

The Environmental Ethic in Wordsworth's Poetry

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Letters
and the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of Bilkent University**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
English Language and Literature**

**by
Ali Özkan Çakırlar**

December 1995

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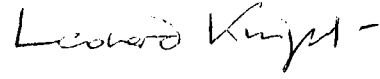
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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature.



Dr. Leonard Knight
(Advisor)

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature.



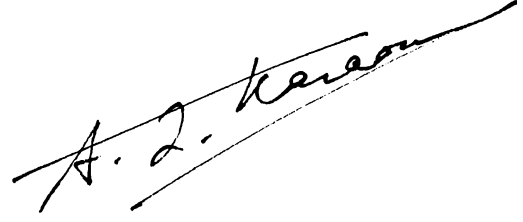
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Director

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Abstract
The Environmental Ethic
in
William Wordsworth's Poetry

A. Özkan Çakırlar
Ph.D. In English Literature
Advisor: Dr. Leonard Knight
December, 1995

Wordsworth's poetry, with its emphasis on the independent existence and consciousness of nature, has a distinctive place in the Romantic movement. His interest in the external world is not, of course, totally new and original. He prefers to take man, nature and society as the main sources and subjects of his poetry. However, the way Wordsworth handles his themes is revolutionary and unique. Nature, for him, is an independent and self-sufficient presence having its own consciousness and therefore it is treated exclusively in various parts of his poetry. Man, like other beings, belongs to the larger family of nature in terms of both his individual and social existence. In this context, Wordsworth's poetry functions as an insistent reminder that man ought to adapt himself as well as his society to the broader order of nature.

Özet

William Wordsworth'ün Şiirinde Çevreci Ahlak

A. Özkan Çakırlar

**İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Doktora
Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Leonard Knight
Aralık, 1995**

Wordsworth'ün şiiri doğanın bağımsız varlığı ve bilinci konusundaki vurgulamalarıyla Romantik akım içerisinde ayrı bir yere sahiptir. Wordsworth'ün dış dünyaya karşı ilgisi kuşkusuz bütünüyle yeni ve özgün değildir. İnsanı, doğayı ve toplumu şiirinin ana kaynakları ve konuları olarak kullanmayı yeğler. Ama bu konuları ele alış biçimi bütünüyle kendine özgüdür. Onun için doğa, kendi bilincine sahip, bağımsız ve kendine yeten bir varlık olduğundan şiirinin birçok bölümünde ayrıca incelenip değerlendirilir. İnsan diğer canlılar gibi hem bireysel, hem de toplumsal varoluşuyla doğa ailesinin bir üyesidir. Bu bağlamda, Wordsworth'ün şiiri, insanın kendisini ve toplumsal örgütlenmesini doğanın düzenine uydurması gerekliliğini sürekli bir biçimde anımsatma işlevi görür. Yapıtının özünü oluşturan çevreci ahlak bu noktada ortaya çıkmaktadır.

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"I have thought twelve hours about society for every
one about poetry"

William Wordsworth

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
THE ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC
IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

I

Ye Trees! whose slender roots entwine
 Altars that piety neglects;
Whose infant arms enclasp the shrine
 Which no devotion now respects;
If not a straggler from the herd
Here ruminant, nor shrouded bird,
Chanting her low-voiced hymn, take pride
In aught that ye would grace or hide-
How sadly is your love misplaced,
Fair Trees, your bounty run to waste!

Ye, too, wild Flowers! that no one heeds,
 And ye -- full often spurned as weeds-
In beauty clothed, or breathing sweetness
From fractured arch and mouldering wall-
Do but more touchingly recall
Man's headstrong violence and Time's fleetness,
Making the precincts ye adorn
Appear to sight still more forlorn.

("Among the Ruins of a Convent in the Appenines")¹

In the context of English literary tradition Wordsworth occupies a significant position not only from a purely historical-canonical perspective but because his poetry also articulates a new insight and originality. It acknowledges the unity and consciousness of nature, ascribes a morality to all beings, envisions the universe as an integrated organic system in which the human and non-human coexist harmoniously, and contributes to the growth of an environmental ethic.

It is essential to emphasize at the outset that Wordsworth does not talk about the notion of ecology directly. It is referred to indirectly in his poetry and it has, I assume, a *central* importance. In this study I will attempt to demonstrate the ecological vision Wordsworth achieves in his work. This will involve focusing on the philosophical background to man-nature relations and the development of ecology, an investigation of the links between perception and imagination, and an exploration of the connections between nature and man's individual and social existence.

II

The world has been undergoing an ecological awakening which seems to affect man's philosophical, social, and political position as well as his daily life. Along with the incredible rate of increase in human population, the intensity of industrialization caused the world's resources to come to the limits of extinction.

The depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, the greenhouse effect, the destruction of tropical forests, the pollution of the land, the sea, and rivers, acid rain, the extinction of various species have all become crucial issues to be dealt with.

Although the first consequences of this environmental sensibility appeared early in the eighteenth century, it was only after the Second World War that environmental worries started to be reflected in the intellectual arena and to determine the political agenda.

The air pollution, more than the existence of the Iron Curtain, brought about the revolution in Czechoslovakia.²

Similar reactions emerged in the field of art in general and literature in particular. Man - nature relationships have always been a major area of concern from classical philosophy to modern literature. Even though poetry has been interested in ecological concerns since before the term became widely known, the matter has been in circulation since only the eighteenth century. Together with the developments in the philosophy of rationality and positive sciences, the idea of human superiority over the earth and other beings led to an arrogant attitude towards nature. Religious dogmatism intensified this arrogance by declaring that human beings were God's most favoured creatures, and that, because nature lacked reason, humanity had

the right to rule over it.

A powerful reaction against such human blindness and vainglory rose spontaneously at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A literary objection as well as a philosophical reaction was shaped by German, French, and English poets and thinkers. With its emphasis on individual feelings, the simplicity and harmony of rustic life, social and individual freedom, the rediscovery of nature and its multitudinous power, this movement came to be known as 'Romanticism.'

Romanticism as a whole, in fact, can be regarded as basically ecological both in its reaction to the mechanical depiction of the universe and in its perception of man - nature relations from an integral and holistic point of view. Due to its lack of a coherent philosophical and intellectual programme or perspective, however, its essential ecological quality is difficult to specify. A close reading of William Wordsworth's poetry may provide solid ground from which the details of the relationship between Romanticism and ecology can be explored. This study is an attempt to investigate to what extent Wordsworth's poetry has an ecological commitment and how it appeals to modern readers through its depiction of place in particular and nature in general.

The function of literature has always been a matter of discussion among critics. Even such questions as "does literature

have a function?" have been asked and negative answers frequently provided. Wordsworth himself declares that "we must either amuse or instruct; nor will our end be fully obtained unless we do both."³: an approach comprehensive enough to provide a general perspective. Of course, other evaluations on this matter seem to reject particularly the didactic aspect of writing. The aim of the author may not, after all, be taken as the essential criterion in assigning a functional value to a literary text which, once it exists as a text, goes out of the hands of its creator. And the reader becomes free to 'consume' it in the way he or she likes. However, literary texts provide pleasure and information independently of the intentions of the author or equally the tastes of the reader. Even a very simple expression of an absolutely private and personal thought or feeling or mood may transmit 'something' to 'somebody'.

Literature provides readers with sufficient pleasure and information to enable them, in Samuel Johnson's words, "better to enjoy life, or better to endure it."⁴ And as Bate suggests "... the way in which William Wordsworth sought to enable his readers better" to do this "was by teaching them to look at and dwell in the natural world."⁵ Wordsworth's poetry, then, is an attempt to make the reader become *aware* of his natural surroundings and to redefine the relationship between man and nature. Such an awareness is the initial and indispensable step towards an ecological consciousness and such an effort to redefine nature and particularly man's place within the circle of

existence paved the way for the conservationist movements of later generations. In this context, while the contribution of Romanticism, in the broader sense, to ecology was immense, in any specific attempt to establish connections between Romantic literature and ecology, Wordsworth recurs as the main figure of his age. His poetry is the most concrete example of this redefinition of man's individual and social posture in nature expressing philosophical, religious, and political aspects of his existence.

Yet Wordsworth recapitulates in his poetry, by a spontaneous phenomenology, feelings about nature that link up with both religion and politics. In his call to *save* nature he expresses not only a residual agrarian sensibility, but a response to apocalyptic stirrings which institutionalized religions cannot always bind or subdue.⁶ (emphasis mine)

The relationship between man and nature has been a focus of attention and contemplation since antiquity. Man's changing position in relation to nature inevitably affected his perception of the external world. Cooperation became antagonism and he started to think that the external world should be under his absolute control and domination. Man, who was part of organic life previously, separated himself from the rest of the world by

emphasizing his capability of reasoning and freedom of choice. His alienation from other beings led him to the false understanding that the world was shaped to satisfy his needs. One consequence of this development was the divorce of the scientific investigation of the external world from humanistic studies. Science concerns itself with facts and truths obtained through empirical data to comprehend the general laws of nature whereas the humanities deal with what science usually neglects: moral norms and values, aesthetics, and literature. The strict materialistic interpretation of the outside world has proved unable to provide any solution to global ecological problems. Hence, it seems essential to bridge the gap between scientific exploration and humanistic evaluation of the universe. Romanticism, in the broader sense, made the first attempt to reconcile subject with object, man with nature, perception with imagination, science with humanities. Wordsworth appears to be the most prominent poet to express, through his poetry, the common ground of this reconciliation: the natural world as an interconnected wholeness.

Images of nature have radically changed since the Greeks, but the origins of the present purely scientific and mechanical perception go back to the Enlightenment when the universe started to be regarded as "A Great Machine" which ran in consonance with physical laws. According to Andrew MacLaughlin, nature, being a part of this machine, was "devoid of intrinsic meaning, completely desacralized, consisting of a

series of discrete parts connected by casual relations."⁷ Since nature, congruent with this approach, does not have an inner meaning and value and works through 'casual relations' and since only human reason and consciousness can make sense of it, "moral limits on the human manipulation of nature appear irrational."⁸ "What is forgotten", for Mac Laughlin however, "is that this image of nature is constituted by a methodical approach which, given its logic, could only yield an instrumental image of nature."⁹ If the scientific perception of nature is something to be shaped through deliberate effort -if nature, in this sense, is seen "as a plastic 'stuff' capable of being molded into whatever shape happens to be desired"¹⁰ - then it is possible, too, to change this man-made image. First Locke and Rousseau, then Herder and Schelling, laid the philosophical foundations of a new perception stressing the organic integrity of all beings. Based on this perception, the ecological image of nature thus rejected the radical split between man and the landscape, between science and humanities.

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) made serious contributions to the development of ecology which, as a term, was first pronounced by another German scientist Ernst Haeckel in 1866. The roots of modern ecology, however, go back a century before Haeckel to an English parson-naturalist Gilbert White and to a Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus.

There have been several versions of ecology since the first

attempts were made to establish its foundations but its basic premises have not changed.

The ecological image of nature is that of an interconnected network, where seemingly discrete things arise and decay within a larger "web of nature." On this view, a more fundamental unity of nature underlies its apparent separateness. The ecological approach leads to an understanding of the fundamental unity of humanity and nature.¹¹

The parallel development of ecology and Romanticism was not a casual phenomenon since both of them relied on the same philosophical, social, and economic foundations. Both Romanticism and ecology attempted to redefine man's place within the larger context of nature. Ecology made use of developing sciences, particularly biology, and field observation which was Wordsworth's common way of conceiving the external world. For this reason,

Romantic poetry retains its central position in our literature because it accurately represents the middle state of human existence - neither at one with natural forms nor alienated from them.¹²

Wordsworth's interest in nature, on the other hand, has not always been taken as proof of his being a nature poet nor of his commitment to a redefinition of man's individual and social existence. He was regarded, particularly towards the middle of the twentieth century, essentially as a poet of imagination because he had wanted to 'transcend' nature to achieve an independent human consciousness. Wordsworth's poetry, according to this approach, could not be descriptive because nature, as it appears in his work, functions only as a literary device. De Man, Bloom, Hartman, and later Easthope read Wordsworth's poetry not as an experience of nature but as the representation of an experience of nature because there is always a tension, a distinction between subject and object, between imagination and nature, between the signifier and the signified. Consequently, Wordsworth's poetry is an 'anti-nature poetry' moving from nature towards 'the autonomy of imagination.'

This seeing of such a radical dichotomy between perception and imagination, however, prevents the reader from grasping the depth of Wordsworth's poetry because his practice is to produce poetry through a cooperation between his physical and inner eye. Mac Laughlin, referring to the developments in quantum mechanics, states that "... the observer *cannot* be separated from the system which is observed."¹³ Similarly David Bohm writes

... to speak of the interaction of 'observing instrument' and 'observed object' has no meaning (for they are only what they are as part of one whole) A centrally relevant change in the descriptive order required in the quantum theory is the dropping of the notion of analysis of the world into relatively autonomous parts, separately existent but in interaction. Rather, the primary emphasis is now on *undivided wholeness*, in which the observing instrument is not separable from what is observed.¹⁴

Nature and its elements frequently appear in Wordsworth's poetry both as self-existing entities and as the broader framework of human existence. For Wordsworth, nature has its own life which is independent of human consciousness. Natural forms have their own 'moral life' and 'inward meaning' constituting an organic wholeness breathing "among the hills and groves." (*The Prelude*, I, 281) Man is only one member of this larger family and his consciousness is a part of nature's overall intelligence. However, the 'filial bond' between man and nature does not necessarily guarantee that man's actions are always fitted to nature's rhythm. A harmonious coexistence of man and nature is possible only when man is "wedded to this goodly universe/In love and holy passion." ("Home at Grasmere", 53-54) In this sense, man must reconsider nature and his own place to

understand that "... 'tis not to enjoy that we exist, / For that end only; something must be done" ("Home at Grasmere", 664-65) What Wordsworth did through his work and action may be understood in different ways. Yet, none of these evaluations can ignore the voice that genuinely managed to create an awareness leading to an ethic in which nature enjoys its own existence.

III

In the second chapter of this study I will give a brief account of the notion of nature in human thought with particular emphasis on Romanticism. The development of ecology and its links with Romanticism will be explored in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter will be devoted to an investigation of the connection between perception and imagination in Wordsworth's poetry because this is directly relevant to an ecological evaluation of his work.

Chapter five will attempt to elucidate Wordsworth's depiction of nature in his poetry as well as focus on the correspondence between nature and man as an individual. Particular attention will be paid to the cases in which he presents natural forms and elements in a non-human context intrinsically underlining their independent existence. Following

this, the idea of man's inseparability from nature will be emphasized through specific examples from Wordsworth's poetry.

Chapter six will investigate Wordsworth's assessment of the links between nature and man's social organization. In this chapter I will attempt to demonstrate that in his poetry Wordsworth proposes a social model which runs in harmony with the broader order of nature.

The final chapter will be a summing up of the environmental ethic Wordsworth accomplishes in his work.

CHAPTER II

A PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

TO

MAN-NATURE RELATIONS

The man-nature relationship has always had great importance particularly in Western thought since antiquity. It has attracted attention from philosophical, sociological, political, and artistic viewpoints because it is directly linked with human existence. Man has frequently asked certain questions concerning his identity in the world as well as in society. The most significant element determining the nature of this inquiry is the quality of man-nature relations, the forms these relations take, and the place man has within nature. Man-nature relations started with a position in which man had little power as compared to nature but the situation was reversed in the course of time for a number of reasons and man began to dominate the external world. This shift has influenced the way mankind perceived the earth and paved the way for the understanding that nature, which once had absolute and limitless power, could and should be controlled and dominated for the sake of human progress. Hence, the direction of the change has been from cooperation to antagonism.

Leaving the social basis of his existence aside, the

questions man has asked himself about his identity and the answers he has provided have reflected, in one way or another, his relations with nature. In this context, he feels either part of organic life, or a member of an unalterable chain of being created by a divine power, or a being who is superior to all other living creatures due to his power of reason.

Man considered himself as part of nature when the level of social organization was relatively low, when production was directly dependent upon land and climate, and when the cultural superstructure was shaped by daily economic activities carried out for the sake of survival. Since his survival was essentially dependent upon nature, his feeling that he was a part of organic life having fundamental ties with the elements of the outer environment and that he himself and the non-human world were complementary to each other was quite plausible. This approach came to be the basis for the materialistic philosophy which started with Heraclitus and went on with the Greek philosophers Democritus and Leucippus in the sixth century B.C.¹

A close relationship with the landscape also led to a conception of morality which was contingent on natural laws. Basil Willey explains this as follows:

In antiquity the cry 'Follow Nature' was raised by Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans; and the

Stoics, like their later counterparts, linked together the starry heavens and the moral law within: the law that preserved the stars from wrong was also the rule of duty.²

Materialism, which emphasized matter and nature more than thought and spirit, got weaker in the course of time through the effects of religious thinking and idealistic philosophy which started with Plato, developed in Aristotelian thought and found its ultimate expression in Christianity.³ The main proposition of idealistic philosophy is that the material world we live in is illusory and that the real world is made up of ideas that reflect a different form of existence. Man has a special position because, although he lives in this illusory world together with the other creatures, he has the capacity to raise himself to the real world of ideas through his ability to think. Consequently, the notion of man-nature integration is neither reasonable nor realistic.

The Middle Ages regarded nature as mainly a regulating phenomenon. The law of nature ruled human societies as well as the non-human world. Describing this as "regulating" nature, Willey asserts that "liberating" nature would come in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁴

The Renaissance and the Enlightenment created an atmosphere of intellectual discussion in which all religious,

philosophical, social, political, and artistic presuppositions were reconsidered. Discussions about the notion of nature reached a culmination in the same period. Willey, consciously echoing Wordsworth's phrase 'what man has made of man,' maintains that

Nature has been a controlling idea in Western thought ever since antiquity, but has probably never been so universally active as it was from the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century. Nature was the grand alternative to all that man had made of man; upon her solid ground therefore - upon the *tabula rasa* prepared by the true philosophy - must all the religion, the ethics, the politics, the law, and the art of the future be constructed.⁵

Human reason, freeing itself from religious dogma, gained an absolute independence reflected in Descartes's well-known proposition "I think, therefore I am; *cogito, ergo sum*. Descartes made the foundations of existence rely on reason and thought. Cartesian philosophy posits a dualistic system in which the human being has both a mind -*res cogitans*- and a body -*res extensa*-. The terminology itself clearly indicates the link between the two parts: body is just an extension of mind and human existence is primarily the consequence of thought. Borchert explains this process as follows:

He(Descartes) has established the existence of his mind (*res cogitans*) on the certainty of his own thinking. Then from the certainty of the imperfection of his own thinking he has demonstrated the existence of the standard of perfection, namely God. Finally, from the certainty of God's perfection he has shown that external bodies (*res extensa*) such as his own, do in fact exist.⁶

The radical distinction between these two basic constituents of the human being has resulted in some other discriminations between, for example, body and spirit, perception and imagination, subject and object. Descartes's dualism has been shared and adopted by many philosophers after him; to such an extent that it may be said to have largely affected, even dominated Western philosophy. Some other philosophers have rejected such a split, supporting monism that assumes the integrity of mind and body.

The climate of opinion in Europe at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was in a rapid and complex process of change due to the scientific progress accelerated by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and to the religious conflicts furthered by the Reformation. Religion was no longer a concept which provided man with peace, comfort, and felicity; it had

no ready-made answers to the questions of life, death, after-death, justice, eternity.

A largely scientific way of thought, based on observation and empirical data, concerned itself with the questions that could not be answered by religion or philosophy. Human efforts discovered the continents, ended the argument whether the sun rotated around the earth or vice versa, found the laws of gravity, transformed matter, inquired into man's own roots. The obscurities that religion was insufficient to clarify were overthrown by science. As a result of all these developments, the universe started to be considered 'A Great Machine' created by a divine engineer. There was no longer any need to take metaphysical conceptions into account to be able to comprehend natural and social happenings. The earth was accepted as a system which ran in accordance with physical laws. Objects, starting from non-living things up to the divine creator, were in a structure called "the chain of being" which indicated the existence of a hierarchical order rather than an interdependency. An illuminating reflection of these developments in literature is Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man." In this long philosophical poem Pope deals with man's position in the chain of existence and examines his ties with the other creatures under or above him and asserts his own opinions about what man should or should not do in such a framework.

The mechanical perception of the universe paved the way

for the conjecture that the wholeness of the universe could only be discerned through human reason. Man had the capability of reasoning and freedom of choice while other beings did not, thus the non-human beings could be regarded as existing not for themselves but for humanity. The earth's resources, plants, animals, land, water, and forests were primarily for the use of man and the community. Economic improvement was the ultimate objective, and nature was seen only as a source of raw material. Man made himself believe the idea that the world was created to serve his needs. Such a belief comprised the moral foundation of his domination over nature. The feeling of superiority gradually turned into a vain insolence. Robert Bly, who calls this attitude "Old Position", remarks that:

It was the peak of human arrogance. Bushes were clipped to resemble carriages, poets dismissed the intensity and detail of nature and talked instead of idealizations or "goddesses," empires were breeding, the pride in human reason deformed all poetry and culture. The conviction that nature is defective because it lacks reason I've called the "Old Position."⁷

At the beginning of the eighteenth century Hobbes, later Kant and Hegel asserted that nature was in a state of continuous war and conflict. Darwin's objectified nature, a century later,

had parallels with this approach. However, first Locke and Rousseau, then Herder and Schelling disagreed with the idea that nature's fundamental characteristic was a chaotic struggle among the species. "Thus,..., Locke became the fundament on which Rousseau, Herder, and Schelling, and then Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Chateaubriand were to lean when treating nature."⁸ The reactions against the idea of absolute domination of man over nature did not have a common base or a systematic and consistent ideology. Hence, they were gathered under the overall title of Romanticism, which was, itself, a general phenomenon consisting of philosophical, social, and artistic assertions with no inner consistency.

Romanticism has been defined and classified in numerous ways ever since it appeared as a movement. It has had several qualities attributed to it and has been intensively analyzed; however, there has been no general agreement on its basic assumptions. Even in its perception of nature Romanticism seems to have many inconsistencies. Harwell emphasizes that:

Even a fool's glance at the Romantics' concepts of nature shows that they lack precision, objectivity, and system,.... Also, the Romantics' concepts are crowded with overlapping variants.⁹

Willey agrees:

Throughout that turbulent time 'Nature' remained the dominant concept - indeed in all the phases of 'romantic' philosophy and poetry it attained an unexampled authority - but never, perhaps, were its many meanings, particularly its two fundamental senses, more confusingly intertwined.¹⁰

Both critics recognize different senses of the word nature as the source of confusion. Harwell, after mentioning the characteristics of nature, falls back on Spinoza to make clear the Romantics' concepts of nature:

Nature characteristics? After dozens of them, one can conclude that, to the Romantics, nature was natural, free, rural, and felt; also sacred, evolved, benevolent, and real. I have retreated to Spinoza for organizing such an array.... *Natura naturans* means "nature 'naturing'"; in my sense, nature creating, generating, or expressing characteristics in their budding stage. *Natura naturata*,..., means "nature 'natured'"; that is, nature created, generated, evidenced, and enriched beyond its particular state to describe patterns of influence and effect.¹¹

According to Willey, Wordsworth and Coleridge found nature first *in* the French Revolution and then in the opposition of England *to* the French Revolution. Wordsworth wrote his best nature poetry after he changed his revolutionary attitude and rejected Godwin's Nature-philosophy. Willey explains the reasons for the contradictions in the Romantics' conceptions of nature in this way:

Perhaps the safest clue through this labyrinth is to bear in mind what I have just called the two fundamental senses of 'Nature': we may call them the 'historical' and the 'philosophical'. In the 'historical' sense Nature means 'things as they now are or have become', *natura naturata*; in the other sense, 'things as they may become', *natura naturans*. But there are further sources of confusion. The 'nature' of anything may be conceived either as its 'original' state when fresh from the hands of God and before it has acquired any 'artificial' accretions, or as its final state, when it has attained the fullest development of which it is capable, and realized most perfectly its own inner principle.¹²

M.H. Abrams prefers a different explanation of nature in

terms of the Romantic viewpoint.

... the term 'nature,' in the usage in which it was opposed to 'art' possessed two main areas of application. In reference to the mind of man, 'nature' designated those inborn attributes 'which are most spontaneous, unpremeditated, untouched by reflection or design, and free from the bondage of social convention.' In reference to the external world, it designated those parts of the universe which come into being independently of human effort and contrivance.¹³

Abrams's summary of the Romantic approach to nature is explanatory enough. Still, the development of the theory of an organic world and its links with the Romantic movement needs to be explored.

The origins of organic philosophy go back to antiquity. "The concept of an *anima mundi* recurs,..., in the Stoic philosophers, in Plotinus, in Giordano Bruno and other thinkers of the Italian Renaissance, as well as in the Platonizing English divines of the seventeenth century."¹⁴ Aristotle differentiated natural objects from non-natural ones with respect to the source that provided energy for action. Natural objects have the source of energy within themselves and their essential beings produce their forms

whereas non-natural objects need an external agent to come into existence and to be in motion. Along with the developments in the science of biology, Aristotle's account of nature inspired "German thinkers of the later eighteenth century," to believe

that the nature and events of the physical universe in all its parts, and of human beings in all their processes and productions, manifestly exhibit the properties that,..., had hitherto been predicated solely of living and growing things.¹⁵

According to Abrams this was a 'discovery' which was "a natural reaction to the boundless pretensions of the mechanical point of view, which radical theorists had pushed beyond the theological and other limits set up by both Newton and Descartes."¹⁶ Within the realms of this reaction, particularly in the center, there were German philosophers and thinkers Schelling, Leibniz, Herder, and Schlegel. Among these, Herder, with his essay 'On the Knowing and Feeling of the Human Soul' has a distinctive place because this essay "heralds the age of biologism."¹⁷

To the elementaristic and mechanical explanation of nature and man, body and mind, Herder vehemently opposed views woven out of Leibniz's monadology, Shaftesbury's

pantheism, and biological science, especially Albrecht Haller's theory that the essential aspect of living organism is its *-Reizbarkeit-* its power to respond to external stimuli by a self-contraction or expansion.¹⁸

Herder takes the life functions of a plant to exemplify the weaknesses of the mechanical explanation of nature and to support the concept of the organism.

Behold yon plant, that lovely structure of organic fibers! How it turns and rotates its leaves to drink the dew which refreshes it! It sinks and twists its root until it stands upright; each shrub, each little tree bends itself toward fresh air, so far as it is able; the blossom opens itself for the advent of its bridegroom, the sun... With what marvelous diligence a plant refines alien liquors into parts of its own finer self, grows, loves... then ages, gradually loses its capacity to respond to stimuli and to renew its power, dies...

The herb draws in water and earth and refines it into its own elements; the animal makes the lower herbs into the nobler animal sap; man transforms herbs and animals into organic elements of his life, converts them to the

operation of higher, finer stimuli.¹⁹

The reciprocal relationship between the plant and its environment is a microcosmic cross-section of a macrocosmic design. Nature, too, is an organic entity with all its elements which have a delicate correspondence and balance. Man, being part of this whole, shares similar life functions with other living beings and exhibits his own unity of body and mind. In addition to the idea of the interrelatedness of different living beings in nature, another significant notion to be stressed is the relationship between the part and the whole. The scientific inclination to dissect nature into its parts and to examine these parts without taking into consideration their links to the whole was attacked. According to Schlegel everything is "an eternal becoming, an unintermitted process of creation."²⁰

No living organism can be understood from the standpoint of materialism alone, because its nature is such 'that the whole must be conceived before the parts,' and it can only be made intelligible as 'a product which produces itself,' exhibiting in the process 'an endless reciprocation, in which each effect becomes a cause of its cause.'²¹

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the idea of nature with its scientific and philosophical connotations became

the background of various investigations and arguments. Empiricists' efforts to observe and understand nature paralleled the Romantics' attempt to "transform" it "into more physical presence."²² The Romantic perception of nature, though inconsistent and contradictory, represented a fundamental and radical break with the Neo-classical tradition.

Rousseau and Herder, and Keats and the English Romantics, were at work upon a nature that by 1750 had arrived midpoint in its man/nature and matter/spirit relationships. As such, the Romantics found nature a subject for soaring, personalized judgements which, however sound or unsound, were intended to be revolutionary and ultimate.²³

This is, however, not a situation that emerged all of a sudden. It should rather be conceived as a process gradually developing over a long period of time. As Willey suggests

Thus far, then, had the divinization of Nature proceeded a hundred years before Wordsworth. Already the injunction 'First Follow Nature' had passed beyond the region of ethics and poetics, and the Wordsworthian nature-religion can be regarded, less as something wholly new, than as the culmination

of a process which had been implicit in the 'humanist' tradition ever since the Renaissance.²⁴

Christianity was also influenced by the changing spiritual and moral codes of the age and opened itself to the effects of Deistic ethics.

The Church had also moved with the times, and, although its basis was still held to be supernatural, it was itself penetrated with the spirit of the age. It admitted that Reason could look up through Nature to Nature's God, and eminent divines since the middle of the seventeenth century (Cudworth, Tillotson, Clarke) had been stressing the reasonableness of Christianity.²⁵

Romantics, of course, had sufficient capacity for piety, nevertheless the quality of their devotion was different from the Deistic brand of Christianity.

The "original" Romanticism emerged in England and Germany in the mid-to-late 1790s, and within a decade it had spent itself. If we are to understand both the extraordinary creativity of this initial "burst" and its equally

remarkable brevity, we have to come to terms with the early Romantics' embrace of pantheism (or panentheism)... pantheism was the heart of the beast.²⁶

The Romantics' nature worship can best be observed in Wordsworth's poetry, but the idea of the divine perfection of nature is not unique to the Romantic era. For instance, nature, for Shaftesbury, is divine and spiritually elevating and its parts are interconnected with and interdependent upon one another constituting a balanced whole. Thus, as was pointed out before, nature became the dominant concept for Romantic philosophy as well as poetry.

In spite of all the confusion about the meanings and connotations of nature, Romantic interest in and responsiveness to the term can be considered a comprehensive phenomenon. The Romantics' challenge to the established political and social order as well as to the existing conceptions of art can be correlated with their attempt to overturn the conventional perception and treatment of nature. A rational evaluation of nature was gradually accompanied by an emotional appraisal and "this change is associated with the growth of the cult of sensibility,..., the increasing value attributed to impulse and spontaneity, and the decreasing importance attached to pure reason."²⁷ Nature, which had hitherto been a philosophical or artistic abstraction, came to have a concreteness by the use of

real objects, particular places, and conspicuous details.

Before dealing with the development of ecology and exploring the links between romantic implications and ecological assumptions, the investigation of the Romantic perception of nature may be useful. According to the Romantics, nature is "the cosmical unity of plants, animals, and man."²⁸ This is the large and general nature view providing a foundation for more specific affirmations such as "nature's communion with man, man's communion with nature."²⁹ Here the links between man and nature are directly referred to and man's devotion to nature is emphasized. One consequence of 'man's communion with nature' is the idea of 'Nature-feeling' (*Naturgefühl*.) Man's attraction to nature has an emotional dimension as well as a physical aspect.

Depending upon the broader suggestion that there is a cosmical unity among plants, animals, and man the idea that 'nature is visible thought; thought is invisible nature' constitutes the philosophical basis of the correspondence.

Kant and Schelling accepted this nature relationship; Goethe includes the idea in early nature writings;... Coleridge had accepted the idea by 1796; Wordsworth, no later than 1805. After 1807, the idea splits into two directions as (1) transcendental theology adopted by Coleridge, Emerson and Carlyle,

and (2) as naturalistic utterance adopted by Wordsworth. To Wordsworth, the spirit of nature is a "shaping faculty" of man. To Coleridge in 1802, it is evidence of a higher spiritual law, interpretable by man.³⁰

The pivotal nature characteristic that Romantics accentuate is the idea that nature has a life of its own. At first glance this may seem to be a cliché, yet it has significant implications on the philosophical as well as on the literary level.

The characteristic implies that nature is neither man's subject nor reflection, neither God's pawn nor paradigm. It does imply that nature is *sui generis*, with its own activity, presence, and pace. Nature having its own life permits nature to exceed man, to become greater in size, and vaster in scope. It permits nature to have the latitude, influence, and effect that the Romantics accepted....

The implication in Nature's having a life of its own is that nature is free rather than represents freedom.³¹

Harwell's distinction between a nature that is *itself* free and a nature that merely *represents* freedom reflects a turning point in man-nature relations. The first affirmation stresses

nature's independence by discussing the issue from a non-human perspective whereas the second approach conceives nature through human consciousness. Emphasis on a free nature rejects the idea that the external world is a human construction.

Within the range of nature characteristics Harwell mentions are "Nature, a stimulant of the senses," "Nature (representing to man) originality, novelty, and revolution of insights," "Nature as an evolutionary process," "The immortality of nature, the mutability of man," "Nature's countryside preferred to Man's city," "Nature, a source of poetry," "Nature as sacred," "Nature, preferable to human kind," "Nature as beautiful and spacious; larger than the imagination can encompass," "Nature inspires the principle of love," "Nature as a source of health and spiritual insight," "Nature, itself, an example for art,"³² All these nature characteristics occupy quite a large spectrum varying from biological observations to philosophical affirmations, from emotional interactions to artistic evaluations, from divine connotations to aesthetic perceptions. This is the climax of 'the divinization of Nature,' which had started at the Renaissance and culminated for English Literature in Wordsworth.

... but why it culminated in the particular form of a passion for 'mute, insensate things,' for 'green grass and mountains bare', for Man 'ennobled outwardly' by mergence with the

inanimate (Michael, the Leech Gatherer, 'Nature's Lady')- all this can be fully understood by tracing the growth of Wordsworth's political sympathies between 1790 and 1798."³³

This process might also be called having a consciousness about nature, which is an indispensable step towards the movements for a conservation of the environment. William Wordsworth played a crucial part in this development.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGY

The word ecology (*Oekologie*) was first used by Ernst Haeckel, a German zoologist, in his *Generelle Morphologie* in 1866. He defined the term as "the science of relations between organisms and their environment."¹ Ecology is a holistic science looking at "organisms in their context; their life-cycle, their environment and their place in the cycle of energy use."² A parallel is drawn between Haeckel and Amerigo Vespucci in that, both discovered the name of something, not the thing itself.³ Nevertheless, Haeckel's contribution to the development of ecology is not limited merely to the coinage of the term.

Haeckel believed in a holistic world-view, that is, he rejected the concept of a mind-body split. He contrasted Goethe and his (alleged) pantheism with Kant, but hoped that the traditions deriving from their two views might eventually live in harmony... He pointed out that the energy level in the universe was constant. According to the first law of the conservation of matter this implied that matter and energy were both constant, and were the same thing... Nothing came out of

the universe: nothing came in.... For Haeckel, nature meant the spirit of freedom. He saw the natural order as progressive and optimistic. He was probably the first naturalist to derive human morality from animal instincts.... This led him to a belief in cooperation and altruism.⁴

According to Bate, "ecology was a science built upon the Darwinian concept of evolution" and "Haeckel's chief inspiration was the argument in *The Origin of Species* concerning the 'web of complex relations' by which all animals and plants are bound to each other."⁵ However, there are other origins of the word ecology going back to ancient Greek. The word *Oekonomie*, as used by Aristotle, "originally meant the proper functioning of a household unit, the *oikos*".⁶ In this sense, one of the essential principles of ecology is that nature has its own economy in which organisms constitute a complex chain of relations, and as a whole, the system is self-sufficient.

Although the word ecology was coined by Haeckel in the second half of the nineteenth century, the development of the concept started approximately a century earlier. There were two fundamental approaches in terms of ecological perspectives. The first one was an arcadian stance, which appeared in Gilbert White's observations and writings. He propounded the harmonious co-existence of man with other living organisms and

proposed a plain and humble life style. The second approach, shaped by a Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707-78), emphasized the inevitability of progress and man's domination over nature.

Gilbert White, who was a parson-naturalist, believed "the microcosm of Selborne could be managed to better advantage, supporting by human assistance the conclusion that 'Nature is a great economist' in providing for man's material needs."⁷ White's utilitarian inclinations did not prevent him from realizing "the ancient arcadian dream of reanimating man's loyalties to the earth and its vital energies."⁸ According to Worster, White drew the picture of a benevolent nature: this is "a stable, productive, rational landscape to which human sentiment can easily respond."⁹ In such a world, the naturalist could easily establish correspondence with nature through observation since "it becomes an innocent pursuit of knowledge about one's neighbors, an integral part of the curate's devotional life."¹⁰

"The practice of field observation", as Bate suggests, was "fundamental to all these developments."¹¹ The economy of nature was scrutinized by the naturalist through close observation of the details of the natural world. Gilbert White was the first step "to those key Romantic texts, Coleridge's notebooks and the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau."¹² White writes,

The most significant insects and reptiles are of much more consequence, and have much more influence in the economy of Nature, than the incurious are aware of; and are mighty in their effect, from their minuteness, which renders them less an object of attention; and from their numbers and fecundity. Earth-worms, though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of Nature, yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm.¹³

According to Worster "the rise of the natural history essay in the latter half of the nineteenth century was an essential legacy of the Selborne cult"¹⁴ which paved the way for a new type of writing concerned with the possibilities of establishing an arcadian society running in consonance with nature's order.

A radical reaction against the threatening effects of science took shape among nature writers. They emphasized the destructive aspects of the "scientific community that had gone far toward dissecting nature into a scattering of unrelated pieces," stressed that "plants and animals act according to an indwelling, mysterious power that physics or chemistry cannot analyze," and stated that

...every organism in nature, and indeed every

molecule and atom, not only in some sense possesses a nonmaterial psyche or spirit but also is an interdependent part of the all-inclusive organism of nature, which is animated by one unifying spirit.¹⁵

The organic perception of nature maintained that physical sciences led to the alienation of man from nature through "narrow specialization, mathematical abstraction, and extensive reliance on elaborate instruments of measurement."¹⁶ The interrelatedness of organisms and the wholeness of nature were ignored. The main fault was to break "nature down into its atomistic parts" disregarding the fact that "the whole of nature is different from the sum of its parts."¹⁷ Artificial laboratory conditions could not satisfactorily explain the functioning of nature. Instead, "nature must be examined in the field, where it is in full possession of its faculties - where it is alive."¹⁸

The Linnaean fashion of ecology, on the other hand, took its roots from a mechanistic outlook which presented the universe as an integrated machine. Nature was benevolent in its routine functioning and this indicated God's magnanimity particularly toward man whose existence was a primary concern. There were, of course, arguments about nature concerning the chaotic struggle among the species. The stronger were killing the weaker for survival in a system of carnage and this was not benevolence. Nevertheless, the naturalists following the Linnaean

school also argued that the system of the survival of the fittest increased "the possibility for a maximum abundance of species and individuals, and such an abundance or plenitude of being is further proof of God's benevolence."¹⁹ At this point, however, human existence, which threatened other species with its unavoidable urge for progress and expansion, was seen as a severe problem. Indeed, the expansionist nature of human civilization was a serious threat for the existence of other species. So, man's overpopulation meant minimum possibility for the survival of other beings. Such a dilemma led naturalists to an ecological ethic which buttressed the idea of a harmonious co-existence of all species and which proposed a limitation to human population and to the notion of absolute progress.

The Linnaean school of ecology had no objection to the idea that nature had its hierarchical order and man occupied the primary place in this system. Therefore, man had the right to manage the world and its resources for his own benefit and welfare. In this sense, Linnaeans had imperialistic tendencies in terms of man's dominion over nature. The way to this dominion was, of course, paved by human reason. There was a close connection between the development of the liberal economy in Europe and Linnaean utilitarianism.

In its utilitarianism the Linnaean age of ecology strongly echoed the values of the Manchester and Birmingham industrialists and

of the English agricultural reformers of the same period.... Adam Smith, the founding genius of modern economics and a learned disciple of Linnaean natural history, saw nature as no more than a storehouse of raw materials for man's ingenuity. And while Reverend Thomas Malthus worried more than these others about how many people the land could support, he thoroughly agreed that the natural economy's sole function was to provide for man's ambitions.²⁰

The analogous development of Romanticism as a political, social, and artistic movement and of ecology as a science was not a coincidence. Both of them claimed that there was something wrong in the established social order in terms of its philosophical ground and functional configuration. Political and economic upheaval fed Romanticism and ecology alike. The American and French revolutions, as well as industrial and agricultural transformations in Britain, radically changed social structures and profoundly influenced the climate of opinion. Scientific improvements in biology and the practice of field observation provided a sound basis for the development of ecology. Romanticism and ecology, both, tried to restate man's place and his links with the other organisms in nature.

Beginning with Henry Moore's *Anima Mundi*

and on into the revival of arcadianism, these ancient ideas were revived to counter the mechanistic science developed in the Newtonian era. But the more militant resurgence of the pagan outlook toward nature came in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the rise of Romanticism in western culture. Led by such figures as Wordsworth, Schelling, Goethe, and Thoreau, a new generation sought to redefine nature and man's place in the scheme of things.²¹

Bate points out the close relationship between Romanticism and ecology by comparing the writings from different disciplines.

Erasmus Darwin wrote footnotes about photosynthesis, while Wordsworth wrote poems about how flowers may vitalize the human spirit. Once late eighteenth-century scientists had shown that plants are literally 'the food of life', since without photosynthesis there would be no oxygen in the atmosphere and therefore no life, Romantic poets could argue that plants are also food for the spirit. Scientists made it their business to describe the intricate economy of nature; Romantics

made it theirs to teach human beings how to live as part of it.... The 'Romantic ecology' reverences the green earth because it recognizes that neither physically nor psychologically can we live without green things; it proclaims that there is 'one life' within us and abroad, that the earth is a single vast ecosystem which we destabilize at our peril.²²

According to Bramwell, ecology is a "normative philosophy, ..., a total world-view which does not allow for piece-meal reform."²³ In this sense, ecology has a subversive quality, what it tries to subvert being "the accepted notion of what science does; the values and institutions of expansionary capitalism; the bias against nature in western religion."²⁴ These were, by the same token, "targets of the nineteenth-century Romantics" and "they were the first great subversives of modern times."²⁵ Although ecology seems, fundamentally, to be a political category having its own analysis of and solutions to the world's problems, there lies an ethic at its essence which proclaims the cosmical unity of man and nature. This is Romantic too.

For all its diverse permutations, Romanticism found expression in certain common themes, and one of the most recurrent was a fascination with biology and the study of the

organic world. Romantics found this field of science a modern approach to the old pagan intuition that all nature is alive and pulsing with energy or spirit.... And at the very core of this Romantic view of nature was what later generations would come to call an ecological perspective: that is, a search for holistic or integrated perception, an emphasis on inter-dependence and relatedness in nature, and an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitutes the earth.²⁶

Within this framework, the ecological quality of Wordsworth's poetry does not stem from his direct reaction to specific environmental problems such as pollution, erosion or the loss of soil fertility. There is no need to search for detailed references to concrete problems to describe Wordsworth's poetry as ecological. As Bramwell states

Although Haeckel did not express fears about pollution and soil erosion, and was not an energy ecologist (...) none the less he was an ecologist in three important ways. Firstly, he saw the universe as a unified and balanced organism. Space and organic beings were made of the same atoms. Hence his Monism,

whether defined as all-matter or all-spirit. He also believed that man and animals had the same moral and natural status, so was not man-centered. Thirdly, he preached the doctrine that nature was the source of truth and wise guidance about man's life.²⁷

Bramwell's reasons to consider Haeckel as an ecologist are also valid for Wordsworth who had a holistic world view as well as an egalitarian philosophy and accepted nature as a guiding and truth-giving existence. All of these constitute the core of his ecological ethic.

CHAPTER IV

**THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN PERCEPTION AND IMAGINATION
IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY**

The question of the relationship between the natural world and human consciousness in Wordsworth's poetry has long been at the center of discussion within the circle of Wordsworth critics. The direct relevance of the problem to arguments about the ecological quality of Wordsworth's poetry makes attempts to explore the links between the human eye and the object depicted inevitable. Some critics believe that Wordsworth is essentially a nature poet and his poems have a descriptive quality. The focus of their discussion is the priority of the poet's direct perception and reflection of physical reality. Some other critics, however, assert the pre-eminence of imagination and its functional role in the composition of the poems. According to them, Wordsworth owes his creativity not to his power of observation but to his power of imagination. Wordsworth's own assertion that it is the "Mind of Man-" which is "My haunt, and the main region of my song." (Preface To *The Excursion*) seems to provide a solid ground for those who emphasize the priority of imagination.

The argument, at first glance, seems to be related more to

the form of poetry than to the content and in this sense may be considered technical or methodical. Nevertheless, it has certain philosophical foundations and consequences. If Wordsworth's poetry is regarded mainly as the product of his imagination, then the implications are that the human mind is superior to nature and that human consciousness exists independently of the external world. On the other hand, if his poetry is considered fundamentally as the reflection of the poet's power of observation and description, then Wordsworth appears to be an unsophisticated nature poet whose crude and naive realism prevents his poetry from having depth and originality. The third position, however, rejects such a radical split between perception and imagination and underlines the inseparability and integrity of nature and human consciousness within the context of Wordsworthian poetic creation.

Wordsworth's sense of place and depiction of nature have been examined by many critics from several viewpoints. Those who judged him as a nature poet sometimes criticized his philosophy of nature from a religious standpoint. Henry Crabb Robinson, for instance, in a diary entry for January 1815, commented on *The Excursion*.

My visit to Witham was made partly that I might have the pleasure of reading *The Excursion* to Mrs W. Pattison. The second perusal of this poem has gratified me still

more than the first, and my own impressions were not removed by the various criticisms I became acquainted with. I also read to Mrs Pattison the *Eclectic Review*. It is a highly encomiastic article, rendering ample justice to the poetical talents of the author, but raising a doubt as to the religious character of the poem. It is insinuated that Nature is a sort of God throughout, and consistently with the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the reviewer, the lamentable error of representing a love of Nature as a sort of purifying state of mind, and the study of Nature as a sanctifying process is emphatically pointed out.¹

The article Robinson talks about appeared in *Eclectic Review*, n.s., xii (January 1815) and was written by James Montgomery who appears dissatisfied with Wordsworth's way of treating nature as something divine, something capable of renewing the human mind and spirit.

A similar reaction comes from Walter Bagehot who accuses Wordsworth of surrendering his soul to nature and adds that, in spite of the efforts of his biographers to present him as a believer and a teacher of Anglicanism, he was inconsistent in terms of his religious stance.

Wordsworth, like Coleridge, began life as a heretic, and as the shrewd Pope unfallaciously said, 'once a heretic, always a heretic'. Sound men are sound from the first; safe men are safe from the beginning, and Wordsworth began wrong. His real reason for going to live in the mountains was certainly in part sacred, but it was not in the least Tractarian.... His whole soul was absorbed in the one idea, the one feeling, the one thought of the sacredness of hills.... The bare waste, the folding hill, the rough lake, Helvellyn with a brooding mist, Ullswater in a grey day, these are his subjects. *He took a personal interest in the corners of the universe.*²
(emphasis mine)

The last remark made by Bagehot in the quotation seems to be a deliberate attempt to demonstrate Wordsworth's heretical posture. Taking a personal interest in the corners of the universe is presented in this quotation as an incomprehensible activity which has become, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, a unique practice for people who are sensitive to their surroundings. So, Bagehot's observation about Wordsworth, though unconscious, is a significant contribution to the idea that Wordsworth's poetry has a fundamental ecological ethic.

Richard Holt Hutton's apprehension, on the other hand, presses on the role of imagination. He asserts that "no poet ever drew from simpler *sources* than Wordsworth, but none ever made so much out of so little" and adds

Thus there is no poet who gives to his theme so perfectly new a birth as Wordsworth. He does not discern and revivify the *natural* life which is in it; he creates a new thing altogether, namely, the life of thought which it has the power to generate in his own brooding imagination.... Natural rays of feeling are refracted the moment they enter Wordsworth's imagination. It is not the theme acting on the man that you see, but the man acting on the theme.³

As maintained by Hutton, Wordsworth deals with simple sources, mostly from nature and its elements, but these do not have a central importance in terms of his poetry because what he creates is completely new and thus we see, as readers, 'the man acting on the theme' instead of 'the theme acting on the man.'

Starting from the early twentieth century Wordsworth criticism changed its direction. A.C. Bradley dwelt on the problematic aspects of Wordsworth's poetry giving special

emphasis to the "dark world of poverty, crime, insanity, ruined innocence, torturing hopes doomed to extinction, solitary anguish, even despair."⁴ After the Second World War M.H. Abrams published his collected critical essays on the poetry of Wordsworth in which he particularly pointed out the importance of consciousness which was a term "that critics began to think encapsulated what had been most original to human thought of the early nineteenth century."⁵

Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, and Geoffrey Hartman highlighted the individual imagination and underlined Wordsworth's transcendentalism. The main argument of this approach was that Wordsworth's poetry was not descriptive at all and that the elements of nature appearing throughout the lines function not literally but figuratively as symbols of a higher framework. De Man's reading attributes to Romantic poetry an ambiguity because "the theme of imagination" is "linked closely" to "the theme of nature" and "the tension between the two polarities never ceases to be problematic."⁶ Romantic poetry, according to de Man, is ambiguous because "...it becomes difficult to distinguish between object and image, between imagination and perception, between an expressive or constitutive and a mimetic or literal language."⁷ De Man's argument suggests that it is futile to try to establish certain links between perception and imagination, between object and image, between nature and consciousness because "the very fact that the relationship has to be established within the medium of

language indicates that it does not exist in actuality."⁸

De Man's understanding relies on the idea that there is a predetermined 'tension' between 'the theme of nature' and 'the theme of imagination' which should be resolved in order to be able to 'distinguish between object and image'. De Man's demand that a discrimination be made between nature and consciousness seems to be self-contradictory since his very next remark indicates that any link between nature and consciousness is impossible in actuality but only possible 'within the medium of language'. If this is the case, then there is no need to search for a non-existing relationship. If such a link is sought in language - i.e. within the lines of Wordsworth- then it means that Wordsworth succeeded in constructing it. If language is totally a separate system existing on a different dimension, as de Man suggests, discrimination between nature and consciousness is again unnecessary because, being symbols of the actual concepts they reflect, the words 'nature' and 'consciousness' are identical in origin. For this reason, it is not meaningful to classify language as 'expressive or constitutive' and 'mimetic or literal'. If language is an allegorical or symbolic representation of reality, if it is a linguistic construction, it cannot be mimetic or literal; it is always expressive or constitutive. Therefore, de Man maintains that romantic poetry is not an experience of nature but the representation of an experience of nature. Within the context of the representation, the symbol used is seen as 'part of the totality that it represents' which is a conclusion impossible to

draw, in Anthony Easthope's words, "for two related reasons: the signifier (representation) cannot coincide with a signified (represented), nor subject with object (...)." ⁹ What Frederick A. Pottle affirms refers to the same argument.

Wordsworth's method is not the method of beautification (Tennyson), nor the method of distortion (Carlyle); it is the method of transfiguration. The primrose by the river's brim remains a simple primrose but is also something more: it is a symbol (to use Hartley's quaint terminology) of sympathy, theopathy, or the moral sense.¹⁰

Here the point is that it is not the linguistic representation of the primrose, but the primrose *itself* which is the object and the symbol at the same moment. The physical eye depicts primrose as a 'simple primrose' and the inner eye transfigures it to a symbol of 'sympathy, theopathy, or the moral sense'. Thus, the linguistic representation is the totality of both the actual primrose conceived by the physical eye and the recreated primrose seen by the inner eye. Primrose and sympathy have already stood on a common basis: they both have their own category within the circumference of linguistic configuration, which is, in this case, that they are both nouns. Consequently, in this dimension they cannot symbolize one another. In other words, primrose does not automatically echo sympathy,

theopathy, or the moral sense when uttered outside its natural context. Similarly, 'sympathy' as an emotional phenomenon does not directly evoke the word primrose unless they are juxtaposed in the same context. As Frank Jordan maintains, "the Romantics used the mimosa to imply not only a state of feeling but also a state of being."¹¹ One more modification is to be mentioned for the sake of clarity: primrose or mimosa is used to indicate a state of expressing as well as a state of feeling and being. Each state can be taken in itself for the purpose of analysis, but the ultimate evaluation does not exclude one or the other. That is to say, the mimosa, for the Romantics, is a combination of both its existence and its connotations. They use it not only to express their thoughts and feelings, but to indicate that it does have a presence which is meaningful in itself and goes beyond the narrow limits of linguistic representation.

Harold Bloom follows de Man's argument about the dualistic nature of Romantic poetry and maintains that it "was an anti-nature poetry, even in Wordsworth, who sought a reciprocity or even a dialogue with nature, but found it only in flashes."¹² The direction of Romantic poetry is from nature toward the autonomy of imagination and its autonomy "is frequently purgatorial, redemptive in direction but destructive of the social self."¹³ Bloom rejects the idea that Wordsworth attempts to reconcile man with nature and asserts that he is "not a seeker after nature but after his own mature powers," who "turned away, not from society to nature, but from nature to what was more integral

than nature, within himself."¹⁴ Bloom's assertion runs the risk of considering human consciousness more integral a concept than nature, disregarding modern psychology's strictures on the complexity and diversity of consciousness and assuming a radical dichotomy between these two phenomena. Yet, the idea is consistent with Bloom's overall approach to Wordsworth in the sense that Wordsworth's poetry has an anti-nature character. As Jordan states, "the monuments of this antinature movement", for Bloom, "are the great poems of Romanticism, but especially *The Prelude* and *Jerusalem*."¹⁵

As I have mentioned previously, the discussion about the relationship between the natural world and human consciousness in Wordsworth's poetry is directly related to the idea that it has an ecological ethic in itself. In the politically radical climate of the 1960s, Wordsworth's nature poetry was attributed to his disappointment at the failure of the French Revolution. Since his political commitment turned out to be in vain, it was suggested, he took refuge in nature in search of tranquility and recovery. The possible reasons for his escape into nature include even his 'unhappily-ended' love affair with Annette Vallon. He never took an active part in the political and social arena in this period of extreme revolution, turbulence, and change, and for this reason, he no longer speaks to the reader who is politically committed. His seeking refuge in nature was, in fact, an escape into imagination that was a concept independent of the political and social structure. Jonathan Bate,

in *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, points out the two distinct readings of Romanticism.

The 1960s gave us an idealist reading of Romanticism which was implicitly bourgeois in its privileging of the individual imagination; the 1980s gave us a post-Althusserian Marxist critique of Romanticism. The first of these readings assumed that the human mind is superior to nature; the second assumed that the economy of human society is more important than... 'the economy of nature'.¹⁶

Indeed, Geoffrey Hartman, in his "Wordsworth: The Romance of Nature and the Negative Way" discusses the concept of imagination in Wordsworth's poetry and asserts that what is important for Wordsworth is not nature but to transcend nature by way of the imagination.

Nature, for Wordsworth, is not an "object" but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit; not something to be worshipped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself.... But it takes the poet many years to realize that nature's "end" is to lead to something "without end," to teach the travelers to transcend nature.¹⁷

Hartman refers to de Man who, within the context of *The Prelude*, talks about "a possibility for consciousness to exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world"¹⁸ to which Bate reacts:

Again and again in his essay Hartman follows de Man in arguing that Wordsworth sought to go beyond nature: 'The poet is forced to discover the autonomy of his imagination, its independence from present joy, from strong outward stimuli ... this discovery ... means a transcendence of Nature'.¹⁹

Bate takes Jerome McGann's *Romantic Ideology* as his example of the 1980s' Marxist reading of Wordsworth and summarizes new historicist claims as follows.

Romanticism gives up on its original revolutionary impulses and finds what it supposes is "A paradise within, happier far."

Imagination is seen as a way of transcending "this frame of things," the earth in which we dwell, where revolutions go sour; imagination remains "unchanged," it is "exalted," "divine." Wordsworth is upbraided for suppressing history and for

"privileging" the individual imagination.²⁰

And finally, by setting these two seemingly opposite readings against each other Bate emphasizes that both readings lack the whole picture of the matter since they look at Wordsworth's poetry from pre-determined standpoints which lead to partiality.

The Hartman-Bloom emphasis on 'The Romantic imagination' looked reactionary to McGann by 1980, but when first articulated around 1960 such a reading seemed radical because it went against the received wisdom that the Romantics were 'nature poets'.... Hartman threw out nature to bring us the transcendent imagination; McGann throws out the transcendent imagination to bring us history and society.²¹

Wordsworth's interest in nature is dismissed, by McGann, as an individualistic retreat and he is accused of escapism. The logic behind this idea is that human mind and society, rather than nature, deserve attention because nature has neither a 'consciousness' of its own, nor a 'history'. Thus, an analysis of Wordsworth's poetry should focus on 'the real man', 'the imagination', which are said to be the core of his poetic creation. Nicholas N. Riasanovski's response to the role of nature in Wordsworth's poetry is different, however.

Numerous other critics have noted the fundamental calming effect which nature exercised on Wordsworth; and some drew parallels between the emotional sequence in many of the poems and the poet's own escape into nature from his disastrous experiences with Annette Vallon and the French Revolution. Still, it would be at least equally legitimate to consider these last two phenomena as merely temporary intruders into a more basic Wordsworthian creative rhythm.²²

Such a 'rhythm' seems entirely plausible, and is supported by Gilpin's suggestion that

Wordsworth found in the old pastoral themes of the importance of nature and the joys of a simple life a basis for renewal of the human spirit in an age marked by the uncertainty of European war and revolution, both political and social. ²³

As Karl Kroeber states, Wordsworth's poetry is not an attempt to ignore history and society, but is an attempt to indicate that "in the perspective of natural existence - the rhythmic continuity

of an infinitely rich ecosystem - even the most epical of social events is trivial and fragmentary."²⁴

The question of the unity of nature and human consciousness should be dealt with in the context of Wordsworth's individual poems to make the matter more specific. This is particularly necessary if we are to determine to what extent his poetry can be considered 'descriptive' or 'imaginative' as well as whether it is reasonable to make such a discrimination where poetry is concerned.

While talking about the 'evolution in poetic terminology' ('from Pope's decorative allegorization to Wordsworth's imaginative use of figural diction'), Paul de Man points out "a profound change in the texture of poetic diction" which "often takes the form of a return to a greater concreteness, a proliferation of natural objects that restores to the language the material substantiality which had been partially lost."²⁵ The inevitable consequence of such a concreteness is the "fundamental ambiguity that characterizes the poetics of romanticism" since "an abundant imagery coinciding with an equally abundant quantity of natural objects, the theme of imagination linked closely to the theme of nature" creates a "tension between the two polarities" which "never ceases to be problematic."²⁶ Because it is assumed from the very beginning that there is a sharp contrast between imagination and the external world, the terms 'tension' and 'polarities' are used to

indicate the so-called antagonism between image and object: 'polarity' spontaneously evokes 'tension'.

De Man takes a short poem by Wordsworth to exemplify the two different levels of language he uses. The poem was first collected in the 1800 volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* under the title of "Poems of the Imagination", and later found itself a place in the fifth book of *The Prelude*.

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!--many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.--And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,--with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill:
Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung

Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
 Would enter unawares into his mind
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
 Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale
 Where he was born and bred: the church-yard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village-school;
 And through that churchyard when my way has led
 On summer-evenings, I believe that there
 A long half-hour together I have stood
 Mute--looking at the grave in which he lies!

By pointing out the words 'interwoven' and 'responsive', de Man talks about the significance of "the analogical correspondence between man and nature" in Wordsworth's thought and suggests that "criticism,..., has especially emphasized this somewhat pantheistic and Schellingesque aspect of Wordsworth, so much so that even the most recent investigations hesitate to go beyond it."²⁷ Although there seems to be a deliberate effort to fabricate, to say something 'new', something 'original', something 'unknown' in de Man's words, particular attention

should be paid to his suggestion that "another dimension opens up and replaces this illusory analogy."²⁸ According to de Man, Wordsworth creates an atmosphere of a "reassuring stability" at the beginning of the poem but later it "disappears and gives way to the precarious adjective 'uncertain' that is added to the key word 'Heaven'."²⁹ And finally, Wordsworth uses the word 'hung', which is a direct transition from "the lower form of poetic imagination", 'fancy', to "true visionary power", 'imagination'.³⁰

While "fancy" depends upon a relationship between mind and nature, "imagination" is defined by the power of its language precisely not to remain imitatively and repetitively true to sense perception. This language is empowered to produce appearances "for the gratification of the mind in contemplating the image itself." The transition from perception to imagination implies a growing boldness of language which distances itself more and more from the norm.³¹

The interpretation that the first part of the poem is a product of fancy because there is perfect correspondence between man and nature, and the second part of the poem is the working of imagination since language grows bold and distances itself more

and more from the norm, seems to be quite artificial and mechanical. The poem from the very beginning to the end exhibits a perfect balance and harmony so far as the effect it creates is concerned. A personal boyhood experience is narrated throughout the poem and, as is generally the case in any narration, the incidents have a beginning, a climax, and a resolution all of which are the workings of imagination. The correspondence between man and natural world does not only appear in the first part of the poem when the owls respond to the boy's hootings, but also in the second part when the visible scene enters unawares into his mind. The shift in the tone of the language, from more concrete expressions to more abstract ones does not necessarily mean that the beginning is 'flat and mechanical', thus 'fanciful', and the ending 'profound and dynamic', thus 'imaginative'. The relationship between nature and the boy, as it is reflected in the poem, is a linear and progressive one: he first starts to build personal and concrete links with his surroundings, then the action gradually becomes an interplay among the members of a single family. Long halloos, screams, and echoes are redoubled as the continuous elements of the interplay and eventually silence replaces the sounds and voices creating an atmosphere of tranquillity and leading to the climactic point at which the boy's existence melts into the consciousness of the external world. This is a spontaneous, gradual, continuous, and organic process of an indivisible experience. For this reason, the poem has an integral development and a linguistic analysis should not disregard this

integrity.

Unlike de Man, Anthony Easthope does not divide the poem into two parts as the product of fancy and the product of imagination, but interprets, particularly the second part, as the effort "to make everything conduct to a single end: an affirmation of the reciprocal relationship (or correspondence or bond) between natural world and the inner self."³² In Easthope's opinion, Wordsworth tries hard to unite the objective world and subjective experience to demonstrate the correspondence between a beautiful landscape and inner experience. However

Since correspondence or unity is *desired* and since desire originates in lack (is defined by its endeavour to overcome lack), the passage covertly admits what it denies so warmly - non-correspondence, the absence of unity, separation between subject and object.³³

According to Easthope, Wordsworth is constructing a situation because he desires the unity which does not occur in actuality. I think, however, such a process, even if it is a construction, inevitably includes the absorption of the external stimuli at the moment of actual experience. In fact, Easthope's conclusion stems from the idea that being and meaning exclude each other. Of course, here being and meaning can be connected with 'object' and 'subject' respectively because he uses these two

couples of terms in a cause-effect relationship: there cannot be a unity between subject and object because being and meaning exclude each other. If this is so, human consciousness should be evaluated within its own terms since no correspondence exists between human consciousness and the external world. Similarly it is useless to seek meaning in the world of objects because meaning is a human construction and real objects can only be accessible through such humanly constructed meaning. And so, "Wordsworth's Nature is produced in the process of human history and through human labour, ... is in fact ideological."³⁴

To illustrate that poetry, including Wordsworth's, is in fact ideologically constructed, Easthope compares and contrasts Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest* (1713) with Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey". The focus of comparison is on the depiction of the landscape in both poems which mutually present an environment with similar features. What makes the poems distinct, according to Easthope, are the different perspectives Pope and Wordsworth have.

Yet Pope and Wordsworth each interpret the 'same' natural scene very differently. For Pope it is typical, construed within a shared literary convention (the pastoral) stretching back via the classical poets of Greece and Rome to the book of Genesis. His is a Newtonian landscape whose explicable

rationality contains difference within an overriding order,... *The natural world is valued insofar as it submits to human control -...- and that control is both avowedly social and historically specific.*³⁵ (emphasis mine)

In contrast,

For Wordsworth the landscape comes as a direct personal experience - it is to be his landscape perceived by his specifically situated eye (...) and recalled from his memory of it. The self represented is apparently beyond or outside the social formation. In symbolic consistency with this, *the natural world is valued in so far as it seems to escape human control-* for Pope 'the wild heath' matters if it can be used whereas Wordsworth relishes the way cultivated hedge-rows, in returning to wood, seem to 'run wild.'³⁶ (emphasis mine)

Despite Easthope's efforts to judge both poems as ideologically constructed writings, there seems to be a categorical difference between them. The extent to which writings are ideological is as significant, at least, as the label attached to the texts. The word 'ideology' suits Pope's poem

much better than it does Wordsworth's. 'The natural world is valued insofar as it submits to human control' indicates a direct opposition with 'the natural world is valued in so far as it seems to escape human control'. If 'ideology' is a human construction, and if Wordsworth's nature tends to escape human control, his poetry is *not* ideological, - at least in the narrow sense of the term. The real problem, for Easthope, is not the 'ideologically reflected nature' in Wordsworth's poetry but the supposed fact that nature does not appear at all in it.

Wordsworth is not interested in Nature. Anyone seriously interested in Nature would do far better to read, say, Erasmus Darwin's beautiful and detailed scientific cataloguing of the differentiated realities and specificities of the natural world in his Poem *The Botanic Garden* (1791) than a single line of Wordsworth. For even Wordsworth's best descriptions of the natural world are hopelessly vague and undefined - clouds whirl across the sky, the moon shines, daffodils bounce about in high winds.³⁷

The confusion, in Easthope's account, apparently stems from an insufficient analysis of nature. The different meanings and connotations of the word 'nature' have been explored in the first chapter of this dissertation. There is not a pure nature

phenomenon and it can be perceived in several dimensions. It is hard to determine in which sense Easthope sees nature. According to him, Wordsworth's interest in nature does not go beyond a personal experience and the transfer of this experience into poetics to enable readers to share it. Wordsworth's philosophical and artistic propositions about nature are not taken into consideration.

Easthope's emphasis on the arbitrariness of language and the disconnectedness of being and meaning leads him to the understanding that Wordsworth is not interested in nature in his poetry. This is a proposition, I assume, inherited from the de Man - Hartman - Bloom tradition, which is a continuation of the idea that human consciousness may exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world. Once human imagination is altogether rejected as being an extension of human beings' material existence, once language is isolated from its roots and imprisoned in a vacuum, Wordsworth's poetry can easily become an anti-nature movement declaring the independence of imagination to create its own order which is larger and higher than the external world.

Frederick A. Pottle takes two statements by Wordsworth, both from *The Preface*, to start a discussion about the relationship between observation and imagination in Wordsworth's poetry: "Poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity" and "I have at all times endeavoured

to look steadily at my subject." Pottle remarks that at first glance these two propositions seem to be contradictory. If the origin of poetry is the recollection of the poet, then there is no need to look steadily at the subject since the poet does not create his lines the very moment at which he makes his observation. In other words, "his (Wordsworth's) normal practice, like that of other poets, was to paint without the model."³⁸ To strengthen this idea Pottle adds that

...a good many of his poems, including several of his finest, either have no basis in personal experience at all, or show autobiography so manipulated that the "subject" corresponds to nothing he ever saw with the bodily eye.³⁹

The specific example Pottle gives to illuminate whether it is the bodily eye or the inward eye that looks steadily at the subject is "I wandered lonely as a cloud". He takes the entry in Dorothy's journal for April 15, 1802 for the starting point.

It was a threatening, misty morning, but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs. Clarkson went a short way with us, but turned back. The wind was furious, and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large boat-house, then under a

furze bush opposite Mr. Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath. The Lake was rough. There was a boat by itself floating in the middle of the bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish, but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows--people working. A few primroses by the roadside--woodsorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry, yellow flower which Mrs. C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and about them; some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled

and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers a few yards higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances, and in the middle of the water, like the sea. Rain came on--we were wet when we reached Luff's, but we called in.⁴⁰

The poem written about this experience is one of Wordsworth's well-known works.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,

They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

According to Pottle, the poem cannot be descriptive because it is essentially the work of the imagination. There seems to be an opposition, an antagonism between the concepts of description and imagination in Pottle's remark. Although imagination is regarded as a very strong creative faculty, it apparently, according to him, lacks the power to describe. In other words, if a poem is a product of imagination (it is weird, in fact, to use a conditional clause here because all poems are

the products of imagination), does this mean that it is incapable of describing the subject it deals with? The problem, again, stems from the assumption that there is an unbridgeable gap between observation and imagination.

Pottle talks about the changes and simplifications Wordsworth makes while he is writing the poem approximately two years after the actual experience took place: "he eliminates the bitterness of the wind,..., reduces the wind, in fact, to a breeze.... The prettiest thing in Dorothy's realization - her image of the daffodils pillowing their heads on the stones - drops out.... He fastens on her central image of the dancing, laughing crowd, and lets everything else go... he makes himself solitary" since "the social glee of the crowd can be made more significant if it is set over against solitary joy."⁴¹

The first thing to be emphasized here is that what makes Dorothy's diary entry prose and Wordsworth's lines poetry are the changes Wordsworth makes to give the poem its shape and spirit. As Pottle himself, too, points out, Wordsworth reduces the wind to a breeze because he wants to emphasize the soft movements of the daffodils as a group to create an atmosphere of harmony, to add a touch of sociability, and to generate a sense of joy and solidarity. The solitude in which Wordsworth places himself is his favourite mode of inspiration and creation. However, that he is together with his sister during the actual experience and that he is alone during the process of creation of

the poem indicates another functional role attributed to solitude: the individual, from a distance, observing the community of daffodils which can be linked with human society. The word 'individual' may be replaced by 'poet' or 'philosopher' reflecting the Romantic posture toward the relationship between the poet and society. The poet, being at the same time an individual and a philosopher, makes observations about nature and society and shapes them in the form of poetry which is "the first and last of all knowledge."⁴² Besides, in the poem Wordsworth creates a microcosmic wholeness in which every single element is a component of the picture: daffodils are at the center, in the background the vales and hills; in the foreground the lake, the trees, the waves, and the breeze. If Wordsworth's poetry is not a photographic representation of concrete details, if it may rather be resembled to a painting in which the painter *reproduces* what he sees by using his own personal prism, the changes Wordsworth makes while he is writing the poem are inevitable. In fact, it is not suitable to call them changes; they are the impressions coming through his personal prism. But we do know that he is lonely, that he sees the daffodils and their dance-like movements. In other words, in spite of what Pottle says, Wordsworth does not paint without the model in front of him, but paints with the model reproduced *in his mind*.

Secondly, Wordsworth's poetry, no matter whether it is imaginative or not, is descriptive: it *does* describe something. Description requires a perspective or a point of view and

Wordsworth has it. He looks at his material from a certain height, a certain place, a certain angle and at a certain time. His physical location as well as his personal background affect his description. It is not easy to determine to what extent a piece of writing is descriptive, or rather, description includes the working of imagination as well. Wordsworth both closely observes the objects in his surroundings and perceives nature as a whole, but as Pottle remarks "... he never gives catalogues, in fact never provides a profusion of imagery."⁴³ And "A *merely* matter-of-fact, an *exclusively* positivistic view of nature fills him with anger, but his own apprehension includes the matter-of-fact view without denying any of it."⁴⁴

Like Easthope, Pottle points out the essential differences between Pope and Wordsworth to emphasize the change of attitude toward both nature and poetry. But before that Wordsworth's own remarks on the same subject are worth reading.

It is remarkable that, excepting the nocturnal Reverie of Lady Winchilsea, and a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the Paradise Lost and the Seasons does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred

that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.⁴⁵

And what Pottle states is compatible with Wordsworth's remark.

Pope starts with an abstraction or a generalization concerning human nature and then looks for a correlative in the world of nature apart from man. His habit of observation of external nature is not detailed and precise; indeed, he thinks it unimportant whether the "facts" of nature which he alleges in his illustrations are really facts or superstitions.⁴⁶

Wordsworth's method, thus, is "grasping objects firmly and accurately in the mode of common perception and then looking at them imaginatively."⁴⁷ The first part of the process is as important as the second part. Actually, this is an organic process for Wordsworth since the world of nature is not simply a poetic or literary device to be employed for the purpose of ornament, but at the same time, a literal fact to be experienced, internalized, and reflected.

The impression that the daffodils are joyous

is not for him (Wordsworth) what Ruskin called pathetic fallacy. Under steady, prolonged, and serious contemplation daffodils can remain for him a symbol of joy because it is his faith (literally - no figure of speech) that every flower enjoys the air it breathes.⁴⁸

In "Wordsworth: The Romance of Nature and the Negative Way" Hartman deals with the same enigmatic relationship between perception and imagination.

Wordsworth's poetry, for Hartman, expresses the possibility of a transition from the absolute dominion of the bodily eye over the poet's mind to imagination which is independent of immediate external stimuli. "We see that the mind must pass through a stage where it experiences Imagination as a power separate from Nature, that the poet must come to think and feel as if by his own choice, or from the structure of his mind."⁴⁹ Here again we see the idea that imagination and nature exclude each other. However, taking *The Prelude* Book VI as an example Hartman proposes that "It is not nature as such but *nature indistinguishably blended with imagination* that compels the poet along his Negative Way."⁵⁰ (emphasis mine) At a philosophical level, nature, consciousness, imagination or perception can be treated individually for the clarity of analysis. Nature and imagination, for Hartman, can possibly be

considered separate concepts from a purely linguistic perspective. Otherwise, it would be difficult to understand his statement that "imagination does not move the poet directly, but always through the agency of nature"⁵¹ As Altieri maintains, Wordsworth's poetry is "not dependent on the opposition between nature and consciousness,..., since for both poet and philosopher, contexts of action rather than formal systems of language are most important."⁵²

There is a direct opposition between the idea that Wordsworth's poetry has an ecological quality in the way it treats nature and the idea that nature in Wordsworth is used allegorically, as a literary device only. The first position refuses "the presupposition of an absolute and unpassable gulf between unselfconscious world and self conscious mind, between human language and phenomenal actualities."⁵³ According to this approach, mind and nature are complementary and human language is a natural extension of the broader context, the external world. Thus, the representation of 'phenomenal actualities' through language ought to be considered within this framework. Language, too, is natural to the extent that the human mind is natural. Therefore, even if, in Wordsworth's poetry, sometimes, the mind, as a relatively *internal* phenomenon, imposes its own structure on nature, which is relatively *external*, a natural process exists both during and after the composition of the poem.

The second attitude essentially relies on formal systems of language: only the linguistic representation of the signified is analyzed and the links between language and context are neglected. In this respect, abstraction is the only way to examine the individual poems. Poems are reduced to linguistic formulae, devoid of meaning, first to be categorized and then deciphered from a purely formalistic perspective. What we find, however, in Wordsworth's poetry is a broader context of thought and action in which linguistic structure is only a part.

To give an unfamiliar example, unfamiliar in terms of the basic Wordsworthian method, I want to take a short poem composed on April 16, 1802 and published in 1807: "Written in March: While Resting on the Bridge at the Foot of Brother's Water." Wordsworth paints with a model this time.

When we came to the foot of Brothers water I
left William sitting on the Bridge & went
along the path on the right side of the Lake
through the wood -- I was delighted with
what I saw -- the water under the boughs of
the bare old trees, the simplicity of the
mountains & the exquisite beauty of the path.
There was one grey cottage. I repeated the
Glowworm as I walked along -- I hung over
the gate, & thought I could have stayed for
ever. When I returned I found William writing

a poem descriptive of the sights & sounds we saw and heard. There was the gentle flowing of the stream, the glittering lively lake, green fields without a living creature to be seen on them, behind us, a flat pasture with 42 cattle feeding, to our left the road leading to the hamlet, no smoke there, the sun shone on the bare roofs. The people were at work ploughing, harrowing & sowing -- Lasses spreading dung, a dogs barking now & then, cocks crowing, birds twittering, the snow in patches at the top of the highest hills, yellow palms, purple & green twigs on the Birches, ashes with their glittering spikes quite bare.⁵⁴

This is the actual experience reflected in Dorothy Wordsworth's lines and here is the poem written during the experience.

The Cock is crowing
 The stream is flowing,
 The small birds twitter,
 The lake doth glitter,

The green field sleeps in the sun;
 The oldest and youngest

Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one!

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The Ploughboy is whooping --anon--anon:

There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing
The rain is over and gone!

In her journal Dorothy says that the poem is 'descriptive of the sights and sounds'. The poem, however, is placed, interestingly, under the subtitle of "Poems of the Imagination." It is a descriptive poem including almost every single detail Dorothy mentions in her account. The flowing of the stream, the twittering of the birds, the glittering of the lake, retreating snow, sailing clouds, working people and even the exact number of grazing cattle are the specific features depicted in the poem. What makes the poem, on the other hand, a whole is Wordsworth's composition through which these details are

brought together. Wordsworth designs the poem around the central theme of the interdependence of the organic life which has a harmonious unity of nature, man, and society all these being the essential fields of interest for him. Natural elements are represented with a precise cataloguing of the surroundings while individuality is highlighted with the cheers of the ploughboy. Grazing cattle and working people, by the same token, stand for sociability. Thus, starting from the concrete examples of natural elements, animals, and people we reach a whole picture in which "The oldest and youngest/ Are at work with the strongest;" (lines 6-7) and "There's joy in the mountains; / There's life in the fountains" (lines 17-8); Wordsworth portrays a social order which is in harmony with the order of nature and this is not merely an observation and description but a working of the imagination as well. The poem asserts its imaginative intensity without losing its descriptive quality. This is another example of the cooperation between Wordsworth's inner and physical eye, his power of perception and imagination.

I want to give a last example before finishing the discussion about the relationship between perception and imagination. This is a sonnet composed in 1807 and published in 1819 as "Composed by the Side of Grasmere Lake."

Clouds, lingering yet, extend in solid bars
Through the grey west; and lo! these waters, steeled

By breezeless air to smoothest polish, yield
 A vivid repetition of the stars;
 Jove, Venus, and the ruddy crest of Mars
 Amid his fellows beauteously revealed
 At happy distance from earth's groaning field,
 Where ruthless mortals wage incessant wars.
 Is it a mirror? -- or the nether Sphere
 Opening to view the abyss in which she feeds
 Her own calm fires? -- But list! a voice is near;
 Great Pan himself low-whispering through the reeds,
 'Be thankful, thou; for, if unholy deeds
 Ravage the world, tranquillity is here!'

The sonnet starts with brief references to the sky, air, and lake. The visual, tactile, and kinesthetic imagery employed to create a picture gives the first half of the poem a descriptive quality. We have the implicit motion of the clouds, the colour of the sky, a mirror-like lake, breezeless air, and stars as the specific details of the mental picture created through poetic diction. Yet, these concrete features are not the mere figures of a static painting. There is a dynamic interaction among them. Lingering clouds, the grey sky, and breezeless air come together and create a vision of 'steeled', mirror-like water which reflects the stars vividly. This composition is completed with a brief remark about mankind who 'ruthlessly wages incessant wars on earth's groaning field' and for this reason the stars are a 'happy' distance from such a chaotic setting. Up to the rhetorical

question 'Is it a mirror?', the first part of the poem has a dominant descriptive quality. After this question, in spite of the surprising use of the words 'abyss' and 'fires' that evoke hell, the reader is provided with an alternative world lying in the depth of the lake where calmness and tranquillity are to be found. The opposition between the positive connotations of the words 'calm' and 'tranquillity' and the negative connotations of the words 'abyss' and 'fires' gives the second part of the poem a touch of mysticism which, as de Man suggests, "indicates a rise in the pitch of imaginative intensity," underlining the "right balance between the literal and the symbolic vision, a balance reflected in a harmonious proportion between mimetic and symbolic language in the diction of the poem."⁵⁵ Once more the literal description of the surroundings through the physical eye is integrated with the imaginative prism of the inner eye.

Poetry, for Wordsworth, has a social function: it has to make its contribution to the feelings of man to provide him with pleasure and happiness. For Wordsworth "the necessity of producing immediate pleasure is not a degradation of the poet's art," rather "it is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe."⁵⁶ He asks the question 'what does the poet do' to satisfy this 'necessity' and provides the answer.

He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite

complexity of pain and pleasure... He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature.⁵⁷

Poetry for Wordsworth, as a result, neither imitates nor constructs reality but attempts to find out what is hidden in the 'ordinary' rhythm of nature, what might not be conceived at first glance, what the primary affections of man in his surroundings are.

Wordsworth's reality never excludes the world that exists independently of human consciousness. As Hagstrum, referring to I.A.Richards, comments

... nature can be viewed as "a projection of our sensibility," but such a nature, "a Nature of our making," is "the deadest Nature we can conceive." Real need and real power come from less subjective places, and poetry must have ways of touching the earth to renew its strength.⁵⁸

Wordsworth himself explains the relationship between nature and imagination very clearly.

I had once given to these sketches (*Descriptive Sketches*) the title of Picturesque; but the Alps are insulted in applying to them that term. Whoever, in attempting to describe their sublime features, should confine himself to the cold rules of painting would give his reader but a very imperfect idea of those emotions which they have the irresistible power of communicating to the most impassive imaginations.... Had I wished to make a picture of this scene I had thrown much less light into it. *But I consulted nature and my feelings.*⁵⁹
(emphasis mine)

In this sense, Wordsworth's poetry sometimes appears to be purely imaginative, as if the human mind shapes the outer world and sometimes nature seems to be completely independent of human consciousness. But mostly his overall practice is to establish a cooperation between his physical and inner eye. For this reason,

The many passages which suggest an extreme subjectivism, an activity of the imagination exerting itself against the world, must be always interpreted in the light of the other conceptions which assume a continuity

between mind and nature.⁶⁰

In conclusion, how Wordsworth deals with his subject matter is as significant as what his subject matter is. Even if Wordsworth had constructed his poetry mainly through his power of imagination, it would not have prevented his work from having an ecological essence because the world he constructed consists of the basic ethical and moral values of ecology: equality among the species, a harmonious natural and social order, and the integral and independent existence of all living and non-living beings.

CHAPTER V
THE INTERACTION BETWEEN NATURE
AND
MAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL
IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

It is often suggested that Wordsworth did not have an abstract interest in nature, but rather confined himself to scrutinizing the interaction between man and the external world. Yet, a closer analysis of Wordsworth's poetry indicates that in certain parts of his poems he takes natural objects as they are and, without linking them to a human context, underlines their own existence. Hence, he acknowledges that nature is an organic and living wholeness existing independently of human consciousness.

The definition of Wordsworth as a nature poet requires an exploration of his way of depicting and expressing natural forces and elements. The poet's mental and emotional powers are actively involved in the creation of his work. At the moment of observation, according to Danby, the poet "was not pre-eminently a note-taker in front of objects."¹ Nevertheless, this does not mean that he always relied on Dorothy's journals for the details of his poems. Rather, his practice was to *internalize* the feelings that emerge at the moment of interaction between nature and his mind. Besides, Wordsworth did not want to

produce an exact representation of reality. Instead, he understood the external truth by adding to it his personal perspective. Nor was he a creator of an 'atmosphere' to make it "the vehicle for feelings originating in the beholder."² Danby, consciously echoing Preface to *The Excursion*, notes that

Tennyson requires us to surrender to the hypnotic melancholy. Wordsworth insists on the opposite: that we should become awake and aware, adjusting our selves to things, not things to us.³

What Wordsworth does while dealing with an external object is to adopt another type of mental stance, namely 'wise passiveness.'

Wordsworth's 'passiveness' is clearly not a condition of relaxation, or of what Keats will call 'indolence.' It assumes, rather, a strenuous discipline of mind. It is a condition of calm and attentiveness, a state of receptiveness that is also vividly alert.⁴

Thus, Wordsworth's depiction of nature requires an active intellectual and emotional openness to the external world. His direct contact with the environment is an indispensable step to achieving a new consciousness of nature and man's place in it.

In the first book of *The Prelude*, for instance, the contrast between "the fretful dwellings of mankind" and nature breathing "among the hills and groves" is highlighted and nature is projected as a living organism. (I, 279-81) These two projections, the first one rejecting man's absolute privilege and priority over nature and the second one admitting nature's 'life' are the fundamental premises of modern ecology. Similarly, in the third Book he says that

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

(III, 130-35)

What makes Wordsworth unique is his treatment of nature as a unified organism. He acknowledges that every living and non-living being has its own 'inward meaning' and 'moral life.' Such a holistic and vitalistic philosophy differs largely from religious and humanistic doctrines in which man has a pivotal place and the rest of the world is secondary and subservient to him. While Christian orthodoxy repudiates the idea that animals have a consciousness of their own, Wordsworth ascribes a moral life even to 'the loose stones.' "Nature's fairest forms" (IV, 9)

appeal to Wordsworth as 'magnificent', 'beautiful', and 'gay', but more importantly they are "... revealed with instantaneous burst" (IV, 10) *proudly* which is a term embodying the notion of a complex, dynamic, and living nature. Actually, this is the beginning of his awareness that nature has a consciousness of its own. The gradual process of recognizing the powers of nature culminates in his overall perception of its wholeness and shaping faculty.

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

("Tintern Abbey", 109-11)

Wisdom, for Wordsworth, can be found in nature for the eye that is able to look into it. A throstle "is no mean preacher" and

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

("The Tables Turned", 12-24)

According to Wordsworth, non-human nature is not an entity of secondary importance lacking a consciousness of its own. On the contrary, all species of the non-human world are equal participants in the universe and humanity is only one

member of this large family. Wordsworth humbly declares that "The birds around me hopped and played, / Their thoughts I cannot measure." ("Lines Written in Early Spring", 13-14) The birds, to him, are *able* to think and man *cannot* take it for granted that he is privy to their thoughts. Similarly, a mind which is receptive and sensitive enough can see that "every flower / Enjoys the air it breathes." ("Lines Written", 11-12) Wordsworth renders nature's consciousness in several ways in which a human context is not always required. His poetry is only a witness of "The spirit of enjoyment and desire, / And hopes and wishes, from all living things" ("Poems on the Naming of Places", I, 6-7) When he addresses a daisy his attention is not centered only upon the features of the flower that provide man with pleasure and happiness but also upon its independent existence.

Thee Winter in the garland wears
 That thinly decks his few grey hairs;
 Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
 That she may sun thee;
 Whole Summer-fields are thine by right;
 And Autumn, melancholy Wight!
 Doth in thy crimson head delight
 When rains are on thee.

("To the Daisy", 9-16)

A wren's ability to adapt itself to the conditions of nature

may become an issue to be dwelt upon for the poet. No human hand interferes in the building of a wren's nest whose "perfect fitness for its aim" ("A Wren's Nest", 10) reveals the complexity of nature's working. Wordsworth, by emphasizing the struggle for existence, creates an awareness of the interdependence of all beings. His poetry functions as a reminder of the cosmic fact that the world is a living system embodying all organisms. "The Primrose of the Rock", belonging to the group of poems titled "Poems of the Imagination", unmistakably articulates the theme of interdependence which binds the external world together. To Wordsworth, the relationship between the primrose and the rock indicates "A lasting link in Nature's chain / From highest heaven let down!" (11-12)

The flowers, still faithful to the stems,
 Their fellowship renew;
 The stems are faithful to the root,
 That worketh out of view;
 And to the rock the root adheres
 In every fibre true.

(13-18)

The poem graphically presents a microcosmic universe consisting of the earth, the rock, and the primrose and represents a macrocosmic order in which "God upholds them all." (22) The independent existence of each entity is acknowledged by Wordsworth, but what makes the real sense is their coexistence.

Together they have a different *meaning* and constitute an intelligible wholeness. Wordsworth wants his readers to open themselves to "those breathing Powers, / The Spirits of the new-born flowers" ("Devotional Incitements", 1-2) He insists that man should "Give ear, ... , to their appeal, / And thirst for no inferior zeal" (23-24) because we can "*think*, as well as feel" (25) and because "... not by bread alone we live." (72) Wordsworth's call for openness and sensitivity to the outer world continually reminds the reader that there is a life out there having its own consciousness and motion. Man's ignorance of this world does not mean that it does not exist. The peace and harmony Wordsworth finds in a wild duck's nest force him to evaluate himself. He feels "self-accused while gazing" and sighs "For human-kind, weak slaves of cumbrous pride!" ("The Wild Duck's Nest", 13-14)

Wordsworth declares the main concerns of his poetry to be man, nature, and society. These are, of course, generalizations of more concrete notions. When he is interested in man, for instance, Wordsworth takes for his subject sometimes a specific person and talks about his/her characteristics and condition; at other times a concept reflecting various aspects of humanity. His treatment of nature follows a similar course. Nature is both a living entity and an abstraction for Wordsworth. In most of his long poems these notions converge and the connections between them are explored. In this respect, Wordsworth's interest in nature has a multi-dimensional quality.

Sometimes natural forms and objects are depicted and evaluated independently of human consciousness. This is one of the characteristics that gives Wordsworth's poetry an ecological essence. On the other hand, the relationship between the non-human world and human consciousness is another dominant theme in his work.

Wordsworth's observation of natural phenomena usually involves an investigation of the connections between man and the external world. When he portrays nature as a whole or examines an element of it, he generally prefers to explore the interaction between human consciousness and the object depicted. In this respect, his poetry is an expression of how the human mind is fitted to the external world. One of the most frequently emphasized premises in Wordsworth's poetry is the unity of man and nature. Man exists within the broader context of nature like other species as an equal member. Since man's existence includes both his physical and intellectual being, Wordsworth perceives human consciousness, too, as part of the external world. In fact, there is not much difference for Wordsworth, in this sense, between man and other organisms because every living being has a consciousness, a spirit which relates and unifies them all:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

("Tintern Abbey", 93-102)

Wordsworth's interest in nature is not a static phenomenon. The essence of his relationship with nature takes shape through the successive stages of his life and it is possible to see the various fluctuations and changes reflected in his poetry. In the different periods of his life his perception of nature varies. For example, physical activities occupy his childhood more intensely than intellectual involvement.

For nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)
 To me was all in all, - I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.

("Tintern Abbey", 72-83)

Wordsworth himself makes a distinction between the several periods in which his perception of nature develops. 'The coarser pleasures', as a phrase, suggests that his earlier experience of nature involves mainly physical activities and is much more instinctive. *The Prelude*, especially the first three books, contains ample examples of the poet's involvement in nature and the quality of the satisfaction he gets from it. His childhood is presented through a panorama of natural elements changing from mountain peaks to lakes, from rivers to groves, from winds to fields, from dawn to darkness. All these elements participate in the shaping of his mind and soul and lead to 'a grandeur in the beatings of' his heart. It is "the earth / And common face of Nature ... " (I, 586-87) that speak to him "Rememberable things." (I, 588) Nature's initial influence on the poet is underlined at the beginning of Book Second.

Thus far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields.

(II, 1-5)

The contribution of nature to the growth of the poet's mind can be clearly examined in an autobiographical poem called "Nutting". A childhood experience of picking hazelnuts is narrated in the poem and the opening lines immediately reflect a mood of excitement.

It seems a day

(I speak of one from many singled out)
 One of those heavenly days that cannot die;
 When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
 I left our cottage - threshold, sallying forth
 With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,
 A nutting-crook in hand;

("Nutting", 1-7)

He turns his steps toward a distant wood where he finds a 'dear nook'. (16) The place is 'unvisited' and isolated creating a sense of privacy and adventure. As usual, Wordsworth depicts the boy's excitement in solitude, when he is alone in nature. It is a painful experience and he forces his way through 'thorns, brakes, and brambles.' (13) But when he comes across the nook, it is just like a banquet of hazels with 'tall, erect, and tempting' (19) clusters. Deeply satisfied with such a 'virgin scene' (21) and 'Fearless of a rival' (24) he sits among the flowers to rest. After enjoying himself in the beauty of the environment, he suddenly rises and brutally assaults the nook to pick the hazels. The action is described as a 'merciless ravage' and at the end he

feels a sense of guilt and pain because 'the green and mossy bower' patiently gives up its 'quiet being.' (47-48) The spirit of the wood together with the shady nook is destroyed for the sake of his material benefit and only after his deed does the boy realize the seriousness of the crime he has committed against nature.

... and unless I now
 Confound my present feelings with the past,
 Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
 Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
 I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
 The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.-
 (48-53)

This is a sort of initiation story and the experience teaches the boy that nature, too, has an existence and a spirit. His perception of the external world deepens, leading him to his later thoughts about what man's ideal relation with the landscape might be: a complete communion emerges when man is "wedded to this goodly universe / In love and holy passion." ("Home at Grasmere", 53-54)

Wordsworth's childhood is a vital phase in which the unbreakable bond between the poet and nature is established. The quality and intensity of his experience of the landscape increase gradually, strengthening his personality with a feeling of

independence and self-confidence in solitude. Summertime sports and competitions, too, contribute to this development.

Thus the pride of strength,
And the vain-glory of superior skill,
Were tempered; thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart;

And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

(II, 69-77)

In the changing and developing course of such an interaction with his surroundings, every bit and piece of his experience of nature participates in the development of his existence. His love of nature is not a pragmatic issue concerning only his material needs. He loves her for her own sake.

Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
Daily the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which we behold and feel we are alive;
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds-
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay

His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
 The western mountains touch his setting orb,
 In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
 Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
 For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.

(II, 175-88)

During his Cambridge years the sharp contrast between his previous experiences of nature and the scholarly and urban atmosphere of the city is articulated. He feels isolated among "Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets / Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:" (III, 32-33) After intimate relations with nature, Cambridge makes him feel "A northern villager." (III, 35) The strong sense of displacement makes him feel like an outsider just observing the others. The heavy atmosphere of the man-made environment prevents him from becoming a part of the urban life. When education turns into simply a practice of strengthening human domination over nature, it builds a gap between man and the rest of the world. Hence, he is indifferent to academic passions:

Let others that know more speak as they know
 Such glory was but little sought by me,
 And little won.

(III, 73-75)

Instead, he turns his attention back to the landscape.

ofttimes did I quit

My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings, and groves,
 And as I paced alone the level fields
 Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
 With which I had been conversant,

I looked for universal things; perused

The common countenance of earth and sky:

(III, 91-100)

He tries not to lose contact with what he values. So, his focus of expression is nature and its elements. He does not deny the importance of academic studies. Yet, he feels he is not suited to such work which seems relatively trivial when compared to 'the common countenance of earth and sky.'

Not that I slighted books - that were to lack
 All sense, - but other passions in me ruled,
 Passions more fervent, making me less prompt
 To in-door study than was wise or well,
 Or suited to those years

(III, 367-71)

This attitude is apparently a reaction to the exaggeration implicit in humanistic studies which place man at the center of creation.

Man is privileged to such an extent that his natural ties with his environment are broken and he becomes a captive of his man-made prison. Wordsworth "was ill-tutored for captivity."

For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries,
 Was a spoiled child, and rambling like the wind,
 As I had done in daily intercourse
 With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,
 And mountains; ranging like a fowl of the air,
(III, 354-59)

A 'spoiled' child is usually surrounded by the 'luxuries' that society or family supplies. The unexpected use of these phrases augments the effect of the imagery Wordsworth employs. 'Social luxuries' turn man into a captive, whereas nature's luxuries provide him with freedom.

Wordsworth's response to nature changes direction as he becomes more mature. The instant pleasures of nature derived from physical involvement in and interaction with the environment are gradually replaced by an awareness of the essence of nature. He achieves a new consciousness and learns "To look on nature,..." ("Tintern Abbey", 89) in such a way that it enables him to recognize the harmony and unity of 'all objects of all thought.' Wordsworth's mature response to the external world contains a strong sense of connection established between man and the non-human world. He harmoniously combines "The

still, sad music of humanity," ("Tintern Abbey", 91) with 'setting suns', 'round ocean', 'the living air', and 'the blue sky.' (97-99) He is able not only to *see* and *appreciate* the details of external nature, but to *look into* the natural forms so as to grasp the vital force, the unifying spirit that 'rolls through all things.' Such a consciousness of nature is much more contemplative and requires intellectual commitment as well as emotional involvement. Wordsworth's apprehension of nature is unique owing to the shift in the perspective from which he evaluates the non-human world. It was indeed revolutionary to feel and admit nature's independent existence. He regularly reminds us that nature is dealt with, in his poetry, 'for her own sake.'

Those incidental charms which first attached
 My heart to rural objects, day by day
 Grew weaker, and ...
 ... Nature, intervenient till this time
 And secondary, now at length was sought
 For her own sake.

(II, 198-203)

Once it is admitted that nature is an entity existing independently of human consciousness, it is not difficult to determine man's links with the external world. For Wordsworth man is a member of the larger family of nature.

blest the Babe,

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

Emphatically such a Being lives,
 Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
 An inmate of this *active* universe:

(II, 234-54) (emphases mine)

Nature, for Wordsworth, shapes the spirit of man. Since man is part of a larger reality, his moral identity is formed through his interaction with his surroundings. In the Lucy poems, for instance, Lucy is presented as being in complete communion with nature and her moral character is tuned according to natural laws. The death of Lucy appears to be the main and common theme of these poems. The identity of the girl(s) is obscure, or rather, not so important. Her portrayal within a natural context and non-human surroundings and the absolute normality of her death emphasize the naturalness of human existence: Lucy comes from, dwells in, and goes to nature. Humanity shares the

same pattern of life-cycle as other beings.

The abundance of natural imagery employed in the Lucy poems reinforces the girl's straightforward interaction with nature. Her isolation from the rest of the human world is not presented as a negative feature. On the contrary, it contributes to her uniqueness, like a star "when only one / Is shining in the sky." ("She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways", 5-6) Wordsworth's vision depicts her as "A violet by a mossy stone / Half hidden from the eye!" ("She Dwelt", 7-8) What makes Lucy stand out as a figure of importance is her natural and spontaneous existence "among the untrodden ways / Beside the springs of Dove," ("She Dwelt", 1-2)

In "Three Years She Grew" Lucy's coexistence with nature culminates in their oneness through her death. After she grows "Three years ... in sun and shower," (1) nature wishes to take her forever because "A lovelier flower / On earth was never sown;" (2-3) The natural rhythm of life shapes Lucy through its diametric forces such as 'sun and shower', 'law and impulse', 'rock and plain', 'earth and heaven', 'glade and bower.' The process reflects the organic complexity of nature emphasizing the significance of the interaction between the opposing natural powers in creating a drive for living. Lucy's growth includes the impulse of 'the mountain springs', 'mute insensate things', 'the floating clouds', 'the motions of the Storm', as well as 'the stars of midnight.' This is, in a way, a process of physical and

psychological maturation at the end of which she becomes ready to experience the terminal union with nature: she dies leaving behind the limited forms of human existence and enters a boundless universe in which

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

("A Slumber did my Spirit Seal", 5-8)

Death is not depicted either as a terminal point in existence, or as the evanescence of life, but as an inevitable phase to be experienced in the larger cycle of cosmic life. In "The Ruined Cottage" Margaret dies suffering in sickness and solitude. This is a sad ending but the Wanderer has an alternative reaction to it.

That consolation springs,
 From sources deeper far than deepest pain,
 For the meek sufferer. Why then should we read
 The forms of things with an unworthy eye?
 She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.

(937-41)

Similarly, the Wanderer is not so pessimistic about the deserted look of the cottage. He does not conceive it as a corruption, as a process of degeneration and decline, but as the indication and

evidence of nature's undefeatable power of renovation.

I well remember that those very plumes,
 Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
 By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,
 As once I passed, into my heart conveyed
 So still an image of tranquillity,
 So calm and still, and looked so beautiful
 Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
 That what we feel of sorrow and despair
 From ruin and from change, and all the grief
 That passing shows of Being leave behind,
 Appeared an idle dream, that could maintain,
 Nowhere, dominion o'er the enlightened spirit
 Whose meditative sympathies repose
 Upon the breast of Faith. I turned away,
 And walked along my road in happiness.

(942-56)

In "Resolution and Independence" the natural harmony is vividly conveyed in the opening stanzas. The rising of the sun, the singing of the birds, the brooding of the Stock-dove, the chattering of the Magpie, and the answering of the Jay all contribute to the creation of an atmosphere in which "All things that love the sun are out of doors;" (8) and man, in such a context and far from the turbulence of urban society, feels utmost communion with the earth.

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
 I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
 I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
 Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
 The pleasant season did my heart employ:
 My old remembrances went from me wholly;
 And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

(15-21)

In "Michael" the landscape contributes to the protagonist's moral being. His existence exhibits the powerful influence of the environment he lives in. He is a man who "learned the meaning of all winds, / Of blasts of every tone;" (48-49) who "had been alone / Amid the heart of many thousand mists," (58-59) His thoughts and consciousness, too, are shaped by the elementary powers of the landscape.

And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
 Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
 Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
 The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
 He had so often climbed; which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
 Which, like a book, preserved the memory

Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
 The certainty of honourable gain;
 Those fields, those hills - what could they less? had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.

("Michael", 62-77)

Wordsworth's portrayal of the shepherd in "Michael" is like a celebration of man's harmonious communion with nature. Michael, in a way, springs from the earth and never turns his back on it. His unalienable ties with both living and non-living beings are so intimate and natural that he is not even an extension of nature, but nature itself. In "Tintern Abbey", for similar reasons, nature is referred to as

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.

(109-111)

Nature, by the same token, is the most influential phenomenon shaping the moral character of the Wanderer in *The Excursion*, who represents the poet in many respects. In fact, most of the main characters in Wordsworth's poetry share more or less similar experiences. Michael, the old leech-gatherer, the

Wanderer, the narrator of *The Prelude* all - coming out of the same surroundings - have common characteristics. The Wanderer, like others, has a close contact with nature in solitude from the very beginning of his life. He was a boy who "... many an evening, to his distant home / In solitude returning, saw the hills" which grew "...larger in the darkness;" (I, 126-28) He "... travelled through the wood, with no one near" (I, 130-31)

So the foundations of his mind were laid.
 In such communion, not from terror free,
 While yet a child, and long before his time,
 Had he perceived the presence and the power
 Of greatness;

(I, 132- 36)

He was equipped with "A precious gift", (I, 140) "An active power to fasten images / Upon his brain;" (I, 145-46) He never neglected "... to turn his ear and eye / On all things which the moving seasons brought" (I, 150-51) In this way nature educated him. He ".. had felt the power / Of Nature" (I, 191-92) which taught him "To feel intensely." (I, 196) Not only his physical interaction with the outer world, but also his emotional involvement with "the solid frame of earth / And ocean's liquid mass" (I, 201-202) shaped his existence.

his spirit drank

The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,

All melted into him; they swallowed up
 His animal being; in them did he live,
 And by them did he live; they were his life.

(l, 206-10)

Not only his thoughts and emotions, but also his beliefs take shape in this interaction.

The written promise! Early had he learned
 To reverence the volume that displays
 The mystery, the life which cannot die;
 But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
 All things, responsive to the writing, there
 Breathed immortality, revolving life,
 And greatness still revolving; infinite:
 There littleness was not; the least of things
 Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
 Her prospects, nor did he believe, - he *saw*.

(l, 223-232)

Another aspect of the relationship between the external world and the individual in Wordsworth is the regenerative impulse with which nature provides man. The characters in his poetry take shelter in nature whenever they feel depressed. When the urban atmosphere of the city makes him despondent, the boy of *The Prelude* escapes to nature to find joy and freedom. The 'captive' of Cambridge is transformed to a free

soul when he gets back to his native hills. The solitary figures in "Michael", in *The Excursion*, in "Resolution and Independence", in "The Old Cumberland Beggar", in "Animal Tranquillity and Decay" all open their souls to the consoling and comforting powers of nature so as to renew themselves. The old man in "Animal Tranquillity and Decay", for instance, is the one

... to whom

Long patience hath such mild composure given
That patience now doth seem a thing of which
He hath no need. (9-12)

Because "He is by nature led / To peace so perfect..." (12-13)

Wordsworth's earlier merely physical attraction to nature is nonetheless compatible with his later awareness of the depth and intensity of the non-human world. When his growing relationship with nature is traced throughout his poetry, his later consciousness of the complex and organic unity of nature is seen to be based on his previous experience of the external world. Wordsworth's intimate physical and emotional connection with the landscape combines with his contemplations on the meaning of existence and, together, they help him grasp the wholeness of nature. In this sense, Wordsworth's apprehension of nature has an integral quality reflecting both his enthusiastic and 'unrefined' childhood experiences and his later more contemplative and philosophical approach. For him, man is tied

to the larger order of the external universe by unbreakable bonds. Such a perception places man in the ecological wholeness of nature.

CHAPTER VI
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE
AND
MAN'S SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Wordsworth's poetry contains several examples of the poet's negative feelings or opinions about industrialized urban society. In the opening parts of *The Prelude* the poet presents himself as a person who feels "A discontented sojourner" (l, 8) in the city. Similarly, his Cambridge days are referred to as captivity since the man-made environment cuts his links with his surroundings. In "Tintern Abbey" "the pastoral farms, / Green to the very door..." are contrasted with the "din / Of towns and cities." (16-26) 'In hours of weariness' the poet owes to the 'beauteous forms' of nature 'sensations sweet.' He also owes to them the 'blessed mood' through which "the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this *unintelligible* world, / Is lightened..." (36-41) (emphasis mine) Wordsworth clearly refers to the chaotic and absurd texture of urban social life, to the 'madding crowd' when he talks about the unintelligibility of the world. In "Michael" the downfall of the shepherd's son takes place in the city, where man is far from the protective and beneficent influence of nature.

Meantime Luke began

To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
 He in the *dissolute city* gave himself
 To evil courses: ignominy and shame
 Fell on him,...

(442-46) (emphasis mine)

In one of the "River Duddon" sonnets, titled "American Tradition", Wordsworth draws on the opposite reactions of the 'Indian' and the 'white man' to the powers of nature.

Such fruitless questions may not long beguile
 Or plague the fancy 'mid the sculptured shows
 Conspicuous yet where Oroonoko flows;
There would the Indian answer with a smile
 Aimed at the White Man's ignorance the while,
 Of the GREAT WATERS telling how they rose,
 Covered the plains, and, wandering where they chose,
 Mounted through every intricate defile,
 Triumphant. - Inundation wide and deep,
 O'er which his Fathers urged, to ridge and steep
 Else unapproachable, their buoyant way;
 And carved, on mural cliff's undreaded side,
 Sun, moon, and stars, and beast of chase or prey;
 Whate'er they sought, shunned, loved, or deified!

Wordsworth's emphasis on the word 'there' explicitly indicates the distinction between the European and Indian way of looking

at and seeing nature. The community spirit reflected in the Indian way of life traditionally passes from 'Fathers' to their sons and is shaped in an exact communion with the landscape. Indian social organization teaches its members to respect the non-human world, and in this sense, it proves to be superior to that of the 'White Man' whose ties with natural forces are destroyed in urban society.

One of Wordsworth's famous and rare city poems, "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge", seems not to fit the idea that he dislikes urban life. The first line is the expression of an invigorating moment at which the poet captures the majestic beauty of the city: "Earth has not anything to show more fair:" It is the city of London Wordsworth sincerely praises, but interestingly enough it is presented as an extension of the earth. The city wears "The beauty of the morning" "like a garment" and "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie" "silent, bare," "Open unto the fields, and to the sky." (4-7) This beauty is doomed to pass away when the morning leaves, taking its silence with it, and makes the city wear its real face. The magnificence of the city can only be noticed within the splendour of the natural context. The poet feels "a calm so deep" in the rising of the sun, the flowing of the river, and "in the smokeless air." (8-11) He views the city at quite an unusual moment: it is early in the morning and "the very houses seem asleep;" (13) So, the poet himself is not involved in the daily routine of the urban society. He is a stranger just intruding on the sleep of the city

without participating in it. The beauty of the city appears to be temporary and the poet captures it momentarily. This is not a sense of belonging to a place but a sense of detached and non-participant admiration, a seizing of the moment within the inescapable flow of the 'unintelligible' life.

How, then, does Wordsworth perceive the links between nature and man's social existence? What sorts of implications does his poetry contain in terms of communal life? Is he simply a primitivist rejecting all the progressivist inclinations of man or is he searching for the possibility of a different and renovated social order in which man peacefully and harmoniously links himself to the external world?

In the Preface to *The Excursion* (1814) Wordsworth briefly announces the subject he wants to deal with.

my voice proclaims

How exquisitely the individual Mind
 (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
 Of the whole species) to the external World
 Is fitted: - and how exquisitely, too -

The external World is fitted to the Mind
 And the creation (by no lower name
 Can it be called) which they with blended might
 Accomplish: - this is our high argument

(62-70)

The first parenthesis in these frequently quoted lines is one of the key points indicating Wordsworth's emphasis on the cosmical unity of plants, animals, and man. Wordsworth does not exclude the other species from the wholeness of existence. All beings come together and, 'with blended might', accomplish the creation. In fact, the subject matter of his poetry is the intricate relations between the species of the earth and the external world, which, by definition, specifies the sphere of ecology. Wordsworth's 'high argument' is also mentioned early in the prose section of the Preface to *The Excursion*.

That Work, addressed to a dear Friend,..., has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society; and to be entitled, 'The Recluse;' as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

His views of Man, Nature, and Society are not dealt with in isolation. They are taken as interrelated themes and, particularly, the interaction among them is explored. His work comprises hundreds of poems such as sonnets, cantos, inscriptions, epitaphs, epics, and elegiac pieces each of which dwells on different topics and themes. In this sense, it would be hard to

claim that Wordsworth's overall work has a single dimension and direction. He underlines this fact himself in the Preface.

It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system: it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself.

Nevertheless, a closer inspection of the thoughts, images, and feelings conveyed to the reader indicates that Wordsworth's work has a general pattern, a grand design, or a backbone which ties all the themes and topics together: this is the unity and wholeness of organic life and, according to him, man must adapt his individual and social existence to this natural pattern. Wordsworth's vision of man's social organization is in harmony with his ideas about man's individual existence. Man must accommodate his social organization, as well as his individual being, to the natural order, which requires a re-evaluation of his connection to nature. In this respect, Wordsworth's contemplations on human society should be explored as an extension of his approach to man - nature relations.

One of the most important consequences of Wordsworth's love of nature is his love of man. The close, individual relations

with nature create a sensitivity to all the living and non-living beings of the earth and this paves the way for a warm communion among individuals and, in a larger sense, among societies. The title of Book VIII of *The Prelude* clearly expresses that 'love of nature leads to love of man.' This is a natural and inevitable process re-establishing the bridge between nature and man's individual and social existence. Man's individual communion with nature is inadequate to create an exact integration with the rest of the world. His communal existence should also be incorporated in the larger order of nature. Wordsworth's interest in nature, then, in its general framework, is far from a personal retreat to avoid the problems of his time. On the contrary, as Bate suggests,

Wordsworth built an account of the pastoral into the pivotal retrospective eighth book of *The Prelude* in order to forge a link between the holistic values of his native vales and the 'social meliorism' that underlay the French Revolution.¹

The economic conditions of his time make Wordsworth think about and comment on the social structure of the community he lives in. In a letter to Charles James Fox he analyzes the possible reasons for the structural changes witnessed in society. His theoretical account of poetry in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* largely relies on these observations.

It appears to me that the most calamitous effect, which has followed the measures which have lately been pursued in this country, is a rapid decay of the domestic affections among the lower orders of society. This effect the present Rulers of this country are not conscious of, or they disregard it. For many years past, the tendency of society amongst almost all the nations of Europe has been to produce it. But recently by the spreading of manufacturers through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, Houses of Industry, and the invention of Soup-shops etc. etc. superadded to the encreasing disproportion between the price of labour and that of the necessities of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed....

In the two Poems, "The Brothers" and "Michael" I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections as I know they exist amongst a class of men who are now almost confined to the North of England.

They are small independent *proprietors* of land here called statesmen, men of respectable education who daily labour on their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty....This class of men is rapidly disappearing.²

His frequently quoted words "I have thought twelve hours about society for every one about poetry"³ clearly indicate that he did not set himself apart from society and its problems. On the contrary, his social and political concerns were expressed intensely in his poetry as well as in his letters and other prose writings. His thoughts on man and society led him to be an enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution; but after becoming disillusioned, he lost his hopes for the possibility of social transformation via mere political commitment. Surprisingly, this did not make his perspective shrink but broaden. He turned his attention to a larger ground for social reform. His retreat to nature was the manifestation of the need to redefine man's individual and communal existence in the context of the external world. This was what Coleridge called "the redemptive process" which "promised future glory and restoration"⁴ in man's harmonious coexistence with the landscape. Wordsworth's 'unfashionable' ('unfashionable'

because he spoke as a man out of his time) predictions would have to wait for a later generation to be comprehended as a totally radical shift in revolutionizing the social structure. Wordsworth's era witnessed great economic and social transformations.

The first half of the eighteenth century had seen an increase in trade, which was paralleled by an increase in the population....

In the textile industry a number of technical inventions produced an increase in output; a way had been found of using coal, in the form of coke, to smelt iron; and the steam engine was so improved that it provided a new source of power....

The transport system improved rapidly,..., enabling the different regions to exchange materials and goods....

The age of steam was not established until 1800, when Wordsworth was thirty. The location of factories was changed so that they were situated near coal; more intensive exploitation of coal deposits and iron ore meant that either, as in the Black Country, the little villages began to merge and quite large areas of land were enveloped and spoilt, or that, as in the case of Manchester, a

factory town emerged....

Negative reactions were somewhat delayed, especially when the economists of the day preached the inevitability of 'progress'. At first the whole of society, including the poets, had welcomed the new industrial processes and the feeling of power which they encouraged.⁵

Indeed, Wordsworth's "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways" reflects the poet's optimism about the scientific and social improvements of the era.

Motions and Means, on land and sea at war
 With old poetic feeling, not for this,
 Shall ye, by Poets even, be judged amiss!
 Nor shall your presence, howsoe'er it mar
 The loveliness of Nature, prove a bar
 To the Mind's gaining that prophetic sense
 Of future change, that point of vision, whence
 May be discovered what in soul ye are.
 In spite of all that beauty may disown
 In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
 Her lawful offspring in man's art; and Time,
 Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
 Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
 Of hope, and smiles on you with cheer sublime.

Although Wordsworth hints at the negative effects that science and technology are likely to create, he perceives the improvement as an inevitable process because 'Man's art', to Wordsworth, is part of nature. His attitude differs greatly from that of the primitivists who, refusing to 'fit the external world to the mind', break the ties between man and nature and even tend to destroy the machines which, for them, symbolize evil. The poem is a clear manifestation of Wordsworth's sincere concern about the social and technological developments and problems of his time. In this sense, the context in which Wordsworth produced his poetry is one of the determinants of the content and nature of his work.

A poem about a daisy or a butterfly, however quiet in tone and however naive it may appear in isolation, may be read in this context as a hymn to battle against economic thinkers, who could find no place for such useless natural objects in their systems of ideas. Even Wordsworth's residence in the Lake District, a non-profit-making area compared to, say, Manchester, and his initial attempt to live off the profession of poetry, represent a challenge to the age.⁶

Yet Wordsworth's poetry does not only indirectly challenge the

possible consequences of the industrial revolution. One of his miscellaneous sonnets, for instance, is a straightforward criticism of the corruption man has created.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

These lines stand as one of the bizarre examples of man's alienation from nature; the absurdity and unintelligibility of his existence. He is isolated, in a way, from the rest of the world, and goes toward a total collapse which neither 'Proteus' nor 'Triton' will have a chance to prevent. Wordsworth underlines the discordant posture man has 'achieved' by exploiting everything that is exploitable for the sake of progress. Man's ambition has created a social jungle which is founded on the

notion of consumption, 'getting and spending', and in the long run, man has become the captive of the war he himself started. He is not aware of the sea, nor winds, nor flowers; thus, unable to look into and see nature.

Wordsworth's interest in the social and economic problems of his time finds expression largely in *The Excursion* which portrays and interprets the details of these social changes. The Wanderer's observations about these developments convey not only a sense of astonishment but also a sense of intimidation.

An inventive Age

Has wrought, if not with speed of magic, yet
 To most strange issues. I have lived to mark
 A new and unforeseen creation rise
 From out the labours of a peaceful Land
 Wielding her potent enginery to frame
 And to produce, with appetite as keen
 As that of war, which rests not night or day
 Industrious to destroy!

(The Excursion, VIII, 87-95)

Similarly, the replacement of the 'tracts', the 'foot-path', the 'horse-track' with "stately roads" which "swallowed up" the older ways of transportation "Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom / Of Britain's farthest glens" (VIII, 96-111) vividly reflects the bewildering yet sad impact of urbanization on the

Wanderer. His surprise intensifies when he notices the speed and scope of the increase in "social Industry's command" which "From the germ / Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced / Here a huge town." (VIII, 117-20) The town is "continuous and compact" but it hides "the face of earth" and "the smoke of unremitting fires / Hangs permanent over it. (VIII, 120-26) But the Wanderer grieves when he looks at "the darker side / Of this great change" to see "Such outrage done to nature as compels / The indignant power to justify herself." (VIII, 151- 54) It is not only nature that is brutally and greedily exploited; the labour of man shares the same destiny: "... an unnatural light / Prepared for never-resting Labour's eyes / Breaks from a many-windowed fabric huge." (VIII, 167-69) No matter whether they are men, women, or children, they

Enter, and each the wonted task resumes
 Within this temple, where is offered up
 To Gain, the master-idol of the realm,
 Perpetual sacrifice.

(VIII, 182-85)

Wordsworth was certainly not a primitivist denying the inevitability of progress. But what were his projections about man's social organization in the broader framework of the external world? In fact, 'the external world', as a phrase, would not fit in the Wordsworthian context because he sees humanity and nature as a unity. Of course, such a consideration

reflects the 'ideal', in Wordsworth's case, rather than the 'actual'. So, his retreat to the small community in Grasmere might be regarded as an attempt to turn the 'ideal' into the 'actual.' His choosing to live in Grasmere Vale has not only a personal but a social aspect. Viewing the affairs of society from the country, Wordsworth had a broader perspective and gained deeper insight into and understanding of the complex process society was undergoing.

Wordsworth had something to say, as well as to do, particularly in his poetry, about man's social existence and its interaction with nature. He was not a politician or a sociologist whose main concern is to deal with social issues and to provide solutions for problems. Nevertheless, he did not set himself apart from the affairs of society. In this respect, what his poetry, as a whole, offers, is an arcadian model of communal organization. To Wordsworth, the individual mind, while fitting itself to nature, should also fit human society to the external world. And what he sees as a possibility and presents as a remedy is a social organization in which man prefers to adapt himself to the broader pattern of nature. As Richard Bourke states

In a footnote to the text (*Guide Through the District of the Lakes*) Wordsworth elucidates the nature of this ideal society by pointing to 'One of the most pleasing characteristics of manners in secluded and thinly-peopled

districts' as comprising 'a sense of the degree in which human happiness and comfort are dependent on the contingency of neighbourhood'.⁷

'Neighbourhood', mentioned here as a key term, suggests close and sincere relationships mutually established among the members of a community which, for Wordsworth, can have its true meaning and existence only in the neighbourhood of nature. The question, for Bourke, is how Wordsworth conceives the details of man's social existence in relation with nature. An answer to this question, however, should not be expected from Wordsworth who, as a poet, articulates his thoughts and feelings on this issue but does not attempt to formulate any political strategy. His poetry is sufficient evidence of his stance in terms of the ideal connections between human society and nature.

On their return from Germany to England in 1799 Wordsworth and Dorothy settled in Grasmere Vale where the poet felt himself at home. It was "happy fortune" for him to live, even to die here. ("Home at Grasmere", 11-14) His emotional involvement with nature, the unbounded ecstasy and exuberance arising from the feeling of wholeness and unity with the landscape in his childhood lead him to decide that "... here / Must be his Home, this Valley be his World." (44-45) At first glance, his reason for settling in Grasmere seems to be an individual decision to find an inner peace and integrity that has

been lost because "the realities of life.../" were "...so cold, / So cowardly, so ready to betray." (65-66) Yet, this is not altogether a sudden emotional reaction devoid of rational thought. Dorothy contributes to this decision and they arrive in Grasmere "On Nature's invitation" and "By Reason sanctioned." (71-72) He wants to find his own realities in the Vale he chooses which comprise a harmonious communion with the landscape and a peaceful society. The strong sense of belonging to the place one lives in is dominant in Wordsworth.

What want we? have we not perpetual streams,
 Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh green fields,
 And mountains not less green, and flocks, and herds,
 And thickets full of songsters, and the voice
 Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound
 Heard now and then from morn to latest eve
 Admonishing the man who walks below
 Of solitide and silence in the sky?

(126-33)

He has all these in Grasmere and maintains that "... a thousand nooks of earth / Have also these,..." (135-36) So, what is particular to Grasmere Vale, what makes it distinctive in the mind of the poet is "The one sensation that is here;" (137) This is the sense of unity and wholeness, the feeling of belonging.

...'tis the sense

Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
 A blended holiness of earth and sky,
 Something that makes this individual Spot,
 This small Abiding-place of many Men,
 A termination, and a last retreat,
 A Centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
 A Whole without dependence or defect,
 Made for itself, and happy in itself,
 Perfect Contentment, Unity entire.

(142-151)

The message carried though these lines is an objection and challenge to the irrational and chaotic advance of society toward industrialization and urbanization, which is likely to cut man off from his environment. Grasmere is a place of 'termination', a 'last retreat' from the attacks of materialistic society which produces an army of disintegrated men living in the "vast Metropolis" and "doomed / To hold a vacant commerce day by day / With objects wanting life - repelling love." (594-97) The urban city is a place

Where pity shrinks from unremitting calls,
 Where numbers overwhelm humanity,
 And neighbourhood serves rather to divide
 Than to unite.

(598-601)

Man has been alienated not only from his environment in the city, but from his fellows as well.

... under a black sky,
 A City where, if indifference to disgust
 Yield not, to scorn, or sorrow, living Men
 Are oftentimes to their fellow-men no more
 Than to the Forest Hermit are the leaves
 (603-607)

In the Vale, however, one can find both individuality and a spirit of community that has its power in the interconnectedness of all living and non-living beings. Personal expression is not confined within the narrow channels of city life, nor is the consciousness of being a community. For this reason, "Far from the living and dead wilderness / Of the thronged World" one can find real society here, "A true Community - a genuine frame / Of many into one incorporate." (613-16) As Abrams elucidates,

In this rural place,..., all is on a human scale,
 a multitude-in-unity in which individuality is
 preserved in a society which is a family writ
 large, and which finds itself thoroughly at
 home in its natural milieu.⁸

Wordsworth, then, fits his mind to nature as well as fitting nature to his mind in Grasmere. This is a two-way process and

both ways are necessary to achieve perfect communion. His sense of belonging to the landscape expresses itself in an address to the Vale which is seen as a body of love and protection.

Embrace me then, ye Hills, and close me in,
 Now in the clear and open day I feel
 Your guardianship; I take it to my heart;
 'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.

(110-14)

The intimate relations established between the poet and the Vale do not exclude other beings. When Wordsworth and his sister came to Grasmere in winter, "Stern was the face of Nature." (163) But this does not prevent them from having warm links with natural forms and elements. The sincere correspondence between them creates a feeling of affection and contentment. 'The naked Trees', 'The icy brooks', 'the shower', 'The sunbeam' all confront them "with a passionate welcoming," (172) which paves the way for a sense of belonging: "It loves us now, this Vale so beautiful / Begins to love us!" (179-80) When "the gates of Spring / Are opened (188-89) the poet notices the perfect harmony between the birds with "Hundreds of curves and circlets, to and fro, / Upwards and downwards" (213-14) and nature; between a pair of Swans "That the whole valley knew" (247) and their environment. The Vale appears to be a microcosmic wholeness in the macrocosmic unity of nature. Man

inevitably turns out to be an equal participant in this world instead of trying to dominate and transform it. As Kroeber says

By insisting that a potent "self" is created through deliberate fitting of one's individuality to the external world and of the external world to one's mind, Wordsworth implicitly rejects any ambition to change, to reshape the external world, to "improve" nature. Insofar as we now regard life on our planet as an interplay of ecosystems constituting a vast ecological totality, we, too, recognize that particular "improvements" are not "free," not independent of consequences throughout the complex of systems.⁹

Indeed, the process of one's fitting himself to the external world needs deliberate effort which can only be attained through an awareness of man's real place in nature. Wordsworth does not miss "the small grey horse that bears / The paralytic Man," (505-6) nor will "The famous Sheep-dog," be, to him, "A Stranger long." (510-12) 'Blackbirds and thrushes', 'Warblers and Eagles', 'Owls', 'The raven', 'the birch-tree woods', 'the clear hills', 'woodland flowers', 'lilies' all wait to be noticed, thought of, and taken seriously. Thus he says,

I came not dreaming of unruffled life,
 Untainted manners; born among the hills,
 Bred also there, I wanted not a scale
 To regulate my hopes; pleased with the good,
 I shrink not from the evil with disgust,
 Or with immoderate pain.

(347-52)

He does not want to found a utopia; instead, what he looks for is "Man, / The common Creature of the brotherhood," (352-53) and he is well aware of the fact that man differs

... but little from the Man elsewhere,
 For selfishness, and envy, and revenge,
 Ill neighbourhood - pity that this should be,
 Flattery and double-dealing, strife and wrong.

(354-57)

Such an evaluation of man living in the country may seem to contradict Wordsworth's approach to rural people, but this is rather general and theoretical an approach since what he talks about here is the details of social texture.

Yet is it something gained, it is in truth
 A mighty gain, that Labour here preserves
 His rosy face, a Servant only here
 Of the fire-side or of the open field,

A Freeman, therefore, sound and unimpaired;
 That extreme penury is here unknown
 And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness,

here may the heart
 Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering
 Dreadless, as in a kind of fresher breeze
 Of her own native element, the hand
 Be ready and unwearied without plea
 From tasks too frequent, or beyond its power
 For languor or indifference or despair.

So here abides
 A power and a protection for the mind,

 Where kindred independence of estate
 Is prevalent.

(358-81)

The poet never feels 'alone', 'misplaced', or 'desolate' (427-28) in such a place where "Joy spreads and sorrow spreads;" (445) and which "Home of untutored Shepherds as it is, / Swarms with sensation." (447) Bate argues that

Here man is a 'fellow-labourer' with nature, working in harmony with the elements and seasons. Furthermore, he is free, 'working for

himself, with choice / Of time, and place, and object'. Marx argued that when we work for someone else we become alienated: 'the worker relates to the product of his labour as to an alien object'. But Wordsworth's shepherds are free, they work for themselves,... Despite the absence of alienation and appropriation, Wordsworth's image is not that of a pre-lapsarian Eden. This is a *working* paradise.¹⁰

The cooperation between man's "self-respecting interests" and "Nature's kind and ever-present aid" (452-55) provides a solid ground for, to use Bate's fine phrase, "the spirit of unalienated labour."¹¹

Their little boons of animating thought
That sweeten labour, make it seen and felt
To be no arbitrary weight imposed,
But a glad function natural to Man.

(467-70)

Thus, Wordsworth's reality in Grasmere surmounts "all Arcadian dreams, / All golden fancies of the golden Age." (625-26) simply because this is not a 'dream' or 'fancy', but a down-to-earth order already existing within the country. "According to this model", says Bate

... pastoral life begets republicanism, and by the same account, pastoral poetry as redefined by Wordsworth begets both reverence for nature and political emancipation.¹²

Once more 'love of nature leads to love of man', not only as individual but as community as well. Wordsworth's vision of human society, then, assumes a complete harmony between man and nature which consequently gives birth to a better and more 'intelligible' social order. A peaceful and humble communion with nature brings with itself a peaceful coexistence in society which is not shaped through an antagonistic struggle against nature but established upon the notion that all living organisms interdependently move within the same cosmical unity of the world. Such a perception of civilization differs from the conventional, absolutely progressivist approaches. As Kroeber maintains,

Increasingly we perceive civilization as healthiest when most adroitly adapted to the necessities of the total framework of natural balances within which it must function. This is, in effect, Wordsworth's vision: no return to primitivism, but instead, full utilization of trained consciousness so as to fit better into

the unified interdependence that is nature. The valley Wordsworth praises is not a "primitive" place, although it is not in the mainstream of the "progressive" agrarian-industrial society that was coming to dominate the life of Great Britain in his day.¹³

In Wordsworth's alternative community man equally participates in the social life knowing that he is only a member of the broader context in nature together with other living beings. "Joy in the mountains" and "life in the fountains" ("Written in March", 16-7) depend upon the mutual contribution of natural elements to the creation of life. 'The crowing Cock', 'the flowing stream', 'the twittering birds', 'the glittering lake', 'the green field', 'the oldest', 'the youngest', 'the strongest', 'the grazing cattle' are all independent, yet mutually functioning parts of the same wholeness. This is actually a larger society composed not only of man but of all beings.

In his relatively long poem "Hart-Leap Well", Wordsworth gives an account of a story of hunting. In the first part, Sir Walter attempts to catch a hart alive but is unable to do so because the hart dies before being caught. In memory of this event Sir Walter builds a 'Pleasure-House' near the well. In the course of time, however, the forces of nature show their effect.

'The pleasure-house is dust: - behind, before,
 This is no common waste, no common gloom;
 But Nature, in due course of time, once more
 Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.
 'She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
 That what we are, and have been, may be known;
 But, at the coming of *the milder day*,
 These monuments shall all be overgrown.

(169-76) (emphasis mine)

The gradual reaction of the natural forces to the destruction of harmony and peace is emphasized throughout the poem. What is determinant, in the long run, is not man's destructive hand, but nature's calm, patient, and healing power which irresistibly and uninterruptedly finds, localizes, and covers up the wounds inflicted upon her. So, if man becomes aware of his destructive power, he might shift to a new consciousness and reshape his perception of nature: "Yet 'tis not to enjoy that we exist, / For that end only; something must be done." ("Home at Grasmere", 664-65) The 'milder day', according to Purkis, "remains a puzzle" and "cannot be solved from within the poem."¹⁴ I suggest, however, that 'the milder day' is Wordsworth's most comprehensive vision of nature, man, and society. It is both an intuitive and intellectual specification of the prospective order to be established through the conscious effort of man. This order is likely to base itself upon the unity

and harmony of all organisms. Purkis formulates it in this way:

At this time the poet's 'Creed' included belief in a *new state of being, a redemptive process* brought about in slow tranquillity without sudden conversions or a Last Judgement.¹⁵

What Abrams says parallels Purkis's comment:

... this new world, despite the inescapable fact of evil and anguish - no less evident in the solitude of "fields and groves" than when they are "barricadoed ... / Within the walls of cities" - will provide a sufficient paradise to which we have immediate access.¹⁶

So, Wordsworth's "small community at Grasmere would be the first to experience 'the milder day' which would eventually include the whole of mankind."¹⁷ His voice is still echoing in the world, creating a new consciousness through which every participant feels his/her individuality while constituting and experiencing a mutual unity.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Remembering the poetic rendering of our concrete experience, we see at once that the element of value, of being valuable, of having value, of being an end in itself, of being something which is for its own sake, must not be omitted in any account of an event as the most concrete actual something. "Value" is the word ... for the intrinsic reality of an event. Value is an element which permeates through and through the poetic view of nature.¹

'Tis Nature's law

That none, the meanest of created things,
Of forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good - a spirit and pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably linked.

("The Old Cumberland Beggar")

Perhaps the most striking point, in terms of all critical

assessments concerning Wordsworth's poetry, is the 'value' he attached to the world he lived in. In Whitehead's terms, 'the poetic view of nature' can unmistakably be specified in his work. The intrinsic value of the non-human world, together with man's individual and social communion with nature, constitutes the backbone of Wordsworth's poetry as well as his philosophy. In the course of Wordsworthian criticism, the links between his philosophy and poetry have been extensively examined and it has been frequently concluded that there is a fundamental discrepancy between them. A purely philosophical account of Wordsworth's poetry may yield certain ambiguities, paradoxes, and conflicts because philosophy, in such a case, tends to interfere in the basic rhythm of poetry. Wordsworth surely had a philosophy or philosophies, but before every other consideration he was a poet. Hence, his work ought to be evaluated within the limits of poetry.

An overall assessment of Wordsworth's work -though his poetry is varied in its subjects, themes, and meanings- indicates that it has an essential direction, a pattern or rhythm in terms of its concerns with nature, man, and society. Wordsworth wrote his poetry in an era when the philosophy of rationality dominated the climate of opinion in the Western world "... displacing any aesthetic religious, or philosophical claim to insight or knowledge."² The purely scientific and mechanistic perception of nature goes back to ancient Greece, but its dominance over the Western world comes after Bacon and Descartes. While

attempting to understand and explain the working of the external world, this approach also attempted to create its own facts. According to MacLaughlin,

The Latin root of *fact* is *factum*, which means a "thing done" or "made." Facts in science are not simply "out there" to be picked, as if they were ripe apples, but rather are constituted through scientific inquiry....

Philosophers of science came to recognize that facts are partially dependent upon theories, and theories are partially dependent upon paradigms or research programs, just as research programs and theories are partially dependent upon facts. If there is a fundamental shift in theory, then there is a fundamental shift in "the facts."³

The scientific image of nature is, thus, the consequence of a deliberate effort to create a theoretical, hence, an artificial world in which the parts are casually related to each other and are valued only in so far as they serve the established paradigm. Nature, viewed from a purely scientific perspective, is seen as a non-living and chaotic entity having inadvertently connected elements. It has neither a meaning in itself, nor a value.

The world becomes colorless micro-objects

colliding with one another. Anything that cannot be measured in the formulas and methods of science disappears from the resulting image. It becomes possible to create what could not even be imagined, and we appear to have an awesome ability to transform nature in accordance with our will.⁴

Similarly,

The world that people had thought themselves living in -a world rich in colour and sound, redolent with fragrance, filled with gladness, love and beauty, speaking everywhere of purposive harmony and creative ideals- was crowded now into minute corners in the brains of scattered organic beings. The really important world outside was a world hard, cold, colourless, silent, and dead; a world of mathematically computable motions in mechanical regularity.⁵

What William Wordsworth attempted to do, in his poetry, was to remind people that there was a beautiful, colourful, and

harmonious world outside. Nature deserved respect because it was the larger family having its own wholeness and value and to which humanity also belonged. His effort to redefine nature and man's place in it was not something theoretical or abstract. On the contrary, he established direct contact with his environment. Claude Levi-Strauss, while discussing the distinction between neolithic and modern man, refers to two distinct modes of scientific thought and adds that

These are certainly not a function of different stages of development of the human mind but rather of two strategic levels at which nature is accessible to scientific enquiry: one roughly adapted to that of perception and the imagination: the other at a remove from it. It is as if the necessary connections which are the object of all science, neolithic or modern, could be arrived at by two different routes, one very close to, and the other more remote from, sensible intuition.⁶

Levi-Strauss quite strikingly points out that these two different attitudes are not spontaneously developing processes but two intentional strategies. The terminology employed here clearly emphasizes the links between the second strategy and the mechanistic worldview which "abandons the immediate world of perception and experience in order to develop a mathematized

understanding of unchanging laws,"⁷ and between the first strategy and Wordsworth's poetry which takes shape through perception and imagination and never discards them. Wordsworth's method of observing the external world leads him to a 'sensible intuition' which is an indispensable step toward an ecological evaluation of the world. As Willey comments, Wordsworth's links with nature had a different quality. He achieved "a new kind of intensity, ... a higher level of insight ... by establishing a bond between Nature and the soul of man."⁸

'Happy is he who lives to understand,
 Not human nature only, but explores
 All natures, - to the end that he may find
 The law that governs each; and where begins
 The union, the partition where, that makes
 Kind and degree, among all visible Beings;

(The Excursion, IV, 332-7)

Wordsworth's vision of nature is basically nondualistic and he clearly shows his readers that if they know how to look at the earth with an exploratory and interested eye, they can see its inherent wholeness and harmony. Wordsworth enables his readers to open large their doors of perception so as to feel and comprehend the ultimate unity of the external world. From his perspective, nature becomes a living, exciting, mysterious phenomenon having its own morality and value. Hence, man

does not need to transcend nature, nor is he able to do it because he is only one part of the larger system and parts cannot transcend the whole.

Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know that pride,
 Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
 Is littleness; that he who feels contempt
 For any living thing, hath faculties
 Which he has never used; that thought with him
 Is in its infancy. The man whose eye
 Is ever on himself doth look on one,
 The least of Nature's works, one who might move
 The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
 Unlawful, ever.

("Lines", 50-9)

Wordsworth's poetry is based on intense observation of the non-human world and its relation to man, which enables him to forge intimate links with nature. The rhythm of nature is so inclusive and comprehensive that, to Wordsworth, even something like the French Revolution, is "nothing out of nature's certain course." (*The Prelude*, IX, 247) Although Wordsworth has been frequently considered as a poet having essential political commitments, it was his belief that "Something more basic than political change was necessary for social amelioration, and that was a change of heart in response to nature."⁹ This might be called a social and intellectual revolution

and, in Jordan's words, "This revolution would, ..., reintegrate heart and head, relocate the universal in the particular, and reunite words and things."¹⁰ Abrams emphasizes the way Wordsworth reunites words and things as follows:

Natural objects enter, flow, are received, and sink down into the mind, while the mind dwells in, feeds on, drinks, holds intercourse with, and weaves, intertwines, fastens, and binds itself to external objects, until the two integrate as one.¹¹

Wordsworth's active involvement with the landscape enables him to perceive the world itself as an active and living organism. In this way, he can show the integration between mind and nature.

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

(The Prelude, XIII, 1-10)

The ecological ethic, inherent in Wordsworth's poetry, does not usually take the form of concrete and detailed expressions of environmental worries and problems and as definite solutions to them. It rather functions as an underlying principle connecting all his themes through a morality that emphasizes the interconnectedness and unity of organic life. What he rejects, in his poetry, is the strict and radical dichotomy between mind and soul, between perception and imagination, between man and nature.

For was it meant
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore ...
On solitary objects, still beheld
In disconnection dead and spiritless
And still dividing and dividing still,
Break down all grandeur ...
waging thus
An impious warfare with the very life
Of our own souls?...

("The Ruined Cottage")

In Wordsworth's work man's communion with the external world is not limited to his individual existence. Human social organization should also be incorporated in and adapted to the natural rhythm of organic life. Wordsworth does not, of course,

formulate any specific social model in his work. Yet, he hints at the humble life-style of an arcadian society that is shaped around the idea of respect for nature.

Although Wordsworth never resolved the economic problem per se, he did recognize the essential sterility of the prevailing view. And he envisioned the possibility of some other relationship, recognizing in his poetry that the World, nature itself, and the Mind, the individual psyche, might be blended in some new creation.¹²

Literary works have frequently been used to express environmental worries and ecological sensibilities. Literature has far more advantages than other forms of writing, say, scientific reports, propaganda bulletins or conservationist articles since it is deeper in meaning and emotion and more permanent in effect. Wordsworth's poetry, in this sense, manages to transmit an ecological ethic in an era which was known for its turbulence and confusion in the history of thought and political struggle. One can see Wordsworth lamenting the ill-treatment of animals without questioning whether they have reason or not: "Never to blend our pleasure or our pride / With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels." ("Hart-Leap Well"), or the expansion of cities and avenues without respect for the environment, or the vanishing of the wilderness: "Wheresoe'er the traveller

turns his steps, / He sees the barren wilderness erased, / Or disappearing." (*The Excursion*, 128-30), or the arrival of the railway by the banks of Windermere:

Is then no nook of English ground secure
 From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
 In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
 As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
 Must perish;-how can they this blight endure?
 And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
 Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
 'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
 Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
 Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance:
 Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
 Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
 Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong
 And constant voice, protest against the wrong.
 ("On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway")

According to Alan Bewell, The Preface to *The Excursion*

... is one of the first great statements of an *environmental* theory of human life, and this language makes Wordsworth's vision unique. His enduring concern is not with the mind or nature in isolation, but with how human

powers and responsibilities manifest (and have manifested) themselves over time in our active engagement with nature....¹³

Bewell comments that the way Wordsworth deals with his themes in *The Recluse* has rarely been taken into consideration properly in Wordsworth studies.

The absence of a concept of environmental discourse may not seem all that important, but it has led to a fundamental misreading of Wordsworth's poetry, which treats nature as if it were a stable, ahistorical phenomenon, opposed to mind. Wordsworth's nature is not simply an object of thought, nor a vehicle through which the mind finds itself. It is as much a historical phenomenon as the mind, and the role that human environments have played in shaping human minds is no less extraordinary for Wordsworth than the geological agency of human beings,...¹⁴

the very world which is the world
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all.

(The Prelude, X, 725-27)

According to Bewell, an overall account of Wordsworth's work yields the conclusion that

Wordsworth is an environmental historicist. The true subject of *The Recluse* is not that of the mind coming to self-consciousness, but instead the story of how, through the "blended might" of human and natural agency, a certain kind of environment came into being that has allowed the mind and nature to achieve their greatest potential.¹⁵

It is neither a coincidence nor a surprise to come across William Wordsworth's name in the index pages of almost all the books concerned with ecology because

Vestiges of the Wordsworthian impulse still survive in the activities of bodies like the National Trust or the Society for the Preservation of Rural England, and amongst the hordes of hikers and cyclists who wander weekly over the countryside in search of they know not what...¹⁶

What they are searching for, perhaps, is a distinctive voice singing its *own* song.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
 So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die!

**NOTES
TO
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¹ All references to Wordsworth's poetry except for "Home at Grasmere" are to *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) References will be indicated parenthetically in the dissertation.

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¹¹ MacLaughlin, 312.

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- 20 Quoted, Abrams, 212.
- 21 Abrams, 212.
- 22 Harwell, 3.
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- 24 Willey, 64.
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- 29 Harwell, 16-7.
- 30 Harwell, 20.
- 31 Harwell, 23.
- 32 Harwell, 24-51.
- 33 Willey, 253.

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⁴ Bramwell, 43-9.

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⁷ Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 9.

⁸ Worster, 9.

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¹³ Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selborne*, ed. Paul Foster, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 182.

¹⁴ Worster, 16.

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¹⁶ Worster, 18.

¹⁷ Worster, 21.

¹⁸ Worster, 22.

- 19 Worster, 46-7.
- 20 Worster, 53.
- 21 Worster, 81.
- 22 Bate, 39-40.
- 23 Bramwell, 42-3.
- 24 Worster, 58.
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- 26 Worster, 812.
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¹⁰ Frederick A. Pottle, "The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth", in *English Romantic Poets*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986) 77.

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- 37 Easthope, 1.
- 38 Pottle, 72.
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- 40 Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere Journals*, ed. Pamela Woof, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 84-5.
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- 42 William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, in *The Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth*, ed. Markham L. Peacock, Jr., (New York: Octagon Books, 1969) 105.
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³ Quoted, John Purkis, *A Preface to Wordsworth*, (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1982) 43.

⁴ Quoted, F. B. Pinion, *A Wordsworth Companion: Survey and Assessment*, (Houndmills: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1984) 193.

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