61] Lindenberger, p. 210.

[62] P. 295.

In view of this portrait of an isolated man who devotes an entire book of his poetic autobiography to the theme of "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind," an element of pathos is found in Wordsworth's recognition of his own preference for solitude:

> And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
> The self-sufficing power of solitude. (II.77-78)

The portrait of the artist which emerges from this study of human motion in Wordsworth's poetry is that of a man who, in his quest for spiritual communication with Nature, seeks escape from the world of physical sensation and succeeds too well in withdrawing from the world of people. The study thus reveals another affinity of Wordsworth's poetry with twentieth-century literature: the theme of the individual alienated from society.

CHAPTER III

THE MOTION OF NATURE AND THE THEME OF THE POETIC IMAGINATION

In the closing passages of The Prelude, Wordsworth states that he has "track'd the main essential Power, / Imagination, up her way sublime" (XIII. 289-90). These lines point to the importance of the imagination both in the poet's value system and in the development of the poem. Imagination, which is one of the central themes of the poem, is represented as "clearest insight," "amplitude of mind," and "absolute strength" (XIII.168-69).

The importance of the subject of the imagination to Wordsworth and other Romantic poets is expressed by Frederick Pottle:

> It is hard for us nowadays to understand why Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley made such a fuss about the imagination, and why Wordsworth and Coleridge labored so to distinguish the imagination from the fancy. Make no mistake about it: it was for them a matter of vital importance, nothing less than a vindication of their right to exist as poets.[63]

The Romantic poets' concern with formulating a theory of the imagination arose in part as a reaction against the mechanistic theories of literary invention which prevailed in the eighteenth century. British empirical philosophers, notable among whom are Locke and Hume, had developed psychological theories which explained the complex operations of the mind in terms analagous to those of Newton's science of mechanics.[64]

[63]Frederick A. Pottle, "The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth," Romanticism and Consciousness, p. 283.

[64]M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 159-67; see also Melvin Rader, Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 39-52.

Although the theories of these empirical philosophers varied in some details, they were in general agreement on their fundamental premises. Most theories postulated that mental processes were composed of discrete elementary components--ideas or images--which entered the mind through the senses. These components were believed to move in sequence through the mind, forming trains of thought. If the train of thought re-created the sequence in which its constituents were originally perceived, it formed memory. Literary creation was believed to consist of the process of dividing and recombining these components by means of a force of associative attraction. The division and recombination of images or ideas and the force of associative attraction which made the process possible were together called, interchangeably, imagination and fancy.[65]

The associative theory of David Hartley, which postulated that the operations of the mind are all derived from simple sensations linked together only by contiguity in original perception, was enthusiastically embraced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge during a part of the period of his closest association with Wordsworth. Whether Wordsworth ever embraced Hartley's associationist theories as enthusiastically as Coleridge did has not been determined, but there is no doubt that he was aware of the theory. By 1801, Coleridge had become disenchanted with Hartley's doctrine, and he was joined by Wordsworth in later attempts to modify the theory.[66]

Although Wordsworth's prose works do not include a specific refutation of Hartley's theory, they do contain a discussion of the imagination. In the 1815 Preface to the _Lyrical Ballads_, Wordsworth attempts to define the

[65]Abrams, _The Mirror and the Lamp_, pp. 160-62.

[66]Rader, _Wordsworth_, pp. 25-30.

imagination and to distinguish between imagination and fancy,[67] but his definition of the imagination is more successful at stating what the imagination is not than in saying exactly what it is. Unable to arrive at a precise definition of the abstract faculty of the imagination, he attempts to define it in terms of its operations, citing the power of the imagination to combine and coalesce which I have quoted in the preceding chapter of this discussion (pp. 19-20). But because he attributes the power of combining images to the fancy as well as to the imagination, the distinction between the two remains blurred.

Wordsworth's failure to provide a clear definition of the imagination in his literary theory seems to stem at least in part from the fact that he was operating under the tyranny of language, dealing with the same subject matter for which Freud and his successors found it necessary to develop their own terminology. The subject, for Wordsworth, was literally too abstract for words. When a subject is so abstract as to defy verbal expression, it is only natural to rely upon analogies with the more concrete external world to explain it. Since analogy is the basis of metaphor and symbol, which are major tools of poetry, it is perhaps even more natural that Wordsworth, a poet, should find poetry a more suitable vehicle than prose for the treatment of the abstract subject of the imagination. He approaches the subject in _The Prelude_ through the use of these poetic tools, and at least a partial theory of the imagination can be inferred through a study of the metaphors and symbols through which it is expressed in _The Prelude_. Therefore, instead of following the more common procedure of seeking an explication of the poetry in the author's later prose writings, I

[67]_Prose Works_, 2, 134-58.

am turning to the poetry for clarification of the theory expressed unsatisfactorily in prose.

It must not be supposed that Wordsworth's use of metaphor and symbol in his exploration of the poetic imagination represents merely an effort to define the imagination by telling what it is like. His use of imagery drawn from the external world is perhaps best explained in the following lines, taken from a longer passage which Wordsworth cites as a Prospectus to The Excursion:

> How exquisitely the individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external World
> Is fitted:--and how exquisitely, too--
> Theme this but little heard of among men--
> The external World is fitted to the Mind;
> And the creation (by which no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish.[68]

Thus, Wordsworth's symbols and metaphors drawn from the external world represent more than simple analogies; they rely upon the reciprocal affinities which Wordsworth felt to exist between the internal and the external, explaining the invisible, blended whole in terms of its visible aspects.

The external world from which The Prelude's metaphors and symbols of the imagination are drawn is the world of Nature, and the images of Nature that he uses are images of Nature in motion. Winds, vapors, and flowing waters--the elements of Nature in which motion is an inseparable feature--serve as symbols for the imagination and as vehicles for the metaphors representing the imagination's external stimuli and internal responses.

This portion of my study is an examination of Wordsworth's use of metaphors and symbols of Nature in motion in his exploration of the subject

[68]Prose Works, 2, 148.

of the imagination in The Prelude. My format reflects two basic issues upon which Wordsworth's treatment of the subject turns: (1) the sources of poetic inspiration and (2) the manner in which these sources are assimilated into the mind to form the creative imagination. The ensuing discussion is therefore divided into two major parts, the first consisting of a study of the metaphors and symbols of Nature in motion in Wordsworth's acknowledged sources of inspiration and the second focusing upon Wordsworth's use of symbols drawn from Nature in motion to express his concept of the imagination itself.

Sources of Inspiration

The sources of poetic inspiration which Wordsworth identifies in The Prelude are drawn from the realms of man, Nature, and society. Among the persons he identifies as having influenced his development as a poet, his sister Dorothy and the poet Coleridge are most prominent. The major social force which is recognized as having contributed to his poetic growth is the French Revolution. Nature itself, however, is the most important source of Wordsworth's poetic inspiration, having nourished his aspirations during his early years and restored and sustained them in his maturity.

Wordsworth's list of the sources of his inspiration cannot accurately be represented without some mention of his acknowledgement of the influence of literature. An account of his childhood reading habits is found in Book I, in a vivid and appealing passage relating his youthful preference for thrilling romances from myth, legend, and history (I.157-219). In addition to the more worldly pursuits he recalls having enjoyed as a student at Cambridge, he refers to the pleasure he derived from the poetry of Chaucer,

Spenser, and Milton (III.276-94). But aside from a reference to "Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven / With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace" (III.281-82), little natural motion is found in the accounts of his reading either in reference to the literature itself or to Wordsworth's inner response to it. The subject of the influence of literature thus falls outside the limits of my discussion.

On the other hand, some image of Nature in motion is found in each of the passages in The Prelude which pay tribute to Dorothy Wordsworth's influence in the development of her brother's imagination. In the first of these passages, Wordsworth recalls times during their childhood when he and his sister "Lay listening to the wild flowers and the grass / As they gave out their whispers to the wind" (VI.234-35). As a beloved companion who shared and sympathized with her brother's appreciation of Nature, Dorothy appears to have reinforced Wordsworth's concept of a living universe.

Later, when Wordsworth's poetic inspiration flagged, Dorothy reconciled him to the earlier appreciation of Nature which they had shared. A second tribute to Dorothy describes her constancy in a simile of Nature in motion:

> then it was
> That the beloved Woman in whose sight
> Those days were pass'd, now speaking in a voice
> Of sudden admonition, like a brook
> That does but cross a lonely road, and now
> Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
> Companion never lost through many a league,
> Maintain'd for me a saving intercourse
> With my true self. (X.908-16)

In this simile, Wordsworth has avoided using the traditional symbol of an unmoving object to signify constancy and has chosen instead an image of moving Nature to project a more dynamic concept of his sister's unfailing devotion.

Dorothy's tempering influence also receives tribute. When Wordsworth's soul had become like "a rock with torrents roaring," it was Dorothy who would

> plant its crevices with flowers,
> Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
> And teach the little birds to build their nests
> And warble in its chambers. (XIII.233-36)

Both the poet's impassioned state of mind and Dorothy's gentle influence are presented in contrasting images of Nature in motion. The gentleness of the image used here to characterize Dorothy's influence echoes the tone of the winding brook image in the second tribute to her and is reiterated more specifically in the lines which close the third tribute to Dorothy in *The Prelude*:

> thy breath,
> Dear Sister, was a kind of gentler Spring
> That went before my steps. (XIII.244-46)

Coleridge, like Dorothy, receives tribute in *The Prelude* as a source of inspiration to Wordsworth, but the tributes to Coleridge are not marked by images of Nature in motion. The difference in the kind and quantity of imagery used to characterize the influence of the two appears to stem from a difference in their spheres of influence. Dorothy appears to have influenced Wordsworth by encouraging him to experience a sensory appreciation of Nature. Entries in her *Journal* describing scenes celebrated in Wordsworth's poems suggest that Wordsworth may have drawn upon her fanciful descriptions of natural scenes in creating his poems.[69] Coleridge, on the other hand,

[69]Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography* (1965; repr. Oxford: Clarendon press, 1957), 1, pp. 43, 354-57; see also Pottle, pp. 275-83, for a detailed analysis of the influence of Dorothy's *Journal* on "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

appears to have contributed to Wordsworth's inspiration by stimulating his intellect.[70] The pattern of natural imagery associated with the two appears, then, to conform to the pattern of human motion in Wordsworth's poetry, in which the "intellectual years" are characterized by an absence of motion. Such a pattern apparently reflects the complementary roles played by Wordsworth's sister and his friend.

In terms of the amount of space devoted to them in The Prelude, Dorothy and Coleridge play a minor role in comparison to that of the French Revolution, which was secondary only to Nature in its influence on the growth of Wordsworth's mind. The Revolution and its impact upon Wordsworth's development as a poet are the subjects of two entire books of The Prelude.[71]

To those of us who live in the twentieth century, the French Revolution is history, its libertarian ideals taken for granted. To the radical poets and philosophers of the period during which it took place, it signalled a new era, the advent of the Millenium. To Wordsworth, it was a personal crisis. The immediacy of his reaction to the French Revolution resulted at least in part from his having been an eyewitness to many of its events. Wordsworth arrived in France in November, 1791, after "the first storm was overblown, / And the strong hand of outward violence / Lock'd up in quiet" (IX.108-10). During the year that he remained in France, some of the major events of the Revolution occurred, among them the deposition of the monarchy and the beginning of the Reign of Terror. The events of the Revolution are

[70] Rader, Presiding Ideas, p. 2.

[71] The second of these books is further divided into two books in the 1850 revision, giving the 1850 Prelude a total of fourteen books instead of the thirteen in the 1805 version.

recounted in The Prelude not for their historical value, but, as Wordsworth expresses it, "only as they were storm / Or sunshine to my individual mind" (X.104-5).

Wordsworth outlines in The Prelude four stages of his personal reaction to the Revolution. The first of these stages is one of relative apathy, the result, he says, of having been reared in the Lake District where individual worth was recognized and the ideals of the Revolution were practiced in the daily lives of the inhabitants. A second stage occurs when he becomes acquainted with some of the anti-Royalist activists--notably Michel Beaupuy--and becomes fired with Revolutionary zeal. His ardor at this stage, however, is an idealistic abstraction. Brought face-to-face with the realities of the Revolution through an encounter with a peasant girl leading a cow (Supra, p. 36), he enters the third stage, in which he becomes aware of the Revolution as a movement of real people who have been denied the recognition of their human dignity. Although his sympathy for the movement is somewhat dimmed by the Reign of Terror, he does not enter the fourth stage, that of abject despair, until after his return to England, when hostile relations and finally open war develop between England and France. Compounding his despair in this fourth stage is an accompanying loss of creative energy.

Two examples of storm imagery have already been introduced in my discussion of the Revolution. One of these passages characterizes the external events of the Revolution as a storm; the other uses the storm image to describe Wordsworth's inner response. Both the storm image and its use to depict external events and inner reactions are typical of the imagery of Nature in motion found throughout the Revolutionary books of The Prelude.

Woven into the imagery of cataclysmic natural motion which characterizes the Revolution is a pattern of wind imagery which is established early in Book IX in a scene in which Wordsworth, having characteristically withdrawn from the tumult of the buzzing throngs in the streets, sits in the courtyard of the Bastille, "Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust" (IX.63). The image sounds a prophetic note and parallels the author's desultory interest in the Revolution at that early stage. In his apathy, he is

> Tranquil, almost, and careless as a flower
> Glassed in a Green-house, or a Parlour shrub
> When every bush and tree, the country through,
> Is shaking to the roots. (IX.87-90)

During this period of "universal ferment," when "The land all swarm'd with passion, like a Plain / Devour'd by locusts" (IX.177-78), Wordsworth is affected by the rhetoric of extremist and moderate alike. The moderate Girondists are characterized as "Powers, / Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day, / And felt through every nook of town and field" (IX.180-82). Although his associates are ardent Royalists, he cannot long tolerate their ideals, and their rhetoric evokes his negative reaction:

> zeal which yet
> Had slumber'd, now in opposition burst
> Forth like a Polar summer; every word
> They utter'd was a dart, by counter-winds
> Blown back upon themselves. (IX.258-62)

The second stage of Wordsworth's reaction to the Revolution, that of zealous idealism, is one which is characterized not by Nature imagery but by fanciful imaginary scenes drawn directly from The Faerie Queene. In contrast to the fairy-tale quality of this imagery is the almost complete absence of any sort of concrete imagery in the discussion following the episode which Wordsworth says made him aware of the true nature of the Revolution. In terms of positive inspiration, this third stage would be expected

to be climactic, its effect heightened by vivid imagery, but Wordsworth accounts for his inner reactions in a brief thirty lines affirming the principles of individual dignity and self-rule, ending with the observation that he will not

> take note
> Of other matters which detain'd us oft
> In thought or conversation, public acts,
> And public persons, and the emotions wrought
> Within our minds by the ever-varying winds
> Of Record and Report which day by day
> Swept over us. (IX.543-49)

The images of Nature in motion which occur up to this point in Wordsworth's account of the Revolution fall into two categories. The events of the period are characterized by images of storm and cataclysm. Interwoven among these images of intense motion are wind images which emphasize the capriciousness of the wind, its unpredictable habit of turning back upon itself. A more ominous tone is set by a wind image at the beginning of Book X. Returning to Paris from the Loire, Wordsworth travels through the serene, sunlit countryside. In this setting, he learns from a mob fleeing the city that the monarchy has been overthrown. The refugees are described as

> the congregated Host,
> Dire cloud upon the front of which was written
> The tender mercies of the dismal wind
> That bore it. (X.9-12)

The ominous tone is intensified in an account of Wordsworth's final sleepless night after his return to Paris, where he has seen the beginning of the Reign of Terror. In his agitated state of mind, he seems to hear a voice saying,

'The horse is taught his manage, and the wind
Of heaven wheels round and treads in his own steps,
Year follows year, the tide returns again,
Day follows day, all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once.' (X.70-74)

Here, the image of the wind turning upon itself is repeated, but in the larger context of the passage, the wind assumes import beyond the mere capriciousness found in Book IX. Beginning with an image of human control from a Shakespearean comedy,[72] the passage moves to the shifting wind and from there to the more predictable cycles of Nature. The natural phenomenon with which it ends, however, is both cataclysmic and unpredictable. In view of the pessimistic effect of the passage, it is hardly surprising that the illusion is followed by another illusory voice uttering a phrase from the tragedy of Macbeth: "Sleep no more."

Another Shakespearean tragedy provides an image depicting the suffering of the inhabitants of Robespierre's native village, who raise their voices against their native son "as Lear reproach'd the winds" (X.463). An even more intense type of wind imagery, also drawn from a Shakespearean tragedy,[73] is found in Wordsworth's description of the public reaction in France to the threat of war between France and England:

The goaded Land wax'd mad; the crimes of few
Spread into madness of the many, blasts
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven. (X.313-15)

These last three examples of Nature in motion draw upon both their own meanings and their association with Shakespeare's Fall-of-Kings tragedies to add dire overtones to the events with which they are associated.

[72] As You Like It, I.i.13.

[73] Hamlet, I.iv.41.

The satanic dimension of the image of "blasts from hell" is found again, intensified to a frenzy, in a wind image which depicts the fever-pitch of the martial spirit in France. Wordsworth compares the excess of patriotism in France to the activities of a child with a pinwheel who is not content with the action produced in his toy by the wind alone,

> But with the plaything at arm's length he sets
> His front against the blast, and runs amain,
> To make it whirl the faster. (X.344-46)

The perversion of the original Revolutionary ideals is reflected in this image of natural motion intensified by man to an unnatural state.

Another progression from an image of Nature in motion to an unnatural image is found in Wordsworth's reaction to Napoleon's coronation, an event which destroys all optimistic expectations for the attainment of libertarian goals:

> when we see the dog
> Returning to his vomit, when the sun
> That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
> In exultation among living clouds
> Hath put his function and his glory off,
> And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
> Sets like an opera phantom. (X.935-41)

In spite of his disillusionment with the course of the Revolution, Wordsworth ends his discussion on a note of optimism, expressing to Coleridge his confidence that "the dull / Sirocco air" of degeneracy will become "a healthful breeze / To cherish and invigorate thy frame" (X.974-77). Still another note of optimism is sounded when Wordsworth says that his narrative of the Revolution has traced faithfully "The workings of a youthful mind, beneath / The breath of great events" (X.944-45). The use of the word "breath," which has etymological and traditional associations with "wind"

and "soul,"[74] suggests some hope that the spirit of the Revolution is not dead. But in the 1850 Prelude, the lines are changed to "The perturbations of a youthful mind / Under a long-lived storm of great events" (XI.373-74, 1850). Although the substitution of more specific terms for the somewhat general ones in the earlier version seems to be a technical improvement, the revision changes the tone of the passage from one of mild optimism to one of turbulence, reflecting, perhaps, Wordsworth's prolonged emotional suffering and increasing disappointment in the aftermath of the Revolution.

Wordsworth attributes the renewal of his creative energy to a renewed contact with the original source of his poetic inspiration, Nature. Of all the sources of inspiration identified in The Prelude, none plays a role as important as that of Nature in the development of the poet's mind. Nature's power to inspire is depicted through Wordsworth's descriptions of natural landscapes and through his use of the recurrent metaphor of the breeze as a symbol of Nature's inspiration. Motion is an important feature of both the descriptive and the symbolic passages.

The descriptions of the natural scenes from which Wordsworth drew inspiration are catalogs of Nature in motion. The motion of Nature is frequently perceived visually in these descriptive passages, but often a heightened spiritual quality is attained through the auditory perception of the motion of winds and waters. Stillness, paradoxically, is also a feature of Wordsworth's landscapes, often being found in conjunction with motion. The relative proportion of motion to stillness in the landscapes varies, but

[74]The history of this verbal association is summarized by M. H. Abrams in "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," English Romantic Poets, ed. M. H. Abrams (1957; New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 46-49.

regardless of which of these aspects of Nature is emphasized, it is usually contrasted or combined with the other.

Wordsworth's affinity with Nature began in early childhood. At the age of five years, he held

> unconscious intercourse
> With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
> A pure organic pleasure from the lines
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters colour'd by the steady clouds. (I.589-93)

As he grew older, the "pure organic pleasure" assumed a more spiritual quality. As a schoolboy, he says,

> I would walk alone,
> In storm and tempest, or in star-light nights
> Beneath the quiet Heavens; and, at that time,
> Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
> To breathe an elevated mood, by form
> Or image unprofaned; and I would stand
> Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are
> The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
> Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
> Thence did I drink in the visionary power. (II.321-31)

The role of Nature as a source of spiritual nourishment is suggested in both passages by the image of drinking in the powers of Nature. The metaphor of nourishment recurs in the apostrophe to Nature which brings to a close Wordsworth's account of his school days:

> Ye Mountains and Ye Lakes,
> And sounding Cataracts! Ye Mists and Winds
> . . . .
> O Nature! Thou hast fed
> My lofty speculations. (II.440-63)

Other examples of Wordsworth's recognition of Nature in motion as a source of inspiration in childhood could be added to these selections, but an exhaustive catalog of examples would add little to the insight provided by the foregoing passages, which convey a sense of the power of moving

Nature and a visionary stillness in which natural motion is sublimated but not entirely absent.

The power and visionary stillness of Nature are found also in Wordsworth's account of Nature's role in restoring his poetic energy after his period of creative debilitation. The inspirational qualities of Nature are more complex in these later passages, but the passages are still dominated by motion, frequently combined with stillness.

Wordsworth attributes to Nature the priest's role as intermediary in one of his catalogs of natural imagery:

> Ye motions of delight, that through the fields
> Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe
> The breath of Paradise, and find your way
> To the recesses of the soul! Ye Brooks
> Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
> By day, a quiet one in silent night,
> And you Ye Groves, whose ministry it is
> To interpose the covert of your shades,
> Even as sleep, betwixt the heart of man
> And the uneasy world, 'twixt man himself
> Not seldom, and his own unquiet heart. (XI.9-19)

The role of Nature as intermediary between the senses, the emotions, and the intellect is suggested by another passage, which combines actual motion with apparent motion:

> Oh! soul of Nature, excellent and fair,
> That didst rejoice with me, with whom I too
> Rejoiced, through early youth before the winds
> And powerful waters, and in lights and shades
> That march'd and countermarch'd about the hills,
> In glorious apparition, now all eye
> And now all ear; but ever with the heart
> Employ'd, and the majestic intellect. (XI.138-45)

In these catalogs of Nature, the amount of motion and the proportions of motion and stillness vary, but none of the landscapes is completely static. Wordsworth appears to have been repelled by complete stasis in Nature. This attitude is indicated in the account of his reaction to his first view of

Mont Blanc's frozen summit. Far from having been inspired by the peak's lofty grandeur, he says that he and his companion

> griev'd
> To have a soulless image on the eye
> Which had usurp'd upon a living thought
> That never more could be. (VI.453-56)

The glaciated heights of the Vale of Chamouny, with its "dumb cataracts and streams of ice," has a similar effect, made clear by Wordsworth's relief at descending from the glacier's sterility to the fertile valley below, where "Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends / And reconcil'd us to realities" (VI.460-61). These passages provide a clear indication that Wordsworth felt the soul of Nature to be manifested through natural motion.

A contrast with the unnatural stillness of frozen Nature may be found in Wordsworth's description of the "perfect stillness" of a forest glade in which he spends an autumn afternoon (I.68-94). The air is still, the sun warm. Wordsworth lies on the warm earth, "seeing nought, nought hearing." But the stillness is punctuated by the occasional sound of an acorn falling to the ground. There is no indication that this auditory awareness of natural motion mars the "perfect stillness" of the scene; on the contrary, this reminder of life in Nature contributes to the perfection of the stillness.

An ideal balance between motion and stillness in Nature is found in Wordsworth's description of an English valley beside the sea:

> A holy scene! along the smooth green turf
> Our Horses grazed; to more than inland peace
> Left by the Sea wind passing overhead
> (Though wind of roughest temper) trees and towers
> May in that Valley oftentimes be seen,
> Both silent and both motionless alike;
> Such is the shelter that is there, and such
> The safeguard for repose and quietness. (II.114-21)

In the womb-like shelter of the valley, with violent winds blowing overhead, Wordsworth finds personal tranquility which does not separate him from the vital powers of Nature. In this passage as in other passages I have cited which combine motion and stillness, the relationship is not so much a matter of juxtaposition as of co-existence: the two combine and coalesce rather than contrasting.

A key to the significance of the co-existence of motion and stillness in Wordsworth's natural description, as well as to the structural alternation between periods of vigorous activity and quiet contemplation in the first two books of The Prelude (Supra, pp. 21-22), is found in a theory stated in the poem:

> From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
> Of calmness equally are nature's gift,
> . . . .
> Hence it is,
> That Genius which exists by interchange
> Of peace and excitation, finds in her
> His best and purest Friend, from her receives
> That energy by which he seeks the truth,
> Is rouzed, aspires, grasps, struggles, wishes, craves,
> From her that happy stillness of the mind
> Which fits him to receive it, when unsought. (XII.1-14)

On the basis of this statement, it appears that the landscapes which are characterized by the co-existence of motion and stillness serve not only to portray the sublime qualities of Nature from which inspiration arises but also to symbolize the creative process itself. The value of this passage as an explication of Wordsworth's well-known definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" which originates in "emotion recollected in tranquillity"[75] has been largely overlooked in the literary criticism covered by my survey of literature. This passage, taken in

[75] Prose Works, 2, 96.

conjunction with Wordsworth's statement in the Prospectus to The Excursion that the individual mind and the external world are reciprocally fitted to each other, and illustrated by the descriptions of external Nature in The Prelude, offers valuable insight into Wordsworth's literary theory. Nature thus serves as a model for the poetic imagination, in which emotion and tranquility co-exist, complementing one another in their alternating dominance.

In addition to Wordsworth's landscapes in motion, which serve as symbols of what they inspire, a symbol of Nature's inspiration is found in the recurrent breeze motif in The Prelude. This symbol is introduced in the opening lines of the poem, when the poet is greeted upon his exit from the city by a "gentle breeze" which signals the return of creative energy. The motif is reiterated at the beginning of Book VII, where Wordsworth refers to the same "animating breeze" with which the poem begins.

The symbolic import of the breeze as an agent of Nature's inspiration is suggested also in Wordsworth's account of occasions during his sojourn in London when he would flee the center of the city in search of "Some half-frequented scene, where wider Streets / Bring straggling breezes of suburban air" (VII.207-8).

Near the end of The Prelude, Wordsworth circles back to his original breeze image.[76] Stating that his poem does not begin with man's unhappiness and must not end so, he invokes

> Ye motions of delight, that through the fields
> Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe
> The breath of Paradise, and find your way
> To the recesses of the soul! (XI.9-12)

[76]The circular structure of The Prelude is suggested by M. H. Abrams in Natural Supernaturalism (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), pp. 74-83.

The breeze thus forms a leitmotif symbolizing the mystical inspirational powers of Nature. The symbolic import of these images seems clear enough, even without Wordsworth's assertion that

> Visionary Power
> Attends upon the motions of the winds
> Embodied in the mystery of words. (V.619-21)

The breeze is identified by M. H. Abrams as a recurrent metaphor in Romantic poetry which symbolizes poetic inspiration. Correspondingly, the Eolian harp serves as "a persistent analogue of the poetic mind, the figurative mediator between outer motion and inner emotion."[77] Wordsworth employs the image of the Eolian harp only once in The Prelude:

> It was a splendid evening; and my soul
> Did once again make trial of the strength
> Restored to her afresh; nor did she want
> Eolian visitations; but the harp
> Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
> Of harmony dispers'd in straggling sounds
> And, lastly, utter silence. (I.101-7)

It is significant, I think, that Wordsworth uses the Eolian harp image only to signify the frustration of the poetic imagination. This fact, along with the fact that this single use of the image is so greatly outnumbered by instances in which the wind acts directly upon the poet, suggests that although Wordsworth concurred with the concept of the poet as a passive instrument acted upon by an external force, he was not attracted by the metaphor of an artifact serving as an intermediary between the mind and Nature.

The immediacy of the relationship between external breeze and internal inspiration in The Prelude can be seen in Wordsworth's expansion of the initial breeze in The Prelude:

[77]"The Correspondent Breeze," p. 38.

> For I, methought, while the sweet breath of Heaven
> Was blowing on my body, felt within
> A corresponding breeze which travell'd gently on
> O'er things which it had made, and is become
> A tempest, a redundant energy
> Vexing its own creation. (I.41-47)

On the surface, the passage appears to be a simple one in which the outer breeze suggests a metaphor for what is happening in the poet's mind. But a closer analysis reveals that Wordsworth has built up the metaphor progressively so that the source of inspiration blends with the creative power it inspires. The literal, external breeze is described metaphorically as the "breath of Heaven," linking in a single phrase the traditional relationship of wind, breath, and spirit. Having suggested the spiritual associations of the external breeze, Wordsworth employs the breeze as a metaphor for his inner state, depicting the internal breeze not simply as an agent of creation but as creator in itself. So closely allied are the inner and outer breezes that an image such as that of the Eolian harp would serve only to mar the unity of the resulting poetic creation.

In summary, the widely disparate sources of Wordsworth's poetic inspiration are linked together by a pattern of natural motion used either literally or metaphorically in their descriptions. Gentle breezes are especially predominant in Wordsworth's acknowledgement of the creativity inspired by his sister Dorothy and by Nature, while storms and tempests serve as metaphors for the turbulent emotions which interfere with creativity. In Wordsworth's discussions of the various sources of inspiration, the same type of imagery is used to depict both the external stimulus and the inner reaction it evokes, resulting in a blending of the external and the internal.

There is little internal evidence in The Prelude to suggest that Wordsworth's identification of the sources of his inspiration represents a

conscious refutation of Hartley's theory that the powers of the mind derive directly from the senses, but his inclusion of his sister and Coleridge and of the French Revolution among his sources of inspiration raises the question of the relationship between the emotions and the senses. It is difficult to account for the contribution of these sources of inspiration solely in terms of sensory perception.

In his descriptions of natural landscapes, Wordsworth appears to avoid breaking down the subject into discrete elements. The simultaneous existence of motion and stillness links the elements of the landscape with each other and with the poet's mind, so that the landscape descriptions emerge as configurations rather than as separate images.

The literal and metaphorical use of Nature in motion to depict external sources of inspiration suggests that these sources of inspiration were perceived by Wordsworth not as objects of the senses but as active forces. The concept of the mental processes as a force or a power rather than a parade of recollected sensory impressions is suggested by the use of the same type of imagery to convey Wordsworth's inner response to external stimuli. Thus, the senses appear to serve as catalysts merging external forces with internal forces, forming a unified whole.

Symbols of the Imagination

Wordsworth is concerned in The Prelude not only with the identification of sources of poetic inspiration but also with the question of how these sources are assimilated into the mind to form the creative imagination. Unlike Coleridge, who developed an extensive theory of the imagination based upon the model of vegetative growth.[78] Wordsworth appears never to have

[78]Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, pp. 167-77.

developed a very clear idea of the precise nature of the imagination. He appears to have conceived of the imagination as being a higher faculty closely related to but not identical with the mind, "Reason in her most exalted mood" (XIV.192, 1850). The mystery of the mind, the imagination, and the relationship between the two is expressed by a passage in the 1850 Prelude:

> Imagination--here the Power so called
> Through sad incompetence of human speech,
> That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
> Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
> At once, some lonely traveller. (VI.592-96, 1850)

Certain passages in The Prelude indicate, however, that if Wordsworth was unable to formulate a precise definition of the mind and the imagination, he at least had definite ideas about what they were not. The mechanistic theory that mental processes are made up of discrete, identifiable components is clearly rejected in three passages which rely on the blending properties of flowing water to suggest the merging of the elements of the creative imagination:

> Who . . . shall point, as with a wand, and say
> 'This portion of the river of my mind
> Came from yon fountain?' (II.213-15)

> I have singled out
> Some moments, the earliest that I could, in which
> Their several currents blended into one,
> Weak yet, and gathering imperceptibly
> Flow'd in by gushes. (VIII.174-78)

> Finally whate'er
> I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
> That flow'd into a kindred stream. (VI.672-74)

The river or stream as a metaphor for the operations of the mind is reiterated with such frequency in The Prelude that it assumes an unmistakable symbolic association. Flowing water is appropriate as a symbol for

the operations of the mind because it suggests a dynamic force, an on-going power. Another property of streams and rivers, their intermittent flow, is called upon also in metaphors depicting the mind as a body of flowing water. Wordsworth depicts his post-Revolutionary interests, temporarily diverted from libertarian ideals, as streams that "Ran in new channels, leaving the old ones dry" (X.771). The loss of the initial fervor he had experienced as he began writing The Prelude is described as an "interrupted stream" (VII.11).

In all of these metaphors, it is not very clear whether Wordsworth is speaking of the mind, the imagination, or both. In view of the nebulous relationship expressed in his metaphor of the imagination as a vapor rising from the mind's abyss, it is doubtful that Wordsworth himself had a very clear idea of what he meant. There is no mistaking his subject, however, in an extended metaphor depicting the imagination as a river which flows sometimes above ground and sometimes below the surface:

> This love more intellectual cannot be
> Without Imagination, which, in truth,
> Is but another name for absolute strength
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And reason in her most exalted mood.
> This faculty hath been the moving soul
> Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
> From darkness, and the very place of birth
> In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
> The sound of waters; follow'd it to light
> And open day, accompanied its course
> Among the ways of Nature, afterwards
> Lost sight of it, bewilder'd and engulph'd
> Then given it greeting, as it rose once more
> With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast
> The works of man and face of human life. (XIII.166-81)

The imagination is thus depicted as a vital, ongoing force which is occasionally submerged below the level of consciousness but which is never stopped completely.

The link between the soul and the imagination in the sixth line of the foregoing quotation is found again in Wordsworth's climactic account of spiritual transfiguration at the summit of Mount Snowdon. Wordsworth describes the scene he encountered on a mountain-climbing expedition when, having reached the summit ahead of his companions, he stood alone in the bright moonlight, a calm sea of mist at his feet. At one point, the mists part, forming "A deep and gloomy breathing-place through which / Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams / Innumerable, roaring with one voice" (XIII.57-59). The parting of the vapors assumes a symbolic meaning:

> in that breach
> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg'd
> The Soul, the Imagination of the whole. (XIII.62-65)

In retrospect, the scene appears to Wordsworth "The perfect image of a mighty Mind, / Of one that feeds upon infinity" (XIII.69-70). Thus, the imagination of the poet is linked with the mind of the universe, which is made visible through the sublime manifestations of Nature. The mind, the imagination, and the emotions are all perceived as active forces which are inseparably united with the active force which moves the universe.

Wordsworth, then, conceived of the imagination as an integral part of the soul of the universe. In view of this concept of the imagination, it is hardly surprising that he failed to achieve a precise definition of the faculty. "Imagination" to Wordsworth was as indefinable as "soul." If he failed in defining the imagination, however, he was more than successful in conveying in The Prelude a sense of the power of the imagination as a force which pervades the mind of the poet and the entire universe with moving grandeur.

CHAPTER IV

THE MOTION OF THE ACTIVE UNIVERSE: ANIMISM AND RELIGION

A salient feature of the Wordsworthian landscape is the sense of life with which it is endowed, a feature which in a recent commentary is aptly termed the "livingness" of Wordsworth's landscapes.[79] This "habitual reading of passion, life, and physiognomy into the landscape," a characteristic which Wordsworth's poetry shares with that of most other major Romantic poets,[80] is not merely personification, the literary device of attributing human qualities to the inanimate; it represents instead the conviction that all elements of the universe are literally alive. Such a tendency to perceive life in inanimate forms is designated as animism.

If the chronology of The Prelude is taken at face value, Wordsworth's animism represents an early phase of his philosophical development, serving as a foundation for the religious views into which it gradually evolved. Animism and religion, both of which are among the presiding ideas of The Prelude,[81] are therefore closely related--so much so, in fact, that they tend to merge--but they are not identical. The ensuing discussion treats the two separately insofar as it is possible to do so, focusing upon

[79]Margaret Drabble, Wordsworth (New York: Arco, 1966, repr. 1969), p. 89.

[80]Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 55.

[81]Rader, Presiding Ideas, pp. 55-62; see also Havens, chapters 5 and 9.

Wordsworth's use of motion to convey the concept of an "active universe" and examining the religious significance of this concept.

The winds, mists, and waters which function symbolically in association with the poetic imagination in The Prelude serve also to endow the physical landscape with the characteristics of life and motion. This animistic sense of life in Nature is found in other passages as well. In one such passage, the ministry of Nature is credited with having made

> The surface of the universal earth
> With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,
> Work like a Sea. (I.498-501)

The livingness of the description is brought about through the combination of motion with the ascription of human emotions to the features of the earth.

In other passages, Wordsworth achieves the effect of life in Nature by using similes comparing the motion of Nature to the behavior of animals. The splitting of ice on a lake is described as having sent

> Among the meadows and the hills, its long
> And dismal yellings, like the noise of wolves
> When they are howling round the Bothnic Main. (I.568-70)

"A dull red image of the moon" is depicted as lying "bedded, changing oftentimes its form / Like an uneasy snake" (VI.636-38). In another passage, a truly animistic sense of both physical life and soul linking man to Nature is attained in the description of the surroundings of an elderly woodcutter who has retired to the woods to die,

> Pining alone among the gentle airs,
> Birds, running Streams, and Hills so beautiful
> On golden evenings, while the charcoal Pile
> Breath'd up its smoke, an image of his ghost
> Or spirit that was soon to take its flight. (VIII.619-23)

In addition to such passages, in which the livingness of the external world is implicit, The Prelude contains a number of passages which explicitly

call attention to Wordsworth's animistic perception of life pervading the universe. Wordsworth refers in The Prelude to "living Nature" (VI.119), "Nature's living images" (VI.314), and the "ever-living Universe" (VI.701). He voices the conviction that "the forms / Of Nature have a passion in themselves" (XI.289-90) and invokes the "Soul of Nature! that dost overflow / With passion and with life" (XI.146-47).

Wordsworth's animism extends not only to the visible landscape but also to the motion of the earth itself. He displays acute awareness of planetary motion, especially as a means of expressing the passage of time. During his childhood, he says, "The year span round / With giddy motion" (II.48-49). He refers elsewhere to the time, also during his childhood,

> when the changeful earth,
> And twice five seasons on my mind had stamp'd
> The faces of the moving year. (I.586-88)

A third reference to the earth's rotation is found in the skating episode, where a sudden stop made it seem "as if the earth had roll'd / With visible motion her diurnal round" (I.485-86). Wordsworth's consciousness of planetary motion in The Prelude gains added significance in the light of the well-known second stanza of one of the "Lucy" poems, "A Slumber Did my Spirit Steal":

> No motion has she now, no force;
> She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees.[82]

In the first line of the stanza, motion is identified with life. Thus, the earth's continual rotation suggests a living body, endowed like all other natural forms with force and motion.

[82] PW, 2, 216.

A correspondence between the life of inanimate forms and the poet's own body is suggested by Wordsworth's awareness of his own vital processes. In moments of exalted communication with Nature, his external motion ceases, allowing him to experience a heightened awareness of the internal, involuntary motions within his body: the respiratory processes, the heartbeat, and the circulation of the blood. At such times, he recognizes "A grandeur in the beatings of the heart" (I.441). He recalls the exultation he experienced during his youth while contemplating the sunrise and sunset, "when, from excess / Of happiness, my blood appear'd to flow / With its own pleasure" (II.191-93). The significance of this bodily awareness is explained in the lines from "Tintern Abbey" which refer to

> the serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on, --
> Until the breath of this corporeal frame
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul.[83]

When his own vital signs are almost--but not completely--suspended, he experiences what he calls in The Prelude "the inner pulse of contemplation" (III.335). The forces within his own body thus become a sign not only of physical life but of an animating soul. If such a soul inhabits his own apparently inert form, it may likewise be attributed to the other static forms of the external landscape.

The landscape itself is occasionally described as if it, too, were a living, breathing body. A sense of enclosure within a living organism is conveyed in the description of a ruined chapel's interior, where Wordsworth encounters "faint / Internal breezes, sobbings of the place, / And

[83] PW, 2, 259.

respirations" (II.129-31). A similar sense of being surrounded by something which lives and breathes is found in the climactic Simplon Pass episode, although the specific anatomical imagery used to describe the ruined chapel is absent from Wordsworth's description of the scene which surrounded him when he entered a ravine in the Alps below the Simplon Pass:

> the immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decay'd,
> The stationary blasts of water-falls,
> And every where along the hollow rent
> Winds thwarting winds, bewilder'd and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that mutter'd close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfetter'd clouds, and region of the Heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light . . . (VI.556-67)

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact source of the scene's anatomical character. Aside from the suggestion of a digestive capacity in the reference to decaying woods, no imagery related to the internal bodily functions is found. The sense of life surrounding the *persona* appears to result primarily from the motion of the muttering rocks and drizzling crags, which suggest the inner pulsations of some gigantic organism engulfing the puny traveler.

Although the concept of an active universe is maintained throughout *The Prelude*, the animism which it reflects takes different forms at various points in the poet's life. Tracing the manifestations of Wordsworth's animism in *The Prelude* chronologically from his infancy through the summer following his first year at Cambridge reveals the progressive development of his animism and its evolution into religion.

The first stage of the child's relationship to his surroundings occurs in the infant at his mother's breast. The babe absorbs his mother's love

into "his torpid life / Like an awakening breeze" (II.244-45). Because of his early contact with a loving human soul, the infant's

> organs and recipient faculties
> Are quicken'd, are more vigorous, his mind spreads,
> Tenacious of the forms which it receives. (II.252-54)

The development of the infant mind is thus described in terms of organic life and growth. The babe has taken the first step toward becoming "a living soul." Mother-love does not in itself appear to be a manifestation of animism, but Wordsworth links the mother-child relationship to his perception of life in Nature in the lines in which he identifies himself as the babe so nurtured by human love:

> Emphatically such a Being lives,
> An inmate of this _active_ universe. (II.265-6)

The love of the mother for her child is seen, then, as an aspect of the world-soul which exists in both man and Nature, and the mother-child relationship is a linking of two human souls, a vital step in the later linking of the human soul with the soul of Nature.

During Wordsworth's boyhood, he developed an intuitive perception of life in Nature. Nature at this point assumed a tutelary role. The concept of a guiding spirit in man's ethical and moral development seems to have been especially important to Wordsworth. It was he who suggested to Coleridge the idea of a poem in which a man violates a natural law and is instructed through punishment by "the tutelary spirits of [the] regions,"[84] a scheme which Coleridge followed in _The Rime of the Ancient Mariner_. Wordsworth himself deals with the theme in three closely related episodes of _The Prelude_ which recount his consciousness of tutelary spirits guiding

[84] _Prose Works_, 3, 17.

him during his boyhood. Without engaging in the overt fantasy of _The Ancient Mariner_, Wordsworth manages nevertheless to suggest an element of the supernatural in the episodes, which describe the manner in which he was "Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear" (I.306).

The first of the three episodes is the story of a nocturnal walk during which he succumbed to the temptation to steal woodcocks from a trapper's snare. A mood of guilt and anxiety is set:

> On the heights
> Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
> My anxious visitation, hurrying on,
> Still hurrying, hurrying onward; moon and stars
> Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,
> And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace
> That was among them. (I.318-24)

In appropriating "the bird / Which was the captive of another's toils," he becomes guilty of a dual crime: an intrusion upon Nature's serenity and a crime against man. Hurrying away from the scene, he imagines that he is being pursued by a ghostly agent of retribution:

> I heard among the solitary hills
> Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
> Of undistinguishable motion, steps
> Almost as silent as the turf they trod. (I.329-32)

The disembodied pursuer is delightfully ambiguous. Wordsworth refrains from identifying the phenomenon as a projection of his guilty conscience, but he does not weaken the story by attributing the motion to an external force. The reader is thus made to feel that the low breathings and sounds of motion are real, even though they may not emanate from a physical source. While Wordsworth does not clearly identify his pursuer as either an internal or an external force, he ascribes the entire episode to the tutelary powers of Nature which led him into the escapade for the purpose of instructing him through fear, observing,

> Though mean
> My object and inglorious, yet the end
> Was not ignoble. (I.339-41)

The power of Nature to instruct through beauty as well as through fear is related in Wordsworth's account of the daring theft of the eggs from a raven's nest hanging at the edge of a precipice. The thematic similarity of this episode to the preceding one and the fact that both events are recounted in the same verse-paragraph in The Prelude indicate that the two tales are to be regarded as a single unit demonstrating Nature's power to employ similar means to achieve different ends. The theft of the woodcocks from the trapper's snare is a "dark" episode, resulting in fear and guilt; the theft of eggs from the raven's nest is a "light" episode which awakens Wordsworth to the mystical awareness of the sublime qualities of Nature:

> Oh! at that time,
> While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
> Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky
> Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds! (I.346-50)

Wordsworth follows these two episodes with another "dark" episode exemplifying Nature's ministry of fear--the boat-stealing scene (Supra, pp. 15-17). The scene is introduced by a passage which reiterates the concept of Nature as a deterministic tutelary power:

> One evening (surely I was led by her)
> I went alone into a Shepherd's Boat, . . . (I.373-74)

It will be recalled that the boat-stealing episode is an account of the fear and awe which result when a mountain appears to rear its dark shape over the boy in the stolen boat, a scene which precipitates dire visions of "huge and mighty Forms that do not live / Like living men" (I.425-26). The story is linked to the bird-stealing scenes by the commentary,

> The mind of man is fram'd even like the breath
> And harmony of music. There is a dark
> Invisible workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, and makes them move
> In one society . . .
> Praise to the end!
> Thanks likewise for the means! But I believe
> That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame
> A favor'd Being, from his earliest dawn
> Of infancy doth open out the clouds
> As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
> With gentlest visitation. (I.351-67)

Wordsworth's concept of Nature as a tutelary spirit is thus related to a personal doctrine of the elect, in which Nature acts upon a chosen few.

In the invocation which provides a forceful conclusion to these three boyhood escapades, Wordsworth links the motion of Nature with the soul of man, suggesting the unity of the external and the internal:

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul that art the Eternity of Thought!
> That giv'st to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion! not in vain,
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human Soul,
> But with high objects, with enduring things,
> With life and nature, purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart. (I.428-41)

He conceives, therefore, of his normal activities as means to an exalted end. But this commentary on the end represents a retrospective assessment of Wordsworth's early life. At the time the events occurred, he was aware only of a vague sense of beauty and fear in his surroundings, without fully comprehending their spiritual significance.

There were less active moments during Wordsworth's childhood, solitary walks when he did not engage in boyish pranks but simply observed and felt. During these quiet interludes, he experienced a mystical communion with

Nature, an undefined feeling of what he calls in "Tintern Abbey" "something far more deeply interfused." He was stirred, but he had not yet identified the ultimate source of his emotional reaction to Nature. At such moments, he says, his soul remembered not what it felt but how it felt, retaining

> an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity, to which
> With growing faculties she doth aspire. (II.336-38)

As Wordsworth's spiritual faculties grew, he came to sense the kinship of all natural forms. When he was seventeen, he

> felt the sentiment of Being spread
> O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
> O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
> And human knowledge, to the human eye
> Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,
> O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
> Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
> Beneath the wave, yea in the wave itself
> And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
> If such my transports were; for in all things
> I saw one life and felt that it was joy. (II.420-30)

The catalog of motion in this passage suggests that his joyous transport was influenced more by the animate than by the inanimate forms of Nature, but natural motion appears to have served as visible evidence of a force existing not only in things that move but also in inert forms which only seem to be still. The active universe is thus perceived through the senses and extended to all forms by the inner eye of the soul.

After Wordsworth had temporarily left his rural environment to attend Cambridge, the unsought feeling of life in natural objects was replaced by a conscious projection of life into the inanimate. During this period he says,

> To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
> I gave a moral life, I saw them feel,
> Or link'd them to some feeling: the great mass
> Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning. (III.124-29)

As in his earlier description of the ruined chapel, Wordsworth draws upon respiration to suggest life in inert forms, but here he is separated from the respiring body rather than being contained within it. As he continues the discussion of his ascription of life to the inanimate during this period, a picture of a compulsive, self-conscious quest emerges:

> So often, among multitudes of men,
> . . . .
> I had a world about me; 'twas my own,
> I made it; for it only liv'd to me,
> And to the God who look'd into my mind.
> . . . .
> for I had an eye
> Which in my strongest workings, evermore
> Was looking for the shades of difference
> As they lie hid in all exterior forms,
> Near or remote, minute or vast, an eye
> Which . . .
> Could find no surface where its power might sleep,
> Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
> And by an unrelenting agency
> Did bind my feelings even as in a chain. (III.140-65)

This passage bears little resemblance to the mystical communion with Nature found elsewhere in The Prelude. Here, the poet is the active force and Nature the passive object of his observations. God is an omniscient but indifferent observer rather than a pervasive animating force. In seeking shades of difference in all that he saw, Wordsworth appears to have been preoccupied with the discrete elements of the universe rather than with the unity of Nature. Under the tyranny of the eye, controlled by the intellect, Wordsworth is unable to feel; his joyous communion with Nature is temporarily extinguished.

To regard Wordsworth's ascription of life to inanimate forms during his Cambridge days as an example of self-conscious animism, as Havens

does,[85] seems to be questionable. In these passages, Wordsworth appears to be describing a phase--perhaps a retrogressive one--of his imaginative and spiritual development. If Wordsworth's animism is revealed in passages in which he engages in a mystical communion with Nature, then his life at Cambridge appears to represent a temporary loss of animism, a separation from his reciprocal relationship with Nature.

Wordsworth's joyous communion with Nature was regained when he left the city and returned to the Lake country for his summer vacation. It came unsought, on a cold, raw evening at sunset as he set out upon a walk around the lake. The hostility of the elements provides an incongruous setting for the mystical revelation which occurred, an incongruity Wordsworth accounts for by comparing the face of Nature at that time to the face of a loved one which is more dear in sadness than in joy. In his solitary communion with Nature, he says,

> If ever happiness hath lodg'd with man,
> That day consummate happiness was mine,
> . . . .
> Gently did my soul
> Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
> Naked as in the presence of her God. (IV.129-42)

The image of the soul gently unveiling itself, which seems somehow more literal than metaphorical, is paralleled by the description of darkness spreading slowly over the mountains while a breeze ripples the surface of the lake. As he rested quietly from his walk, drinking in this mystical recognition of God in Nature, Wordsworth once again seemed to hear a ghostly companion:

[85]P. 82. To Havens, the passage suggests that Wordsworth "clearly liked to think of the pervading Spirit as so modified in each object that each has some conscious personality of its own."

> Now here, now there, stirr'd by the straggling wind,
> Came intermittingly a breath-like sound,
> A respiration short and quick, which oft,
> Yea, might I say, again and yet again,
> Mistaking for the panting of my Dog,
> The off-and-on Companion of my walk,
> I turn'd my head, to look if he were there. (IV.174-80)

In view of the nature of the episode, the identification of the disembodied companion with the presence of God is strongly suggested. The similarity of this presence, perceived through its breath-like sounds, with that of the imagined agent of retribution in the first bird-stealing episode is striking. The difference between the two disembodied companions is that the first evokes fear and guilt, while the second suggests the spirit of God surrounding the poet, contributing to his tranquility and spiritual transfiguration. Through the inclusion of details reminiscent of the earlier, more animistic episode in this account of a mystical revelation of God in Nature, Wordsworth suggests a continuity of experience, endowing his early animism with religious implications. The life which he intuitively felt to exist in all things during his early youth is thus linked with a revelation of God, who is the source of that life.

The relationship of God to the active universe is a major theme of *The Prelude*, which is essentially a religious poem. The religion of *The Prelude* is not a systematic statement of doctrine but a religion of feeling. It is revealed through glimpses and intimations of a spiritual power present in all elements of the universe. In Wordsworth's religion, Nature serves the function ordinarily attributed to the church, that of intermediary between man and God, although its role is by no means limited to this function. There is little in *The Prelude* to suggest conformity to the doctrine of any established religious institution. Even the God who is recognized in the poem differs in many ways from the God of more conventional religions.

The major elements of the religion of The Prelude are Nature, the imagination, and God, all of which are related to motion. Because this religion can best be understood by examining both what it is and what it is not, my discussion of the subject deals first with its deviation from the views of institutional religion, departing during this portion of the discussion from the subject of motion, and returns to the question of what the God of The Prelude is, a question to which motion is central.

If the 1805 version of The Prelude had been published immediately after its completion, it would undoubtedly have drawn vitriolic reviews from conventionally pious critics, as did The Excursion when it was published in 1814. Although public reaction to the poem was mixed, The Excursion was generally considered to be heterodoxical, especially by the evangelicals.[86] Wordsworth was curiously silent in defense of his religious views, even though the criticism of them was based as much on what was absent from the poem as on what was present in it, and, as Havens observes, the pantheism which critics found in the poem was primarily a question of interpretation.[87] The tone of The Excursion is more openly didactic than that of The Prelude, but the two poems do not differ essentially in the religious attitudes expressed.

Although The Prelude is a religious poem, it is not a Christian one. Christ is not mentioned at all in the 1805 version, nor, except for a passing reference to the Godhead (VIII.639), is the doctrine of the Trinity. The question of salvation is not raised at all. If Wordsworth's failure to

[86]Moorman, 2, 265.

[87]P. 187.

mention these elements of traditional Christianity does not mean that he rejected them outright, it certainly implies that they were of little concern in his personal relationship with God.

Also un-Christian is Wordsworth's lack of conviction on the question of immortality, reflected in the statement that

> Our Simple childhood sits upon a throne
> That hath more power than all the elements.
> I guess not what this tells of Being past,
> Nor what it augurs of the life to come. (V.532-35)

He neither accepts nor rejects the Christian belief in a life after death or the Platonic concept of pre-existence which he explores in the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." Although this lack of conviction can hardly be interpreted as anti-Christian, it is at least non-Christian in its lack of clear affirmation of belief in a "life everlasting."

Wordsworth's lack of concern with the elements of traditional Christianity did not result in a condemnation of more orthodox faiths. In *The Prelude*, he describes with great tenderness the "clear though shallow stream of piety" of Ann Tyson, the "grey-hair'd Dame" with whom he lodged during his schooldays. Although he clearly recognizes some flaws in her Sunday piety, he describes her church-going, Bible-reading Sabbaths affectionately, recalling that he loved her Bible, "when she had dropp'd asleep, / And made of it a pillow for her head" (IV.215-21). The tolerant attitude reflected in this passage annoyed Coleridge, who complained of Wordsworth, "It is his practice and almost his nature to convey all the truth he knows without any attack on what he supposes falsehood, if that falsehood be interwoven with virtue and happiness."[88]

[88]Moorman, 1, 366.

Wordsworth's own religion was a religion of feeling. He recalls,

> I worshipp'd then among the depths of things
> As my soul bade me . . .
> I felt, and nothing else. (XI.234-38)

He "felt the sentiment of Being spread / O'er all that moves" (II.420-21). The intellectual interpretation of Scriptures and theological treatises had no place in his religion of feeling, as he makes clear in the statement,

> I experienc'd in myself
> Conformity as just as that of old
> To the end and written spirit of God's works,
> Whether held forth in Nature or in Man. (IV.356-59)

Another avowal of conformity to the spirit if not the letter of institutional religion is found in a passage which combines apology with defense:

> If this be error, and another faith
> Finds easier access to the pious mind,
> Yet were I grossly destitute of all
> Those human sentiments which make this earth
> So dear, if I should fail, with grateful voice
> To speak of you, Ye Mountains and Ye Lakes,
> And sounding Cataracts! Ye Mists and Winds
> That dwell in the hills where I was born.
> If in my youth, I have been pure in heart,
> If, mingling with the world, I am content
> With my own modest pleasures, and have liv'd
> With God and Nature communing, remov'd
> From little enmities and low desires,
> The gift is yours. (II.435-48)

The passage is perhaps as strong a defense of his religion of Nature as Wordsworth ever wrote. Without denigrating more conventional faiths, he suggests that there are alternate means to the attainment of what Christians like to think of as Christian virtues. He even employs the phrase "pure in heart," which occurs also in Christ's Sermon on the Mount.[89] The passage implies acceptance of the ethical standards of Christianity as well as

[89]Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."

agreement with the Judeo-Christian assumption that religious experience is related to ethical behavior.

As Wordsworth grew older, his religious view became more orthodox. By 1807, he had begun to attend church regularly, perhaps in deference to his wife's sensibilities and the need to provide an example for his children.[90] His admiration for the worship and discipline of the Church of England increased until, by 1843, according to Moorman, "The beneficent influence of the Anglican Church on society was now one of Wordsworth's deepest convictions."[91] This increasing orthodoxy is reflected in several revisions in the 1850 Prelude. A comparison of the 1805 text with that of 1850 reveals a number of examples of what de Selincourt calls "pietistic embroidery,"[92] although it is impossible to determine whether these changes represent a sincere increase in orthodoxy or merely an increase in prudence. Wordsworth carefully removes suggestions of Nature-worship. Coleridge, for example, is described in the 1805 text as "The most intense of nature's worshippers" (II.477). By 1850, he has become "The most assiduous of her ministers." The supremacy of God is emphasized and His immanence correspondingly reduced in such changes as the alteration of the lines "Great God! / Who send'st thyself into this breathing world" (X.386-87) to "O Power Supreme! / Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe." Passages which equate God solely with Nature or with man are revised: "A Soul divine which we participate, / A deathless spirit" (V.16-17) becomes "As might appear to the eye of fleeting time, / A deathless spirit." The

[90] Moorman, 2, 105.

[91] 2, 473.

[92] P. lxxi.

religion of feeling becomes a more reflective religion in changes such as that of "The feeling of life endless" (XIII.183) to "faith in life endless." Whether such changes represent a sincere change in belief is a biographical question rather than a literary one, but a comparison of the two texts is valuable in identifying and interpreting those passages which the author himself recognized as unorthodox in content.[93]

It must be observed that although Wordsworth was careful to replace suggestions of Nature-worship with passages which acknowledge God's supremacy, the alterations in the text add few exclusively Christian elements to the later version. Except for the increased emphasis upon a transcendent God and three passing references to Christ, none of which materially affect the poem's meaning, the 1850 Prelude is as non-Christian as is the 1805 version.

Wordsworth's description of his mother's religion merits some attention. He attributes to her a religion which combines tradition, natural piety, and a Transcendental belief in man's natural goodness:

> she, not falsly taught,
> Fetching her goodness rather from times past
> Than shaping novelties from those to come,
> Had no presumption, no such jealousy;
> Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
> Our Nature; but had virtual faith that he,
> Who fills the Mother's breasts with innocent milk,
> Doth also for our nobler part provide,
> Under his great correction and controul,
> As innocent instincts, and as innocent food.
> This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
> From feverish dread of error or mishap
> And evil, o'erweeningly so call'd. (V.267-78)

[93]For more detailed discussions of changes in the 1850 Prelude, see de Selincourt, pp. lvii-lxxiv; Moorman, 2, 501-510; and Darbishire, pp. 120-43.

Since Wordsworth was only seven years old when his mother died,[94] it is unlikely that his powers of observation were sufficiently developed to permit such an analysis of her faith during her lifetime. His evaluation of her religion seems therefore to be an idealization of her memory based on what he believed that religion ought to be. Such an idealization may be representative either of the religion to which Wordsworth aspired or of that which he believed himself to have attained.

Coleridge once accused Wordsworth of being "at least a semi-Atheist.[95] On the basis of Wordsworth's life and his works, this accusation appears to be singularly unwarranted. Although Wordsworth's concept of God appears to have undergone some change during his lifetime, there is no evidence that he did not believe in some form of deity at all times during his life. In 1798, the year in which The Prelude was begun, he regarded God and Nature as interchangeable and did not believe in a deity external to the universe.[96] This belief is reflected in a fragment from a 1797 notebook containing "Peter Bell." In the fragment, Wordsworth refers to

> one interior life
> In which all beings live with god, themselves
> Are god, existing in the mighty whole,
> As undistinguishable as the cloudless east
> Is from the cloudless west, when all
> The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.[97]

The passage is often interpreted as a statement of pantheism, the belief that Nature is God and God is Nature, although, as Havens observes, it does

[94]Moorman, 1, 18.

[95]Coleridge's diary for November 29, 1820. Cited by Havens, p. 80.

[96]Moorman, 1, 584.

[97]De Selincourt, p. lxix.

not specifically limit God to the physical universe. Since pantheism is the belief in a deity who is immanent in the physical world and who is limited exclusively to it, the degree of pantheism reflected by the passage is open to question.[98]

A transcendent God is strongly suggested in a stanza from "Hart-Leap Well," composed early in 1800:

> The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
> That is in the green leaves among the groves,
> Maintains a deep and reverential care
> For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.[99]

The Being is not identified as God, nor is its transcendence explicit. But an unprejudiced examination of the text which puts aside considerations of authorship might well find the deity reflected in the passage to be indistinguishable from the omnipresent, loving God of orthodox Christianity.

The God of The Prelude is also a God of love, a God

> who feeds our hearts
> For his own service, knoweth, loveth us
> When we are unregarded by the world. (XII.275-77)

In this love, there is little hint of the father-child relationship which constitutes a traditional view of God's relation to man. Wordsworth's personal relationship with his God is generally one of communion rather than of submission.

At one point in The Prelude, however, Wordsworth does describe his submission to God's will, in an incident in which God, like the God of the Twenty-Third Psalm, restores Wordsworth's soul after the death of his father.

[98]Havens, p. 188. Havens' definition of pantheism is consistent with that found in the Oxford English Dictionary, but of six recent desk or collegiate dictionaries surveyed, none stipulated a deity limited to the physical universe.

[99]PW, 2, 254.

Wordsworth's father died during one of the boy's Christmas holidays from his school at Cockermouth. In The Prelude, Wordsworth describes a scene in which he watched for the servant who was to come with ponies to take him home for those holidays. Choosing the highest summit in the area as a vantage-point, he sat accompanied only by a sheep and "A whistling hawthorn," looking through the straggling mist at the scene below. As he sat alone on the hilltop, he engaged in "trite reflections of morality," which he does not identify more specifically. The subsequent death of his father is described as having seemed to Wordsworth a punishment for these reflections, which Moorman suggests were "presumptuous hopes and selfish wishes," perhaps accompanied by feelings of immortality.[100] The restoration of his spirits is attributed to God, and the life of natural elements becomes a symbol of this restoration:

> Yet in the deepest passion, I bow'd low
> To God, who thus corrected my desires;
> And afterwards, the wind and sleety rain
> And all the business of the elements,
> The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
> And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
> Which on the line of each of those two Roads
> Advanced in such indisputable shapes,
> All these were spectacles and sounds to which
> I often would repair and thence would drink,
> As at a fountain. (XI.373-85)

The means by which God restored his spirits is not clear. Wordsworth's submissiveness to God bears no apparent relationship to the process of atonement and forgiveness which is called for in more conventional Christian creeds. In returning repeatedly to the scene of his "trite reflections," Wordsworth appears to have been seeking reassurance of God's presence rather than of His mercy. God appears to have acted upon Wordsworth through

[100] I, 69.

a communion with his spirit rather than through subjugation by fear. The communion with a higher power became a continual source of restoration, as Wordsworth makes clear in the statement,

> I do not doubt
> That in this later time, when storm and rain
> Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
> When I am in the woods, unknown to me
> The workings of my spirit thence are brought. (XI.384-89)

Wordsworth characteristically mentions God only once by name in the entire episode and devotes most of the passage to a description of the workings of Nature, a fact which raises some question as to how much of the restorative process he actually attributes to God. This characteristic has led Abrams to express the opinion that references to God are immaterial to the content of *The Prelude* and that they could be removed without materially altering the poem's meaning. Abrams finds that God does not *do* anything in *The Prelude*.[101] Such a statement by an eminent literary critic calls for an investigation of whether God actually does anything in *The Prelude* and, if so, what He does and how He does it.

The question of what God does in *The Prelude* is related to Wordsworth's concept of a world-soul which animates the universe. Wordsworth's perception of life and soul in both the animate and the inanimate forms of Nature has, I hope, been adequately demonstrated in my discussion of animism in *The Prelude*. The part of the question which remains to be explored is whether this animating force is a single, immanent power; whether this power is limited to the physical universe; and whether it is identified specifically as God.

[101] *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 90.

A comparison of an early text of Books I and II of The Prelude with the 1805 version provides some insight into the question of whether Wordsworth felt the active universe to be animated by a single pervasive power or by a number of discrete spirits which existed separately in all natural objects. Manuscript V, an early draft of Books I and II probably composed in 1800,[102] contains a number of passages which savor strongly of polytheism, all of which were changed in the 1805 Prelude. The lines "I believe / That there are Spirits, when they would form / A favored Being . . ."[103] are changed to "Nature . . . when she would frame a favored Being . . ." (I.363-64). The phrase "led by her," referring to Nature, in the introduction to the boat-stealing scene, originally appeared in Manuscript V as "led by them," referring to plural spirits.[104] Manuscript V invokes

> Ye Powers of earth, ye genii of the Springs
> And ye that have your voices in the clouds
> And ye that are familiars of the Lakes
> And standing pools.[105]

The pagan genii and familiars (as well as the repetitive conjunctions) are replaced in the 1805 version by

> Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
> Or on the earth! Ye visions of the hills!
> And souls of lonely places! (I.490-92).

Similarly, an invocation to "ye Beings of the hills, / And ye that walk the

[102]De Selincourt, p. xxix.

[103]De Selincourt, p. 22n.

[104]De Selincourt, p. 23n.

[105]De Selincourt, p. 28n.

woods and open heaths"[106] becomes "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe / Thou Soul that art the Eternity of Thought!" (I.428-29). It is apparent that Wordsworth was diligent in excising the suggestion of plural spirits from the early draft, replacing such passages with suggestions of Nature as a single entity. The last four of the passages cited from the 1805 version appear virtually unchanged in the 1850 version, a fact which suggests that the author was satisfied with their orthodoxy. The presence of a reference to "Ye spirits of air"[107] in a passage from Manuscript D, which was probably composed between 1828 and 1832,[108] long after Wordsworth had begun to demonstrate a high degree of orthodoxy in his poetry and his life, suggests that the apparent polytheism may represent simply a habitual mode of expression rather than a religious belief. Whether Wordsworth did or did not embrace a belief in discrete spirits early in his life, the fact that he took such apparent pains to eradicate the indications of such a belief points up the evidence of a single, unified spirit of Nature in the 1805 version as well as the final one.

The references to a single world-soul, which must be laboriously extrapolated from *The Prelude*, find a more systematic presentation in a passage from the published version of *The Excursion*:

> 'To every Form of being is assigned'
> Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,
> An *active* Principle:--howe'er removed
> From sense and observation, it subsists
> In all things, in all natures; in the stars
> Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
> In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone

[106] De Selincourt, p. 16n.

[107] De Selincourt, pp. 429-30n.

[108] De Selincourt, p. xxiii.

> That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
> The moving waters, and the invisible air.
> Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
> Beyond itself, communicating good,
> A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
> Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
> No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
> It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.[109]

The passage brings together a number of the elements of Wordsworth's active universe which have already been observed: the combination of motion and stillness, the attribution of life to apparently inert forms, and the pervasiveness of life in Nature. Only the overtly didactic tone of the passage and the suggestion that good is sometimes mixed with evil appear to represent a departure from the spirit of similarly animistic passages in _The Prelude_.

The foregoing passage from _The Excursion_ obviously depicts an immanent spirit; some degree of transcendence is reflected also in the statement that the active principle is _assigned_ to every form and being rather than simply existing in them. Although the passage does not tell what power it is that assigns this principle nor does it specifically identify the power as that which dwells in natural objects, a belief in some supreme controlling force is implicit. _The Prelude_ identifies this force more specifically as

> the one
> Surpassing Life, which out of space and time
> Nor touch'd by the welterings of passion, is
> And hath the name of God. (VI.151-57)

It is important, I think, to take note of the fact that Wordsworth does not identify this infinite and eternal "one Surpassing Life" as being merely somewhat similar to what others call God. I find no hint of the sort of

[109] _PW_, 5, 286-87.

reasoning which is sometimes used to postulate the view that all monotheistic religions worship the same deity. Wordsworth very explicitly tells what the deity is and what He is called.

In The Prelude, Wordsworth indicates also the manner in which God operates. God is seen as operating through Nature by breathing life into it. "Nature's Self" is called "the breath of God" (V.222). God is identified as a source of both physical and spiritual life in the invocation to

> Great God!
> Who send'st thyself into this breathing world
> Through Nature and through every kind of life,
> And mak'st Man what he is, creature Divine. (X.387-89)

The image of God breathing life into man and Nature is particularly appropriate to the depiction of God as a source of life because of the association of "breath" with "soul." The unity of physical life with spiritual life and the unity of God with the active universe are thus suggested by a single image. The image is, furthermore, highly suggestive of a God who acts as the Prime Mover of the universe. It presupposes a force which was endowed with life and breath before it bestowed these characteristics upon natural objects. God is thus seen to transcend the physical universe.

Although The Prelude does not specifically identify the world-soul or active principle as God in every passage in which such a spirit is mentioned, the fact that the identification is made in a few passages suggests that a similar identification may be inferred in passages in which it is not explicit. If references to "soul" and "spirit" are added to those which identify God by name, God assumes an important role in The Prelude. If the use of these alternative terms is interpreted as a diminution of the role of God in The Prelude, then the importance of God's role in Paradise Lost must also be questioned, since Milton, too, resorts to such alternatives.

The God of The Prelude may be summarized, then, as a single spirit, infinite and eternal, which is present in all animate and inanimate objects of the universe and which exists apart from these objects as well. The question of what God does in The Prelude is answered by the observation that God serves as the source of the life through which Nature acts upon the imagination. Neither God nor Nature nor the imagination acts primarily by doing; all three act by being. They are attuned to each other in a process of mutual interaction which is analagous to the sympathetic vibration of musical instruments playing in unison.

Motion plays an important role in this sympathetic vibration. The workings of God, Nature, and the imagination are all presented in association with motion, used either literally or metaphorically. The true significance of motion in the association of God, Nature, and the imagination in The Prelude can be ascertained by turning once more to "Tintern Abbey" to consider the lines,

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

The spirit which dwells in all things is equated here with motion. Although this spirit is not identified in "Tintern Abbey" as God, it appears to be identical to the pervasive animating spirit of The Prelude which Wordsworth very clearly identifies as God. The repeated patterns of motion in Nature in The Prelude assume added religious significance when it is recognized that to Wordsworth, motion was God and God was motion, a concept reflected

also in the sonnet "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free":

> Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
> And doth with his eternal motion make
> A sound like thunder--everlastingly.[110]

The concept of God as motion is not unique to Wordsworth. Coleridge reflects a similar concept in an apostrophe to God in "The Destiny of Nations":

> Nature's vast ever-acting Energy!
> In will, in deed, Impulses of All to All![111]

Coleridge's concept of God is apparently derived from that of Joseph Priestley, the Unitarian theologian who exerted a profound influence on his beliefs. H. W. Piper summarizes Priestley's views on the subject as follows:

> For Priestley matter was not only endowed with feeling and intellect but was merged with the divinity. God, as a spirit was superior to, but not different in kind from matter, that is to say energy, and this natural energy is what we know of God . . . Priestley quoted Giordano Bruno to summarize his position. 'All the motions that strike our senses, the resistance which we find in matter, are the effects of the immediate action of God . . . There is no active force in nature but that of God . . . an immense spring which is in continual action.'[112]

In view of Coleridge's recognized influence on Wordsworth's thoughts and the similarity of Priestley's theory to Wordsworth's poetic expressions, Wordsworth seems likely to have been familiar with Priestley's theory and to have found it congenial to his own world-view. The felt life of inert objects is justified by the view that matter is a form of natural energy, and the concept of God as motion offers an ideal explanation of the perception of God in "all that moves, and all that seemeth still."

[110] PW, 3, 17.

[111] The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 147.

[112] Pp. 36-37.

Although Wordsworth does not overtly equate God with motion in The Prelude, the identification is implicit in the extensive descriptions of the motion of Nature which accompany moments of intense spiritual revelation. The religious character of the winds, waterfalls, decaying woods, muttering rocks, and drizzling crags in the Simplon Pass episode is manifest in Wordsworth's statement that these

> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> The first and last, and midst, and without end. (VI.568-72)

The association with God is made here in the reference to the apocalyptic prophecy of Revelation and in the final line of the passage, which combines Scripture and liturgy in its echo both of the book of Revelation and the familiar "Gloria Patri."

The Simplon Pass episode is a "dark" episode in which the poet is surrounded by natural motion which seems hostile. The light in the scene is far above him. When it is considered in conjunction with another climactic religious experience, the Snowdon episode, the Simplon Pass episode assumes a symbolic character representing an imperfect stage of Wordsworth's religious development in which the transcendence of the human soul has not been recognized. In contrast to the darkness of the Simplon Pass episode, the Snowdon episode is characterized by illumination. Light is symbolically combined with Wordsworth's physical transcendence of his surroundings to suggest the transcendence of the human soul when it is perfectly attuned to God and Nature. Both of these climactic religious experiences lead to the recognition of an infinite power, representing, perhaps, an outgrowth of the earlier light and dark animistic experiences in which Wordsworth was

"foster'd alike by beauty and by fear." The development of the theme of Wordsworth's relationship with God in The Prelude can be described, therefore, as a spiral structure which begins with animism and attains a widening significance until it culminates in a moment of epiphany at the summit of Mount Snowdon, where God, Nature, and the imagination merge into a mighty whole.

The term "epiphany" applies to the Snowdon episode both in its literary sense, in which it has come to be applied to any psychological turning-point in a literary work, and in its more traditional usage as a moment of religious transfiguration. No summary or explication can do justice to the power of the poetry itself:

> at my feet the ground appear'd to brighten,
> And with a step or two seem'd brighter still;
> Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,
> For instantly a Light upon the turf
> Fell like a flash: I looked about, and lo!
> The Moon stood naked in the heavens, at height
> Immense above my head, and on the shore
> I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
> Which, meek and silent, rested at my feet;
> A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved.
> All over this still Ocean, and beyond,
> Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
> In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
> Into the Sea, the real Sea, that seem'd
> To dwindle, and give up its majesty,
> Usurp'd upon as far as sight could reach.
> Meanwhile, the Moon look'd down upon this shew
> In single glory, and we stood, the mist
> Touching our very feet; and from the shore
> At distance not the third part of a mile
> Was a blue chasm; a fracture in the vapour,
> A deep and gloomy breathing-place through which
> Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
> Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
> The universal spectacle throughout
> Was shaped for admiration and delight,
> Grand in itself alone, but in that breach,
> Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
> That dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg'd
> That Soul, the Imagination of the whole. (XIII.36-65)

Light, perspective, and motion combine to endow the scene with livingness. The unmoving *persona*, finding himself *of* the mist, merges with the moving landscape. The roar of moving waters which becomes the soul of the living scene is especially significant in the light of Wordsworth's concept of God as motion. The visible motions are manifestations of God--in fact, *are* God--but there is also a dark, invisible part of God separated from His visible manifestations by a mist which permits man to be aware of His power but conceals its exact nature. In revealing to Wordsworth a supreme power which is at once present in Nature and separated from it, the visible and invisible motion of the scene becomes literally

> The perfect image of a mighty Mind,
> Of one that feeds upon infinity. (XIII.69-70)

The "perfect image" of the scene incorporates not only the landscape but also the poet, who becomes a part of it both physically and imaginatively. God, soul, Wordsworth, Nature, and the imagination are thus merged into a single, infinite, moving whole.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discussion has examined patterns of motion in Wordsworth's _Prelude_, considering the motion of man and of Nature in an effort to establish a single pattern which would account for Wordsworth's tendency to use little kinesthetic appeal in his portrayals of human characters and the contrasting tendency to describe Nature in strongly kinesthetic terms. As a result of the study, not one but two separate patterns of motion have been identified. One pattern consists of the physical motion of human beings. The other, quite separate from the pattern of human motion, is a symbolic pattern which associates literal and apparent motion with the themes of the poetic imagination and the living universe.

The study of human motion in _The Prelude_ considers the motion of individuals and that of collective humanity, revealing two smaller patterns which are linked primarily by the absence of the metaphors of motion in Nature which are associated with the more abstract ideas in the poem. Because the motion of individuals in _The Prelude_ varies according to the age and sex of the subject, the motion of children, adult males (including the _persona_), and female characters is discussed separately. The examination of these separate categories of human characters reveals a general pattern of human motion which accounts for the prevalence of motion in certain characters and its absence in others.

Children in The Prelude are portrayed by the use of intense physical motion. The scenes of Wordsworth's childhood in the poem are scenes of skating, kite-flying, swimming, running, and leaping, presented in a succession of scenes which alternate with quieter moments of contemplation. Although the motion of the child gradually diminishes with age, the portrayal of the youth is not entirely devoid of motion until the period of young adulthood is attained, when physical motion stops altogether.

The adult male, in contrast to the child and the youth, is marked by an almost complete absence of motion. This absence of motion is conspicuous in both the solitary figures Wordsworth encounters during his walks and in the *persona*, who in The Prelude is clearly identified as the poet himself. The absence of motion in these characters is not entirely a lack of kinesthetic appeal; it often takes the form of stillness which is called deliberately to the reader's attention. The only exceptions in Wordsworth's poetry to this type of treatment are found in such insensitive, licentious men as the title character in Peter Bell and in the primitive characters such as the shepherds who populate the Lake country where Wordsworth grew up.

The pattern of motion in the female is not as consistent as that related to the male. The Prelude alone contains such a small number of female characters that the study of their motion must draw upon other poems to establish a pattern. Although the pattern thus revealed is less pronounced than that of motion in the male, Wordsworth displays a general tendency to employ motion more frequently in his portrayals of women than in those of men, and the motion of young girls is more intense than that of mature women. The motion of young girls in such poems as "Louisa" is

a joyous, unrestrained response to Nature much like that of the child in *The Prelude*. Motion appears also in the portrayal of more mature female characters in such poems as "She Was a Phantom of Delight," which develops the stages of Wordsworth's acquaintance with his wife through varying metaphors of implicit or explicit motion. Wordsworth's sister Dorothy is also associated with metaphors of motion, but the motion in these metaphors is that of Nature; little human motion is used in her portrayal. Because the metaphors of motion associated with Dorothy Wordsworth are related to her contribution to her brother's poetic inspiration, they are discussed in the chapter on the poetic imagination, but the presence of motion in Wordsworth's acknowledgement of Dorothy's influence on his imaginative development is consistent with the pattern which associates motion more readily with women than with men and conforms also to the larger pattern which accounts for this tendency.

The key to the interpretation of this pattern of motion in individual human characters lies in the successive phases of intellectual development reflected in *The Prelude*. Childhood, the stage of sensation, is a period of sensory response to Nature in which the child focuses upon his own mind and body. This stage is followed by that of boyhood, the stage of emotion, in which fear, awe, and a gradual consciousness of Nature's beauty predominate. Following this stage are those of fancy and of analytic reason which occur respectively in late adolescence and young adulthood. The culmination of this developmental process is the stage of maturity, in which the fully developed imagination provides insight into the unity of man, Nature, and God. Each of these stages is marked by a decrease in the physical motion of the subject. While this schematization of the stages of

development represents Wordsworth's own mental growth, it is applicable to the other characters in his poetry as well, and the degree of human motion used in the portrayal of a character serves as a reliable index to the state of imaginative development he has attained. The child, the young girl, and the licentious male are clearly representative of the first, sensory level of development. The woman and the primitivistic male, who like the youth, are characterized by motion which is more restrained than that of the child, appear to have attained one of the intermediate stages of development which surpass the purely sensory level but do not reach the stage of full imaginative development which Wordsworth attributes to his own mature years.

This pattern accounts for all of the characters except the male solitaries, who in some cases would be classified as primitives and would be expected to be associated with motion. These subjects may, I think, be integrated into the general pattern on the basis of the poet's inner response to them. The undefined symbolic nature of Wordsworth's encounters with these characters appears to have stimulated his imagination. In view of Wordsworth's habit of using the same sets of symbols to characterize both the external stimulus and his inner response, the absence of strong kinesthetic appeal in the portraits of his solitaries is consistent with a pattern which relates stillness in man to the stage of full imaginative development.

The motion of collective humanity, which is found in urban settings in _The Prelude_, is like that of the child in its intensity, but it differs radically from the child's joyous motion in its tone. The literal and metaphorical motion associated with crowds is frenzied and diabolical,

setting the persona apart from the masses of humanity which threaten to engulf him. In spite of Wordsworth's professed love of mankind, his distaste for men grows in proportion to their number and their proximity to him. The city is tolerable to him only when it is viewed from a distance or when the crushing tide of humanity is driven from the streets by the hour or the weather. This pattern of motion, which cannot be wholly integrated into that associated with individual characters in Wordsworth's poetry, sets the city apart, dissociating it from meaningful human relationships and from the life of the imagination. In his isolation from the masses, the persona of The Prelude thus bears a strong resemblance to the alienated hero who is a pervasive character in twentieth-century literature.

The complete separation of the pattern of human motion from the pattern of motion associated with the imagination is heightened by the paradoxical use of the motion of Nature in recurrent metaphors related to the imagination while the stage of human growth in which this faculty is most fully developed is characterized by stillness. In Wordsworth's treatment of the imagination in The Prelude, the motion of Nature comprises a group of metaphorical patterns related to the sources of Wordsworth's inspiration, among which are his sister Dorothy, the poet Coleridge, the French Revolution, and Nature. Natural forces in which motion is inherent serve also as symbols of the imagination itself.

Dorothy Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the two major acknowledged human sources of Wordsworth's poetic inspiration, are associated with contrasting patterns of motion. Dorothy's influence, as noted above, is characterized by metaphors of Nature in motion, while no such metaphors are associated with Coleridge. These metaphorical patterns appear to reflect

the spheres of their influence, as well as conforming to the pattern of literal motion in human subjects. Dorothy influenced Wordsworth's imaginative development by increasing his sensory awareness of the external world, while Coleridge's influence resulted in the stimulation of the intellectual powers.

The second major source of poetic inspiration, the French Revolution, is associated with images of natural motion in which wind predominates. This pattern of symbolic imagery characterizes both the Revolution itself and Wordsworth's response to it. Images of storm and cataclysm serve as symbols of the Revolution, to which Wordsworth reacts in four successive phases: initial apathy, romanticized idealism, a recognition of the true nature of libertarian goals, and finally, increasing disillusionment with the perversion of Revolutionary ideals. The first of these phases is characterized by an image of stillness surrounded by motion, that of a hot-house plant protected from the storm raging outside. Neither the second nor the third stage is characterized directly by the symbolism of Nature in motion, but a motif of shifting, erratic wind imagery is woven throughout these three stages of reaction and is repeated at the beginning of the fourth, providing poetic continuity throughout the discussion of the Revolution. As the fourth stage, that of disillusionment leading to utter despair and the temporary loss of poetic power, is reached, the wind imagery assumes a more ominous tone which is heightened by the repetition of images drawn from Shakespeare's Fall-of-Kings tragedies. The final perversion of libertarian ideals in the open warfare between France and England and Napoleon's subsequent coronation is symbolized by two striking images of natural motion corrupted to an unnatural state.

Throughout the Revolutionary books of The Prelude, the use of similar motifs of imagery to reflect external events and the poet's reaction to them links the external world to the inner world of the mind, thus serving as a symbolic expression of the unity of actual events and psychological response.

The influence of Nature upon Wordsworth's imaginative development, like that of the Revolution, is characterized by wind imagery, but this imagery forms a leitmotif running through the entire Prelude instead of being concentrated in one portion of the poem. The wind imagery which serves as a symbol for the inspirational powers of Nature is a motif of gentle breezes which awake corresponding motions within the mind. Again, the inner and the outer worlds are linked, but the linking is more complex than the use of similar patterns of imagery to portray both states. The same literal breeze which awakens poetic inspiration becomes a symbol of the condition that it evokes, serving simultaneously as vehicle and metaphor.

The workings of the mind are closely associated with catalogs of Nature which juxtapose motion with stillness in panoramic views of the natural landscape. The key to the interpretation of this symbolic use of the landscape is found in Wordsworth's statement that moods of calmness and of emotion are equally Nature's gifts, contributing to the genius of the poet. This statement, along with the scenes which symbolize this combination of emotion and tranquility by combining motion and stillness, supplements Wordsworth's well-known definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity." While the creative process consists of the alternation of emotion and tranquility, the co-existence of the two in the symbolic landscape suggests that the two are present simultaneously within the mind,

the alternation being a matter of predominance rather than of the replacement of one by the other. The landscape thus serves as a model for what to Wordsworth was a psychological reality.

Another body of iterative imagery associated with the subject of the imagination is the image of flowing water, which serves as a symbol for the imagination itself. The appropriateness of this symbol arises from its motion, which implies a dynamic process, and from the power of rivers and streams to combine waters from discrete sources into a single, moving body. Wordsworth's concentration upon the power of flowing waters to coalesce seems to represent a deliberate refutation of mechanistic theories of the imagination, which postulate that mental processes consist of a contiguous flow of discrete sensory impressions. The merging of waters from many sources into one inseparable body symbolizes, therefore, the merging of discrete sensory impressions in the unity of the imagination, which is shown in the climactic Snowdon episode to merge in turn with the powers of God and Nature in the active universe.

Wordsworth's concept of a universe which is literally alive is a generally recognized theme both of _The Prelude_ and of a large number of his other major works. This concept is both explicit and implicit in _The Prelude_. Through repeated references to "the living world" and "the active universe," Wordsworth clearly and openly affirms the belief that life exists in all natural forms. In keeping with this belief, he describes the natural landscape in a manner that emphasizes its "livingness," suggesting this quality both through the use of literal motion and through the ascription of the qualities of life, especially that of respiration, to stationary forms and objects. This mode of perception, termed "animism,"

has been identified as one of the presiding ideas of The Prelude. It is closely associated with, but not identical to, another presiding idea of the poem, that of religion, serving as a foundation upon which rests the belief in a deity pervading all objects of creation.

Wordsworth's animistic perception can be traced through several stages of growth in The Prelude, from the early communication between human souls to the recognition of the religious implications of the feeling of life in all things. The first step in the linking of the human soul with that of Nature occurs in infancy, when the mother's love is communicated to the infant mind, which is described metaphorically as if it were a living organism capable of motion and physical growth.

A later stage of animistic perception occurs in childhood, when Nature assumes the role of a deterministic tutelary power which leads the child into mischievous escapades in order to instruct him through beauty and through fear. The ministry of fear is accompanied by the perception of a punitive agent either in the imagined motion of hills which appear to be pursuing monsters or in the audibly perceived motion of a disembodied pursuer. The sublime qualities of Nature also take on a tutelary role when boyish escapades lead to a mystical association of the boy with the motion of the winds and clouds.

During Wordsworth's adolescence, the perception of life in Nature grows from a vague, intuitive feeling to a strong conviction of the existence of universal life. During this period, the motion of natural forces and of animate creatures is seen as evidence of a life which exists in apparently inert forms as well. But this conviction of universal life is not wholly assimilated into the imagination at this stage of his development. When

Wordsworth attends Cambridge, where he is cut off from close communication with Nature, his animism becomes a compulsive quest, the conscious ascription of life to natural forms by the intellect rather than the imagination. The poet arrives at the true meaning of the feeling of life in Nature when he returns to the Lake country during his summer vacation, where he undergoes a spiritual revelation which links the life of Nature to God. During this revelation, a ghostly presence similar to that perceived in the earlier boyish escapades is felt, manifested through breath-like sounds. This disembodied presence, unlike the earlier one, is associated with the spirit of God, a spirit which does not assume the threatening character of the earlier imaginary agent of retribution. Through the similarity of the descriptions of these unseen presences, Wordsworth's earlier animism is endowed with religious implications.

Through this progressive development of Wordsworth's animism, which culminates in a moment of religious insight, the early scenes which ascribe life to Nature and which, through the use of real and imagined motion, portray Nature as a living body, may be seen as a contribution to the poem's religious theme. The theme of religion is more fully developed in later parts of the poem, which deal with the mature stage of the poet's life when the imagination achieves full development. The implication of this developmental pattern is that only through the imagination can man attain true communication with God.

The religious attitudes expressed in _The Prelude_ have little in common with traditional Christian piety, although revisions in the 1850 version appear to reflect either a sincere change in attitude or a deliberate attempt to suggest a more conventional piety than that which is found in

the 1805 version. Christian elements are conspicuously absent from both versions, suggesting that the doctrine of salvation, the theology of the Christian faith, and Christ himself are of little or no importance in Wordsworth's religion, which seems to consist of an intimate, personal communication with the soul of the universe. In addition to the traditional Christian views which are significantly absent, the lack of firm conviction in a life after death is clearly expressed in The Prelude, being neither accepted nor rejected. This lack of conviction in a question central to Christian doctrine clearly affirms the basically non-Christian orientation of Wordsworth's religion.

Wordsworth's personal relationship with God is one of spiritual affinity rather than of the traditional father-child relationship of the Judeo-Christian ethic. This spiritual affinity often comes about when the motion of natural forces brings about the inner workings of the human spirit, so that communication with God is seen as attunement with Nature.

The close association of God with Nature results from the conviction that God exists in all natural objects, a conviction that has caused the religion of The Prelude to be labelled as "pantheism." Since true pantheism is defined as a belief in an immanent deity which is limited to the physical universe, however, there is some question as to whether Wordsworth's religion is wholly pantheistic. The acknowledgement of God as a Prime Mover who breathes life into the active universe suggests a pre-existing power. It is difficult to conceive of a power which acts in such a manner as one which did not exist before the universe was activated. In short, the God of The Prelude appears to be both immanent and transcendent, and the religion of The Prelude is not, therefore, wholly panthestic.

If the religion of The Prelude is somewhat orthodox in its recognition of a transcendent God, it is unorthodox by the standards of institutional religion in its attitude toward the revelation of God, which comes about not through Scriptures or sermons but through a close communion with Nature. The church is not mentioned in Wordsworth's idealized description of his mother's religion, which appears to combine a reverence for the past (presumably antedating the institutionalization of religion), natural piety, and an optimistic belief in man's natural goodness. Since Wordsworth's mother died when he was seven years old, this description probably represents his ideal of what religion should be, and it could serve as a summary of the attitude toward religion demonstrated throughout The Prelude.

The traditional monotheistic concept of God is found in The Prelude, although references to plural spirits in an early draft of the first two books suggest that this concept represents a view developed after the poem was undertaken. All such references are replaced in the 1805 text by references to Nature as a single entity or to a soul which is the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe." Whether these changes represent a sincere change in belief or merely the deletion of a habitual mode of expression, they point to a conscious effort to suggest a single, immanent spirit.

The two passages in The Prelude which are most often recognized by critics as climactic religious experiences are the Simplon Pass episode and the Snowdon episode. In the first of these, the violent motion of Nature in a ravine below the Simplon Pass in the Alps is endowed with religious significance by a linking of these manifestations of power with echoes of the Biblical book of Revelation. In the second, the literal motion of mists and vapors, the metaphorical motion of distant hills, and the aurally

perceived motion of rushing waters bring about the poet's reflection on the unity of God, Nature, and the imagination. Motion is, therefore, central to the recognition of God in the most significant religious experiences recounted in The Prelude.

The importance of motion in the revelation of God is not simply that motion serves as a symbol of His power. To Wordsworth, motion was God and God was motion. The concept is not uniquely Wordsworth's; it was postulated by the Unitarian theologian Joseph Priestley, whose belief that God is a form of motion or energy is reflected also in Coleridge's poetry. While this concept can only be inferred in the study of The Prelude, where motion brings about a recognition of God, it is clearly explicit in the reference in "Tintern Abbey" to "a motion and a spirit that . . . rolls through all things." To see motion, then, is to see God.

The value of the Snowdon episode in linking together the themes of imagination and religion cannot be overlooked. In addition to affirming the oneness of God, it identifies Nature and the imagination as manifestations of this single, all-encompassing power. At the summit of Mount Snowdon, all the powers of the universe are merged into a mighty whole, and the universal motion of Nature in the scene becomes "the perfect image of a mighty Mind." The image is perfect poetically as well as conceptually. It is what it stands for, a universal power made visible.

The Snowdon episode is significant also because of what it does not achieve. Wordsworth recounts the ascent of the mountain in the company of several companions. He reaches the summit only moments ahead of his companions. Their presence during his spiritual transfiguration which takes place there is indicated in the scene by the use of the pronoun "we."

Except for this single pronoun, however, their presence is not acknowledged, and they play no part in his recognition of the oneness of the universe. In Wordsworth's close spiritual communication with Nature, he is isolated from man.

Wordsworth's failure to integrate man into the Snowdon episode parallels his failure to integrate the pattern of human motion into the pattern which links Nature, God, and the imagination through their association with the motion of Nature. The failure, however, is philosophical rather than poetic. In view of the poem's avowed purpose of reflecting the growth of the poet's mind, the failure to achieve an integration of two separate patterns of motion--both of which are internally consistent--into a single pattern is successful poetically because it reflects a psychological reality. While Wordsworth attempts to account for man's role in his imaginative development by including a book recounting the manner in which the love of Nature leads to love of man, this professed love of mankind is not sustained throughout the poem. The separation of man from Wordsworth's philosophical scheme of the universe both in literal descriptions and in patterns of motion is entirely consistent with the self-portrait of the youth who walked among crowds of men, ascribing life and feeling to the rocks which lined the road.

A critic has said, "To ascend Wordsworth is to ascend a mountain around which there clings a perpetual mist."[113] While no study of a single motif can entirely dispel this mist, the study of motion in _The Prelude_ has revealed some new insights into the poem. Among these insights is the discovery of a pattern of growth in the progression from animism to religion. Although the stages of imaginative development in _The Prelude_ have been

[113]Charles Williams, "Wordsworth," _English Romantic Poets_, p. 110.

recognized in previous studies, little attention has been paid to the fact that this development is accompanied by a similar pattern of animistic and religious growth. This pattern raises some question as to the validity of the critical practice of treating all passages of religious expression in The Prelude as definitive statements of the religious views which Wordsworth held at the time the poem was written. It would be as logical to regard the physical motion of the child as a self-portrait of the mature poet, and no critic, to my knowledge, has been so short-sighted as to interpret these passages in such a light.

A second contribution of the study results from its identification of two separate patterns of motion which affirm Wordsworth's isolation from other human beings. While this isolation has been noted in several critical studies of The Prelude, its recognition has been largely a matter of intuitive perception. No other study of which I am aware has engaged in a systematic examination of a motif which confirms this impression. The identification of separate patterns of motion in man and in the expression of Wordsworth's philosophies thus serves as textual evidence which substantiates an observation made in biographical and psychological studies of the poem.

In spite of its length, my study has by no means dealt with all aspects of motion in The Prelude. It is primarily a textual study which refrains from offering archetypal or psychological interpretations of the patterns of motion revealed, because such interpretations are appropriate neither to the scope of the study nor to my own training and inclinations. Because motion is subject to both archetypal and psychological interpretations, the

patterns of motion in The Prelude might profitably be examined from either of these points of view in future studies.

Another suggestion for additional study is that patterns of motion throughout the entire Wordsworthian canon be analyzed. Although the identification of significant examples of motion in all of Wordsworth's poetical works was a preliminary step in my own study, the patterns found in the later poetry were not analyzed in depth when it became apparent that such a comprehensive survey was too broad in scope to permit the detailed discussion of these patterns in my study. The survey did reveal, however, a tendency in the later poetry toward an increase in human motion and a decrease in the merging of symbol with idea in the motion of Nature, so that natural motion becomes a metaphor clearly separated from vehicle, a symbol in the sense of one thing which stands for another. A comparison of patterns of motion in the earlier and in the later poetry might well offer additional insight into the nature of Wordsworth's poetic decline.

My study, then, has not exhausted the subject of motion in Wordsworth's poetry. A part of its value lies in the groundwork which it has laid for additional study, through the recognition of a motif which, in spite of its pervasiveness, has received little attention as a means of interpreting The Prelude. Motion in The Prelude has been shown to be not merely a rhetorical adornment, a property of imagery which enhances its sensory appeal, but a symbolic pattern linking diverse themes and endowing them with a poetic unity which reflects a conceptual reality.

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