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The Effect of Nature and Imagination upon Wordsworth as Seen in the Prelude

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THE EFFECT OF NATURE AND IMAGINATION
UPON WORDSWORTH AS SEEN IN
THE PRELUDE

by
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to acquaint the reader with a knowledge of Wordsworth's theory of poetry as he has expressed it for us in his poem the Prelude. By theory is meant the essential qualities of Nature poetry and their interconnection. Specifically, these essential qualities according to the poet Wordsworth are Nature and Imagination. Far too often Wordsworth and his poetry are eschewed by the multitude simply because it failed to understand the value which Wordsworth attached to the function of Nature and Imagination upon the poet. In order to appreciate fully the works of Wordsworth, one certainly must be cognizant of the mission and beliefs of the poet. Thus in the thesis, this mission and these beliefs which, as it were, constitute the doctrine that Wordsworth has expressed in his auto-
biographical poem the Prelude will be explained.

Designedly, I have tried to steer clear of any philosophical implications that are involved in Wordsworth's teaching on the faculty of the Imagination and the "self-applauding" intellect. We have also avoided any mention of his religious and humanitarian beliefs since these are unnecessary in this thesis. Enough matter in the explanation of Nature's effects on and the Imagination's transformation of the poet is at hand.

It must be borne in mind throughout this thesis that the Prelude is a poem not a prose work. Wordsworth's theory is couched in poetic language and therefore is not read as literally and as easily as one might hope. Undoubtedly some of the meaning and experience which Wordsworth wished to convey will be lost by the author's inability to feel with Wordsworth at all times. Them, too, our poet is hampered by the very words he is of necessity forced to use; his emotion must be transmitted to others by the ordinary conventional expression which we call language. Whenever Wordsworth's words were in keeping with the composition of the thesis, we preferred to quote Wordsworth rather than paraphrase what he said. By doing this we hoped that the reader would understand Wordsworth more easily, since he would be closer to the

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original expression of the poet himself.

It is important that we consider Wordsworth as a great missionary. His mission was to instruct all mankind in the sweet lessons of Nature. As Nature's apostle he expresses "a constant and conscious reaction against the mentality of the Eighteenth Century," a mentality which was wont to accept Science and the scientific fact at its face value. Against the evils of determinism, the mechanistic theory of man's non-cooperation with matter, and pure idealism, Wordsworth proclaimed his doctrine concerning the beauty and truth of Nature.

Wordsworth was also a reformer par excellence. It will be remembered that the cold, straight-laced Neo-classical age had just come to an end. Lyric poetry had been almost completely at a stand still. The poetry of the times highly flavored of cold intellectuality and, sad to say, was rammed into a ready-made metrical form which usually straight-jacketed whatever feelings the poet wished to express. In effect, the poetry of the pre-Wordsworthian times lacked much of the emotional element that is so essential to poetry. The reformer Wordsworth would have nothing to do with this period. He threw off the intellectual shackles of the former era for he felt that he had a message to communicate.

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to his people. He felt that poetry was the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," feelings which should not and could not be inhibited by superimposing a ready-made metrical form upon them. He was bitter against:

..........that dangerous and overprized
craft of picking phrases out from
languages that want the living voice
to make them a nature to the
heart. 4

He felt that the form must be educed from the situation. Each poem, as it arouses its own particular feelings and emotions, must have a metrical form that fits it best. Thus feelings must not be forced into a metrical pattern that is not suitable to them.

The crusader, Wordsworth, shouts out to the people of his times the message of Nature. He tells the world that they are "out of tune." 5 The sea and the howling winds have no particular meaning to the eighteenth-century man other than profit and adventure. This hurt Wordsworth. Men did not understand the beauty Nature was trying to communicate to them. "I would rather


4 de Selincourt, Prelude, VI 129-132.

be a Pagan suckled in a creed outworn, "he tells them, than be so
immune to the inspiration and beauty of Nature. Strong words are
these. Yet words uttered from the heart of one who "had devoted his
life to the promulgation of a brighter and happier world which he
thought possible."7

Certainly it is a pity that such an apostle should be un-
able to see through the beauty of Nature and understand its real
meaning. Even though Wordsworth did not realize the supernatural
impact of Nature, we can say with a good deal of certainty that
on the purely natural level he mounted higher than any other poet
of English literature in the mysticism of Nature. E.C. Stedman
says:

Wordsworth felt the sublimity of the repose that
lies on every height, of Nature's ultimate subjection
to the law. His imagination comprehends her reserved
forces; and before his time her deepest voice had no
apt interpreter, for none had listened with an ear so
patient as his for the mastery of her language.8

To explain why Wordsworth never attained the real God beyond the
shell of Nature is a mystery answerable only by God.

In this thesis we will try to explain the effect of
Nature and Imagination on Wordsworth; we will do so by tracing
Wordsworth's love of Nature in his poem the Prelude. We believe

6 Ibid. 9-10.

7 Patton, C.H., Rediscovery of Wordsworth, Stratford Co.,
Boston, 1935, 258.

8 Stedman, E.C., Nature and Elements of Poetry,
that his genuine devotion to the wonders of creation and his great insights into external reality will prove beneficial to us both in our understanding of Wordsworth’s poetry in particular and all poetry in general.

Let us not be led astray by the seemingly philosophical confusion of Wordsworth. The fact that he never sufficiently explains apparent contradictions is an inherent weakness in the man Wordsworth. Be it known that he never worried himself about a philosophy as such until he met Coleridge. Even after his meeting, Wordsworth’s philosophy is lived out rather than thought out. He does not seem to be bothered about consistency of doctrine. What seemed to fit at the moment, Wordsworth used. Philosophy, however, should not prejudice our appreciation of poetry, for the power of great poetry does not depend upon the ideas and beliefs of the poet who is not a poet-philosopher, but rather upon the experience which the poet is trying to convey to his readers. Let us always remember that Wordsworth has not called himself a philosopher, but he has called himself a poet. We might even say that Wordsworth is a natural mystic with insight. He is a poet who has been thrilled by the wonderment of Nature. His poetry does have a message for us if we will take the time and trouble to listen and feel.

To explain this message and the love of Nature which Wordsworth wishes to convey, it will be imperative that we consider the various essential elements which play so important a part in his poetry. We will study Nature as Wordsworth conceived
her: a dynamic and tender Mother who constantly impresses her forms upon the poet. We will consider the poet who is "cheer'd by the genial pillow of the earth," ⁹ and soothed "by the sense of touch from the warm ground." ¹⁰ The poet's sensibilities and greatness of soul will give us insights into the poetic depths of Wordsworth's own great soul. We will study the necessary and the proper correspondence which the poet must show to Nature's loving influence: how he observes, recollects, and meditates with love and fervor when presented with Nature's external objects. He is "all eye and all ear, but even with the heart employed." ¹¹ Then finally, we will look at the Imagination, the highest faculty of the poet as poet. We will see how this faculty burnishes and reforms the sense data so that the poet cannot "chuse but feel." ¹²

These are the important factors in Wordsworth's doctrine on poetry which he lays down in his poem the Prelude. It is very difficult to separate the thesis into five sections, for all the sections are so united that one presupposes the other, and must be studied in the light of the other. We have tried, as far as is possible, to isolate Nature, the poet, poetic correspondence, and

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⁹ de Selincourt, Prelude, I 88.
¹⁰ Ibid. I 89.
¹¹ Ibid. XI 144-145.
¹² Ibid. XIII 84.
Imagination. The reader, realizing that these chapters are so closely related, will bear with any repetition which must naturally result in such a separation. The chapters must be taken in the order assigned if the thesis is to read logically. So too the matter must be separated if the full meaning of Wordsworth's doctrine on Nature and Imagination is to be understood.

It will be noted that we have used de Selincourt's text of the Prelude as our primary source. Mr. de Selincourt is a true scholar in Wordsworth's writings. His book is considered as the authoritative version. Over and above this, his commentary on the lines of the Prelude, although far too jejune for the majority of readers, is excellent and extremely enlightening.
CHAPTER TWO

NATURE

In his poem the Prelude, whose subtitle is The Growth of a Poet's Mind, Wordsworth does not attempt to give a clear-cut definition either of Nature or Imagination. This, however, is not strange. According to Wordsworth's own principles laid down in the Prelude, he would put away the meddling intellect which "mis-shapes the beautious forms of things." ¹ Thus he does not classify according to genus and specific difference those things which would have saved his readers much thought and considerable arguments. Wordsworth's Imagination must grasp the totality of things, and the reader must be left with a comprehensive impression rather than a concrete idea of the effect which Nature and Imagination have upon the poet. We must feel with the poet Wordsworth rather than understand. On this very matter Mr. Beach has this to say:

In Wordsworth's account of the Imagination as in his account of Nature, there is a cloudy margin of uncertainty, an emotional dazzle in which ambiguities thrive, in which it is not possible to distinguish

sharply the bounds of scientific truth and of the heart's desire.  

Many and scattered are the passages in which Wordsworth deals with Nature and Imagination. Since they are usually rather short, it will be necessary to use more than one passage so that we might draw out certain characteristics from his, as Mr. Beach calls it, "obscurity." One passage of greater length will be used and will be supplemented by others from various other books of the Prelude. In this way the reader can see that Wordsworth's doctrine is uniform throughout. The passages which have been chosen do not pertain exclusively to Nature. Only the characteristics of Nature, however, will be emphasized in this chapter. Later, the poet, his correspondence, and the Imagination will be treated in their respective chapters.

In our study of Wordsworth's Nature, we must in all due fairness to Wordsworth caution the reader. We must be careful that we, who have not the intimate knowledge and love of Nature which Wordsworth possessed, do not misjudge him. It has been pointed out before and will be pointed out again that Wordsworth's background has a great deal to do with his manner of thinking. Raymond Haven's words should enlighten us somewhat:

Wordsworth’s conception of Nature and its ministry to

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the human spirit rose from boyhood experience. What is
deepest and most vital in it was derived, not from books,
or from Coleridge, but from the fields, the waters and
the mountains about Hawkshead. Here, at last, the child
was father of a man. 3

Let us then consider Wordsworth in the light of Wordsworth's edu-
cation. He was educated among the beauties of Nature and loved
them as his companions.

In the second book of the Prelude, Wordsworth gives us
an insight into his meaning of Nature. He says:

Blest the Infant Babe
(For with my best conjectures I would trace
The progress of our being) Blest the Babe
Nurs'd in his Mother's arms, the Babe who sleeps
Upon his Mother's breasts, who, when his soul
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
Doth gather passion from his Mother's eye. 4

This is the passage which I have chosen as a typical passage to
illustrate Wordsworth's Nature. In view of the total impression
which the whole poem leaves on the reader, it can be said that
Mother, nurs'd, and kindred with an earthly soul are the key words
to the meaning of Nature.

The choice of the word MOTHER carries with it a great
deal of significance for Wordsworth. First, and most obvious of
all, Mother signifies a person. Nature was a real person to
Wordsworth. She was a personal entity very much distinct from

3 Havens, Raymond Dexter, The Mind of the Poet, Johns
Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1941, 88.

4 de Selincourt, Prelude, II 238-243.
his own personal entity. Nature possessed a life just as Wordsworth, and she was not dependent upon his thought for her existence. Whether Wordsworth recognized her whisperings or not, she was physically present to him all the time. This personality which Wordsworth assigned Nature is, of course, in direct opposition to the philosophical doctrine of the day. It was a slap in the face of the British Empiricists and Idealists who treated Nature as a specimen to be dissected or as a pure figment of the mind.

This person was a particular person; she was a mother and thus possessed all the characteristics of a mother. It is of interest to note here that Wordsworth's mother died when he was yet a boy, and Nature, as it were, was adopted by him and became his mother and companion. He constantly refers to Nature as his companion: "......while I wandered on with that revered Companion." 5 "......with my companion at my side I watched." 6 "......a gentle companion." 7 Nature, his newly found Mother, was constantly ministering to him in his every need. When he needed help or even consolation, she was ever present to console or cheer him on his way. A calmness and peacefullness filled his youthful heart as Nature, his Mother, tenderly led him on to happier moments. Thus,

5 Ibid. IX 466.
6 Ibid. II 361.
7 Ibid. XIII 251.
besides the quality of companionship, we find Wordsworth frequently predicating tenderness of Nature: "...to thee from all the tenderness I imbibed." 

"...of tenderness which I may number now with my first blessings." 

"...and your whole year seemed tenderness and love." 

This person, Nature, was to Wordsworth a tender mother who was ever his loving companion.

In response to this motherly tenderness and helpful companionship, Wordsworth feels himself called to sing the praises of Nature. "I made no vows," he said, "but vows were then made for me; bond unknown to me was given that I should be, else sinning greatly, a dedicated Spirit." Thus Wordsworth became, in return for Nature's love of him, "singled out for the holy services of Nature." 

In the word NURS'D we find that this tender loving Mother is active. Nature is now a dynamic force constantly ministering, constantly feeding her "chosen son." This is probably one of the most striking characteristics of Wordsworth's Nature. It is

8 Ibid. XIII 213-214.
9 Ibid. VIII 493-494.
10 Ibid. VII 43.
11 Ibid. IV 344.
12 Ibid. I 63.
13 Ibid. III 82.
through her activity that the material for poetry is given to the poet, provided, of course, that the recipient is of poetic temperament. We will, however, consider this poetic temperament in the following chapters. As a dynamic mother, Nature helps, inspires, and teaches her son. We find Nature haunting Wordsworth when he tried to make sport with a baby bird. He tells us that in his childish glee he attempted to capture a baby raven from its nest. Nature, his mother, reprimanded him as only a mother could. Her tenderness became anger, and her companionship a constant reproach.

"With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not the sky of earth." Such was Nature's reprimand. Her external objects, which were otherwise a delight to Wordsworth, lost their charm and became ministers of his conscience. Another time, he tells us that he took a boat from the dock without asking the permission of the owner. His purpose was a short sail on the lake so that he could enjoy Nature's evening beauties. Nature, again, became his conscience and repaid him for his misdemeanor. He tells us:

........................in my thoughts  
There was a darkness, call it solitude,  
Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes  
Of hourly objects, images of trees

Ibid. I 348-350.
Of sea or sky, no colors of green fields;  
But huge and mighty forms that do not live,  
Like living men moved slowly through the mind  
By day and were the trouble of my dreams.  

Again we see how Nature punishes him when he violates her companionship. She takes away all beauty and fills his mind with horrid thoughts which even interrupt the peace of his dreams.

Wordsworth leaves his readers with the thought that his mother, Nature (certainly not to be confused with the fairyland Mother Nature) leads him by the hand all the time both in consolation and in desolation. Nature is so dynamic that she is forever acting upon him. She is constantly impressing her manifold of sensible forms upon his generous soul. He tells us that "the calm and dead still water lay upon my mind even with the weight of pleasure, and the sky never before so beautiful sank down into my heart and held me like a dream." 16 Again, he says that "from Nature and her overflowing soul I had received so much that my thoughts were steep'd in feelings." 17 In speaking of his reaction to Nature's impressions, he says "...how Nature by extrinsic passion first peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair and made me love them," 18 and again "thou hast fed my lofty

15 Ibid. I 420-427.  
16 Ibid. II 176-180.  
17 Ibid. II 416-418.  
18 Ibid. I 573-575.
speculations; and in thee for this uneasy heart of ours I find a never-failing principle of joy and the purest passion." 19 No one will now deny that Nature, as Wordsworth considers her, is a very dynamic force.

One of the most interesting and oft-recurring characteristics of Wordsworth's Nature is brought out in the words: KINDRED WITH AN EARTHLY SOUL. We note that it is a reecho of the fact that Nature is his mother.

We must at this point distinguish Nature from the objects of Nature which are the external manifestations or the outward garb of Nature. Such a distinction is analogous to that made between the body and the soul. The flowers, trees, birds, etc. are the externals or the body of Nature, while the soul which pervades and enlivens these external members is Nature herself. It is with this soul of Nature that the poet claims his kindred. In the recognition of this kinship, the poet understands Nature, he receives insight, and the process of poetry is initiated. More of this particular topic will be seen in a later chapter.

Wordsworth believes in an Anima Mundi which permeates all being and gives relationship to them. The external objects of Nature, beautiful in themselves, are much like the garment which

19 Ibid. IV 172-176.
Nature can wear or shed at will. Speaking of the transitory state of the beauty around him, Wordsworth says in an almost broken-hearted tone: "Tremblings of the heart it gives me to think that the Immortal Being no more shall need such garments." He states, however, that it isn't so much the exterior that counts but rather it is the soul that is the all important factor in Nature, for all beings "are different in kind, not tender." It is the life-giving soul of Nature that thrills the poet because he can see through the externals where the real beauty is hidden. The external beauty is only a shadow of the interior beauty of Nature.

If the flowers, trees, birds, etc. are the body of Nature permeated by a living soul, we naturally ask what Wordsworth holds concerning the rocks, hills, and the sea. How are these permeated by the living soul of Nature if they are inanimate? Wordsworth answers that he does predicate a living soul of even these inanimate objects. He gives his reasons:

From deep' analogies by thought supplied
Or consciousness not to be subdued
To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower
Even the loose stones on the highway
I gave a moral life; I saw them feel
Or linked them to some feelings; the great

20 Ibid. V 21-23.
21 Ibid. III 242.
Mass lay bedded in a quickening soul and all... That beheld respired with inward meaning.

A person as richly imaginative as Wordsworth is almost certain to feel a conscious life in all Nature. His years of very close intimacy and passionate love of Nature would naturally move him to such a judgment. Walter Pater tells us that Wordsworth felt "that every natural object seemed to possess more or less of a moral and spiritual life to be capable of a companionship with man." Wordsworth seems then to predicate "soul" of inanimate beings by what we call extrinsic denomination. The mind or the imagination sees all the objects bedded in a quickening soul of Nature. Thus the mind predicates a soul of these objects. It is due to analogies that these objects are given life. Merely because they are in some way related to man or other animate life, it is possible for Wordsworth to attribute life to them. Each object, no matter how insignificant, reflects and, in its own way, adds glory to the surrounding objects. The whole world is made of an infinite number of organic relations and complexities, and the Anima Mundi.

22 Ibid. III 122-130.
pervades them all. 24

With this doctrine well in mind, we can understand Wordsworth more easily when he says:

I felt the sentiment of Being spread
0'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
0'er all, that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, yet liveth to the heart,
0'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts, and sings
Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
Beneath the waves, yea in the wave itself
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not!
Of such my transports were; for in all things now
I saw one life, and felt that it was a joy.
One song they sang and it was audible. 25

We spoke of the universe, Nature's external robe, as

a unity and complexity of relations. We might have said that it is

a togetherness of many sensible forms bound and united by one pervading principle, the Anima Mundi. 26 Each of these external manifestations of Nature is in some way related to the poet and has a message for him to convey. It speaks in various tongues of love and tells him of the greatness of Nature. When the poet recognizes this form possessed of a kindred soul, he understands the message of Nature. The beauty of the external world captivates him, and in this captivity, the message of Nature is revealed. The poet thus develops a deep familiarity with Nature and at once is able


25 de Selincourt, Prelude, II 420-431.
to see the interconnection and similarity of forms. In this vision we have the explanation of the metaphor and the simile. As a result of the poet's close observation of the forms presented to him and his recognition of their propinquity, the poet actually sees the daffodils laugh, 26 "the sky rejoice in the morning's birth," 27 and the "hundred hills their dusky back upheave." 28 The similarities are themselves in Nature; the poet merely recognizes them and announces them to the world. He sees the happiness and the joy of the laughing child in the daffodil, because he has so often contemplated both the child and the daffodil. Since there is a common soul, the Anima Mundi, which pervades all Nature's objects whether they be animate or inanimate, intelligent or mute, the poet feels that he is able to take the qualities of one object and prediate them of the other as long as he can see a similarity between them. Thus the metaphor and the simile are actually in the object. It is not a figment of the poet's fancy. It is merely seen by the poet as an objective fact and announced. It is objective and not objectified.

We may conclude this chapter on Wordsworth's idea of

28 de Selincourt, Prelude, XIII 45.
Nature with a summary of the essential characteristics which the complete Prelude has given us. We have examined various passages from different parts of the poem and we have seen that they all say the same thing about Nature.

We saw that Nature was a person, a distinct entity, and not dependent upon the mind of Wordsworth for its existence. This person, delineated by Wordsworth, was a mother possessed of all the qualities of a mother. Her tenderness and her love were ever ministering to the poet. Nature was truly his dear companion.

We distinguished between Nature and the external manifestations of Nature. We said that the distinction was similar to the distinction between body and soul. Nature, the soul, is the life-giving principle. It permeates all the external manifestations and is the bond of their unity. Life is predicated of inanimate creatures by extrinsic denomination only. Because of the infinite relationships with man and other animate objects, inanimate beings are said to be bedded "in the quickening soul."

The myriad relations which exist in Nature's objects are the fundament for the simile and the metaphor. The poet sees the same soul running through all created beings and thus feels that he can predicate the characteristics of one entity of an entirely different entity. His close observation of both objects reveals certain similarities which he feels he might well use in the figures of his poetry. Thus we said that the simile and the
metaphor were actually in the objects themselves. They are mere announcements of reality.

The chief characteristics of Nature were hidden in her dynamism. She is a force which works constantly on the poet. In her workings she reveals to him the message for mankind. Through her tenderness she leads the poet to a further love becoming his teacher, his inspiration, and, at times, his task-master.
CHAPTER THREE

THE POET

On would naturally think, from his reading of the poem the *Prelude*, that Wordsworth distinguishes the poet both from Nature and the faculty of the Imagination. Certainly the impression is given that the Imagination is almost a separate faculty entirely distinct from the poet's mind. But the reader realizes that Wordsworth does this in order that the reader come away with a great admiration of Nature and Imagination, which are the two most important factors in Wordsworth's poetry. In this chapter we intend to study the poet *qua* tale. We wish to show the qualities necessary in the poet so that Nature and Imagination can work upon him with the most effective results. The poet's ability to put his thoughts in metrical feet will not be considered in this chapter.

Wordsworth tells us that the poet is "a gentle creature who loves the things of Nature."¹ A gentle creature supposes a docile, refined taste which respects and reverences the objects it is to use. He is the a most delicate instrument whose "sight

is dazzled by the novel show" of God's creation. "e is the high priest of Nature, a dedicated Spirit, as we have seen in the previous chapter, who has the "happiness to live when every hour brings palpable access of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight." 3

In speaking of the poet's high calling, Wordsworth says:

.....................I was a chosen son
For hither had I come with holy powers
And faculties whether to work or feel.
To apprehend all moods and all passions
Which time, place, and season do impress
Upon the visible universe, and work
Like changes there by force of my own mind. 4

Are all poets chosen sons, or is the poet an ordinary man?

Wordsworth gives us the answer in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

He is a man speaking to men; a man it is true endowed with more lively sentiments, more enthusiasm, and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions; who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar passions and volitions manifested in the goings on of the universe and habitually impelled to create where he does not find them. 5

2 Ibid. II 204.
3 Ibid. II 304-306.
4 Ibid. III 82-89.
We know how well Wordsworth realizes that he is a man speaking to other men, that he is a man with a purpose, a message. He is called to bring to the world Nature's message of love and of peace. He is an apostle who must speak to his fellow men in the language which they know and understand.

In the previous chapter we have already discussed the high degree of activity which Nature is want to use upon man. We saw that she is a tender mother constantly ministering to the poet. She is a loving mother "whose blessings are spread around the poet like a sea." If the poet is to drink in these manifest beauties and interpret the hidden meaning within Nature's external grandeur, he must be a man of great sensibility. It is through the senses that Nature does her work. Thus the poet must always be on the alert to take every impulse that Nature wishes to give. Wordsworth speaking of his own degree of sensibility says that his reader must have "chamois sinews and eagle's wings" if he, the reader, is to understand the depths of attention and the heights of feeling which he, Wordsworth, has attained with Nature. Such sensibility is necessary for a poet if he is to apprehend all the moods and passions of Nature. So a great deal of response

on the part of the poet is a requisite if he is to correspond in any poetic degree with the highly dramatic force of the ever-working Nature.

The poet's soul is comprehensive. It reaches out to embrace all Nature's objects, for the poet wants to grasp the living soul of the universe and present it to mankind. Even the lesser manifestations of Nature are worthy of his song, since all objects have a place in his heart. Objects which seem insignificant to us are "not to be despised." They are linked in spirit with the poet's soul and add their share to the total glory of all Nature. When the poet recognizes this kindred spirit with Nature, he cannot "chuse but feel."

This degree of sensibility and comprehensiveness of soul on the part of the poet is summed up in the Prelude under the title "vital" soul. This vital soul is "ever wakeful even as the waters are to the sky's motion." This soul is ever in potency to receive Nature's wonderful forms. It is ever "obedient

8 Ibid. VIII 491.
10 de Selincourt, Prelude, V 20.
11 Ibid. I 161.
12 Ibid. III 135-136.
as the lute that waits upon the touches of the wind." 13

    The poet is Nature's inmate." 14 His spirit is expressed by the words "I loved whate'er I saw, nor lightly loved but fervently." 15 Thus love is the poet's key word. The poet is a lover who wants to talk about his loved one. He feels her loving forces dominating him and urging him to recreate as best he can that which he sees before him. As a lover, he possesses all the desires of a lover. He longs to be with the beloved, to communicate with her. "Underneath what grove shall I take up my home and what sweet stream shall lull me to my rest?" 16 To Wordsworth there is nothing greater than "the bliss of walking daily through the fields or the forest with the Maid we love." 17 He cannot be satisfied with the thought of his absent loved one; he must be present to her and united with her. Such a union between the poet and Nature is the beginning of poetry, for poetry is the marriage of the poet's mind with Nature. 18

    It is interesting to note with what joy Wordsworth leaves

13 Ibid. III 137-138.
14 Ibid. XI 214.
15 Ibid. XI 226-227.
16 Ibid. I 12-14.
17 Ibid. XII 129-130.
London for his vacation in the Lake Country; "from yon city's walls set free, a prison where he hath been long immured." Lodging worried him not. "I breath again," were his sentiments. He is happy to rejoin Nature for "love cannot be nor does it easily thrive in cities where the human heart is sick and the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed."  

To appreciate Nature the poet must take on the garb of Nature; he must be "ever on the watch willing to work and to be wrought upon." His habitat is by the brooks, fountains, hills and valleys and his thoughts must ever be on Nature's works and beauties. Unless the poet have an intimate knowledge of the universe's splendors, and unless he actually feels himself in direct contact with these splendors, he will not learn their secrets. It must be remembered that the poet is not a camera, nor is his poetry a picture of reality. The poet is a creator spurred on by love, and his poetry is a living creature made from the reality of living manifestation. If the poet cannot see into the life of things and know Nature as she really is, then he cannot recreate Nature so that all men can know and love Nature.

19 de Selincourt, Prelude, 1 7-8.
20 Ibid. I 19.
21 Ibid. XII 201-203.
22 Ibid. XIII 99-100.
Finally, the poet is in a sense a mystic. He has very deeply experienced the beauties of Nature which have been revealing to him. They are his personal experiences which have evoked feelings of love and wonder. Just as the mystic brushes away all concepts of God in his desire to see God as He really is, so the poet rids himself of all distractions so that he might take hold of Nature as she manifests herself to him. "I have loved and enjoyed, that was my chief and ruling business, happy in the strength and loveliness of imagery and thought." The mystic and the poet are alike in that both are drawn to unity with the object as it exists apart from them. The motive behind this union is love.

23 Ibid. VI 77–79.
CHAPTER FOUR

WORDSWORTH'S CORRESPONDENCE
TO NATURE

Thus far we have considered Nature and the poet. We have studied each isolated from the other. It remains for us to put them together. We wish now to see how this very sensitive poet, whom we have been considering, reacts or, at least, should react given the stimuli of tender Nature. We wish to trace the correspondence of the poet to the whisperings of this very dynamic external universe about him. Again, this will be done in the light of Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, the Prelude.

We have seen Nature in her dynamic role. We have studied her as a power, a person quite distinct from the poet himself. Nature as a person presents her multitude of sensible forms upon the poet's mind with the result that the poet is forced to cry out to the world "the Spirit of Nature was upon me here; the soul of Beauty and enduring life was present as a habit." 24 If

24 Ibid. VII 735-737.
the poet but take his time to listen and see, Nature will reveal to him her beauty and her charm. She will show the striking similarities in Nature between the various forms which she is constantly presenting. Deep within her manifestations will be the message which she wishes the poet to convey.

Nature is the artist who paints on the canvas of the poet's mind. Her pictures are the glorious sunrise, the yellow daffodils by the rippling brook, the violet by a mossy stone. It is she who manifests her objects to the poet that he might duly perceive them, experience them, and appreciate them. In his turn, he must re-create what he sees in the language of men.

In the words of Wordsworth, we have seen that Nature is present as a habit. Thus the poet is constantly in the presence of some manifestation of Nature. The poet, however, may too soon become a "spoiled child" 25 in his daily intercourse with Nature and lose Nature's effects. There is a certain set of rules which the poet must follow, if he is to correctly interpret Nature's secrets. Since Wordsworth conceives a poet's mind as the "mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of Nature," 26

25 Ibid. III 352.

there must be a definite plan of correspondence. The mirror must be kept spotless, if the manifestation of Nature is to be reflected. That which is a habit to the poet must not be taken for granted or esteemed lightly, lest the manifestation go unappreciated.

To keep a poet a fit instrument to announce Nature’s beauty, Wordsworth lays down two simple rules: observation and recollection, \(^{27}\) If these rules are followed religiously, the value of this observation has this to say:

I am a perfect enthusiast in my admiration of Nature in all her various forms; and I have looked upon, as it were, conversed with the objects which this country has presented to my view so long and with such increasing pleasure that the idea of parting from them oppresses me with a sadness similar to what I have always felt in quitting a beloved friend. \(^{26}\)

No one will deny that the admiration of which he speaks springs from a love founded deep in the heart of a lover. Nature has befriended him, and as his constant companion has made his leaving the objects of Nature a sad experience. Wordsworth loves Nature and love implies a knowledge which, in its proper turn, presupposes study or observation. One cannot love what he does not know well. Wordsworth tells us that he looked upon and conversed with the objects of Nature. He understood that his vocation

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\(^{27}\) Ibid. Cf. "Lyrical Ballads" 793.

\(^{28}\) Read, Herbert, Wordsworth, Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, New York, 1931, 78-79.
demanded that he "apprehend all passions and all moods which
time and place and season do impress upon the visible universe." Grierson tells us that Wordsworth "pored over objects till he fastened their images on his brain." Such was the observation of Wordsworth. He "looked with feelings of fraternal love upon those unassuming things that hold station in this beautiful world." 

Since Wordsworth considers man and Nature essentially adapted to each other, he will do everything in his power to see that this essential correspondence is fulfilled. Thus observation is one of the chief requirements. Wordsworth defines observation as the "ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves." As an example of his accurate observation he says "I explored the streamlet and pried into Yorkshire dales." His words explored and pried are indeed interesting; they seem to show a deep consideration of Nature. They are far more forceful than if he had said that he looked at the streamlet and entered Yorkshire dales. The former shows real activity on the poet's part, and certainly a greater use of his senses. His whole mental attitude is one of keen observation.


31 de Selincourt, Prelude, XIII 275.


33 de Selincourt, Prelude, VI 194-195.
We have said already that the mind was the mirror of the properties of Nature; we add now that it is a conscious mirror. Thus, if the poet is to appreciate the value of Nature and her objects, he must be conscious of her. It is through the senses that the poet must first meet Nature. Without sense perception the poet of Nature would have no song to sing, since his senses are the gates of the poet's knowledge of reality. It is through these senses that the poet recognizes the "glorious presence of reality." 34

In themselves the senses are passive; they receive the dynamic force which external reality is wont to exert upon the poet. In such perceptions, the poet is like any other man. Once, however, this process of receptivity is initiated, true activity on the poet's part begins. It is here that the poet and the ordinary man begin to take different paths.

In keeping with his vocation, which is to present the beauties of Nature to all men, the poet has an obligation to invite inspiration. He must see all the external forms which dynamic Nature is so willing to bestow upon his senses. He does this simply by throwing open the gates of his senses, and, as it were, allowing his soul to feed on the bountiful imagery of Nature.

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34 Ibid. VII 249.
He need not fear that inspiration will not come, for the "pulse of Being is everywhere felt." 35 Wordsworth tells us how vast the field of Nature's objects is:

The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. 36

If the poet then will follow wheresoever he can find the atmosphere of sensation, --and that is everywhere--he is fulfilling the perceptive part of his poetical duty. Since, as Wordsworth says in his poem Expostulation and Reply:

The eye--it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel; whereso,they be,
Against or with our will. 37

he recommends a course of observation called "wise passivity." 38

It is not enough to invite the dynamic force of Nature. As Nature unfolds her beauty, the poet through observation must correspond to this unfolding. The poet must recognize a kindred soul in Nature and must study the manifold complexities and relations before meaning and love can be imparted to him. Observation, then, is a requisite for the poetry of Nature.

What is the course of wise passivity which Wordsworth

35  Ibid. VIII 626.
38  Ibid., 24.
so highly recommends? It is nothing but a willingness to follow where the poet's richly expanding experience might lead him.39 It is an awareness and expansion of the mind to external objects of Nature.40 Wordsworth tells us that, though the scene be "by nature an unmanageable sight, it is not wholly so to him who looks in steadiness, who looks to see the parts as parts but with the feeling of the whole."41 The poet must be wise in that he takes what Nature gives him when Nature wants to give it. He must, however, choose those things which are most conducive to poetry. When we speak of choosing, we immediately imply that there will be an elimination. Wordsworth says: "I glanced but at a few conspicuous marks leaving then ten thousand others."42 Notice that he says he left some of the sights. There must be a selection since all the objects here and now are not equally important to arouse the required emotion and feeling.

The poet is passive in so far as he allows Nature to impress her forms upon his mind through the medium of his senses. Reception is not poetry and must not be identified with poetry. It is but the beginning of poetry. Only after the poet has drunk


40 Cf. Patton, Rediscovery of Wordsworth, 108.

41 de Selincourt, Prelude, VII 708-712.

42 Ibid., VII 566-567.
in the vastness of Nature with her infinite number of forms, the process of poetry has begun. It is then that the poetic genius of the poet begins its transformation of the sense data.

While the poet is receiving these external stimulations through the medium of his senses, he is carefully observing Nature's forms in the minutest details. He is drinking in as much of the sweet wine of Nature as he can hold; he is truly at home with Nature because he finds in her a kindred spirit, a tender companion. "Intercourse was mine, 'twas mine among the fields by day and night and by the waters all the summer long." 43

We note that Wordsworth was a constant companion of Nature. His only occupation was to enjoy the beauties of the universe which surrounded him. He spent his days and nights in an atmosphere conducive to external sensation. He was like "the bee among the flowers." 44 His attitude is best expressed by the words: "should the guide I choose be nothing better than a wandering cloud, I cannot miss my way." 45 He answered Nature with a deep love and thus

44 Ibid. I 609.
"the common face of Nature spoke rememberable things to him." 46

The spirit with which he enjoyed Nature is understood in the lines: "all these were kindred spectacles and sounds to which I oft re-paired and hence would drink as at a fountain." 47 No wonder then that Wordsworth could frequently say: "we fed our souls there," 48 for it is in the recognition of Nature as a kindred soul that appreciation comes and the message of Nature is given through the workings of the Imagination. Such was the observation of Wordsworth and such would he have all poets observe if they are to sing properly the praises of Nature. Nature will speak; "every spire we saw among the rocks spake with a sense of great peace." 49 The poet must learn to listen. Once he has caught the sweet sound of Nature, he will delight in the forms manifested to him. His pleasure will not be transient, but will last for weeks at a time. "Where but a half hour's roam through such a place would leave behind a dance of images that shall break in upon my sleep for weeks." 50 Wordsworth listened, watched, and felt. He enjoyed to the full the peace which his Nature wanted to

46 Ibid. I 615-616.
47 Ibid. XIII 324-326.
48 Ibid. VI 481.
49 Ibid. VI 418-419.
50 Ibid. VIII 164-165.
communicate to him. So great were his powers of observation that "scenes remained in their substance depicted on the brain and to the eye were visible, a daily sight." 51

It is evident then from what has been said that the senses of the poet must be very keen to the impulses of Nature. In themselves the senses are passive; yet once the poet is informed by these manifestations of Nature, he becomes very active. Wordsworth knew and taught that, if the poet was to attain the true and highest vision of Nature, the soul of the poet must act along in unison with the dynamic soul of Nature. 52 The poet's study must be so careful that, once he has left the scene of inspiration, he does not easily forget what he has seen. Observation ceases at this point, and recollection begins. We might define recollection as a meditation or contemplation of the scene which was carefully observed by the poet. Once observation has been completed, the poet realizes that no sensation, although very pleasing in itself, should be cherished qua individual sensation. Rather it must assume its place in the intricate pattern of sensations, memory, and contemplated ideas. Then and only then are the parts of Nature seen in their proper light. Then and only then are these parts

51 Ibid. I 599-602.

appreciated; they are appreciated only because they are parts of a whole. The poet leaves the scene of his happy information where he has been thrilled by wonderful Nature, and, "in the bliss of solitude," recollects the sweet draughts of beauty his previous observation has afforded him. He meditates on these observations that they might become habitually dear to his memory and that their "hues and forms by invisible links be allied to the affections." 54

Wordsworth's holidays in the Lake regions where he could roam among the trees and fields were the happy times of his life. With great expectations he looked forward to his departure from London. He likens himself to a captive coming from the house of bondage. On his return to London after his summer rest, he says of the fruit of his recollection:

> But oft in lonely rooms, and mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
> And passing into the purer mind
> With tranquil restoration."

One does not feel sensations in the heart and blood stream unless he has made these objects of sensation something very real to himself. Such a pleasure does not come to those unless they know and

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54 de Selincourt, Prelude, VI 363.
love the objects manifested to them by Nature. It is evident that one does not know and love without careful observation and attention in Nature's omnipresence.

Once the poet has carefully considered and noted with love the various images presented to him, he at once begins to reflect on them. He tries to see their interconnections, their similarities, and their differences. The physical faculties of the senses are no longer in operation, but the mind and the Imagination are aroused to the highest pitch of emotional activity. According to the depth and clarity of the poet's mind and the keenness of his Imagination, the poem will assume greater or lesser perfection. Wordsworth tells us that after he perused:

The common countenance of earth and heaven
And turning the mind upon itself
Pored, watched, expected, listened; felt
Incumbancies more awful, visitings
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul.

We note that his mind was in constant activity. He pored over what he had observed; he watched with a keen eye for any similarities or differences; he expected, that is waited or delayed in such wonderful thoughts. Does this not show a well-occupied mind, a mind immersed in the beauties of Nature? The last verb which Wordsworth


uses is especially worthy of note. Much is implied in the verb watched. The poet must have the patience to wait for light, for frequently deep insight does not come of a sudden. He must pore over the matter until he has digested it well, delaying on those things which give him pleasure. He is not the type who surrenders easily; rather he knows that, according to the time he spends in contemplation or recollection of those things which he has observed, he will receive meaning and insight into the heart of Nature. We notice that it is only after he has pored and watched, expected and listened that he begins to feel the visitings of the Upholder.

With the scene fresh in his mind, the poet glorifies the objects he has experienced with the result of his past feelings. It is the scene recollected in tranquility that has the full import for the poet. Tranquility is a necessity; the poet cannot give his attention to thoughts of Nature, thoughts which he has before experienced, unless there is peace and absence of distractions. Certainly, this is the reason Wordsworth did not like London. He realized that there were too many distractions in the daily run of life in the big city. Only when he was in the quiet of the rural country could he consider Nature as he wished.

The poet feels emotion when he is actually in the process of drinking in creation's beauty. His emotions grow stronger when he considers the scene in tranquility. Meanings from Nature are imparted as he considers the scene as a whole and not as parts.
The full import of the scene gradually reveals itself; now the poet sees meaning where before he was unable to do so because of his preoccupation in sense observation. The longer the emotion incubates in the mind, the longer the Imagination has to work upon the material which Nature has presented to it. Therefore there will be many more meanings imparted to the poet and the pitch of the emotion will be greater. Wordsworth's theory of emotions recollected in tranquility is very true. The reader will recall instances in his own life where his emotions have been heightened after he has left the scene which was the cause of his emotions. Once he gives his memory and Imagination a chance to work and has the time to think out all the various circumstances of the scene, emotions are far more advanced quoad intensity than at the scene itself. Thus the reader will realize what great value this doctrine of emotions recollected in tranquility has for the poet who is constantly dealing in the realm of emotions. Things are seen in perspective when they are contemplated, when time is given to consider them from all angles. Frequently, what seemed of great importance at first becomes quite insignificant after quiet thought, and what was insignificant looms large. "Nature opened frequently the eyes else shut."58

58 Ibid. VI 119.
When we speak of recollection or contemplation we do not wish to confuse it with what is commonly called revery. Too frequently Wordsworth's critics are want to call his meditation or recollection a revery. Revery as defined by Barry Cerf is "a delicious half sleep and escape from the world of responsibility." 59 From what has been said so far concerning Wordsworth's love of Nature, his correspondence to her beauties, and his deep knowledge of the mission before him, we can say that Wordsworth was not a poet to escape reality, but rather a poet who wanted to bring reality to the world about him. His mission was to announce to all men the glories of Nature. In revery the dreamer's interests are self-centered. He considers Nature as if she were meant for him alone. Nature is an escape, a place in which he can take refuge from the hardships of the world. Nature has interest for him alone; she is his. There is a very selfish note about the term revery as opposed to contemplation or recollection.

The poet, on the other hand, observes Nature and meditates on her not for his own pleasure or escape, but for the pleasure of all men. Love has so led him to capture the beauties of Nature that, once he possesses them, he wants to share them with everyone. He wants to shout the glories of Nature from the

hightest points of the city. Can such be guilty of revery? Is not his vocation to be the eyes and ears of mankind? Is he not to see and hear and feel for those who are unable to do so? Is he not chosen to make his fellow men happier, not be adding to the material conveniences, but by enlarging their sphere of sensibilities? He must interpret, translate, and re-create the beauty of external Nature for those who are not so sensitive to the inspirations of Nature as he. His meditation cannot be a revery, for a revery has no apostolic value.

In the poet's meditation, not revery, he considers, examines, relishes and revivifies that which he has previously experienced. The emotions after this meditation become more intense. Past experiences lend their accompanying emotions to the poet's recollection. Thus meditation fans the spark of Nature's inspiration into the full flame of deep emotion which is expressed for the benefit of the people.

During the time of the meditation, the faculty of memory plays an important part. Not only are the details remembered from the observed scene, but details from previous scenes are brought forth from the memory's store-house and are compared and joined with those of the present scene under contemplation. "Images are

60 Cf. drierson, A Critical History, 353.
summoned back from lonesome banishment" to become inmates in the hearts of men now living or to live in time to come," 61

We see that, even though the forms at the time of information are "lifeless to the poet" 62 they do not remain so for any length of time. The "maturer seasons" 63 of meditation will call them forth to impregnate and elevate the mind. Walter Bate speaking of the value of meditation has this to say:

Poetry takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquility gradually disappears and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced. 64

When the emotion becomes so strong—its strength increases according to the time that the emotion is under contemplation—then poetry is in the immediate stage. The poet is ready to announce to his people the beautiful message of Nature; he is ready to make them feel what he has felt during his recollection.

We see then that observation and recollection are very necessary if the poet is to correspond with Nature. Without these essential factors, insight into Nature would be lost and the poem

61 Ibid. I 174-176.
62 de Selincourt, Prelude, I 623.
63 Ibid. I 625.
would be superficial. If the poet is to mount the heights of poetry, he must learn to listen, watch, love, and feel with Nature.

Over and above this observation and recollection, which are positive means for the invitation of inspiration, Wordsworth gives another rule. This rule is as it were negative, namely that the poet is not to treat Nature as a scientist. The distinction must always remain between the poet and the scientist. The approach each takes toward his subject is essentially different and must not be confused. It is definitely a part of the wise passivity, which Wordsworth has proclaimed a necessity for poetry, that the scientific approach be not employed in the poet's intercourse with Nature. He means that the "meddling intellect" be restrained as far as is possible. The intellect as such is the enemy of all that is poetic, for it tends to classify objects at the very moment it perceives them. Observation, on the other hand, drinks in the beauty without any formal classification of it according to genus and species. Observation feels rather than thinks. Classification, the enemy of poetic unity, separates that which should be united. It considers part as part and never worries about the relationship to the whole except if there be question of further classification.

We have already seen that the poet appreciates Nature in so far as he understands the grand and beautiful relationship that exists among the various manifestations of Nature. It is according to the appreciation of the relationships that sentiment, love, and inspiration come. Thus classification, which is the setting apart of a thing from that to which it should be united, disrupts the unity of Nature and therefore distorts the beauty and truth of the whole. From a dismembered part the total impression and abiding inspiration cannot flow. The intellect abstracts one aspect of the object from its totality, and diverts the poet's attention from the complete picture. For the best results of contemplation Wordsworth advises a non-scientific process. We "must get rid of the heady thoughts jostling each other," 66 He explains his reason: "they seduce from the firm habitual quest of feeding pleasures." 67 The poet should assign the sense perceptions immediately to the Imagination whose function it is to synthesize rather than analyze. Certainly the meddling intellect will give a definition, but a definition to the poet is useless. The poet's vocation is to arouse a noble emotion in his people; a definition is incapable of arousing such an emotion. Wordsworth's doctrine might be better expressed by the memorable sentence of Thomas a Kempis with, of course, the proper changes to fit the subject matter. Thomas a Kempis

66 de Selincourt, Prelude, IV 273.
tells us that he would rather be able to feel contrition than define it. So Wordsworth would say that he would rather be able to feel the glorious sunset on a warm June evening than be able to define it or tell how many light years away from the earth it was. The sunset was made to be appreciated, felt, and experienced. The poet's vocation is not necessarily to add knowledge to man's intellect, but to enliven his sensibilities. His job is to re-create for the world the beauties which he finds in such abundance in the world about him.

How different is the vocation of the poet from that of the scientist. Both frequently observe the same material object yet their methods are completely different. We have seen that the poet's observation consisted in drinking in and uniting himself with nature. The scene he carefully observes as a whole; each part of that whole is loved in so far as it is a part of the whole. The complete picture so impresses itself on the poet that he must love it. Individual parts do not impress him as much as the totality.

The scientist's observation is mainly abstractive. He is satisfied to tear apart Nature's objects in what he considers a "sacrifice for the sake of science." He wishes to reduce a certain object to its ultimate parts and to number and classify

68 Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, Benziger Brothers, 1948, 67.
each of the dismembered sections. He busies himself with impersonal analysis, abstraction, and classification. The part is frequently more important than the whole. Little feeling goes into the overall work of the scientist, rather, the atmosphere in which he labors is one of cold business. Wordsworth exclaims in pity against these scientists: "But who shall parcel out his intellect, by geometric rules, split like a province, into round and square?" The scientist is "as one incapable of higher things and ignorant that high things are around." The poet rejoices in the presence of Nature, for Nature is his "sole companion and faithful friend." He does not come to Nature with a knife, nor does he come with a microscope as the scientist. His weapons are of greater value. He comes with a heart to love. The object of his contemplation is "Nature herself as she permeates all creatures. To him "unblinded by these outward shows, the unity of all has been revealed." He comes to Nature as a lover and a friend. He is Nature's son. The poet desires to unveil, to draw out, to bring to light the unity, truth, and beauty which are latent in Nature's bosom. Driven on by a spontaneous love and reverence for Nature, he wants to catch

70 Ibid. VIII 686-687.
72 de Selincourt, Prelude, II 225-226.
every word, every syllable of Nature's message for man. He is greedy to hear her secrets and feel her companionship and love. He does not analyze, but only loves. Of the poet Wordsworth says:

\[ \text{Thou art no slave} \\
\text{Of that false secondary power, by which} \\
\text{In weakness, we create distinctions, then} \\
\text{Deem that our puny boundaries are things} \\
\text{Which we perceive, and not which we have made.} \]

Far from desubstantializing the objects of Nature as the scientist does with his "false secondary power," the poet synthesizes all that he sees; he unifies whatever he observes. "I looked for universal things, perused the common face of earth and heaven." The poet also gives the universal, yet a universal with a particularized cast. He observes what is most universal in the scene and portrays these universal elements as particulars. Thus, in the poem, "To a Daffodil" he is not referring to any particular daffodil or group of daffodils. They are not necessarily the Yorkshire daffodils, but daffodils in general. What the reader commonly understands by the term daffodils is what Wordsworth treats of in his poem. However, the picture that Wordsworth presents to his readers is a particular picture with general daffodils in it. The daffodils are dancing and fluttering in the breeze; they are "tossing their heads in sprightly dance."

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73 Ibid. III 220-224.
74 Ibid. III 110-111.
75 George, The Complete Works, "To a Daffodil" 311.
the reader daffodils in general do not toss their heads, nor do they dance or flutter. Yet the daffodils in this poem are doing these very actions. It is Wordsworth's way of particularizing general truths. Thus all men can with their general knowledge of daffodils share in the scene which Wordsworth has observed and contemplated. All, whether they have actually shared in similar scenes or merely now share them, are able to feel the emotion which the poet wishes to convey. The poet is easily able to do this since he has established a kinship and a familiarity with Nature which allows him freely to admire and taste her manifold beauties.

Both the scientist and the poet are observers of Nature yet we have seen that their manner of observation is distinctly different. We might say with Wordsworth that the scientist "murders to dissect," while the poet through the thought embodying power of the Imagination re-creates and reproduces the actual vitality of living Nature as he sees it before him.

We must not think that Wordsworth is an enemy of the scientists. He realizes the good work which they are trying to do for mankind. He holds, however, that the formal object of their vocation differs even though the material object at times may be the same. Thus the correspondence which the poet shows

76 Ibid. "Tables Turned," 83 line 27.
to Nature should not be the same correspondence as that of the scientist. Wordsworth tells us how the scientist and the poet are able to work hand in hand:

> If the time ever comes when what is now called Science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.  

It will be noted that Wordsworth is not at odds with the scientists, but he does not give them much hope. As long as they will abstract and examine part isolated from the whole, they have separated the soul from the body. Yet if they put flesh and blood on the skeleton which their process of abstraction has produced, Wordsworth will appreciate and use their fine observations.

One quality which Wordsworth demands of all poets and, we might add, a quality which the scientists woefully lack, is the heart to feel. "Enough of Science and of Art; close up those leaves; come forth and bring with you a heart that watches and receives."  

To the scientists and the people so taken up with the novelty of fascination caused by industrialization, he says: "we have given our hearts away." Man under the industrial regime has no time to appreciate Nature's manifold blessings. He

sees not the "beauties which in all places spread around his step as constant as the grass upon the field." They are "out of tune." Nature does not hold the same fascination for them as it does for the poet. They have not established a kindred feeling with her. Thus Wordsworth says sorrowfully: "little that we see in Nature that is ours."  

While the scientist lacks heart, the poet may err on the side of having too much heart. Thus he may be far too subjective in his treatment of Nature. He will represent Nature not as she actually is before him, but rather according to the predisposed disposition he brings with him to Nature's scenes. As a result this type of poet imposes upon Nature his own personal feelings. He considers Nature and her message according to his subjective mood. There is a great difference between drawing out of Nature what is there objectively, and imposing a mood upon Nature which she does not have. A poet, for example, who is dejected over some great misfortune in his private life will tend, if he is not careful, to color Nature's manifestations with the dark paints of his own melancholia. This mood then which he imposes upon Nature comes not from a close observation

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80 de Selincourt, *Prelude*, VI 703-705.
82 Ibid. 3.
of her beauty nor from a careful meditation on all the elements of the scene; rather it comes from the depth of the poet's own desolate soul. Oppressed by the heat of the noon-day sun and blinded by the glare which reflects the heated ground, the poet might easily find fault with the objectively beautiful sun. Thus Nature might become oppressive to the poet at this time. The poet is not big enough to look behind his mere inconvenience to see the greatness of Nature's sun. He is certainly subjective rather than objective. When Wordsworth was almost nauseated by the terrible street scenes in France after the revolution, he says:

But though the picture weary out the eye  
By nature an unmanageable sight,  
It is not wholly so to him who looks  
In steadiness, who hath among least things  
An undersense of the greatest, who sees the  
Parts not as parts but with the feeling of  
The whole. 83

This information and insight which Wordsworth gives should be of great import to the poet. Wordsworth points out that no matter how horrid the scene, if the poet but look in steadiness and without impatience, the scene will not be unmanageable to him for long. The poet must learn patience; we saw before that Wordsworth demands this of him for meditation. Once the poet realizes that the sun, to use the example we considered before,

83 de Selincourt, _Prelude_, VII 707-712.
is but a part of the great body of Nature, his desolation will leave him.

In circumstances similar to the case of the man and the sun, I think that it can be said without much argument that the poet Wordsworth would have overcome the inconvenience caused by the sun; certainly he would have acted differently. He would, according to his doctrine, been uplifted by the thoughts of the noon-day sun. In the warmth of this sun he would rejoice; in the vastness of the sun he would find companionship and constant protection. Thoughts such as these are uplifting and are inspired by observation and meditation. If Wordsworth had not frequently meditated on the glories of the sun, he would not have the storehouse of the sun's blessings to draw upon and relieve him of his inconvenience. Instead of casting a sullen mood on the joyful sun, he would learn the lesson of cheer from this magnificent masterpiece of Nature. He would be encouraged to carry on as does the sun in spite of dark storm clouds. Indeed there is a great difference betweneen the subjective poet and him who looks upon "nature as she actually is. Fundamentally the subjective poet is self-centered; he is unable to see meaning in life beyond the orbit of his own little being. Thus life depends upon his moods for its ebb and flow. Were he a poet with a vocation, he would overcome his feelings, so that he could take on the general feeling Nature wished to impart to him. "Even
the dead still water lay upon my mind with the weight of pleasure...." 84 Objectivism is a hard doctrine, but Wordsworth did practice it. In comparing Wordsworth to the other Romantics, Herbert Read says: "The Romantic poet projects into Nature his own feelings and sentiments. The poet's joy or melancholy is transferred to natural objects." 85 Later, in the same paragraph, he speaks about Wordsworth: "For Wordsworth, however, Nature had her own life which was independent of his." 86 This would seem to indicate that Mr. Reed did not consider Wordsworth as one who projects his own feelings on Nature.

Finally, the poet cannot be objective if he is unable to keep in touch with Nature at all times. He cannot feel with Nature if he does not invite her inspiration. Nature's voice is sweet and it must be carefully listened to by the poet. If the poet will pay attention, he will be able to re-create the fresh and vital life that Nature presents him. If while in his state of wise passivity, he drinks deep of the Pierian springs of observation, he will correspond to Nature, not as the scientist, but as the poet, the holy one singled out for the services of Nature.

84 Ibid. II 177-178.
85 Read, Wordsworth, 127.
86 Ibid. 127.
CHAPTER FIVE

IMAGINATION

We have seen that the poet is an artist, and, as an artist, he must consciously hand on through certain external signs the feelings which he has so vividly experienced. These feelings must affect others so that they feel what the artist has felt. The poet is by nature endowed with a more lively sensibility, with more enthusiasm, and a more comprehensive soul than the ordinary man. He looks upon the manifestations of Nature with love. Unlike the scientist, he studies a subject realizing it, relishing it, and weaving it into the very pattern of his life as well as the lives of others.

Just as any other man, the poet is submitted to the "never ending show" of external beauty. His sensitive soul, because of its almost unlimited capacity for beauty and because of the poet's loving habit of contemplation, can drink in more of Nature's loveliness than the soul of the ordinary man. Surely, he does this with more ease and care than a man less interested

1 de Selincourt, Prelude, V 607.
in the manifold beauties surrounding him would do. From such
great draughts, the poet is able to perceive the great meaning
which is hidden deep in the soul of Nature. His "inward eye" 2
tells him "what wealth the show to him had brought." 3 The common
man, however, can only see the superficial beauty of Nature; he
cannot understand the message since it is within the soul of Nat-
ure which he cannot penetrate. Not only does the poet see the
sunrise and hear the chirping of the birds, but he feels and lives
through these experiences. He feels and rejoices in the great
splendor of the sunrise and the pleasing song of the morning birds.
Over and above the ordinary man, the poet is of a generous nature.
Once he has delighted in the glories of Nature, he hastens to com-
municate his mood and feelings to others. Thus all men can ex-
perience and share in the poet's happiness.

We ask ourselves why it is that the poet glories in
Nature's presence. We wonder why it is that he sees meaning hid-
den in the external manifestations of Nature which the non-poet
cannot see. There is an answer to these questions. The poet's
joy and insight do not come from the mere information of the pas-
sive senses of the poet. Both poet and non-poet can and frequently

2 George, The Complete Works, "I Wandered Lonely as
a Cloud" 311, 21.

3 Ibid. 18.
do share equally in the sensory benefits of Nature. Let us take
the scene which Wordsworth suggests to us from his poem "Composed
on Westminster Bridge!" How few Englishmen as they overlooked the
great city of London from this famed bridge were able to see the
city "like a garment wear the beauty of the morning." 4 How few
people could see in the calmness of the evening a "holy time quiet
as a nun breathless in adoration." 5 Yet both Wordsworth and the
ordinary man saw London on the same morning. They saw the same
ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples. Yet to the non-poet,
to the ordinary man, London was the same dirty city it had always
been; the hour of the morning did not make it less dismal or
smokey. To the ordinary man London's evenings were but the close
of another day, calm or not. No wonder then Wordsworth says that
"they have given their hearts away." 6 It cannot be denied that
Nature has manifested herself to the poet and the non-poet that
day on Westminster bridge. The poet shows the proper correspon-
dence, the other a disinterestedness. The non-poet fails to see
the extraordinary in the ordinary, because he does not look with
loving observation.

The difference between the poet and the non-poet does

4 Ibid. "Composed on Westminster Bridge" 284, 4-5
5 Ibid. "It is a Beautiful Evening, Calm and Still"
6 Ibid. "The World is Too Much with Us" 349, 3.
not lie in the fact of beautiful expression. There is something very genuine about the poet's utterance that some poetic diction culled from a thesaurus by the non-poet lacks. The difference is not a superficial difference; it is something very fundamental to the poet himself. It is greater than his powers of observation and contemplation; it is greater than his beautiful expression. There is a poetic insight which sets him apart from the common man we call this insight the Imagination.

In this chapter we will treat the poetic Imagination as Wordsworth conceives it. Again the reader is reminded that there is no little obscurity in the poetic language of Wordsworth when he is describing this important faculty. We will try to explain the Imagination from various passages in the Prelude, and, for the most part, will desist from any philosophical refutation of his doctrine.

Once the reader has overcome the first great assertion which Wordsworth makes concerning the Imagination, his doctrine is not too difficult to follow. We will grant with misgivings the assertions of Wordsworth. The first assertion is that the faculty of the Imagination is the primary faculty of man. The second, that the Intellect is only a "secondary power"7 which ministers to the needs of the Imagination. We will not grant that the Intellect is a "false secondary power"8 as Wordsworth claims. Again

7 de Selincourt, Prelude, II 221.
8 Ibid. III 230.
The reader is reminded that this thesis is expository of Wordsworth's doctrine; thus there is no intention that we argue the matter every time Wordsworth's doctrine is divergent from the true Scholastic theory. We will leave Wordsworth in his ignorance. Too much emphasis on the superiority of the Imagination over the Intellect is not going to affect our understanding of Wordsworth's doctrine of the Imagination. We will grant the assumption with a distinction. The Imagination is the primary faculty of the poet as poet, we will concede, for the act of visualizing which is so important to the poet is done chiefly by the Imagination and not the Intellect. However, the Imagination is not the chief faculty of the poet as man.

Briefly and simply, Wordsworth's Imagination is that higher faculty of the mind which works on the sense perceptions, synthesizes them, associates other perceptions with the new perceptions, intuits the meaning of the manifestations of Nature, and creates a new being out of the aggregate.

Wordsworth says that the Imagination "feeds upon infinity." Thus the Imagination works on the sense perceptions which are, as it were, infinite. We will allow this word infinite since Wordsworth as a poet with poetic license is permitted to overstep his boundaries somewhat, especially when we know what he intends to signify by the words he uses. When the poet looks

9 Ibid. XIII 70.
about him at the myriad aspects of Nature, his senses are crowded with external stimuli. The impression of infinity is easily understood by one so impressed. Since the poet in his observation looks at the objects with love and not with a microscope, the total impression is one of vastness and infinity. There is no separative nor classification of objects. The poet's state of wise passivity withholds his mind from any consciously planned division and analysis. Observation is a time for drinking in the beauties manifested to the poet. Yet, while the poet is observing, his Imagination is also at work.

The work of the Imagination is one of synthesis. Synthesis is a process of the mind by which objects are put together. The scene which the poet has experienced has been so vast that he sees an infinity of objects before him. All these objects have their place in one general scheme which the poet will attempt to describe for his people. If the poet is to gain the over-all picture, he must consider each part as related to the whole. He must meditate on the scene "in solido," and thus he will understand the totality. Such a comprehensive grasp must envision all objects of greater or less significance. Wordsworth describes the result of his meditation as "an interminable building rear'd by observation of affinities in objects where no brotherhood exists.

to the common minds." The poet is able to see in this vast scene present before him the many interconnections and interrelations of the myriad objects in Nature. The non-poet sees only the superficial vastness of the scene bereft of all affinities and relationships. The non-poet's soul is not comprehensive enough to envision "that interminable building" as Wordsworth so states it. He is distracted by one or other object or else is disgusted by the whole scene. The non-poet has eyes, but he does not observe.

In his process of synthesis, the poet, after observation and meditation, puts those objects together which belong together. He has studies their interrelationships and understands which objects of the scene are useful for the poem. Those which he does not need, his Imagination relegates to the storehouse of the memory from which they may be evoked when and if needed. Wordsworth says that the Imagination "tried her strength among new objects, simplified, arranged and impregnated my knowledge." Although the Imagination is a synthesizing faculty, it also abstracts what it does not need, so that it can build up and highlight what is valuable to the poem. The matter of the scene must be simplified and arranged so that the details are in their proper order. The main objects of Nature will be modified by the lesser

11 de Selincourt, Prelude, II 402-403.
12 Ibid. VIII 796.
objects for the desired effect. All objects have some mood or
other which find their way into the poet's heart, and remain there
until "maturer seasons" when the Imagination will call them forth
for their proper significance. Hence the Imagination works on a
more comprehensive level than does the Intellect. The Intellect
abstracts until it has the essence of an object, while the Imag­
ination adds all the surrounding properties to the object so that
the totality of the scene is felt and appreciated as living.

The poet's mind, because of his minute observations and
loving contemplations of Nature's manifestations, has become over­
crowded with sensations and meanings. Truly the poet "has dwelt
with scenes until each object has become connected with a thousand
feelings, a link in a chain of thought, a fibre of his own dear
heart." His close observation has caused him to see both the
essential and accidental characteristics of the observed scene.
Thus his Imagination, the "unfathered vapor" independent of any
personal prejudice, associates objects that have like character­
istics. It is due to this association that the simile and the
metaphor are valid. The poet observes the calm peacefulness of

13 Ibid. VIII 796.

14 Hazlitt, William, William Hazlitt on English Liter­
ture, Jacob Zeitlin (ed) Oxford University Press, 1913, 195.

15 de Selincourt, Prelude, VI 527.
of the evening in London; with that silence and peace he links the calmness and peacefulness of the nun in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Both the evening in London and the nun before the Blessed Sacrament have given him the same emotion. In both he sees the silence, the gentleness, and the peace. Thus the Imagination in its thought association links the two similar emotions and the two scenes. The poet then says of the evening that it was "quiet as a nun breathless with adoration." 16 Time and place mean nothing to the associative Imagination; in its fusion of similarities there is no "here, nowhere, there and everywhere." 17 Mr. Rader says that Wordsworth felt and lived relations and thus subsequently utilized the theory of associationism to explain these relations. 18 It is therefore evident that the attitude of careful observation and contemplation is of utmost importance for the workings of the associative Imagination. The non-poet who cannot see beyond the superficial show of things is unable to see these likenesses and relationships. Thus he cannot appreciate the total effect of the scene nor can he use his Imagination to associate

17 de Selincourt, Prelude, V 557.
18 Cf. Rader, Presiding Ideas in Wordsworth's Poetry, 16.
those objects that have affinity for one another.

We must keep in mind that the Imagination is always very operative. It feeds upon "all passions and all moods which time and place and season do impress upon the visible universe."19 Thus the poet can work "like changes there by force of his own mind."20 How does the poet work like changes? Wordsworth answers the question: "The Imagination so moulds them (the outward face of things) and endues, abstracts, combines or by abrupt and un-habitual influence doth make one object impress itself upon all others."21 This is but another way of saying that the Imagination synthesizes and associates objects which are presented to it by the senses. To mould and combine are acts of synthesis. By such acts the parts are considered in their proper perspective and thus are linked together. They are the parts of the whole and must be considered in the light of the whole. We are told that nothing is exempted from the touch of the Imagination. The Imagination deals with all objects of the scene; those which are un-important are abstracted and endued for the present time. They are retained, however, in the storehouse of the memory for future use.

So far we have considered the Imagination as a faculty

19 de Pelincourt, Prelude III 85-86.
20 Ibid. III 88-89.
21 Ibid. XIII 79-82.
which works upon the objects already observed and contemplated. This faculty subjects these objects to the process of synthesis and associates former emotions and former scenes observed with the new objects. Before we go on to study the Imagination in its creative and intuitive capacity, we will consider the Imagination from a passage in Wordsworth's *Prelude*. We will note how Wordsworth formulates his doctrine on the Imagination.

In Book XIII Wordsworth "took his way to see the sun rise from the top of Mt. Snowdon." As a true admirer and a deep observer of Nature, he narrates his journey through the "dripping mist, low hung and thick that covered the sky." After panting uphill "with eager pace and no less eager thoughts," he tells us:

For instantly a Light upon the turf
Fell like a flash; I looked about and lol
The moon stood naked in the Heavens, at
Imnense above my head, and on the shore
I found myself of a hugh mist of sea
Which, meek and silent, rested at my feet;
A hundred hills their dusky backs heaved
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,
Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.

Meanwhile the moon looked down upon this show
In single glory, and we stood, the mist
Touching our feet, and from the shore -
A distance not a third part of a mile
Was a blue chasm; a fracture in the vapour,
A deep 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.25

The scene which Wordsworth has just painted for us is truly a
dismal scene. Certainly it is mysterious and awesome. It was a
scene of many details. Nature was impressing upon Wordsworth's
feeling soul many of her external forms. There was a message in­
volved in the scene. We realize that his senses were "crowded"
by the numerous natural objects even though the night was dark and
misty. From Wordsworth's own words already quoted: "and no less
of thoughts,"26 we see that he was ready and willing to corre­spon­
d to Nature by observation and meditation. The objects which
impressed themselves on his senses were: the turf, the moon, the
shore, the sea of mist; the hills, the vapour and the chasm. These
were the food upon which his Imagination would work. In the next
stanza of the Prelude, he gives us the result of his meditation:

A meditation rose in me that night
Upon the lonely mountain when the scene
Had passed away. And it appeared to me

26 Ibid. XIII 32.
The perfect image of a Mighty Mind
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an underpresence
The sense of God, or whatsoever is dim
Or vast in its own being, above all
One function of such mind had Nature there
Exhibited by putting forth, and that
With circumstance most awful and sublime,
That dominion which she oftentimes
Exerts upon the face of outward things
So moulds them, endues, abstracts, combines,
Or by abrupt and habitual influence
Doth make one object so impress itself
Upon all others, and pervade them so
That even the grossest minds must see and hear
And cannot chuse but feel. 27

Let us examine the result of his meditation. We will see how he analyzed and synthesized.

As he looked on the scene from his vantage point on the top of the hill, he saw the moon. Yet on this night of his climb of \( \ldots \) Snowdon, although he had seen the moon often, it was the first time he had ever observed the moon in such circumstances. The moon's flash gave light to his path, illumined his steps, and allowed him to see a great distance. As he examines the scene "in solido" he noted how lofty was the position of the moon in respect to the other objects of the scene. The moon possessed a certain night and grandeur as it shone on the entire scene. The moon's range seemed almost infinite as it lit up the darkness of a sudden and exposed the great number of objects to his view. Now he was able to look at the hills, hundreds of them, as they were engulfed

27 Ibid. XIII 66-84.
in the encircling mist; now he would look at the vapours out in the sea. At last his eye was attracted to the blue chasm from which the roar of the stream, torrents, and waters issued forth in unison. The scene impressed him and he made it the object of his meditation that evening.

As he thought, and meditated upon what he had experienced during his ascent of Mt. Snowdon, similarities immediately presented themselves to his Imagination. They were similarities which he had noted in his previous observations and meditations. The moon, whose sudden flash had lighted his way and permitted him to see over the vast expanse before him, worked very much like the faculty of the Imagination. Flashes of the Imagination, or insight illuminate the poet's path as he walks among the sensible beauties of Nature. It is through these flashes that the poet gets his comprehensive view of the total scene. These flashes enable him to understand the message that he is to relate to his people. Just as the moon holds a lofty position in the heavens giving the poet the impression of might and grandeur, so too the Imagination is mighty and grand in its own orbit. Thus, in effect, Wordsworth says that the moon is like a mighty Mind, the Imagination. His observation and insight have shown to him the similar qualities in both of these objects.

As he looks about him he sees the moon high above his head. He watches it as it sheds its light over the vast scene.
Before the flash of the moon, Wordsworth could barely see the path; after the flash, objects were made visible as far as his eye could see. His view, as it were, embraced infinity. His words suggest such a concept. He says that the moon is "at height immense above my head,"28 that there is a huge sea of mist,"29 that there are a "hundred hills,"30 and that the scene resembles a "still Ocean."31 Each of the above underlined words suggests vastness and great number. Thus the poet feels infinity, an infinity of objects, as he overlooks this scene on Mt. Snowdon.

On reflection Wordsworth realizes this vastness and this infinity are the vastness and the infinity of the Imagination "from whose touch nothing is safe."32 The objects over which the Imagination has control are almost innumerable. Thus we see the great similarity between the infinity of objects over which the moon shines and the infinity of objects over which the Imagination holds its sway. Thus Wordsworth says that "the mighty mind feeds upon infinity."33 He likens this mind to the moon that illuminates so vast a number of external objects for the poet.

Again, Wordsworth watches the moon which "looked down

28 Ibid. XIII 41-42.
29 Ibid. XIII 43.
30 Ibid. XIII 45.
31 Ibid. XIII 46.
32 Ibid. XIII 525.
33 Ibid. XIII 70.
upon this shew"34 casting its light now upon these objects and now upon those until it finally focuses upon the blue chasm. Again he sees similarities between the action of the moon and that of the Imagination. The Imagination considers all the objects Nature presents to it, and it suppresses the less important while it highlights the significant. The Imagination so moulds the "outward show" that one object impresses itself upon all the other objects. The blue chasm in the scene on Mt. Snowdon impressed itself upon the many objects which were present to Wordsworth's view.

Wordsworth is very careful to note at the beginning of the passage quoted that the meaning which he understood from the scene of his ascent was the result of meditation "when the scene had passed away."35 He had observed the moon and her functions very carefully. He saw in the moon's actions a marked similarity to the actions of the Imagination. Thus he shows us how a poet's Imagination works on a given scene. His theory and his practice coincide. Objects have so presented themselves to him that after careful consideration he can easily see the interconnection between one object and the other and between one object and the whole. The ordinary eye of the non-poet could not see these similarities. He lacks the "inward eye" which gives the inward vision.

34 Ibid. XIII 52.
35 Ibid. XIII 68.
It is in a sad tone indeed that Wordsworth bemoans the lot of poor Peter Bell. He says of him: "A primrose by the river brim a yellow primrose was to him, and nothing more." Nature's objects should have sparked Peter's heart and soul, but they left him cold. Peter led a drab existence bereft of all insight. "He traveled here, he traveled there, but not the value of a hair was heart or head the better." For Peter Bell, who was never bewitched by the beauty of the sky, to arrive at the conclusions which the poet ascertains would take a long and laborious process of thought. The poet sees similarities in Nature almost immediately; his constant habit of observation and contemplation permits him to do this; permits him to think in similes and in metaphors. He has let Nature sink deep into his soul and she has become a part of him. Such familiarity with Nature easily arouses the Imagination to discover meaning in the depth of Nature's beauty. The process whereby the meaning is revealed is the Imagination's inward vision or insight.

Lastly, the Imagination is creative. From the meditation which Wordsworth has given us, we have been able to see certain marks of creativity in the Imagination. We have seen that the poet takes the objects which Nature impresses upon his senses, synthe-

36 George, The Complete Works, "Peter Bell" 100, 58-60.
37 Ibid. 48-50.
sizes them, embellishes them with similarities which he has noted from his meditation, and presents them to the people so that they might experience what he has experienced. He gives men something which they can make their own.

In order that all men understand what the poet has given them, the poet must seek for the universal object with universal applications. In this the creative ability of the poet manifests itself. In his letter to Crabb Robinson dated September 11, 1818, Wordsworth says that the Imagination images individual forms that are embodied universal ideas. This sounds very much like the work of the Intellect. Wordsworth continues by telling us how the Imagination does this work:

The poet first conceives the essential nature of his object and strips it of all its casualties and accidental individual dress, and in this he is a philosopher but to exhibit his abstraction nakedly would be the work of a philosopher. Therefore he reclothes his universal idea in an individual dress which expresses the essential quality and has also the spirit and life of a sensual object.

It is evident that what the poet presents is not a naked abstraction "the self-created sustenance of the mind debarr'd from Nature's living images, compelled to be a life unto itself." The poet


39 Ibid. 304.

40 de Selincourt, Prelude, XII 58-60.
presents what Nature manifests to him. However, he does this by taking what is universal in the object and embellishing it with individual notes. The poet must present the universal so that all men might understand. The universal, however, as universal will not evoke an emotion, but the universal modified by time and place and circumstance will make the scene real and a source of feeling to the people who wish to appreciate the poem. When we say that the poet embellishes the object, we do not mean that the poet looks about at random to dress up an abstraction which he has in his mind. We mean, rather, that certain objects or manifestations suggest universal truths to the poet. These truths recall other objects. The Imagination unites these universal truths with the objects themselves and thus gives to the universal truth an external dress which belongs to it. The poet adds to his universal object surrounding objects which add significance. Coleridge praises Wordsworth's excellence in portraying the universal:

The fourth characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth's work is: the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from Nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the expression to all nature. Like a green field reflected in a calm perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and luster. Like the loisture or polish on a pebble, genius neither falsifies nor distorts its colors in objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye.

of the common man in his observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what has often been kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveler on the dusty high road of custom.42

Thus the poet does not distort reality in his portrayal of the objects of Nature, rather he brings out the tints and shades which the common eye cannot see. He recognizes in the object certain characteristics which otherwise would go unnoticed. The ordinary eye would dwell on the irrelevant and the accidental, but the poet, who is an artist, knows from experience and observation what is essential. It is with the essential that the poet deals in his poetry.43 Commenting on Wordsworth's insight into the essential of Nature Mr. Rader says: "Wordsworth's characteristic method is to abstract from each idea its individuating characteristics to emphasize its communal properties and to almost lose it in the reciprocal glow."44 We have seen how at this process of idealization, which is nothing other than realizing the essential qualities of an object and presenting them as such, is not distorting truth. The poet is simply taking a scene in its ideal form, embellishing it with significant factors, and expressing a proper emotion. In so far as he has created an experience which others may enjoy, he is a creator. We have seen that this creation


43 Rader, Presiding Ideas in Wordsworth, 164.

of an experience is due to a number of factors, namely, the feeling aroused at the sight of the objects, the associations suggested, and the fruit of the contemplation. Poetry is not a mere communication of the scene. All men can communicate or describe, but the hidden beauty, the feelings, the analogies, the spiritual significance and the experience are the work of the poet, his great creation.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

We will remember that the purpose of this thesis as stated in the Introduction was to acquaint the reader with a knowledge of Wordsworth's doctrine so that the reader might realize Wordsworth's genuine love of Nature. We hoped that once the reader understood Wordsworth's doctrine on Nature and the Imagination, he could appreciate the poetry of Wordsworth as Wordsworth would wish him to appreciate it. We said that it was necessary to see and understand the meaning of Nature and Imagination and their roles on the poet. Once they were understood, the spirit of Wordsworth would be better understood.

From passages in the Prelude, the autobiographical poem of Wordsworth's growth with Nature, we have tried to explain the roles played by Nature, the poet, Imagination, and poetic correspondence in Nature poetry. We have considered each of the above separately. We have tried to consider them independent of each other so that our knowledge would be more complete.

We saw that Nature was a real entity distinct from the poet and the poet's thoughts. We studied her as a Mother and a...
constant companion who inspires, teaches, and reprimands when
the necessity requires. Her tender influence upon the poet con-
stantly draws him closer to her so that she can reveal her secrets
to him. We saw the unity which exists in Nature. There is a
unifying principle which pervades all the objects of Nature; we
called this principle Nature. This Nature is the Anima Mundi
which gives soul to the outward manifestations. It was due to this
Anima Mundi that the poet felt a familiarity with Nature and thus
could see beyond the externals into the interconnections that are
truly present in Nature. This was the fundament for the metaphor
and the simile. Lastly, and most important, we considered Nature
and her external manifestations as a dynamic force which constantly
works on the passive senses of the poet. She is the one who fur-
nishes the material upon which the poet's Imagination can work and
build meaning.

We saw that the poet was a gentle creature who knew how
to respect and reverence the works of creation. His comprehensive
soul grasps all the external signs and his great sensibility is
ever keenly aware of Nature's manifold objects working upon him.
He approaches Nature with love, for he is truly a lover who wishes
to be with and talk about his loved one. He is also a mystic in
a natural sense, for he brushes away every distraction that would
hinder his union with the beloved. His sole aim as a poet is to be
completely united to Nature so that he can reveal Nature's secrets
to all men. His vocation is to be the minister of the ever-dynam
power of Nature.

Wordsworth believes that the poet and Nature are essentially adapted to one another. There must be a correspondence between the poet and Nature. We observed that the poet, if he is to receive the manifestations of Nature, must follow a certain set of rules. He must observe with a keen eye all with which he comes into contact. It is by careful observation that he notes the very essential qualities and perceives the relationships which are deep within the objects of Nature. If he does not observe the scene with patience and love, the meaning of Nature will remain hidden from his view. After his careful observation of the whole scene, he meditates upon the scene making the objects which he has observed part of his consciousness. He recollects previous observation of Nature and unites these to the scene under present observation.

Attitude is not that of the scientist. He does not come to Nature with a knife or a microscope to dissect or to classify. He comes to Nature to love and to feel. What he has observed and he has meditated upon, the poet weaves into his life and the lives of others. He is not subjective in his treatment of Nature; rather he attempts to see into the meaning of Nature and draw the truths from her soul. He does not impose feelings upon the manifestation of the universe, but takes Nature as she is.

Finally, we considered the Imagination which we said was the highest faculty of the poet as poet. We denied that the Intel-
lect is subordinate to the Imagination and that it is a "false secondary power" as Wordsworth called it.

We defined the Imagination as the faculty of the mind which works on sense perceptions, synthesizes them, associates old perceptions with the new, intuits the meaning hidden within Nature, and creates a new being out of the aggregate. It is the poet who creates poetry for all men through the Imagination. By the process which we termed synthesis, the Imagination puts together all the objects which belong together, arranging them according to their significance. It highlights the objects that will better evoke the emotion intended, and relegates to the background the less significant. The associative process of the Imagination brings forth relationships and interconnections that the poet can better express himself. Past experiences are added to the present scene, resulting in the fact that the total experience can be felt to the full. The simile and the metaphor are the outcome of the associative Imagination's work.

The intuitive process of the Imagination sees meaning hidden within the beauties of Nature; the creative process makes a new experience for man so that he can feel and love with the poet.

Truly Wordsworth is a poet of Nature, a poet who must be understood in the light of his beliefs. With the doctrine as it has been explained in the thesis, it is hoped that the reader will grow to love the simplicity and genuine feelings of Wordsworth. He has a message for all; it is our duty to listen.
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The thesis submitted by Ralph H. Talkin, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

July 16, 1954

Date

Signature of Adviser