8-1999

Romantic Ken : time and perspective in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth

Will Harris

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Will Harris entitled "Romantic Ken : time and perspective in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Edward Bratton, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Joseph Trahern, Jr., Richard Aquila

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Will Harris entitled "Romantic Ken: Time and Perspective in the Poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Edward Bratton, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

Romantic Ken

Time and Perspective in the Poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Will Harris
August 1999

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

Acknowledgments

I have been fortunate to have an excellent group of professors on my dissertation committee, and I thank all of them for their time and assistance. It has been an honor to be associated with Professors Edward Bratton, Richard Kelly, Joseph Trahern, Jr., and Richard Aquila. They are all smart, funny, and practical men, and working with them has been a pleasure.

I would particularly like to thank Dr. Bratton, who has taught and assisted me throughout my graduate career. He spent a vast amount of time directing this project, and he provided much helpful guidance. Dr. Bratton's kindness and optimism are inspiring. He is everything a professor should be.

Finally, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to my wonderful parents, who have supported me in countless ways, and who were both English majors.

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the connection between representations of time and representations of sight in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth. These poets often use descriptions of their narrators' views as means of marking and measuring time's progress. This study argues that the technique of perspective depiction allows both poets to demonstrate the reconciliation of the philosophical tensions which are imbedded in their poetry.

When speaking of Coleridge and Wordsworth, one might generalize about two of their chief concerns as follows. First (and as many critics have observed), the poetry of each of these men reflects an inconsistency regarding the relationship between the external and internal realms. For Wordsworth, this issue is manifested in his ambivalence about the degree of nature's influence (or lack thereof) on the mind. For Coleridge, a similar dilemma appears in his constant wavering between a Hartleian materialism and a Berkeleian idealism. Second, it is also generally acknowledged that the art of each poet often seems to alternate between two different conceptions of time: one is objective and successive, and the other is subjective and durational. Throughout the works of both poets, one may recognize the tensions that arise due to frequent dalliances within conflicting epistemological and temporal schemes.

Numerous critical studies have considered the issues of perspective and time in this poetry; often, these topics appear in slightly modified form in discussions of landscape and memory, respectively. However, few have touched on the interactive relationship between sight consciousness and time consciousness. This thesis argues that these poets utilize the connection between one's visual field and one's conception of time. Through ingenious narrative presentations of temporal and visual data, each author is sometimes able to mediate between his conflicting philosophical tendencies. Surprisingly, both Coleridge and

Wordsworth achieve this by grounding their narrators in landscapes that contain particularistic time-space details. One finds that such dense fields of vision allow for the convergence of divergent strains within their epistemological and temporal systems.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AP Coleridge, Anima Poetae. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895.

AR Coleridge, Aids to Reflection. Ed. John Beer. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993. Vol. 9 of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 16 vols.

BL Coleridge, Biographia Literaria. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983. Vol. 7 of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 16 vols.

CL Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956-1971.

CN The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. Kathleen Coburn. 4 vols. New York: Pantheon, 1957-1990.

CW The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1912.

E Wordsworth, The Excursion (1814, text from P)

JDW The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth. Ed. Ernest De Selincourt. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1941.

L Coleridge, Logic. Ed. J. R. de J. Jackson. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981. Vol. 13 of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 16 vols.

LB Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads. Ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1991.

LWD The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Ed. Ernest De Selincourt, revised by C. L. Shaver et al. 2nd. ed. 6 vols. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967-82.

P, P 1850 Wordsworth, The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. New York: Norton, 1979. (P designates the 1805 version).

PG The Prose Works of William Wordsworth. Ed. Alexander B. Grosart. 3 vols. London: Edward Moxon, 1876.

POS The Prose Works of William Wordsworth. Ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1974.

TT The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. T. Ashe. London: George Bell, 1896.

WPW Wordsworth, Poetical Works. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1936.

Introduction

Romantic poets loved to write about their surroundings, and they loved to write about themselves. More than anything, the Romantics sought to find signs of harmony and connection between these two realms. This is especially true for Coleridge and Wordsworth, for their religious inclinations enhanced their desire to recognize unity in God's order. Out of these interests, however, arose the general Romantic predicament. These poets' twofold attraction to the separate spheres of nature and self hindered their goal from the outset. Each sphere was too glorious in itself for the poet to maintain a simultaneous interest in the other. As a result, individual Romantic poems frequently alternate between praise for the beautiful object and the thoughtful subject. Romantic narrators often seem to waver like a child choosing between favorite toys.

These poets were also brilliant men, however, and they made heroic efforts to mediate between their mixed sympathies. The main attempt at a compromise appears in the general Romantic pattern, which places a sensitive poet-narrator in a sensuous environment and monitors their interaction. Occasionally this situation leads to successful results. "Tintern Abbey," for example, nicely demonstrates the "half-creative" roles that both nature and self play in arriving at pleasant insights. Yet on other occasions, this dialogue between man and environment only accentuates the separation between the two. Many great Romantic lyrics therefore end with a sense of alienation. Shelley's Mont Blanc is indifferent to him; Keats is not like his urn or his nightingale; and Blake cannot comprehend his tyger.

The challenge was probably even more difficult for Coleridge and Wordsworth. Along with Blake, they were the first of the English Romantics to grapple with this predicament. Unlike Blake, however, they could not escape from their artistic challenges through sustained mystical reveries. As first-generation Romantic poets, they enacted the

difficult transition between the eighteenth-century, documentary method of analyzing nature and the arch-Romantic, emotional interpretation of it. Given these poets' position in history, it is not surprising that their narrative personae sometimes fluctuate between detached, factual descriptions of their surroundings and exclamation-ridden accounts of their reactions within them.

Although Coleridge and Wordsworth do seem to have felt the growing pains of poetry more acutely, they also soothed those pains with an impressive battery of experimental anodynes. For example, Coleridge flirted with pantheism; this doctrine justified the celebration of individual objects as a means of recognizing a cosmic unity among things. Wordsworth also dabbled in pantheistic thought, but he found a more pleasing solution in the function of his memory. By describing his experiences in nature within the context of his personal memory, he nicely subverted questions about the role of external elements in those experiences. Of course, these poets also found less sophisticated methods of bridging the gap. One such technique, which both poets used, is that of "gazing." Sometimes their narrators describe how they simply stared through their surroundings as a rough-and-ready means of recognizing the universal significance of a particular place or event.

One should note that "gazing" includes a temporal dimension. To say that one gazed is to suggest that it took time to see. This is significant, for in addition to its strides in reconciling man with his surroundings, Romantic art distinguishes itself through its recognition of the weightiness of time. Simply put, Romantic poetry attends to the real effects of time's progress to a greater extent than the poetry that came before it.[1] It is difficult to account for this new attentiveness to time, but one can nevertheless recognize two key factors in its development. These factors, in turn, provide another sign of a dual

[1] This development is so significant that James Heffernan has equated Romanticism with "the representation of temporalized space" (226).

interest in both self and environment. First, a literary work's depth of character is directly proportional to its temporal density. Without a rigid chronological framework, it is difficult to chronicle the subtleties of personal development. As a result, a precise sense of timing often accompanies the process of Romantic self-analysis (especially in The Prelude). Second, as these poets viewed landscapes with keenly observant eyes, they recognized the more subtle ways in which nature reflects time's progress. In their poetry, they tried to identify the significance of those displays. Accordingly, nature's contributions to timekeeping are important aspects of poems such as "Dejection: An Ode," "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and "Strange fits of passion have I known."

These poets were also intrigued by the fact that nature could represent time's progress in two different ways. For example, both Coleridge and Wordsworth recognized the temporal complexity manifested in the sun's rising and setting. They saw in the dawn and the dusk an odd shift between the sun's continuous motion and the momentary nature of its tangential contact with the horizon. In a letter describing the process of sunrise, Coleridge struggled to understand this strange "difference of kind -- a chasm of kind in a continuity of Time." When he observed this process, Coleridge explained, he somehow sensed that "the Divinity is transpiercing it at once and declares his presence" (CL3 814).[2]

In their works, Coleridge and Wordsworth sought to capture the Divinity -- or at least truthful insights -- "at once." Yet this is a difficult thing to do. Divinity exists in the realm of the eternal, and truthful insights are enduring ones. As their works represented time in a more dense and realistic manner, these poets encountered the problem of showing how particular, momentary experiences could have lasting significance. This paradox of the eternal moment was not an entirely new one; Augustine, for example, had already explored this issue in his Confessions. For Coleridge and Wordsworth, though, this temporal paradox was not a provocative thought problem, but rather a troubling hindrance

[2] Richard Jackson's "The Romantic Metaphysics of Time" brought this letter to my attention.

to their poetry. To complicate things further, both poets were aware that their personal perceptions of time -- what Coleridge called "time felt" -- were often inconsistent with the objectively measured progression of clock time. Here again, then, a disturbing sense of separation between self and environment arose.

This study regards time as a specific dilemma within the general Romantic predicament. While working to bridge the gap between their environments and themselves, these poets had to find ways of resolving the opposing conceptions of natural, objective time and personal, subjective time. Furthermore, in order to show the general significance of particular poetic scenes or events, they had to create a means of blending the momentary into the enduring. This study also demonstrates that Coleridge and Wordsworth found ways of manipulating their representations of time in order to escape the restrictions it imposes. In short, the temporalizing of their poetry helps to reconcile their inherently paradoxical goals.

Coleridge and Wordsworth mainly resolved the problem by representing time through vision. These poets recognized that one's manner of viewing a landscape affects his conception of time. In their poetry, they often signify time's passage by describing their views of nature. Sometimes, they refer to independent, natural markers of time's progress, such as the position of the sun or the moon. On other occasions, these poets tell time by tracing the movements of their own eyes and relating visual data in a rhythmic, successive series. When a poet-narrator moves through a landscape and relates exactly how objects moved in and out of his range of vision, his narrative appears to be made up of crisp, well-defined instances.

However, the mere connection between sight and time did not in itself remove the rivalry between man and his surroundings. In fact, this connection exposed some familiar problems. Coleridge's and Wordsworth's attentiveness to transient visual effects threatened to promote an undesirable sense that these poets were only concerned with the

momentary and the immediate. Also, their thoroughgoing interest in the visual splendors of nature had troubling implications. Both Coleridge and Wordsworth held that eyesight maintains a "despotic" control over thought. Sight discourages introspection into the wondrous mystery of one's personality, and it therefore elevates the external environment to a privileged status.

Coleridge characteristically turned to metaphysics for solutions to these problems. His notes and prose works reveal that he reflected on the philosophy of time throughout his life. In his writings, two key issues relating to time arise repeatedly. The first involves the very nature of time. He questioned whether it is an absolute, objective process or a mere abstraction made by humans. Coleridge was also concerned with the relationship between the conceptions of time as duration (what he called "Imaginary Time") and time as succession (or "Real Time"). Ultimately, he concluded that all conceptions of time are human interpretations of Godly eternity. Furthermore, the "modifications" of duration and succession represent contrary but equal aspects of infinity. Accordingly, he sought in his poetry to show how the enlightened observer recognizes both conceptions of time within a natural setting. Sometimes, this amounts to no more than a shrewd identification of an apt symbol within nature. In addition to sunrises and sunsets, for example, Coleridge recognized divine logic in the complex processes of certain water phenomena (such as fleeting but recurrent eddies in streams). However, in some poems, such as "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "The Picture," Coleridge brings out these temporal counterparts through ingenious narrative methods, which involve accounts of how narrator-observers looked at poetic landscapes.

Of course, Coleridge was always quick to identify corollaries to principles, and his analysis of time was no exception. He recognized that if the harmonious interaction of self and environment is characterized by a blended, dual representation of time's progress, one can also create a sense of horror by separating these temporal conceptions. As will be

seen, this awareness contributes to the dismal overtones of "Dejection: An Ode" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

Wordsworth, by contrast, showed little interest in the abstract philosophy of time. His prose writings simply do not discuss the subject at any length. If Coleridge approached the problem of time as a metaphysician, however, Wordsworth approached the problem as a writer. Wordsworth, whose poetic technique originated in the telling of simple ballads, was always conscious of the need to delineate his ideas clearly. Yet nothing could be more opaque than his two great themes, which involve the mysteries of his personal development and the interconnection between nature and his mind. When trying to dramatize these nebulous ideas, Wordsworth's poetry often creates temporal traps. His narratives present profound moments -- or "spots of time" -- from his experiences, yet these moments are supposed to capture the timeless, unfathomable nature of his personality. Similarly (and as Coleridge was the first to note), though his poetic persona tries to explain how his mind recognized universal insights during certain episodes, he oddly adorns his accounts with incidental remarks about circumstances of time and place. As a writer, Wordsworth was drawn to specific elements of setting, and he monitored them with a painter's eye and a conductor's sense of time. However, a poet of the soul should have little interest in pictures or watches.

As analyses of passages in The Prelude, The Excursion, and shorter poems will show, the sight-time relationship helps to mediate between these contrary inclinations. Remarkably, his poetry avoids thematic pitfalls by introducing details of views and timing. As a life-long enthusiast in the studies of landscape painting, landscape gardening, and scenic travel, Wordsworth was keenly aware of the role of physical perspective within his poetic settings. By meticulously presenting dense spatial fields in his scenes, his works manage to establish the subjectivity of the narrator's view of the landscape. Furthermore, Wordsworth's scenes emphasize this subjectivity by creating a specific sense of the timing

of his observations. As a result, the narrator is able to interact with nature and enjoy its visual splendors directly, but always with the understanding that his own activity precipitated all harmonious insights. This work shows that this is an important principle in scenes such as the encounter with the discharged soldier in The Prelude and the "Ruined Cottage" section of The Excursion. On other occasions, Wordsworth's poetry draws on his knowledge of perspective to prove the logic behind his alternating representations of time. With the clever selection of vantage points (usually on mountaintops), he shows how nature itself promotes a consciousness of momentary parts as well as continuous wholes. One finds that this technique is especially useful in the problematic Book Eight of The Prelude and in Book Nine of The Excursion.

The main purpose of this study is to demonstrate the crucial effect of the sight-time relationship in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth. In doing so, this study also works to enhance the reader's appreciation of the depth of reasoning behind these poets' narrative techniques. With regard to Coleridge, this work establishes a strong connection between his prolonged philosophical analysis of time and the treatment of time in his poetry. Hopefully, this fact will help to offset the understandable critical tendency to characterize Coleridge as a man who thought at the expense of his art. This study also seeks to round out the critical impression of Wordsworth. He is often regarded as a one-trick poet who repeatedly used memory as a means of circumventing time's bothersome effects. Though there is some truth in this idea, this study better establishes the detrimental and beneficial effects of the presence of time in his poetry. Finally, it is also hoped that this analysis will have implications for the reading of other Romantic poetry, and possibly for the reading of literature from other periods and genres. To that end, the Epilogue of this study briefly hypothesizes about comparable treatments of time and vision in works by other authors.

To conclude, a comment about the title of this study is in order. The word "ken" does not appear often in the following chapters. However, both Coleridge and Wordsworth used the word frequently, and it has apt connotations. First, it is somewhat archaic, and it therefore helps to designate a type of poetic "seeing" that distinguishes the works of these men. More importantly, the various meanings of "ken" touch on all the ideas in this study. The word nicely incorporates the notions of range of vision, recognition, and knowledge, and it implies that there is a connection between them. "Ken" also hints at two senses of time: one recognizes in an instant; one knows for a lifetime. This study of Romantic Ken is a study of the relationship between seeing, timing, and knowing.

A Prefatory Note About Chronology

The following analysis of Coleridge's poetry does not attempt to portray his work as following a progressive, chronological development in his treatment of time and perspective. The poems considered here demonstrate Coleridge's different conceptions of time and his different ways of representing them. Chapter Two focuses on the works by Coleridge that seem to demonstrate his most complex and effective treatments of time. As it turns out, those works were composed after all of the poems mentioned in Chapter One (with one exception). However, it would be an oversimplification to say that Coleridge's writings reflect a single, conscious shift from one treatment of time and vision to another.

Coleridge's varying approaches to representing time manifest his characteristic fluctuation as a poet and a philosopher. Hazlitt captured this quality when he aptly described Coleridge's mind as "tangential" and observed, "There is no subject on which [Coleridge] has not touched, none on which he has rested" (v. 11 p. 29). This dabbling, eclectic nature of Coleridge's mind causes the appearance of inconsistency in much of his work, and questions arising from this fact have provided the impetus for many critical

studies. Of course, this apparent inconsistency is not equivalent with artistic failure, for Coleridge's vacillation is clearly a necessary result of the comprehensiveness of his thought. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, an awareness of Coleridge's constant intellectual flux requires a corresponding critical flexibility.

Here one should consider the precedents set by critics as well as by Coleridge himself. First, the critics: as will be seen, the bulk of scholarly work on Coleridge may be reduced to a single debate, specifically that regarding the poet's philosophical and poetic dilemma of trying to reconcile his subjective mind with the objective world. Generally, these studies differ only insofar as they argue for the success, failure, or indeterminacy of this reconciliation. Importantly, most critics view this dilemma as having an inherent -- or at least early -- presence in Coleridge's mind, and they accordingly qualify their discussions of his "development" and of supposed influences on his thought and writing. For example, John Muirhead begins his study of Coleridge as Philosopher with a cautionary acknowledgment of "The Native Hue of Coleridge's Mind." Muirhead writes:

> The philosophical development of a mind like Coleridge's, omnivorous, sensitive, growing to the last, is necessarily a tangled tale; in his case rendered more tangled still by apparently contradictory accounts of it in his own writings and conversations. There was no recorded line of thought with which his soul had not some bond of sympathy. I believe the chief mistake to be avoided is that of attributing too much to any one of the multitudinous influences that went to the formation of his opinions. (35)

Meanwhile, beyond this "tangled" and comprehensive scholarship that Muirhead describes, there is also in Coleridge an unusual strain of what Stephen Prickett calls "a semi-Platonic 'recognition' theory underlying his method of reading and acquiring knowledge." For example, Coleridge "does not seem to be reading Kant and Fichte to understand what *they*

have to say, but to understand what he already (in some sense) *knows"* (78, his emphasis). As Prickett observes, Coleridge explicitly promotes this view of himself at times, as seen in his explanation (from 1804) of why he never tried to acknowledge his philosophical "obligations step by step" (particularly with regard to German philosophers). Coleridge writes, "Because I could not do [so] in a multitude of glaring resemblences without a lie / for they [i.e., their ideas] had been mine, formed, & full formed in my own mind, before I had ever heard of these writers" (CN2 2375). There he goes on to say, "[I] was jubilant when I found my own ideas well expressed already by others."[3]

Also, even if one does not wish to regard Coleridge's thought as having an *a priori* nature, one must certainly respect the fact that the poet became aware of fundamental philosophical questions at an early age. Coleridge read extensively in various subjects during his childhood, and he later recalled, "At a very premature age, even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in metaphysics and in theological controversy" (BL1 15). Here Coleridge does not provide the names of the objects of this teenage inquiry. Nevertheless, it is clear, for example, that by his early twenties (and before the composition of most of the poetry considered in this study), Coleridge was well read in both empirical and Neoplatonic philosophers (Orsini 18-29). It is likely, then, that Coleridge struggled from an early age to reconcile conflicting realist and idealist philosophies.[4]

These accounts of the complex and non-linear workings of Coleridge's thought encourage an approach to his poetry that is probably appropriate already for all poetry.

---

[3] Coleridge maintained this claim of original knowledge throughout his life. In 1825, for example, he wrote, "I can not only honestly assert but I can satisfactorily prove by reference to writings . . . that all the elements, the *differentials*, as the Algebraists say, of my present Opinions existed for me before I had ever seen a book of German Metaphysics later than Wolf and Leibniz or could have read it, if I had" (CL5 421-22). Muirhead weighs the relevant evidence and concludes there is "no reason to question either the sincerity or the truth" of this and similar statements (56).

[4] Coleridge declared in 1820 that "there neither are, have been, or ever will be but two essentially different Schools of Philosophy: the Platonic, and the Aristotelian" (CL5 1222-23).

This approach recognizes that the techniques and implications of these rich poetic works do not necessarily correspond to the poet's concurrent learning and proclamations. More specifically, this study de-emphasizes the idea of chronological development in favor of recognizing a general, poetic deliberation on the subject of time and vision throughout his work. Also, though Coleridge's prose writings and accounts of his studies provide valuable insight into this subject, the following mainly views these sources as providing explicit commentary on issues that are implicit in Coleridge's poetry from the start.

The following analysis of Coleridge includes writings that represent a wide span within his career, but this study's coverage of Wordsworth's works has a narrower scope. Though many of Wordsworth's poems are mentioned, it mainly focuses on The Prelude and (to a lesser extent) The Excursion. The chapters on Wordsworth also refer to a smaller number of his letters and prose works, and all of the ones mentioned were written within five years of each other. As a result, an explanation of this study's non-chronological approach to Wordsworth might not be necessary. Nevertheless, since this study does make generalizations about Wordsworth's techniques, a brief comment on the subject is in order. Of course, it is ironic to consider the issue of chronology with regard to Wordsworth, since much of The Prelude shows the problems of trying to represent the poet's development in a linear way. As with Coleridge, then, one is encouraged to follow the poet's own lead in his preference for an all-encompassing approach.[5]

However, the main reason for avoiding a chronological interpretation here is the fact that a pattern of development simply does not arise with respect to this issue. The weighty presence of time in Wordsworth's poetry has paradoxical, but consistent, effects: many of his works individually embody a familiar conflict between temporal punctuality

[5] Of course, Alan Grob's excellent study of Wordsworth in The Philosophic Mind shows that one can in fact trace a development in some of the poet's ideas over the course of his career. However, even Grob acknowledges that this type of approach is stymied by The Prelude, since it is the result of an odd, prolonged history of composition (11).

and intimations of immortality. Also, one finds that Wordsworth repeatedly uses certain techniques when trying to remove this temporal tension.

Hopefully, then, the reader will find that this study achieves in analysis what Coleridge and Wordsworth seem to have sought in their poetry, which is a pleasant balance between quantitative revelations and qualitative understanding.

Chapter One

Coleridge in Limbo

"Time, Real and Imaginary"

Coleridge explicitly presents an allegory in his poetry only one time. He does so by appending the unique subtitle, "An Allegory," to the poem "Time, Real and Imaginary." With this gesture he lends a hint of distinction to a poem which history has otherwise doomed to obscurity. Given its allegorical status as well as its brevity, one would expect the eleven-line poem to offer a simple, pithy demonstration of these two conceptions of time. However, this is not the case:

> On the wide level of a mountain's head,
> (I knew not where, but 'twas some faery place)
> Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails out-spread,
> Two lovely children in an endless race,
> A sister and a brother!
> This far outstripp'd the other;
> Yet ever runs she with reverted face,
> And looks and listens for the boy behind:
> For he, alas! is blind!
> O'er rough and smooth with even step he passed,
> And knows not whether he be first or last. (1-11)[1]

In these curious lines, the connection between the running children and any ideas about time is not immediately clear, and thus the first mystery of the poem arises. There is also a mystery involving the poem's date of composition. Upon its first publication in

[1] All quotations from Coleridge's poetry are taken from The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), and are documented by line numbers.

1817, Coleridge claimed that it was "a school boy poem" included in the volume "at the request of the friends of my youth" (CW 1151). However, his son and editor, Hartley, expressed doubt about this claim. He also speculated that Coleridge wrote the poem around 1811 or 1815 (AP 205).

It is quite appropriate that this overt, poetic study of time is shrouded in a twofold mystery of meaning and dating, for Coleridge himself wrestled with questions about the nature and representation of time throughout his life. However, under the cloud of these uncertainties, it is possible to extract several telling notions from the poem. As will be seen, these notions provide clues for understanding Coleridge's manipulation of time and perspective throughout his poetic career.

Coleridge's declaration that the poem is an allegory calls for the reader first to establish the representative roles of its two children. On this point, one who knows nothing about Coleridge might feel a bit confused, for the poem makes no clear connections. Such a person could only rely on the respective order of the presentation of the terms "Real and Imaginary" and "sister and a brother"; this process reasonably equates Real Time with the sighted girl and Imaginary Time with the blind boy. Even a limited understanding of Coleridge's work reinforces this idea, for one may describe the whole of Coleridge's life as a pursuit of the creative Imagination, and he often suggests that physical senses, especially eyesight -- or what he calls "the despotism of the eye" -- are hindrances to this goal (BL1 107). Also, Coleridge's prefatory comments on the poem help to establish an interpretive scheme: "By imaginary Time, I meant the state of a school boy's mind when on his return to school he projects his being in his day dreams, and lives in his next holidays six months hence; and this I contrasted with real Time" (CW 1151). Implicitly, then, Real Time is calendar time, which is external, objective and quantifiable. By contrast, the day dream realm of Imaginary Time is internal, subjective, and independent of the constraints of Real Time. With this in

mind, it is logical to conclude that the blind boy, who is deprived of his primary sense and who cannot observe the markings of clock time, is to be regarded as the representative figure of Imaginary Time.[2]

As Hartley Coleridge noted, one may find another guide to the poem's meaning in a notebook entry from 1811. The entry, which is apparently a commentary on the poem at hand, reads:

> How marked the contrast between troubled manhood, and joyously active youth, in the sense of time! To the former, time like the sun in an empty sky is never seen to move, but only to have *moved.* There, there it was, and now 't is here, now distant! yet all a blank between. To the latter it is as the full moon driving on amid clouds of all shapes and hues, and kindling shifting colors . . . and yet seems not to have moved at all. This I feel to be a just image of time real and time as felt, in two different states of being. The title of the poem, therefore . . . should be time real and time felt (in the sense of time) in active youth, or activity with hope and fulness [*sic*] of aim in any period, and in despondent, objectless manhood -- time objective and subjective. (AP 204)

The loose construction of this note muddles things a bit. Whereas the previous examples make a simple contrast between Imaginary Time and Real Time, Coleridge here dwells on subjectivity, and in so doing he complicates the notion of Real Time. In one sense, this description of a troubled man's failure to monitor time's passage (as marked by the sun) reflects his subjective predisposition. In another sense, though, this lack of awareness also allows the sun to exemplify Real Time's progress, which occurs independently of any observer's perception. In the note, Coleridge seems to realize that

[2] Though they reach their conclusions in a different manner, A. A. Raven, John R. Byers, and Edward Kessler (86-87) agree that the girl and boy represent Real and Imaginary Time, respectively.

he cannot demonstrate the objective, external nature of Real Time without appealing to a non-observing (or occasionally-observing) subject, toward which Real Time is demonstratively indifferent. Thus, the sun example has both objective and subjective dimensions. Here, though, it is helpful to recall the girl from the original allegory. Coleridge presents her as always running with a "reverted face." Whereas the troubled man beholding the sun is conscious only of its shift relative to its past position, the backward-looking girl similarly has no sense of her forward motion (she can see only where she has been). The sun analogy is slightly different from that of the girl in that the former emphasizes the successive nature of Real Time's progress. However, both analogies capture another essential aspect of Real Time: as A. A. Raven explains, "The person who experiences Real Time does not feel it move but knows that it has done so only by observation of some other object" (32). Thus both the shifting sun and the running girl demonstrate the passage of Real Time.

By contrast, he who experiences Imaginary Time is like the observer who never looks away from the moon and is therefore aware only of motion, and not shifts in position (here, Coleridge's description of the clouds cleverly provides the indispensable function of establishing a relative sense of motion, yet the metaphor preserves the sense of being ignorant of the moon's gradual shifts in position). With this in mind, one understands the significance of the boy's blindness in the allegory. As the representative of Imaginary Time, he is constantly aware of motion, for his other senses preserve his consciousness of running "over rough and smooth." However, due to his blindness, he has no notion of his position relative to his sister: he "knows not whether he be first or last."

Overall, then, both the poem and the notebook entry demonstrate that Coleridge acknowledges two conceptions of time's passage: objective and subjective. Also, he captures this understanding by emphasizing details of motion, position, and sight (or lack

of sight). Beyond these basic facts, however, one may gain a better sense of Coleridge's treatment of time through a consideration of some differences between the poem and the annotation. First, although "Time, Real and Imaginary" does not express a preference for one sense of time over the other, the notebook entry suggests Coleridge's belief in the primacy of Imaginary Time. Imaginary Time is the possession of "joyously active youth," after all, while Real Time burdens "Troubled manhood." Also, the poem suggests an inherent relationship between its two time schemes, for the allegorical figures are "a sister and a brother." In the sun/moon analogy, however, Coleridge offers no sense of a connection between objective and subjective time. There, Coleridge must describe two separate scenes to make his point. Also, in the sun/moon comparison, Real Time appears more as an unfortunate absence of Imaginary experience rather than as a true counterpart of subjective time.

These differences are representative of Coleridge's treatments of time throughout his poetic career. One finds that his poetry is consistent in its frequent, simultaneous exhibitions of two conceptions of time. Beyond this, though, his poetry is inconsistent in its representations of the relationship between "time objective and subjective." Often, the two schemes appear as equal counterparts (as in "Time, Real and Imaginary"). Elsewhere, one finds the poet working to embrace subjective time through the denial of the objective temporal realm. Furthermore, one Coleridgean system conceives of a hierarchy of time schemes, the ascendance of which leads to a notion of eternity itself; and another regards Real and Imaginary Time as balanced and interrelated approximations of Godly timelessness. Before considering these systems, however, it is necessary to recognize the ways in which Coleridge conveys the senses of objective and subjective time.

Vision and Real Time

Coleridge's poetry is distinguished by its presentation of visual detail. Throughout his work, one finds a constant attentiveness to the sight lines of the narrator-observer. His poems realistically integrate the positions and motions of the observer with the presentation of the viewed objects. Furthermore, this quality of his narration seems to have been with the poet from the start. Consider, for example, the opening stanzas from one of his earliest poems, the sonnet "Life," from 1789:

> As late I journey'd o'er the extensive plain
> Where native Otter sports his scanty stream,
> Musing in torpid woe a Sister's pain,
> The glorious prospect woke me from the dream.
>
> At every step it widen'd to my sight --
> Wood, Meadow, verdant Hill, and dreary Steep,
> Following in quick succession of delight. . . . (1-7)

The poet begins the first stanza with an indistinct reference to the "extensive plain" and a slightly more specific reference to a local stream. By the fourth line, however, the "prospect" of the real natural scene shocks the poet from his dream, not only of his "Sister's pain" but also, it seems, of vague description. In the second quatrain, the poem suddenly offers a truer sense of the narrator's real, changing views. Having initially established a rather general setting, the poem now traces each "step" of the poet and the corresponding widening of the narrator's perspective. Coleridge presents a visual inventory of the "succession" (a key word) of "Wood, Meadow, verdant Hill, and dreary Steep."

Here one must observe that the poem's attentiveness to vision corresponds with temporal demarcation. As the second stanza establishes a more realistic account of the

narrator's shifts in perspective, it appeals to a discrete sense of time in order to link his motion with his subsequent views. With the narrator's steps comes a series of landscape revelations. Furthermore, and as the multiple dashes in the poem emphasize, these views appear at distinct moments: there is not a gradual change of view, but rather a quick succession of sights.

Of course, a walk through a landscape may in fact present shifts in view that are dependent upon a single step's difference (as when just reaching the peak of a mountain, emerging from a treeline, and so on). However, such a walk would also include many other scenes that do not lend themselves to visual or temporal demarcation (as with a gradual turn in a path or a long walk through an open meadow). In this sense, the presentation of visual data in "Life" could not be described as completely realistic. Rather, Coleridge seems to be emphasizing selectively the bounded, momentary scenes that one may extract from a detailed description of a narrator's points of view. Also, with Coleridge's allegory of time in mind, one must note that this technique is akin to the sense of Real Time, for it centers on the visual recognition of distinct shifts in position over time.

The few lines of poetry quoted above may not alone justify these complex statements, but as will be seen, one may recognize a similar treatment of visual detail throughout Coleridge's work. His technique is more apparent, however, in his early poetry, because he there emphasizes the narrative "eye" as much as, if not more than, the narrative "I."[3] "Lines Composed While Climbing . . . Brockley Coomb" (from 1795) provides another primitive example. In fact, the poem begins with a consideration of perspective: "With many a pause and oft reverted eye / I climb the Coomb's ascent . . ." (1-2). After this opening, the poem proceeds to describe the lush views of nature that

[3] It is quite revealing that, according to my counting in Sister Eugenia Logan's concordance, variations on the word "eye" appear over 300 times in Coleridge's literary work. By contrast, "ear" appears nine times.

accompany the ascent, and embedded in these views are elements of visual and temporal demarcation:

> From the deep fissures of the naked rock
>
> The yew tree bursts! Beneath its dark green boughs . . .
>
> Where broad smooth stones jut out in mossy seats,
>
> I rest: -- and now have gained the topmost site. (7-11)

The description is brief, but one nevertheless sees that Coleridge creates the scene out of distinct elements of time and space. Temporally, the poem consists of a series of moments: the climb is measured by pauses, the yew tree "bursts" rather than grows from the rock fissures, and the poet has "now" reached the summit. Along with this segmentation comes sharply defined visual detail, as captured in the jutting stones, the tree bursting from the rocks, and the prospect of the just-reached "topmost site." As in "Life," Coleridge here displays his inclination toward particularity in description.

Coleridge also refers to his "prospect" in both poems, and his specific use of this word prompts a consideration of the historical context of his descriptive technique. Overall, one may regard Coleridge's affinity for visual and temporal particularity as the product of a gradual, eighteenth-century movement that promoted this sense of perspective. According to John Wilson Foster, poetry of the mid-1700's distinguished itself by its new interest in describing landscape views more realistically. Foster partially locates this development in the emphasis of so-called "topographical poetry" (or "landscape poetry") on the selection of a real prospect from which the poet-narrator may describe a scene. As he explains, literature of the Medieval and Renaissance periods frequently presented symbolic prospects -- often of paradise -- in the "culmination" of allegorical stories (238). However, topographical poems such as John Denham's "Cooper's Hill" (which, like most other topographical poems, "begins with a poet standing on a hill overlooking a river") show an interest in the actual, literal views that

certain prospects provide. Thus one finds relatively accurate descriptions of localized topographical features creeping into poetry of this period. At the same time, these poems show "perspective emerging from an ideal and perspectiveless prospect" in a "painful birth" (235, 243). Foster describes this difficult transition as follows:

> The poet's eye seems to be trying to gain liberation from its close and traditional identification with the muse and fancy. Perspective seems to be trying to escape from the prospect's mythic and perspectiveless totality, and point of view from fancy's omniscience. . . . The eye as a physical organ or instrument is no longer capable of seeing all it wishes to see across time and space. A fixed point of view means limitation and partiality. (239)

As the overtone of struggle in Foster's description suggests, this emergence of the physical eye was not complete in the middle of the eighteenth century. He notes, for example, that even Denham "has it both ways" in "Cooper's Hill." There, in spite of passing representations of a realistic sense of perspective, the poet does describe views that are beyond the conceivable bounds of real sight. He also alternates between literal and allegorical depictions of the view (238-40).

Although Foster denies that there is a direct correlation between landscape gardening, landscape painting and this poetic development, he does acknowledge similar, contemporary movements in the sister arts. With concerns about direct influences aside, one may certainly recognize the eighteenth century's general progression toward favoring objectivity and verisimilitude in depicting visual settings. For example, in her study of landscape painting from this period, Barbara Maria Stafford describes the artistic results of "a period that valued the factual, that doted on meticulous observation, that dwelled on experience" (59). As Stafford explains, the sources for such empirical affinity in the arts are numerous. They include literary developments (e.g., the boom in description-oriented

travel literature during this period), philosophical developments (especially, Stafford says, the "Lockeian idea of knowledge: the sequential accumulation of particulars collected from multifarious but verifiable objective reality") and scientific developments (e.g., geological findings that recognized infinite variety among substances ranging from crystals to earth strata) (17-21). In painting, these Neoclassical insights created a fondness for depicting sudden changes within a view as well as emphasizing "singularity" -- such as "the odd outcropping, the characteristic section of terrain," and so on (17, 59-60).

In his study of Coleridge's treatment of nature, Raimonda Modiano considers the poet's relationship to this Enlightenment context. Whereas Stafford observes a general link between travel literature and eighteenth-century art, Modiano examines Coleridge's own, abundant travel writings and finds in them an attentiveness to "the most minute and rapidly changing phenomena in a landscape" (8). Modiano explains that throughout these works Coleridge is "patiently describing the diverse appearances of objects both far and near and nervously straining his eyes to encompass the perpetually varying activity of nature" (8). For Modiano, the clearest influence on these writings is the lingering influence of the Picturesque school of painting, which encouraged mimetic representations of nature (8-9). As Wordsworth's well-known, disparaging remarks about the Picturesque school suggest, this movement had certainly waned by the dawn of the Romantic period.[4] However, Modiano notes that Coleridge never explicitly criticized the Picturesque school. In fact, he claims that Coleridge only diverges from the Picturesque tradition by being "picturesque to a point of fine excess" (12). In other words, Coleridge distinguishes himself through his heightened attentiveness to the representation of visual

[4] Cf. P xi.155-75. As Chapter Four of this study notes, however, Wordsworth's art also reflects an interest in Picturesque principles. His attitude toward the movement generally seems more ambivalent than this passage from The Prelude suggests.

detail. According to Modiano, however, Coleridge's notebooks and travel writings show the negative consequences of such particularistic description: unlike painting, it is difficult verbally to describe numerous details while still maintaining a sense of a view as a whole. Modiano writes, "We watch Coleridge in turn giving way to the pressure of individual objects and patiently cataloging their minutest forms, or driving directly to the constitutive lines of a landscape without filling in any of the details" (16).

One may recognize a similar, poetic pattern of fluctuation in a work such as "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement." This poem describes Coleridge's mixed feelings upon leaving his cottage near Bristol, where he and Sarah lived as newlyweds in 1795. The narrator explains that these mixed feelings arise from his sense of guilt about spending his time in idle enjoyment of nature:

> Was it right,
> While my unnumber'd brethren toil'd and bled,
> That I should dream away the entrusted hours
> On rose leaf beds, pampering the coward heart
> With feelings all too delicate for use? (44-48).

However, before Coleridge considers this question, he hints at its answer with the opening stanzas of the poem, which delight in presenting a detailed inventory of the cottage's beautiful surroundings. Coleridge also describes this beauty by presenting the reactions of a Bristol local who was passing by. In the poem's account of this onlooker's actions, one again sees Coleridge's interest in the presentation of measured, successive views:

> For he paused, and look'd
> With a pleas'd sadness, and gaz'd all around,
> Then eyed our Cottage, and gaz'd round again,
> And sigh'd, and said, it was a Blessed Place. (14-17)

This observer, like Coleridge in his travel writings, seems to waver between general gazing and fixing his view on a specific image (in this case, of the cottage). Interestingly, the lines counter this fluctuation with a deliberate rhythm of description; their measured pauses and repetition emphasize the sequential nature of the observer's perceptions.

Later in the poem, one sees an expansion of this technique in a description of Coleridge's own view of the area. In the following, the poet describes his view of the landscape from the prospect of a mountaintop:

> But the time, when first
> From that low Dell, steep up the stony Mount
> I climb'd with perilous toil and reach'd the top,
> Oh! what a goodly scene! *Here* the bleak mount,
> The bare bleak mountain speckled thin with sheep;
> Grey clouds, that shadowing spot the sunny fields;
> And river, now with bushy rocks o'erbrow'd,
> Now winding, bright and full, with naked banks;
> And seats, and lawns, the Abbey and the wood,
> And cots, and hamlets, and faint city-spire;
> The channel *there*, the Islands and white sails . . .
> It seem'd like Omnipresence! (26-38, his emphasis)

Coleridge begins to present the landscape as a "scene," but the passage in fact contains a series of scenes. As Coleridge speaks of what is "*here*" and what is "*there*," one can imagine him as turning and pointing. Apparently, Coleridge is partially inclined to evoke the idea that this mountaintop prospect provides a total, encompassing view: the passage serves as an introduction to a meditation on God, and within a few lines the poet claims that "the whole World / Seem'd *imag'd* in [the landscape's] vast circumference" (39-40, his emphasis). However, the prolonged presentation of various visual details, combined

with the absence of any verbal or visual links between them, utterly counters this idea of totality. Like the Bristol bystander, this narrator is doing a lot of turning and looking. In the process, the poem tends toward a successive sense of Real Time, for the narrative reflects to the poet's attraction to distinct, bounded views.

Imaginary Time

One sees, then, that these early narratives hint at Coleridge's tendency to grasp at particular elements within his settings. Furthermore, to the extent that these particularities momentarily arise in the midst of a flux of motion and/or an extended observation, they provide a sense of linear and successive temporal gradations. Of course, the use of this technique appears relatively inconsequential (at least in the poems considered above), and its fullest effects will not be recognized until the next chapter.

It is important to observe at this point that many of Coleridge's works, including the vision-oriented poems mentioned above, offset their visual particularity with a countering suggestion of indiscrete sensation. Often, this subjective sense appears in a dismissal of the eye's actual, physical perception of the external view. In other words, one sometimes finds particularistic visual details juxtaposed with explicit or implicit efforts to see beyond such distinctiveness and instead enjoy an immeasurable duration of experience. "Life," which earlier demonstrated a movement toward a more accurate representation of perspective, provides a good example. After Coleridge's marked description of his steps through the landscape and his corresponding views, the poem's presentation of perspective suddenly changes. Although the second quatrain does present the successive appearance of "Wood, Meadow, verdant Hill, and dreary Steep," it concludes by describing the arrival at a prospect where "all -- at once -- did my eye ravish'd sweep!" (6-9). With this shift, the poem becomes another example of the

transitional poetry described by Foster, for the poem hereafter presents a metaphorical depiction of the narrator's view:

> May this (I cried) my course through Life portray!
> New scenes of Wisdom may each step display,
> And knowledge open as my days advance!
> Till what time Death shall pour the undarken'd ray,
> My eye shall dart thro' the infinite expanse,
> And thought suspended lie in Rapture's blissful trance. (9-14)

At the beginning of this passage, Coleridge again presents his walk (now symbolic) as a series of steps and scenes. The goal of this measured pursuit, however, is to arrive at a landscape of "infinite expanse" where the darting, viewing eye has no momentary anchor. In short, the goal is to see past Real Time and space. Importantly, the poem's introduction of this enraptured sensation coincides with a shift from a realistic depiction of perspective to a metaphorical one. Also, the use of the words "infinite" and "trance" is revealing here, for these words provide another hint of the association of blissful experience (reminiscent of the "joyously active youth" Coleridge describes in his note) with a diffusive and penetrating gaze that is not bounded by visual elements. In this sense, the narrator here strives to achieve the blindness Coleridge associates with Imaginary Time, which is removed from conditions of objective time and position in space.

The poem makes it clear, however, that this eternal bliss is a product of the rapture and is therefore a quality of paradise. By contrast, the narrator's experiences on earth must continue as the measured series of steps of learning described, leading ultimately to the "time" at which Death makes the transition into eternity possible. The poem suggests that a discrete temporal process is indeed temporal in the sense that it is inferior to the spiritual realm. Coleridge appears bound by experience in the earthly

world to a successive sense of time, while the rapture provides a continuous duration, which is the narrator's goal. Thus, Coleridge establishes a simple, two-step hierarchy between objective, Real Time rapture and heavenly eternity. To the extent that Coleridge's description of the bliss of the rapture evokes his description of Imaginary Time, Imaginary Time in fact appears to be timeless.

As will be seen, this sense of a connection between Imaginary Time and eternity is inconsistent with other portrayals of time in Coleridge's poetry. Often, his works do not present Imaginary Time as occupying a separate dimension from clock time. Rather, Imaginary Time appears in some cases merely as a subjective, qualitative understanding of time's passage. According to this approach, Real Time and Imaginary Time do not denote two separate processes of time. Instead, they describe two ways of interpreting the same, single event (i. e., time's progress). Here it is helpful to recall Coleridge's comparison of a youth's perception of time to a troubled man's. There is certainly not an ontological shift between youth and manhood; instead there is a shift in perception. According to that analogy at least, the difference between time schemes is not that of mortality and immortality.

Coleridge sometimes demonstrates a sense of a complementary relationship between objective and subjective time by contrasting momentary, visual intersections that a field of vision presents against the indistinct changes that it also contains. One sees a poetic exploration of this in "A Sunset," which treats one of Coleridge's favorite poetic subjects. The natural, archetypal event of a sunset presents images of both gradual descent and a well-defined moment of disappearance. Coleridge emphasizes this paradoxical aspect of the process in the poem. He begins, though, with another observable moment, specifically that of the visual tangent established by the sun's first contact with the horizon:

Upon a mountain's edge with light touch resting,

There a brief while the globe of splendour sits
And seems a creature of the earth; but soon
More changeful than the Moon,
To wane fantastic his great orb submits,
Or cone or mow of fire: till sinking slowly
Even to a star at length he lessens wholly.

Abrupt, as Spirits vanish, he is sunk! (1-8)

From the beginning, Coleridge's description reflects the role of interpretation in perceiving the temporal dimension of this event. As anyone who has truly observed a sunset knows, the initial, apparent contact between the sun and the horizon is a fleeting one (in fact, the whole process is surprisingly fast). The poem, however, opens with a suspension of this momentary, visual tangent. Coleridge emphasizes the tangential nature of the contact with the words "edge" and "light touch," yet he also seems to be showing off his poetic ability to make the sun "sit" and "rest" at this point for a rather indeterminate "brief while." Here one sees the experience of "time felt" (as Coleridge defined subjective, Imaginary Time) in that the narrative makes no effort to approximate the Real Time of the sun's rapid shifts in position.

From this point, the poem appeals to the inherently gradual appearance of the sun's following motion. As though pressing a button, Coleridge in line three allows the sun to proceed from its unnaturally static position. The diction of the next four lines repeatedly emphasizes the immeasurable nature of the process, as seen in "changeful," "wane," "sinking slowly," and the revealingly oxymoronic "lessens wholly." This description, like this stage of the event itself, offers no sense of visual distinction, and in so doing it promotes a sense of temporal duration rather than succession. Moreover, such

indeterminate language provides a nice set-up for the "abrupt," momentary disappearance of the sun, which marks a climactic shift from one sense of time's progress to another.[5]

Attached to the manuscript of this poem are the poet's own comments on it. Coleridge writes: "These lines I wrote as nonsense verses merely to try a metre; but they are by no means contemptible; at least in reading them I am surprised at finding them so good" (CW 394). It is likely that some of this satisfaction arises from the facility with which the narrative shifts between temporal schemes. The event itself contains an inherently blended portrait of successive and continuous representations of time, and the narrative demonstrates an ability to pivot between these schemes on the perceiver's own terms. More importantly, the poem's fluctuations between the two conceptions of time do not promote a sense of hierarchy among them. Rather, momentary, measurable time and gradual, immeasurable time appear to be equal, complementary modes of perceiving a single process.[6]

As noted above, Coleridge suggests that he did not put much thought into writing "A Sunset," and one wonders if this carefree creation allowed for the narrative's happy balance of temporal representations. Such a question arises within the context of much of his other poetry, which displays an uncertainty regarding the relationship of these two time schemes. In order to recognize the roots of this dilemma, one should recall that Coleridge defines Real and Imaginary Time as "time objective and subjective." An exploration of Coleridge's thoughts on the relationship between object and subject will shed light on these corresponding views of time.

---

[5] Cf. Osorio III.i: "A rim of the sun lies yet upon the sea -- / And now tis gone!" (CW 560); "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out: / At one stride comes the dark" (199-200).

[6] It is worth noting that one of Wordsworth's later poems reveals a similar fascination with the senses of visual and temporal contrasts that a sunset provides. In an untitled sonnet on this event, Wordsworth emphasizes the lengthy nature of the period during which he watches the sun drop. He then remarks on the sudden manner in which the sun pays "the appointed debt / To the flying moments, and is seen no more" ("I watch, and long have watched, with calm regret" ll. 8-9). As Chapter Four explains, the temporal complexity of the sunset also has an important function in the climactic scene of The Excursion.

Subject and/or Object

Questions about the interaction between a perceiving subject and the external, objective world puzzled Coleridge throughout his life.[7] During the composition of his Biographia Literaria in 1815, Coleridge was still wrestling with the issue, and there one finds a clear expression of his familiar dilemma. Drawing from Schelling, Coleridge in Chapter 12 declares, "All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject" (BL1 252). Having made this observation, Coleridge proceeds to define his use of the terms "object" and "subject." He plainly states: "Now the sum of all that is merely objective, we will henceforth call nature, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand the sum of all that is subjective, we may comprehend in the name of self or intelligence" (254-55). Coleridge immediately afterwards expresses the balanced and interactive relationship between subject and object in the act of knowledge: "Both conceptions are necessary antitheses. . . . Now in all acts of positive knowledge there is required a reciprocal concurrence of both, namely of the conscious being, and of that which is in itself unconscious" (255). That said, Coleridge establishes the task of the following sections of the Biographia: "Our problem is to explain this concurrence, its possibility and necessity" (255).

Coleridge next explicitly declares what he has implied in his definition of subject and object: neither precedes or has primacy over the other. He writes, "During the act of

[7] In 1801, for example, Coleridge remarked that "the subject of my meditations ha[s] been the Relations of Thoughts to Things" (CL2 671-72). The phrase "thoughts and things" appears frequently in Coleridge's writings as a shorthand reference to this subject-object dilemma, and at times he revealingly transposes the two words while employing the phrase (see CL2 678, CN2 2784). Much of the Biographia, meanwhile, is dedicated to an exploration of "the natural differences of *things* and *thoughts*" (BL1 90, his emphasis). Of course, in striving to reconcile this dualism, Coleridge often wavered between privileging either the objective or subjective realm. With regard to his poetry, one may find well-known examples of his shifting polarity in the nearly-pantheistic "The Eolian Harp" and the explicitly-idealistic "Dejection: An Ode."

knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united, that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs. There is here no first, and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one" (255). Coleridge appears certain of this point, for he proceeds to demonstrate at length the fallacies of empirical, object-centered realism (which Coleridge labels as "natural philosophy") and subjective idealism ("transcendental or intelligential" philosophy).[8] However, it soon becomes clear that Coleridge's exploration of the subject-object relationship consists mainly of a rejection of inadequate theories.

As Kathleen Wheeler has observed, Coleridge's dismissal of empirical systems (such as Hartleianism) and idealistic systems (such as Berkeleianism) leaves him in the midst of a philosophical stalemate based on "the undeniable dualism of mind and matter" (33). Wheeler explains that this type of dualism is unacceptable for Coleridge, for it emphasizes a fundamental division -- rather than a distinction -- between the two realms. As Coleridge puts it, "It is a dull an obtuse mind, that must divide in order to distinguish; but it is a still worse, that distinguishes only to divide" (AR 33). In short, Coleridge does not want to de-emphasize the interactive relationship between subject and object. Wheeler observes, "For Coleridge this great problem of the interaction of the two distinct existences could only be solved by progressing to some position which neither denies one or the other, nor maintains their absolute difference" (34).

Whether Coleridge does progress to such a position -- in his philosophy or in his poetry -- is a matter of great debate. In fact, this question is at the heart of most criticism of any and all of Coleridge's writings. Critics describe the issue in different ways, but one sees that a fundamental subject-object tension is usually embedded in the specific topic at hand. Some commentators, such as George Watson, simply acknowledge the

[8] Chapter Two of Kathleen Wheeler's Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* contains a detailed commentary on Coleridge's evaluation of these two schools.

presence of this "baffling question of the poet's relation to external reality" and cautiously decline to offer an opinion concerning the issue's resolution (35). Others are eager to praise or pity Coleridge. Thomas McFarland, for example, reduces all of Coleridge's philosophical writings to an exploration of the relationship between his senses of "I am" and "It is." He concludes that there is a "remarkable unity and cohesiveness" in Coleridge's prose, and he claims Coleridge achieves a "Trinitarian Resolution" of the problem (xxiv). For Walter Jackson Bate, the subject-object issue appears in the form of the poet's conflicting desires for feelings of unity and diversity: "The overriding philosophical interest of Coleridge, from the time he became a disciple of David Hartley at Cambridge until the end, was in unity of interpretation, unity of feeling, unity of relationship of every sort, but with no sacrifice for the claims of diversity." According to Bate, one sees this struggle in the poet's "openness to the obdurate detail . . . and [in] his eagerness in every case to rescue it into a richer synthesis" (31). Bate tends to view Coleridge's pursuit as ending in success. By contrast, Paul Magnuson emphasizes the "nightmare poetry" that demonstrates Coleridge's "retreat into subjectivity [which] destroys any connection with objective reality" (16). Similarly, Michael Cooke observes that "Coleridge seeks so variously, and on balance so vainly, to come to formal imaginative terms with the material world" (168).

The fact that critics' conclusions are individually so sweeping and collectively so varied suggests that a great deal of generalizing is involved here. Nevertheless, the differences of critical opinion on this issue, which mainly arise in an effort to make just this sort of generalization, are not as contradictory as they appear. All of these commentaries essentially emphasize Coleridge's lifelong struggle with this key epistemological question. Also, critics' different conclusions obscure a fact that almost all would acknowledge: his claim for the "necessary antitheses" of subject and object notwithstanding, Coleridge seems to have had a predisposition toward favoring the

primacy of the subjective mind. "Such an assumption," write Bate and James Engell, "was in Coleridge's very nature" (BL1 lxxiv). Referring to his childhood, Coleridge acknowledged this fact about himself in a letter of 1797:

> I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my *sight* -- even at that age. . . . Those who are led to the same truths step by step through the constant testimony of their senses contemplate nothing but *parts* -- and all *parts* are necessarily little -- and the Universe to them is but a mass of *little things.* (CL1 354, his emphasis)

As shown earlier, Coleridge's poetry reveals a fondness for specific sights, "parts" and "little things" in his depictions of landscape and perspective. Here, though, he expresses his instinctive trust in the primacy of his "conceptions" over his "sight." As will be seen, this subjective persuasion accounts for the denial of sensation, especially that associated with Real Time, in certain poems. Before analyzing those efforts, however, it is helpful to consider Coleridge's study of Hartleian doctrine. This phase in Coleridge's thought represents only a battle in a lifelong subject-object war, yet in it one may recognize the underpinnings of his distrust of externality and all its manifestations, including Real Time.

Coleridge's philosophical pursuits during his time at Cambridge led to what Bate describes as a "complete commitment" (which began around 1793) to the philosophical system of David Hartley (12). This system would encourage Coleridge to locate epistemological primacy in the objective realm. Hartley's doctrines may be classified in various ways, including associationism, necessitarianism, materialism, and mechanism. At the heart of these terms, however, is an empirical sense of the guiding influence of the external world on mental processes. Bate describes Hartley's depiction of learning and knowledge as follows:

> Man, as Hartley conceives him, is a sort of computer capable of progressive development. When an object is encountered, vibrations carry the impression through the white medullary substance of the nerves to the brain, after which fainter vibrations ("vibratiuncles") remain ready in the brain to coalesce with others. Memory begins, and man develops step by step as more complex and refined actions take place. (12)

As Melvin Rader explains, these impressions (according to Hartley) have physiological, atomistic properties: "sensations are bits of perceived data, ideas are bits of meanings -- each bit is as separate and impenetrable as a Newtonian physical atom. Even in complex combinations, the ideas are like beads, strung on the thread of association" (23). Importantly, then, Hartley's system not only locates the origins of thought in the objective realm but also promotes the idea of perception being made up of segments or individual units.

Soon after he had embraced Hartley's system, however, Coleridge's natural distrust of "little things," as well as his previously described predisposition toward idealism, became apparent. In the spring of 1796 he began to study the philosophy of George Berkeley, whom Bate describes as "the supreme exemplar of subjective idealism in the history of philosophy" (32). Also, though he was referring to himself as a "Hartleyan" around 1794, Coleridge by 1798 was declaring, "I am a Berkeleyan" (CW 180).[9] A few more years of reflection led to a more forceful rejection of associationism. In 1801, Coleridge declared that he had "overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley" (CL2 706). Of course, Hartley himself allowed for mental processes that surpass atomistic sensation, yet Coleridge could not reconcile the notion of "vibratiuncles" with any sense of creative will. Ultimately, Coleridge simply refused to

[9] J. A. Appleyard rightly notes, however, that the influence of Berkeley's system on Coleridge, like that of all philosophies, "does not seem to have been a consistent or steady one" (51).

believe in the possibility of a "single sensation." According to Gian Orsini, this disbelief "challenges the basic assumption of empiricism" and "refutes the whole system and destroys all the castle of inferences built upon it" (89).

As he would later explain in the Biographia, the problem in Hartley's system is that it adheres to the notion of a physical, mechanical propagation of successive vibrations through the ether of the nerves. Coleridge points out that this atomism inextricably binds thought to space and time: "For to what law can the action of material atoms be subject, but that of proximity in place? And to what law can their motions be subjected, but that of time?" (BL1 110). According to Coleridge, a dependence on the laws of space and time necessarily eliminates the possibility of a subjective will. He states that the result is "inevitably, that the will, the reason, the judgment, and the understanding, instead of being the determining causes of association, must needs be represented as its creatures, and among its mechanical effects" (110).

Thus Coleridge dismisses associationism due to its disturbing implications. Elsewhere, though, Coleridge suggests that he simply does not sense that thought is a successive process. One sees this type of rejection of associationist atomism in a notebook entry on Hume. Coleridge states: "How opposite to nature and the fact to talk of the 'one moment' of Hume, of our whole being an aggregate of successive single sensations! Who ever felt a single sensation? And what is a moment? . . . Succession with interspace? Absurdity! It is only the *licht-punct* in the indivisible undivided duration" (CN2 2370).[10] Coleridge's diction here is revealing in that it again focuses on the spatial and temporal dimensions of this system. The theory of association is

[10] Regarding "licht-punct," or light-point, Orsini cites the definition by Henry Fuseli, a contemporary of Coleridge: in a painting, "one point is brightest in the eye, as on the object, this is the point of light. From it, in all directions, the existent parts advance or recede" (89).

undermined by its need to relegate thought to segments of time and space ("succession" and "interspace").

At points, Coleridge's fascination with the idea of a "moment" surfaces. In one notebook entry he writes, "What a swarm of thoughts and feelings, endlessly minute fragments, and, as it were, representations of all preceding and embryos of all future thought, lie compact in any one moment!" (AP 208). However, it is this sense of richness that causes him to deconstruct the very idea of a moment. In another note he writes:

> Nothing affects me much at the moment it happens. It either stupefies me, and I, perhaps, look at a merry-make and dance-the-hay of flies, or listen entirely to the loud click of the great clock, or I am simply indifferent, not without some sense of philosophical complacency. For a thing at the moment is but a thing at the moment; it must be taken up into the mind, diffuse itself through the whole multitude of shapes and thoughts, not one of which it leaves untinged, between not one of which and it some new thought is not engendered. Now this is a work of time. . . . (AP 26)

Here one sees Coleridge negotiating between his awareness of sensory moments and the subjective process of interpreting them. Importantly, Coleridge links a "thing" from the objective world with a temporal "moment," while the subjective mind is characterized by a "diffuse" working of time. Thus, he associates the objective realm with temporal particularity and the subjective with temporal extension. A sense of mutual, dualistic interaction remains in Coleridge's analysis of this dynamic, for he does describe the influence of the external event on the mind's creation of a "new thought." However, this does not appear as a balanced, equivalent relationship. Rather, a sense of primacy is present in this description, for he apparently has the assurance of philosophy that an indifference to momentary events is permissible. A "thing of the moment" may occur

externally. However, it is a passive event that must actively be "taken up into the mind." There, catalytic powers eradicate its momentary nature.[11]

The point of this digression into Coleridge's metaphysical uncertainty is to provide a context to what now appears as a specific, poetic manifestation of its tension. Again, this consideration of associationism only provides a glimpse into Coleridge's prolonged and complex ruminations. Nevertheless, the poet's analysis of Hartleianism nicely captures his characteristic wavering and suspicions, in this case with regard to segmented sensations. As described earlier, Coleridge's poetry from the beginning displays a fondness for realistic perspective, and this effect incorporates appeals to visual data that are clearly bounded in space and time. Countering this fondness, meanwhile, is a philosophical distrust of such particularity. One recognizes this distrust in his dismissal of the temporal and spatial limitations that an associationist model imposes on the mind. Such a dismissal demonstrates Coleridge's subjective favoritism. More importantly, it displays his inclination to denigrate the notion of quantifiable sensations, such as those that can be measured by the scheme of Real Time.[12]

---

[11] Of course, Coleridge's refutation of Hartley was never a permanent and complete one. As Prickett observes, it is improper to regard Coleridge's dismissal of Hartleianism as a "drastic re-orientation of Coleridge's poetic experience" (49). Rather, Prickett explains that Coleridge chiefly took issue with the atomistic, materialistic aspect of Hartley's doctrine, which, as noted above, limits thought processes to dynamics of time and space. Prickett adds, "[Coleridge's] attack on associationism is nowhere on associationism *as such*. The theory of association was to prove enormously fruitful in his later thought" (55, his emphasis). Also, although Chapters Five through Seven of the Biographia do present a thorough investigation and dismissal of most of Hartley's doctrines, his recognition of the fallacies of empiricism and associationism fails to resolve his dilemma with the objective world. As Appleyard states, "Even after he rejected this position [of "the sensate explanation of knowledge"] the clarification of the relationship of external nature to the mind and imagination was one of the central problems of his philosophy" (5).

[12] While commenting on Coleridge's rejection of Hume's "one moment," Rader notes that the poet anticipates "Bergson's insistence upon the continuity of duration" (23). Though it is ironic to say so, Coleridge does seem to favor a Bergsonian notion of time *at times* in his thinking and writing. Here, though, one must observe that what this study classifies as Real Time is successive time, and is therefore

Tuning the "Harp of Time"

In a similar manner, Coleridge's poetry in some cases associates Real Time with an inferior sense of understanding. "Ode to the Departing Year" (from 1796) provides a good example. Like many Coleridge poems that mention time, the "Ode" presents the notions of both "time objective and subjective." Unlike some other works (such as "A Sunset"), however, "Ode to the Departing Year" is one of Coleridge's poems which suggests the primacy of subjective time.

The "Ode" is a Pindaric one, and it is therefore grounded in a sense of tradition. The poem is also occasional, and it passes judgment on current events (Coleridge explains that he wrote it during the last few days of 1796). Of course, the poem's expressed intention of recognizing the grander significance of recent happenings requires an ironic approach to time. Also, Coleridge could certainly cite precedents for dedicating his poem to the achievement of a comprehensive historical perspective. However, as the Argument of the poem demonstrates, the presentation of these events in the ornate style of the ode threatens to undermine the poem with an unwanted sense of bathos: "The Ode commences with an address to the Divine Providence that regulates into one vast harmony all the events of time, however calamitous some of them may appear to mortals. The first Epode speaks of the Empress of Russia, who died of an apoplexy on the 17th of November 1796" (CW 160).[13]

In fact, as the poem proceeds to describe this empress and contemporary political concerns, it fails to achieve a positive effect. As Max Schulz puts it, the poem is one of "chaos" (31). Interestingly, though, "Ode to the Departing Year" is consistent in its efforts to perceive linear, historical events through the understanding of the "one vast

---

the opposite of what Bergson would consider as time's real nature. One should instead compare Bergson's idea of time to Coleridge's portrayal of ever-enduring Imaginary Time.

[13] I believe M. M. Bakhtin would delight in this poem in that it wavers between appeals to a cosmic, indiscriminate sense of time and a countering sense of historical particularity. The poem is in fact a

harmony" of divinity that is described in the Argument. Accordingly, Coleridge characteristically creates a perfect metaphor for this treatment of time. He expresses it in the opening lines of the poem:

> Spirit who sweepest the wild Harp of Time!
> It is most hard, with an untroubled ear
> Thy dark inwoven harmonies to hear!
> Yet, mine eye fix'd on Heaven's unchanging clime
> Long had I listen'd, free from mortal fear,
> With inward stillness, and a bowed mind;
> When lo! Its folds far waving on the wind,
> I saw the train of the Departing Year! (1-8)

Later in the poem, Coleridge refers to the "fateful strings" of the Harp of Time, and in so doing he underscores the significance of his metaphor (25). In this apt image of the harp one sees Coleridge's recognition of the individual, particular events (or harpstrings) of history, and he explicitly acknowledges that "mortals" may have trouble seeing past this "calamitous" segmentation. Nevertheless, the goal here is to achieve divine understanding, which simultaneously perceives the total harmony of the individual events working in accord.

The ode is a highly figurative one, and it includes descriptions of a number of personified abstractions (including Distemper, Poverty, and so on). Similarly, the poem is not concerned with actual eyesight. The poem presents only a metaphorical vision of this passing train of history, and therefore a consideration of visual perspective is inappropriate. There is a revealing detail, however, in Coleridge's description of his visionary "eye" in the poem. Importantly, the ambitious narrator emphasizes the static nature of this eye. It appears that he must strive to steady his gaze in order to see past the

---

battleground between what he would describe as epic and novelistic chronotopes.

misleading appearances of individual events. As heaven is described as "unchanging," so too must the eye remain "fix'd." The first stanza of this ode implies a connection between eyesight and time, but the connection is a negative one: divine, harmonious time is understood through an enraptured, penetrating gaze, or a denial of real sensory perception.[14] Presumably, those who cannot see the interconnectedness of seemingly calamitous events are misled by physical senses. From the beginning, then, the poem argues for a hierarchical understanding of time schemes, and to a lesser extent it suggests a need to overcome "the despotism of the eye."[15] As in "Life," one here gets an idea of heaven only through a trance, rather than in the meticulous observation of a real landscape (which is the case in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement," for example).

The subjects of time and eyesight only appear in the periphery of "Ode to the Departing Year." Although Coleridge has trouble maintaining the lofty tone to which he aspires, the poem's shortcomings have little to do with problems involving time or vision. Elsewhere, however, the ideas of a hierarchy of time and the deceptive nature of immediate sensation are more prominent. It is in those poems that Coleridge's inconsistencies in treating sight and time become clear. As has been seen, Coleridge does have reasons to distrust the immediate perception of a temporal moment. It is also apparent, though, that Coleridge is drawn at times to visual and temporal particularity. In the next chapter, one will see examples of Coleridge's negotiating between these

---

[14] One finds a comparable suggestion in "Frost at Midnight," where the meditating narrator begins his ascent to a sense of "oneness" (which includes a commingling of past, present, and future) by shutting down his physical senses: the "numberless goings-on" in the village, for example, become "inaudible" (12-13). In the poem, Coleridge explains that during his imaginative childhood he often "gazed" (he repeats the word) until "soothing" dreams arrived (25, 34). The poet underscores the sense of a separation between imagination and physical perception through his description of his classroom day-dreaming, where his "eye" was "Fixed with mock study on my *swimming* book" (37-38, emphasis added).

[15] This sense of gazing through a landscape is similar in some ways to "Tintern Abbey," where there is an apparent connection between Dorothy's "wild eyes" and her lesser sense of appreciation for the event. By

apparently conflicting loyalties. At present, though, it is appropriate to observe a failed attempt at such a negotiation and to recognize the epistemological problems therein.

"Religious Musings"

Like "Ode to the Departing Year," "Religious Musings" (written between 1794 and 1796) presents a sweeping vision of the process of time. The poem is a religious reverie that seeks to place the process of history within the context of the moment of rapture, which will make God's unity and purposes clear to all. To be fair to Coleridge, one must acknowledge that it is another one of his youthful experiments and that it reflects a strong Miltonic influence (Abrams 265). These facts, combined with the inherently difficult and paradoxical nature of the poem's subject matter, should discourage a scrutinizing consideration of the poem's claims and merits.[16] For the purposes of this study, though, "Religious Musings" is revealing in its recurrent patterns involving hierarchies of time and vision.

Occasioned by Christmas Eve of 1794, the poem begins with an explanation by Coleridge that "This is the time" when he seems "to view the vision of the heavenly multitude" (1-5). Part of the motivation for this vision lies in the "mistrust and enmity" of the present day, for the poem laments various contemporary events, especially the war with France. In addition to its contemporary political references, the poem makes several allusions to latter-day figures such as Berkeley, Hartley and Benjamin Franklin.[17] However, the narrator of the poem is concerned with these figures and events only to the extent that they may be understood within the context of providential progress. In fact,

---

contrast, William possesses "an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony" (148, 47-48). As Chapter Four explains, gazing is an important act in much of Wordsworth's poetry.

[16] Both M. H. Abrams and Humphry House passingly describe "Religious Musings" as an "interesting" poem, yet in both contexts this adjective implies that the poem is a curious failure (Abrams 265, House 59).

[17] The poem offers praise for both Hartley and Berkeley, and thus Coleridge appears to respect their views simultaneously.

many of the lines offer vague, extra-historical meditations on God's beauty and wisdom. The two events that receive the most attention, meanwhile, are the crucifixion and the rapture.

It is explicitly clear in "Religious Musings" that Coleridge strives to gain the mind of God, for there lies the unity of mind that is Coleridge's ever-present desire: "There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind, / Omnific" (105-06). As Coleridge portrays it, salvation is equivalent to unity with this ultimate source, where God is "all in all" and "We and our Father one!" (44). Similarly, the goal of the poetic vision is to achieve the all-encompassing perspective of God, who "with no partial gaze / Views all creation" (111-12).

Eyesight imagery appears constantly in the poem, but Coleridge appeals to the idea of vision mostly in a figurative sense. For example, he "sees" personifications such as Fear and "views" judgment day. Given the subject matter, such a technique seems appropriate, and here Coleridge has the precedent not only of Milton, Blake, and various literary traditions but also of the Bible itself. However, something is not quite right about this figurative vision. The problem arises with Coleridge's attachment to present reality. It is not his allusiveness to contemporary figures and events that hinders the poem; again, Coleridge has precedent for incorporating such material into an abstract work (as did Pope and Dryden, for example). Rather, Coleridge fails to present his vision in a fully symbolic way. This failure seems to have two causes. First, there is an inherent problem of appealing to the idea of vision, even in a figurative manner, as a means of perceiving an unseen God. Second, Coleridge's fondness for visual detail threatens to pull his vision from the sphere of metaphor into the world of real sight.

Coleridge declares that God views all, and he wishes to achieve a Godly view. However, God himself cannot be seen -- at least not directly. Coleridge hints at the heart

of the problem early in the poem, where he works to mediate between the seen and the unseen:

> For the Great
> Invisible (by symbols only seen)
> With a peculiar and surpassing light
> Shines from the visage of the oppressed good man. (9-12)

Here, Coleridge's parenthetical qualification provides a necessary justification for the next two lines as well as for the poem as a whole, for without the possibility of symbolic vision, the poet would have nothing to say. Revealingly, the accompanying reference to God's manifestation in the face of the "oppressed good man" is not entirely metaphorical. Instead, there is a hint that a good man's face might actually reflect God's radiance. Indeed, God's light is "peculiar" in the poem, for at times it is almost literally visible.

Coleridge's reference to "symbols" suggests a quasi-Platonic approach to the external world, in which God may be recognized, but only indirectly. As the poem puts it, "Life is a vision shadowy of Truth" (396). With this Platonic view comes a corresponding portrayal of eyesight: there are various degrees of true seeing. Throughout the poem, Coleridge expresses pity for those who adhere to a visual rather than visionary understanding. Importantly, the misguided are almost always associated with an improper functioning of the eye: the reader encounters an "eye-starting wretch"; others who are "made blind by lusts"; a "pale-eyed form"; and those who wrongly "cast the sad eye to earth" (69, 147, 281, 258). By contrast, the "elect of Heaven" properly turn away from the real view of the earth and instead make use of their "strong eye" (46-47). Apparently, one can almost see the invisible by gazing:

> Their strong eye darting through the deeds of men,
> Adore with steadfast unpresuming gaze
> Him Nature's essence, mind, and energy!

And gazing, trembling, patiently ascend

Treading beneath their feet all visible things

As steps, that upward to their Father's throne

Lead gradual. . . . (47-53)

Such is the working of "the eye of Faith" (143). Coleridge emphasizes the fixed nature of this eye by referring to it as "serene," "patient," and "unmoved" (367, 243, 78). Of course, Coleridge is essentially distinguishing between a secular understanding that is influenced by outward appearances and a properly religious ability to conceive of a higher reality. However, emphasis on imagery of eyesight complicates matters in that it allows Coleridge's fondness for real sights to shine through. One can go down steps as well as up them, and Coleridge appears to hesitate on a visionary landing, looking back wistfully at the steps he has climbed:

Fair the vernal mead,

Fair the high grove, the sea, the sun, the stars;

True impress each of their creating Sire!

Yet nor high grove, nor many-colour'd mead,

Nor the green ocean with his thousand isles,

Nor the starred azure, nor the sovran sun,

Ever with such majesty of portraiture

Imag'd the supreme beauty uncreate,

As thou, meek Saviour! (14-22)

Coleridge may protest too much about the inferiority of these sights culled from nature. Regardless, the passage reflects the poem's recurrent hierarchy of vision: there is the eyesight of the natural world (which at times appears in the poem as a distraction and at other times as a valid "step" toward enlightenment); there is the paradoxically "invisible" image of God; and between them there is a mediated sense of vision, here captured in the

idea of the visible Christ, and elsewhere presented as a semi-metaphoric gazing that sees through and beyond the visible world.[18]

The poem also suggests a hierarchy of temporal schemes. As described earlier, the poem is occasioned by disturbing contemporary events. Coleridge wishes to transcend his immediate, disjuntive perception of these events in order to gain a realization of their relationship to a cosmic, providential framework. Thus, as in "Ode to the Departing Year," he adopts a broad and visionary perspective of history: "Years . . . Ye sweep athwart my gaze" (377-78). There is, then, a gaze of time as well. With such a gaze, one may see through the singular appearance of an event and recognize the logic of the "one wondrous whole" (128).

Similarly, presentations of particularistic time in the poem appear valid only as a symbolic representation of heavenly dynamics. One can see this in a vivid description of a man achieving redemption on earth. It takes the form of an epic simile, and in this simile one sees another example of Coleridge's technique of defining a temporal moment (albeit symbolic) through vision:

> As when a shepherd on a vernal morn
> Through some thick fog creeps timorous with slow foot,
> Darkling he fixes on the immediate road
> His downward eye: all else of fairest kind
> Hid or deformed. But lo! the bursting Sun!
> Touched by the enchantment of that sudden beam
> Straight the black vapour melteth, and in globes

[18] Similar notions of God's invisibility and a hierarchy of being appear in Paradise Lost (Book Five, lines 469-500 describe this hierarchy, and Raphael acknowledges the limitations of "lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms" [v.573]). However, Milton rarely seems concerned with the logistics of such an understanding; his Platonism serves as a poetic convenience. Similarly, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," from which "Religious Musings" borrows some of its diction, completely lacks the emphasis on eyesight and its various

Of dewy glitter gems each plant and tree;

On every leaf, on every blade it hangs! (94-102)

With words such as "touched," "bursting," and "sudden," Coleridge exaggerates the transitory nature of the dawn and emphasizes its momentary nature. Such a technique is appropriate for representing a crucial change, but it also hints at the awkwardness of temporal transitions that are necessary in this type of poetic vision, which ultimately seeks to transcend time. Here again, Coleridge's artistic inclination toward Real Time complicates matters, for it brings this issue of transition to the forefront.

In fact, the poem at points seeks to describe the actual transition from time to timelessness that the rapture necessitates. One sees the most explicit consideration of this timelessness in the poet's musing on the time of Christ's return. Coleridge, drawing on Christ's statement that this moment is unknown to all, focuses on the notion of the "hour" of the end of time:

For who of woman born may paint the hour,

When seized in his mid course, the Sun shall wane

Making noon ghastly! . . .

How his arm

The last great Sprit lifting high in air

Shall swear by Him, the ever-living One,

Time is no more! (384-86, 392-95)

Revealingly, this passage represents the end of time with a diminishing, visual image of the waning of the natural world. More importantly, though, this description again shows that Coleridge's flight from Real Time toward Godly understanding repeatedly brings him back to notions of transitional moments. This fact offsets the poem's suggestion of a

---

connotations which are present in Coleridge's poem (instead, Milton is characteristically preoccupied with poetic explorations of light).

temporal hierarchy, in which a comprehensive, simultaneous view of history appears as a desirable middle ground between earthly, successive time and Godly timelessness.

Elsewhere, Coleridge would delight in portraying the inconceivable gap between time and timelessness. The idea of the momentary transition of judgment is the subject of the four-line, impromptu poem "For a Market Clock":

> What now, O Man! thou dost or mean'st to do
> Will help to give thee peace, or make thee rue,
> When hovering over the Dot this hand shall tell
> The moment that secures thee Heaven or Hell! (1-4)

Here Coleridge achieves artistic effect by emphasizing the paradoxical notion that a precisely measured moment of clock time may signify the commencement of one's eternal destiny (in heaven or hell). In "Religious Musings," however, Coleridge strives to bridge this temporal gap rather than explore it.[19]

If critical reaction provides a valid standard, his efforts fail. Abrams offers the most favorable response to "Religious Musings" with his observation that the poem is "a strange amalgam of Neoplatonic Christianity and Hartleian philosophy" (265). Schulz is slightly more critical in that he points out the poem's gaudy diction, while Watson calls it a "disastrous example" of the "highminded balderdash" of Coleridge's overly-ambitious early verse (Schulz 51, Watson 51). Coleridge himself recognized the over-written quality of this and other early poems. In his Preface to the second edition of his poems (1797), he explains that he tried to revise the poems in order to "tame the swell and glitter both of thought and diction." Interestingly, though, he then singles out "Religious

[19] Milton also refers to the gap between time and eternity in Paradise Lost (e.g., Adam to Raphael in Book Twelve: "How soon hath thy prediction, Seer blest / Measur'd this transient World, the Race of Time, / Till time stand fixt: beyond is all abyss, / Eternity, whose end no eye can reach" [xii.553-56]). As suggested in these lines, though, Milton characteristically possesses a negative capability regarding such a crux. For example, Raphael instructs Adam, "Meanwhile enjoy / Your fill what happiness this happy state / Can

Musings" as a poem that is beyond repair: "This latter fault however had insinuated itself into my Religious Musings with such intricacy of union, that sometimes I have omitted to disentangle the weed from the fear of snapping the flower" (CW 1145). It is ironic that a poem dedicated to the conception of unity is marred by another type of unity, yet the criticism seems valid. The weaknesses of "Religious Musings" are inextricably connected to its structure, for the poem simultaneously disparages (philosophically) and embraces (through figurative language) the concepts of sight and time. Since the poem adheres to a Platonic, hierarchical approach to reality, its language cannot attain a wholly symbolic function. As his metaphors make use of temporal and visual data, they betray Coleridge's fascination with perspective particularity, and they also pull the visionary back toward the visual.

In Limbo

Thus "Religious Musings" demonstrates the problematic nature of shifting -- both poetically and philosophically -- from the temporal realm to heavenly timelessness, and from eyesight to a vision of the Great Invisible. In this sense, the poem displays what Angus Fletcher describes as a metaphysical realization that consistently troubles Coleridge: thresholds, such as that between time and timelessness, or subjectivity and objectivity, must be comprised of "nothingness." Referring figuratively to Coleridge's efforts to move from the "labyrinth" of the temporal realm to the spiritual realm of the "temple," Fletcher writes, "Between the temple and the labyrinth there must be a crossing which, viewed from the perspective of time, does not stand, stay, hold, or persist." Nevertheless, Coleridge's desire to make the transition remains, and therefore one finds him in a state of "liminal anxiety" (140).

---

comprehend, incapable of more" (v.503-05). By contrast, Coleridge, whom Keats cited as one deficient in negative capability, seems dissatisfied with the idea that "no eye can reach" across the "abyss" of eternity.

Fletcher observes in passing that Coleridge's "Limbo" serves as a fine example of the paradoxical nature of the threshold experience (155). As one of his later works, it falls under the category of what critics tend to portray as poetry of failure. Magnuson, for example, notes that "Limbo," like many of Coleridge's late poems, sounds like "a dialogue of self and hollow echo" (124). Similarly, Bate writes that in "Limbo" one may "glimpse the appalling spiritual suffering with which Coleridge was sometimes visited" (177). However, "Limbo" expresses this negative theme quite powerfully, and in it Coleridge appears to capture -- perhaps consciously -- the futility of the approach to time that has been examined to this point.

Appropriately, the poem is a fragment. Made up of only 38 lines, "Limbo" works to describe the indescribable, static nature of the void of purgatory. As the opening passage reveals, this Limbo is hardly a neutral territory. It is instead a frightening place, wherein its inhabitants "creep back from light" like blind "moles" who "see but to dread" (6-9). Thus, the poem begins with a description of a strange perversion of sight. The poem next concentrates on Limbo's strange effect on time and space:

> 'Tis a strange place, this Limbo! -- not a Place,
> Yet name it so; -- where Time and weary Space
> Fettered from flight, with night-mare sense of fleeing,
> Strive for their last crepuscular half-being;
> Lank Space, and scytheless Time with branny hands
> Barren and soundless as the measuring sands,
> Not mark'd by flit of shades, -- unmeaning they
> As moonlight on the dial of the day! (11-18)

With the departure of space comes the death of Real Time. Once it is separated from earthly motion and markers, objective, sundial time has no meaning or purpose. In this case, the absence of Real Time contributes to the horrifying nature of Limbo, yet the

portrayal also serves as a reminder of the inferiority of this type of objective system. Clearly, the sole domain of Real Time is in the earthly realm.

Having shown this, the poem next presents yet another Coleridgean contrast between objective time, with all of its shortcomings, and a superior sense of temporal perception. With no transition or explanation, the poem suddenly describes a figure of faint hope:

> But that is lovely -- looks like Human Time,
> An Old man with a steady look sublime,
> That stops his earthly task to watch the skies;
> But he is blind -- a Statue hath such eyes; --
> Yet having moonward turn'd his face by chance . . .
> He gazes still, -- his eyeless face all eye;
> As 'twere an organ full of silent sight. . . .
> He seems to gaze on that which seems to gaze on him! (19-30)

Here is a "lovely" understanding of time, "Human Time." Clearly, this is equivalent to Imaginary Time, as the now-familiar motifs of blindness, moonlight, and spiritual gazing reveal. Human Time demonstrates its loveliness by its independence from limitations of time and space, and this independence allows for a continuous, "all moveless" basking in the moonlight (29).

Like "Religious Musings," then, "Limbo" quickly begins its hierarchical climb from a slavish dependence on the sensory realm up to a subjective perception that is not bounded by objective time or eyesight. However, as Bate says, "even this blind hope [of Human Time] is denied the soul in limbo" (178). With its very next lines, the poem oddly brings this spritual ladder crashing down:

> No such sweet sights doth Limbo den immure,
> Wall'd round, and made a spirit-jail secure,

By the mere horror of blank Naught-at-all

Whose circumambience doth these ghosts enthral.

A lurid thought is growthless, dull Privation. . . . (31-35)

A syntactic flexibility makes the meaning of the first line uncertain, but the rest of the passage resolves the issue. As Modiano puts it, this vision of Human Time is only "an incongruous and illusory experience" (94). There is no ascendance within nothingness, and there are no steps between the completely different realms of time and timelessness. Thus the poem introduces the notion of a superior Human/Imaginary Time only to show its failure at bridging an immeasurable gap.

The words "but," "yet," and "not" appear repeatedly in "Limbo." In so doing, they underscore the fact that the poem is one of uncertainty and negation. Here again, Coleridge himself appears to be lost in a poetic limbo, for he has once again addressed the subject of time, and this has once again demonstrated the failure of his effort to favor one sense of time over another. Like the children in "Time, Real and Imaginary," Coleridge appears to be running in an "endless race." Regardless of whether his vision is focused or blinded, his feet are bound to the earth, and he cannot view or reach an unearthly landscape of timelessness.

Chapter Two

Coleridge the Timekeeper

Practice Versus Theory

"The more I reflect," wrote Coleridge in 1805, "the more accurate appears to me the analogy between a watch and watches, and the conscience and consciences of men, on the one hand, and that between the sun and motion of heavenly bodies in general and the reason and goodness of the Supreme on the other." Not surprisingly, this analogy's threefold dimension and its typically inexact syntax make it a bit confusing. With his next sentence, however, Coleridge clarifies his understanding of the analogous relationships:

> Never goes quite right any one, no two go exactly the same; they derive their dignity and use as being substitutes and exponents of heavenly motions, but still, in a thousand instances, they are and must be our instructors by which we must act, in practice presuming a coincidence while theoretically we are aware of incalculable variations. (AP 126-27)

Coleridge's observation of the flawed but microcosmic nature of an individual's conscience is a shrewd one. As a watch provides an estimate of a general, presumed consensus of timekeeping, so a man's conscience imperfectly exemplifies collective reason. Both of these relationships, meanwhile, parallel that of the planetary spheres to "supreme" reason, wherein the former merely approximate -- but also give evidence of -- the latter.

If one disregards Coleridge's commentary on conscience and focuses on this analogy's other two components, one may find yet another hint of the poet's understanding of time. As with his other attempts to illustrate this understanding, this analogy contains divergent implications. Coleridge's portrayal of time in this case is reminiscent of that of Newton, who regarded the planets as imperfectly representing and measuring a true,

absolute dimension of time, which exists with God in absolute space.[1] Similarly, Coleridge's analogy contains another trace of a hierarchical view of time: individual watches approximate the general consensus of all watches, just as planetary motions imperfectly correspond to absolute time.

However, Coleridge here has also tempered this hierarchical portrayal of time with a spirit of pragmatic acceptance. The passage hints at senses of both limitation and contentment within such limitation. Reflecting on the attempt to keep time may make one conscious of the unstable foundations of one's presumptions or the "incalculable variations" which Coleridge describes, but those who wear watches have no time to ponder such matters. Coleridge, like the average person, is "aware" of the potential inconsistencies, but he is more concerned with the "practice" of keeping time. In a similarly pragmatic spirit, he once remarked that a philosopher-astronomer who is setting his watch should ignore the planets and instead consult the town clock. He does this "not because he believes it right, but because his neighbours and cook go by it" (TT 183).

Though brief, these observations about timekeeping are similar to an important strain in much of Coleridge's poetry. As described earlier, Coleridge's representations of a hierarchy of time inevitably lead the poet to failure, for they always leave the poet standing on the brink of the abyss between time and timelessness. Despite this futility, it appears that Coleridge never fully accepted this sense of fundamental separation; at another point in 1805, for example, he would write, "O the complexities of the ravel produced by time struggling with eternity!" (AP 131). In spite of this struggling, however, Coleridge in some works does not portray time as a hindrance to his imaginative pursuits. In fact, some poems present an author who has embraced his role as an individual timekeeper, and who appeals to his poetry's representations of time as a means of conveying his themes. This is

[1] A more detailed summary of Newton's understanding of time appears later in this chapter.

the poet who would declare, "Time and all its modifications are the self-sacrifice which Truth makes to conception" (CN3 3575).

This declaration -- that truth in itself is unknowable, and that time is a necessary aspect of conception -- invalidates Coleridge's efforts to reach beyond the world of normal perception into a truer, more imaginative consciousness. As his prose writings explicitly recognize this concession, however, Coleridge's poetry often reflects the positive result of accepting the limitations of human sensation. In the poetry considered thus far, one sees a poet's natural technique, which is characterized by a thorough attentiveness to details of time and perspective, subverting his poetry's speculative goal, which is to drop the deadweight of real perception. Elsewhere, though, the poetic "practice" of demonstrating the mental conception of time accompanies some of Coleridge's most effective poetry. There, Real and Imaginary Time appear as equal counterparts, for they are regarded as human projections with a shared origin (of the mind). They are not portrayed as distant relations (as they appear in "Religious Musings," for example), but rather as the closely-linked, brother-and-sister pair of Coleridge's allegory. As a result of this understanding, the potential for their harmonious reconciliation in poetry arises, and such a reconciliation bolsters Coleridge's explicit appeals to a sense of the "one Life," or the recognition of unity among all things. The corollary to this understanding, meanwhile, is that a division between the two conceptions of time is unnatural and discordant. However, this type of discordance may sometimes create a desirable, gothic effect.

"Dejection"

Long before he envisioned the otherworldly horrors of "Limbo," Coleridge himself experienced a similar sense of stagnation. The ironically powerful monument to this dreadful period is "Dejection: An Ode." It is clear that this poem does not merely capture an artistic pose or an assumed voice, for the origins of the ode lie in a much longer "verse

letter" in which Coleridge, for example, refers to friends by name and to his strained relationships with them. It is a deeply personal poem, and it centers on the poet's candid self-analysis. However, the poem also presents a profound and general statement about the mind and creativity.

It is difficult to miss the message of "Dejection." Quite simply, the poem contains Coleridge's boldest statement of subjective idealism in poetry, and it therefore captures a polarized moment in his ever-changing philosophy. One may find the fundamental argument of the poem in the oft-quoted lines, "We receive but what we give, / And in our life alone does Nature live" (47-48). Coleridge proves this point negatively in "Dejection," for nothing really happens in the poem, and he can only lament his sorrowful lack of inspiration. Nevertheless, he portrays the sterility of his mind and soul masterfully. As many have observed, the poet primarily displays the failure of his "genial spirits" through his depiction of the surrounding landscape, which, as Magnuson puts it, is "a mirror of his own soul" (117). Accordingly, the poem begins with a description of the "tranquil" and "unroused" evening, and Coleridge presumes that he is experiencing the lull before the approaching (and quite symbolic) storm (3-5). As the weather shifts, he expresses his hope that he, too, will shift away from his inspirational doldrums. Perhaps, Coleridge muses, some type of violent change is necessary to "startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!" (20). Yet as the storm approaches and the winds howl, Coleridge instead experiences a crescendo of depression. He is roused only by a stronger realization of his sad lot in "Reality's dark dream" (95). Coleridge portrays himself as lost in a limbo on earth, for as he realizes the need to summon his imaginative powers from within, he simultaneously displays the horrors of his inability to do so.

Critical studies of "Dejection" tend to scrutinize Coleridge's landscape imagery, and this scrutiny reveals a fascinating interplay between the portrayal of landscape and

Coleridge's mind.[2] However, these analyses overlook the density of temporal imagery that also appears in the ode. Again, there is no action in the poem, and it therefore offers little sense of temporal progress. Meanwhile, though, Coleridge's tools of timekeeping appear in the foreground. The poem opens with a meditation on the appearance and significance of the moon, and Coleridge's description introduces his preoccupation with time. Following the lead of "The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence" (to which he alludes in the poem), Coleridge looks to the moon for signs of the upcoming weather. He writes:

> For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
> And overspread with phantom light,
> (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
> But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
> I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
> The coming-on of rain and squally blast. (9-14)

Marshall Suther observes that Coleridge here describes the moon "in its most ambivalent phase" (121). The temporal imagery in this passage is ambivalent as well. Two facts -- that Coleridge is describing the moon, and that he twice describes "swimming phantom light" around it -- suggest he is working toward another portrait of a pleasant, enduring sensation. However, the image contains a lingering sense of shifting, Real Time: he sees two phases of the moon at once, and this odd juxtaposition forecasts the coming of the storm. Coleridge clearly intends for this opening description to establish the disturbing mood of the poem, and he captures this disturbance in part by investing the image with temporal tension.

---

[2] For insightful analyses of the function of landscape in "Dejection," see House (135-38), Bate (107-10), and Suther (119-151).

The poet later observes that the moon is "as fixed as if it grew / In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue" (35-36). Such a fixed image can provide no inspiration for Coleridge. Still, he continues to look to nature for some positive symbol. He writes:

> All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
> Have I been gazing on the western sky,
> And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
> And still I gaze -- and with how blank an eye!
> And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
> That give away their motion to the stars;
> Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
> Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen. . . . (27-34)

Everything that Coleridge elsewhere associates with Imaginary Time also appears in this description. The narrator observes the scene with a trance-like "gaze" (once again, Coleridge repeats the word), and the passage emphasizes the lengthy and continuous nature of this experience. More importantly, these lines also present another visual display of stationary movement as the clouds unnaturally "give away their motion to the stars," which, Coleridge is cautious to note, are "always seen." Though the clouds and the stars are the central objects of this passage, this nightscape's enduring, relative motion is reminiscent of the poet's association of "time felt" with a view of the moon "driving on amid the clouds" and yet seeming "not to have moved at all" (AP 204).

When describing that image of the driving moon, Coleridge also emphasized the connection between imaginary experience and constant attentiveness. There, he distinguished the real experience of "troubled manhood" (for example) by associating it with a failure to monitor consciously the sun's (i. e., time's) progress. By contrast, in "Dejection," Coleridge is clearly at pains to demonstrate that his troubled state does not result from any sort of distraction or inattentiveness. He has spent the evening searching

for a sign of hope in nature's images, but he has found no solace: "I see them all so excellently fair, / I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!" (37-38). Of course, these lines -- like the poem as a whole -- primarily promote the projective, idealistic theme of the poem. They also express a corresponding belief in the inadequacy of the senses, especially sight. Coleridge makes this point clear a few lines later:

> Though I should gaze forever
> On that green light that lingers in the west:
> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within. (43-46)

Importantly, though, one must note that Coleridge's dismissal of sight in this case also applies to the perceptive "gaze" that seems so desirable in other poems. The narrator has avoided the momentary distractions of sensory flux, but the insights of the "strong eye" have failed to appear. As Suther writes, "Coleridge seems to himself to have *done* that which he ought to have done, and there is still no health in him" (124, his emphasis). Temporally and visually, "Dejection" emphasizes the duration of the poet's experience, yet this emphasis serves only to convey the failure of such experience at creating a blissful, imaginative state. Here, then, one finds an unusual separation between a strong sense of "time felt" and genial, insightful experience. Like "Limbo," "Dejection" demonstrates the failure of Imaginary (or "Human") Time as a transcendental link to spiritual bliss.

"Limbo," though, is a metaphysical curiosity, and it primarily works to capture the fundamental difference between worldly time and spiritual timelessness. By contrast, "Dejection" is more practically concerned with the sources and problems of artistic creation. Importantly, within this more immediate and practical context, Coleridge does not adopt the absurd stance of dismissing time as being ultimately superfluous. Instead, the poem hints at a redefinition of time and its origins. The hints are subtle ones and are best understood in the light of some of Coleridge's explicit, prose statements about time, which will be

considered below. However, one may at this point recognize two important implications in "Dejection." First, Coleridge expresses a desire for a discrete sensation which will supplement the vague, continuous nature of his experience. For example, consider the diction of the end of the first stanza, where Coleridge hopes that the rain and sounds of the approaching storm "Might now perhaps their wonted *impulse* give, / Might *startle* this dull pain, and make it move and live!" (19-20, emphasis added). Coleridge next complains that his grief is "without a pang" and is instead "void, dark, and drear"; and he laments that it "finds no natural outlet, no relief, / In word, or sigh, or tear" (21-24). Here Coleridge reveals his desperation, for it is pathetic to realize that his best hope is only for some tangible sign of his sorrow. At the same time, though, one finds in these lines an acknowledgment of a need for focused sensations. A mere duration of experience is inadequate, and he wishes for a quantifiable, impulsive moment of self-awareness.

"Dejection" also comes close to identifying the mind as the source of temporal sensation. After all, the poem offers a blanket declaration regarding the wellspring of human experience, and there are suggestions that this doctrine applies to the conception of time as well. In stanza five, for example, Coleridge again makes the point that "Joy" (here another name for the pleasing perception of unity in all things) is a projection of the soul. In this stanza, Coleridge describes Joy as a "strong music," a "light," and a "fair luminous mist" that emerges from within (60-62). He concludes:

> We in ourselves rejoice!
> And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
> All melodies the echoes of that voice,
> All colours a suffusion from that light. (72-75)

Though this passage primarily reiterates the poem's general theme, one should realize that Coleridge tends to associate the ideas of melody and pervasive light with a positive

perception of time.[3] Given this connection, as well as the temporal imagery in the opening of the poem, it is not unreasonable to regard "Dejection" as suggesting that time, too, flows from within, and is an innate condition of the human mind.

In "Dejection," though, Coleridge only hints at this idea. Elsewhere, he explicitly claims that all conceptions of time are products of the mind. One sees this especially in his voluminous notebooks, where, as editor Kathleen Coburn notes, issues involving "time, space, and God" arise "perpetually" (CN3 3973n). Coleridge's notes further demonstrate that he could waver between conflicting opinions on the subject of time. However, they also present some conclusive statements about it, and one may recognize the importance of these beliefs in his poetry. Before looking at these statements, it is helpful to consider the historical and philosophical context of Coleridge's speculations.

Coleridge and the Philosophy of Time

Michael Ayers has observed that philosophical investigations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were distinguished by much disagreement regarding the "ontological status" of space and time. He further explains, "The disputes about them were of considerable historical and philosophical importance" (223). Despite the many subtle variations involved, one may divide the opinions on the nature of time into two general schools of thought: the substantival and the relational. The substantival position, chiefly associated with Newton, holds that time (like space) is an absolute, independent entity. As Newton defines it in a scholium to the Principia, "Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external" (qtd. in Audi 805). Newton contrasts this process with the time of "sensible measure." This time

[3] Cf. the aforementioned imagery of light and music in "Ode to the Departing Year" and "Religious Musings." Also, note CN3 4319, where Coleridge claims that "Light negatives time" in the same manner as music, which "though appertaining to Time yet as far as it is harmony is an organized total or Co-presence in that Time."

may be recognized in the motions of clocks or planets, and it reasonably (but imperfectly and relatively) approximates the perfect order of absolute time (Sklar 58). In 1624, Frenchman Pierre Gassendi expressed the same view quite simply: "It does not seem to be the case that [time] is based on motion, or that it is a consequence of it. It is something that is only indicated by motion, as what is measured is indicated by what is used to measure it" (qtd. in Brundell 64).

Contrary to this view is the tradition attributed to Aristotle, who portrayed time as a mere abstraction from motion. According to Aristotle, time has no independent existence. Instead, time derives only from the senses of before, during, and after that are established by motion and change (Ayers 223-24). In the seventeenth century, such prominent thinkers as Descartes, Hobbes and Leibniz essentially maintained this relational view, which Hobbes summarized by writing, "Time is the phantasm of before and after in motion" (qtd. in Ayers 226).

Coleridge's notebooks show that he was well read in the works of all of these men, and his notes include both positive and negative comments about each of them. Also, when speaking of them, he often specifically addresses this debate about time. For example, a notebook entry from 1801 quotes several paragraphs by Hobbes on time and then offers Coleridge's brief critique: "This is a very lame account" (CN1 937).[4] In the midst of these commentaries, however, Coleridge usually refrains from entering into the debate along purely philosophical lines. Instead, Coleridge's own comments on time usually appear within a religious context.

[4] One other figure who should be mentioned here is John Locke, who (according to Ayers) was drawn to both substantival and relational views of time (232-36). Coleridge offers extensive commentary on Locke in his notebooks as well as in his letters. Usually, though, and in a classic example of psychological projection, Coleridge mocks Locke's philosophical vagaries. Referring to Locke's claim that he was building on Descartes' foundations, Coleridge wrote: "Mr. Locke supposed himself an *adder* to Descartes -- and so he was in the sense of *viper*" (CN1 857).

As with Newton, Coleridge's prevalent view about the nature of time seems to derive largely form his understanding of the nature of God. Furthermore, Coleridge is surprisingly clear and consistent in his statements about the relationship between God and time. One will recall that in "Religious Musings" Coleridge associates judgment day with the end of time ("Time is no more"). Similarly, Coleridge in his notebooks often expresses his belief that God and eternity exist beyond time. In the midst of a discussion on the Trinity, for example, he observes, "Time does not apply to God -- he is neither one in time nor three in time, for he exist[s] not in time at all -- the Eternal" (CN3 3973). Elsewhere, Coleridge mocks the view that time is a finite section or segment of eternity. As Coleridge puts it, eternity is not "a baron of beef or quarter of lamb, out of which and off which time is cut, as a brisket or shoulder." Rather, Coleridge says, eternity is the "*antitheton*" of time (AP 243, his emphasis).

This view places Coleridge in stark opposition to Newton. Though Newton's approach to time was similarly linked to theological concerns, he reached different conclusions because of his belief in the importance of God's associating with humanity through the shared experience of time. As J. E. McGuire explains, Newton therefore rejected the idea of God's timelessness (in the sense that God exists in a "*nunc stans* -- an infinite and timeless now") (92). Instead, Newton argued that God's existence is "sempiternal" -- that is, it can (in McGuire's words) "be characterized by successiveness and the temporality of earlier and later" (92-93). Coleridge greatly respected Newton, and as noted earlier, he would occasionally echo a Newtonian view of a hierarchy of temporal systems. According to Coleridge, though, the notion of "infinite time" is "an impossible idea" and "a metaphysical absurdity" (CN3 3973).

Here Coleridge could cite the tradition established by such authorities as Boethius, Anselm, Augustine, and Aquinas (all of whom Coleridge studied), who agreed that God's eternal existence is timeless (Pike 15). However, in spite of this solid theological

foundation, and in spite of Coleridge's many emphatic statements about God's timelessness, one can hardly say that this understanding came easily to the poet. As Coburn has noted, Coleridge's notes echo Augustine's own frustrations that arose while trying to conceive of time's finite quality. In the City of God, Augustine candidly asks, "Would even the greatest fool say that there was a time when there was no time?" (CN3 3763n, Augustine 75). Similarly, a brief notebook entry from Coleridge muses, "At what time was there no time is the true meaning of 'When did Time begin?' -- [it is a] mad question" (CN3 3763). Also, one sees the more practical consequences of this paradox of time in Coleridge's notes toward his planned commentary on the book of Genesis. In characteristic fashion, the poet-philosopher reaches an impasse after the Bible's first three words. His notes, which wrestle with this issue of a "beginning" of time, reveal his frustration:

> Whether there was a *first* beginning, any thing of those, that begin to be, that had no thing before it, is another question, if indeed it be a possible question -- i. e. if the terms do not imply a contradiction -- viz. In what time was there no time. That the matter of the Universe had no beginning is Atheism -- that Beginning had no beginning, may be nonsense. . . . (CN3 4418)

Thus one returns to "the ravel produced by time struggling with eternity." Paradoxes notwithstanding, though, the fact remains that Coleridge's prose writings consistently distinguish between Godly eternity and human temporality.

J. R. de J. Jackson has pointed out another religious concern that underlies Coleridge's thoughts on time. It relates to the poet's opinions about Hartleian associationism. One will recall that Coleridge's predisposition toward favoring the subjective mind encouraged him to retract his early commitment to Hartley's system. As Jackson observes, however, Coleridge's Christianity also influenced his conclusions about

Hartley (and Hume and other associationists). Jackson summarizes Coleridge's fear of object-centered associationism as follows: "If our actions are determined by external stimuli then we cannot be held morally responsible for them"; and "if the relationship of cause and effect is merely a habit of mind . . . we have no reason to assume that there must have been a first cause, or God" (L lxiv-lxv). According to Jackson, however, Coleridge realized that a certain understanding of time would disprove this troubling, godless notion. If one believes that the sense of time is merely a projection by the mind onto the outer world, then one simultaneously negates the concept of external causes and effects, for causation presumes a temporal process. This is the line of thought behind a well-known letter by Coleridge from 1801, in which he announces that he has "extricated" time and space: "If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only completely extricated the notions of Time, and Space; but have overthrown the doctrine of Association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels" (CL2 706). Of course, this extrication may not have been an independent feat by Coleridge. Rather, as Jackson and others have observed, there may be a Kantian strain in this statement and others like it, and one should note that this declaration by Coleridge coincides with a period of his study of Kant. According to Jackson, Kant's discussion of time and space in the Critique of Pure Reason provided Coleridge with "the very weapon he needed" in adhering to a Christian philosophy in the face of the "modern infidels" (L lxv).[5]

[5] It is unclear when Coleridge learned Kant's philosophy. The prevalent opinion is that Coleridge began his first in-depth study of Kant in 1801 (see Rader 32-33, Orsini 47-48). Others argue for an earlier dating; for example, notebook editor Kathleen Coburn speculates that Coleridge acquired at least a second-hand knowledge of the philosopher somewhere between 1794 and 1795 (CN1 248n, 249n). Also, Anglophilic critics such as Claud Howard argue that Coleridge had already realized "almost all the essential points of Kant's idealism" due to his exposure to the Cambridge Platonists in the mid-1790's (98). Regardless of these arguments, two facts support the belief that Coleridge knew at least the basics of Kant's philosophy well before 1801. In a letter from May, 1796, Coleridge expresses his desire to visit Germany. Upon his return to England, he writes, he would like to establish a school ("for eight young men at 100 guineas each") where he would teach, among other things, "the new Kantian system" (CL1 209). This plan for teaching suggests that Coleridge at this point had at least a general understanding of Kant. Second, Coleridge did travel to Germany in 1798, and it is hard to believe that such a man as Coleridge would fail to

Kant's own statements about time appear unclear and inconsistent at times, but one may summarize his views as follows. Time is not an abstraction in the Aristotelian sense, and it is not an absolute, independent entity in the Newtonian sense. Rather, time is a "pure intuition" of the human mind. The mind does not derive the notion of time from experience. Instead, time is an *a priori* condition of sense experience; it is an inherent condition of the mind that makes ordered perception possible. Thus time is purely subjective but also related to the objective realm, for though time is a sort of mental program, its sole function is to make sense out of the external world.[6]

Coleridge demonstrates his allegiance to this line of thinking in his Logic manuscript, which he compiled between 1803 and 1829 (L xxxix). There, Coleridge lifts verbatim passages -- especially those relating to time and space -- from the Critique of Pure Reason. There is therefore no doubt regarding the source of bold statements in the Logic about time. For example, Coleridge writes, "Time is not anything that subsists for itself or belongs to things as their own property," "Time is the form of inner sense," and "Time is the immediate condition of the inward proceedings of our consciousness" (L 170-71). Given these borrowings, it is perhaps unnecessary to state, as Gian Orsini does, that

---

immerse himself in the latest trends in German thinking. When considering this historical question, though, one must recall Coleridge's oft-repeated claim that the ideas of Kant and other philosophers "had been mine, formed, and full formed in my own mind, before I ever heard of these writers" (CN2 2375).

[6] Kant maintained that although the sense of time does not derive from the perception of objects, it is still "empirically real" since all experience is temporalized; a real conception of time accompanies the perception of all phenomena. However, Kant also held that time is "transcendentally ideal" since it is an *a priori* condition of experience and since it only applies to the mental sensation or appearance of objects (rather than the objects themselves). The conception of time is a fact of perception, but time has no status that is independent of this perceptive process.

Complicating things further is Kant's claim that the time of pure intuition cannot be perceived in itself. Kant suggests that the empirically real sense of time that accompanies perception is merely a manifestation of this intuition. Professor Richard Aquila has observed (during conversations with me) that these tensions in Kant's definition of time are remarkably similar to uncertain portrayals of time in Coleridge's poetry. In the works of each man, one finds a nearly-contradictory depiction of time as both real and ideal, as well as a suggestion that real time is a spurious form of the pure, ideal intuition of time. It is doubtful (but not unthinkable) that the poet consciously sought to represent these equivocations in his poetry. However, as these philosophical and artistic minds reach comparable conclusions and uncertainties, they testify to the general right-thinking of their pursuits.

Coleridge "supported" Kant's doctrine of the "ideality" of time (93). Despite this obvious connection, Orsini and most critics agree that Coleridge's thought is different in many ways from Kant's system, and they regard Coleridge's support of particular Kantian doctrines as mere connections between distinctive philosophies.[7] Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, an important fact remains: Coleridge's espousal of Kant's views underscores the mature poet's inclination to treat time as a subjective projection of the mind. Furthermore, one may partially attribute this view of time to Coleridge's religious concerns, for the "extrication" of time and space was crucial to Coleridge's disproof of godless associationism. Such a view is nicely complemented by Coleridge's ruminations on God's timeless, eternal nature, for this understanding of God implies that the experience of time is a human -- rather than heavenly -- process.

The Translation of Eternity

As described in the previous chapter, Coleridge's poetry often displays an effort to transcend temporal experience and thereby move closer to the unified mind of God. At this point, Coleridge's understanding of God's timelessness could be viewed as contributing to such an effort. However, Coleridge's writings and poetry show that his conclusions about time's nature could often lead him to pursue the other alternative and embrace his natural, human mode of perception. For example, a notebook entry from 1810 displays this attitude. The entry begins with a familiar definition of time and space: they are "the forms of all perception," but they are also "pure intuitions." Having made this Kantian observation, the entry moves toward the concerns of its own author as it notes that all perception is "passive, ergo not in God -- ergo Space and Time not in God." From here,

---

[7] For representative claims about Coleridge's differences from Kant, see Muirhead (89-96), Howard (98-101) and M. A. Perkins (92-93).

though, Coleridge's reasoning shifts to a slightly more practical observation: "But except under the forms of Space and Time we can predicate nothing, can bring no one of the most abstract intellections to consciousness" (CN3 3973). His next entry expresses the same idea more simply: "We assuredly cannot reason except under some form of perception" (CN3 3974).

This idea seems obvious, but the statement is a crucial one with regard to Coleridge's approach to time. Whereas Coleridge elsewhere denigrates time due to its worldly domain, he here contentedly acknowledges the limits imposed by perception. Importantly, this idea of limitation allows for a positive conclusion. One sees the direction of this idea in a rather complex note that Coleridge wrote years later. There, Coleridge arrives at a compromising but also inspiring position regarding the struggle between time and eternity. He begins by expressing the idea that time is an inexact "translation" of God's eternity. Within this process of translation, the sense of eternity is split into two different human conceptions. From "the ideal truth," Coleridge writes, "we have necessarily an intuition of simultaneity, of which the finite modification is Continuity." Meanwhile, from the "unity of the Infinite, which in the finite mind equals Reflection, we have the notion of Moments." In other words, humans imperfectly conceive of God's eternal (but also "immediate") existence through the sensation of time's flowing duration. Reciprocally, the dynamic of God's self-awareness (or the "self-finding of the Infinite") appears to the human mind in the form of reflection, which makes an ordered sense of successive, momentary events possible. Of course, it appears that Coleridge is splitting hairs here. One could just as easily associate the idea of simultaneity with the sense of moments, and the ideas of reflection and unity with the sense of continuity. In a way, however, this is Coleridge's point. His conclusion is uncharacteristically clear and emphatic: these two conceptions of time may appear to be "opposite forces," but they are in fact "the Forces of one Power, and to know this is *Philosophy*." As he explains, the

reflecting powers of the mind, and the ensuing senses of successive moments of time, are not a "separation of continuous thought any more than a Wave of the Ocean. It is but a seeming separation." Coleridge concludes the entry by stating that if we had a proper "Command of Time," we could see the organic unity and interrelationships among all things, "from a Pebble up to Planet" (CN3 4351, his emphasis).

The wave analogy is a helpful one, and it demonstrates Coleridge's great ability to illustrate abstract concepts with simple images. Years before presenting this particular illustration, though, Coleridge was drawn to similar demonstrations of succession-with-continuity. In a notebook entry from 1799, for example, Coleridge lists several "Images" from nature which he apparently intends to use in future works. One of these is comparable to the wave analogy, yet it is also more vivid and memorable:

> The *white rose* of Eddy-foam, where the stream ran into a scooped or scolloped hollow of the Rock in its channel -- this shape, an exact white rose, was for ever overpowered by the Stream rushing down upon it, and still obstinate in resurrection it spread up into the Scollop, by fits and starts, *blossoming* in a moment into a full Flower. (CN1 1589, his emphasis)[8]

Like waves within the ocean, this water flower complements the continuous flow of the stream with a contrasting sense of pulsating "resurrection."

On another occasion, Coleridge refers to a mysterious condition of his dream states in which the interdependent senses of vision and time distort each other. His observation anticipates the scientific recognition of the persistence of vision (which, for example, makes the viewing of motion pictures possible). More importantly, it presents an

[8] This particular passage is from a notebook entry from 1803. Coleridge's original description of this sight appears at CN1 495 (from 1799), but his revised description presents a more detailed image.

interesting union of contrasting temporal sensations. Coleridge describes the condition in part of a letter:

> It is a transmutation of the succession of Time into the juxtaposition of Space, by which the smallest Impulses, if quickly and regularly recurrent, aggregate themselves -- and attain a kind of visual magnitude with a correspondent Intensity of general Feeling. The simplest Illustration would be the circle of fire made by whirling round a live Coal -- only here the mind is passive. (CL2 974)

In this passage, Coleridge is clearly concerned with dreams rather than with poetry. Also, since it describes an aggregate of successive images, the metaphor of the twirling coal is different from those of the ocean and the rose eddy. Still, this letter provides yet another example of Coleridge's fascination with emblems of segmentation coexisting with unity, or of moments commingling with duration. More importantly, Coleridge suggests that he finds a sense of truth in this type of intersection. After describing his view of the recurring rose eddy, for example, Coleridge explains that he "hung over the bridge" and stared at the image, all the while "musing and considering how much of this scene of endless variety in Identity was Nature's -- how much the living organ's!" (CN1 1589).[9] Thus Coleridge's line of thinking quickly moves toward his familiar, overriding concern with finding harmony between the specific and the general, and between the subject and the object. However, these illustrations also suggest that the reconciliation of two different conceptions of time is an important issue within his artistic project.

[9] Presumably, one may define "living organ" as the quasi-pantheistic spirit of life and unity in all things. The phrase seems akin to Coleridge's idea of the "one Life," which is addressed below.

"This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"

Similarly, one finds that the union of temporal schemes often accompanies those poems in which Coleridge claims to have achieved a harmonious perception. In order to recognize this, it is appropriate to turn to a poetic form that is generally regarded as the most conducive to creating the sense of unity that Coleridge so desires. This is the "conversation poem." According to George Watson, the structure of the conversation poem lends itself to Coleridge's examination of "man's relation to the world around him" (84). All of Coleridge's conversation poems at least raise the question of the poet's ability to recognize a connection between himself and the external world. Usually, the poet expresses the likelihood of this union; in "The Eolian Harp," for example, he temporarily recognizes "the one Life within us and abroad" (26). As Schulz explains, an effective presentation of this "one Life" theme is the goal of each of these poems. He writes, "At the very core of the conversation poem is the belief that one force breathes through all, animate and inanimate alike; for although man in his essence is distinct from nature, he co-exists with and is a part of its totality" (86). Schulz additionally states that since this is the theme of Coleridge's lifelong pursuit, the conversational form presents the poet's most "mature" voice (73).

When considering this ambitious and effective poetic form, critics usually cite "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "Frost at Midnight" as the best of the group. However, Paul Magnuson argues that "This Lime-Tree Bower" is the only poem that "succeeds" in asserting Coleridge's place in a "harmonious universe" (25). He notes that the positive conclusion of "Frost at Midnight" depends on Coleridge's hope that his sleeping child will someday gain a sense of the "one Life." Coleridge is therefore limited by the fact that he needs the "mediation" of another mind to "reach the one mind of God" (29, 33). Though "This Lime-Tree Bower" also makes use of an inspirational intermediary (Lamb), Coleridge himself seems to achieve a direct, harmonious insight in the midst of the poem.

With this distinction in mind, it is appropriate to consider the poet's manipulation of time in this most successful conversation poem.

The poem is complex, but its plot is not. A headnote establishes the setting: Coleridge has been visited by the Wordsworths and the Lambs, and on this day the visitors have gone for a walk. However, Coleridge cannot join them due to a leg injury, and he is left alone in the bower. As the opening of the poem reveals, Coleridge is quite bitter about this solitary confinement, and he even hyperbolically speculates that he may never see his friends again. Soon, though, Coleridge joins them through his imagination, and he envisions the familiar sights that they are presumably encountering. After presenting some generalized descriptions of the group's likely pursuits, Coleridge shifts to a concentration on what Lamb must be seeing at the moment. He imagines that Lamb has fixed his eyes on the setting sun. As Coleridge envisions this view, and as Lamb observes it, the poem reaches a climax of description and emotion. The two men have a shared mind, and this mind perceives the harmony of things. The heart of the poem culminates in an expression of Coleridge's sense of "delight" in the "one Life," for his imaginative journey has succeeded in relieving his physical and spiritual solitude (43).

In his lengthy study of "This Lime-Tree Bower," R. A. Durr argues that the poem "exemplifies [Coleridge's] ideal of organic form" (515). Durr makes this statement in the light of Coleridge's claims about the purposes of poetry and art in general. According to Coleridge, art should mediate between and reconcile the subject-object separation, and it should allow one to "contemplate the Particular in the Universal, and the Universal in the Particular" (qtd. in Snyder 136). In his close reading of the poem, Durr points out several techniques that work to convey this aesthetically satisfying sense of reconciliation; the most important of these involve clever depictions of images and landscapes. Also, Durr claims that the "marvelously intricate" form of the work may be regarded as a model of the methods and movements of Coleridge's poems in general (515).

Durr's analysis nicely reveals some complex aspects of this imagery, but he fails to consider the poem's subtle manipulations of time. As it turns out, the poem's treatment of time is closely related to its depictions of images and landscapes, and the temporal structure of the work reinforces its climactic sense of a harmonious reconciliation. By presenting Real and Imaginary Time as complementary and compatible sensations, Coleridge promotes the poem's thematic sense of unity.

Generally, the form of a conversation poem provides several positive effects. For example, this form creates desirable senses of spontaneity, intimacy, and candor (Schulz 73-74). In "This Lime-Tree Bower," the conversational style also has the crucial effect of heightening a reader's awareness of the temporal progression of the poem. The narrator speaks in the present tense, and this sense of present action is important; the word "now" appears repeatedly in the narrative. Coleridge further reveals his consciousness of time (and also of sight) in the poem's introduction, which anticipates his loss of a future memory of this day. Because he cannot join his friends, he has lost "Beauties and feelings, such as would have been / Most sweet to my remembrance even when age / Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness" (3-5). The awareness of the present in the poem is important in that it makes the poem's climactic sense of unity possible, for it would be absurd for Coleridge to say that he has achieved a sense of the harmony of nature in stages. More specifically, the temporal structure of the work emphasizes the fact that the perceptions of Coleridge and Lamb have become synchronized, and their subjective minds recognize the "one Life" at the same time.

The poem creates this effect of momentary unity through an overall movement from vague descriptions to detailed ones. As Coleridge begins to speculate about the journey of the Lambs and the Wordsworths, his imagination paints a fairly murky portrait. "Meanwhile," he muses, his friends

> Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance

To that still roaring dell, of which I told;

The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,

And only speckled by the mid-day sun. . . . (8-11)

Coleridge's vision continues, and it is a pleasant one, but it is also shaded and uncertain. The early part of the poem therefore corresponds to what Durr describes as a recurrent Coleridgean pattern. This pattern reflects the "initial disharmony between man and nature" through an opening depiction of an obscure environment (Durr 519). From here, though, the poem proceeds to a more vivid setting. Coleridge next imagines that his friends leave the dark dell and "now . . . emerge / Beneath the wide wide Heaven" (19-20). Importantly, Coleridge at this point also concentrates on the point of view of Charles rather than of the group as a whole, and thus the poem continues its movement toward particularity.

It is quite appropriate that the following, central passage of the poem centers on Lamb's view of the setting sun, for as shown earlier, Coleridge is aware of the temporal richness of this event.[10] As the description of the setting sun continues the poem's dramatic rise, it also promotes a familiar sense of a gradual and continuous event:

Ah! Slowly sink

Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!

Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,

Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!

Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!

And kindle, thou blue Ocean! (32-37)

Not surprisingly, the next lines demonstrate that Lamb has assumed the gazing perception and "swimming sense" associated with the experience of Imaginary Time:

[10] See Chapter One, pp. 27-29.

So my friend

Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,

Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round

On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem

Less gross than bodily; and of such hues

As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes

Spirits perceive his presence. (37-43)

As the sun gets closer to the horizon and as the colors of the sky create a dazzling display, the poem reaches an imaginative climax. Of course, Coleridge's reference to the "veil" of the "Almighty spirit" suggests that he is still interested in seeing past the abyss between the temporal and spiritual realms. In a lesser poem, Coleridge might have shifted at this point into a sustained reflection on God, heaven, or eternity (as seen earlier in "Life," for example). Similarly, he might have expressed a desire to dismiss his senses entirely and somehow transcend time and space. This is not a lesser poem, however, and instead of progressing in this type of direction, the poem simply stops.

Of course, the narrator has much more to say, but Coleridge halts the action of the poem in order to examine this instance of unity. The next lines make the transition to a description of Coleridge's experience of the same event:

A delight

Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad

As if I myself were there! Nor in this bower,

This little lime-tree bower, have I not mark'd

Much that has sooth'd me. (43-47)

As Coleridge shifts from a description of "swimming" sense to "sudden" delight, he also makes a transition into a past-tense description of his own view from within the bower. In effect, then, Coleridge is able to represent two perspectives from the same point in time.

Though these perspectives are of course different ones, they are also unified because they are synchronized.

Having interrupted the continuous progress of the sun, Coleridge is free to embrace the measured and particularistic portrayals of view toward which he is so instinctively drawn. Whereas Lamb's vision was insightful but diffusive, the view in the bower at sunset is a sharp one:

> Pale beneath the blaze
> Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
> Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
> The shadow of the leaf and stem above
> Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
> Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
> Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
> Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
> Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
> Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
> Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
> Yet still the solitary humble-bee
> Sings in the bean-flower! (47-59)

This listing of individual sights is reminiscent of the poet's euphoric description of his view in "Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement." In that poem, though, Coleridge fails to create the sense that he is elaborating on a single sensation; instead, he seems to recognize different objects at different times. In "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," the action of the poem has ceased, and the cessation allows Coleridge to portray a single experience both as a whole and in parts. One should also note that this passage makes a seamless transition back into the present tense. This movement counters the successive

nature of the narrator's description, and it preserves the fluidness that accompanies the description of Lamb's experience.

Overall, then, Coleridge orients the poem around a sunset, which inherently demonstrates different conceptions of time's progress. As the poet describes Lamb's gazing, continuous view of this event, Coleridge's narrative technique allows him to describe his own, simultaneous perception of the same sense of harmony, but from a different perspective. Having frozen this synchronized process, Coleridge is able to dissect his sensation by listing the particular elements (such as single leaves and bees) that contribute to the synergy of the whole event. He underscores this idea with the poem's brilliant concluding image, which is of the visible "speck" of a rook whose flight crosses the sun's "dilated glory" (71-72). Finally, all of this is made possible by the fact that the poem's action is envisioned by the mind of the physically-incapacitated narrator. Within this subjective sphere, manipulations of time are possible, and this command of time demonstrates the success of the narrator's imaginative perception.

"This Lime-Tree Bower" also represents a significant reversal of the pattern of Coleridge's earliest poetry. There, his Real Time representations of movements through landscapes usually function only as a foundation for his ultimate goal of gazing past individual details and perceiving an enduring whole. However, Coleridge's deliberate, itemized description of his experience at the end of "This Lime-Tree Bower" suggests that a sense of the "one Life" is not complete without a simultaneous perception of the elements within that unity. Such a paradoxical goal is difficult to attain in poetry, but here Coleridge's clever use of the conversational form makes a sense of reconciliation possible.

"The Picture"

In some poems, Coleridge seems to make his challenge even more difficult, and at times he consciously explores the demands he is placing on his poetry. One sees this, for

example, in "The Picture," which overtly demonstrates the conflicts between reality and the imagination. Specifically, the poem presents a young lover's meditation on the large gap between idealized romance and the sad shortcomings of real human relationships. At the same time, the poem also draws attention to the different ways in which a poet may represent landscapes and time. Michael Kelly, one of the few critics who have commented on "The Picture," summarizes the manner in which the poem draws attention to its technique: "The poem is like a picture; it has vivid pictorial qualities, and the narrator, by being very precise in all of his descriptions, requires that we examine it with the same care that we would a picture" (92).

The poem opens with the present-tense, first-person narration of the youth, who makes it clear that he is rapidly moving through a rural landscape:

> Through weeds and thorns, and matted underwood
> I force my way; now climb, and now descend
> O'er rocks, or bare or mossy, with wild foot
> Crushing the purple whorts. . . . (1-4)

After these opening lines, the narrator continues to present detailed, present-time descriptions of his constantly changing surroundings. He also hints at the motive behind his retreat. It appears that the narrator is a jilted lover, and in his embarrassment he has plunged into the wilderness in order to counter the habits of his romantic (and Romantic) mind.

Now that he has assumed a cynical state of mind, the narrator imagines the thoughts of his romantic alter-ego in a derisive way. The narrator shows his faith in the tangible reality of the wilderness as he describes the effect it would have on his love-struck, former self:

> But hence, fond wretch! breathe not contagion here! . . .
> If in sullen mood

He should stray hither, the low stumps shall gore

His dainty feet, the briar and the thorn

Make his plumes haggard. (26-31)

Throughout the poem, the narrator continues to envision this idealistic counterpart of himself, and he mocks the maudlin manner in which a lover would view this thorny setting. However, whenever the narrator satirically describes idyllic portraits of young lovers, wood nymphs, and the like, he loses his sense of irony and then yields to that pastoral state of mind. This is most apparent in the middle of the poem. There, the narrator wryly observes that there is no beautiful maiden standing next to a nearby stream, but then he longingly imagines her appearance, and he creates a sort of portrait in his mind. Soon, though, the romantic image is shattered, and the disgusted narrator plods on. Eventually, he encounters an actual picture. He finds a rough sketch on tree bark that his beloved has left in the woods. Encouraged by the fact that he can visit her under the pretext of returning the sketch, the narrator (now in a happy, romantic mood) walks on to her house. Here the poem ends, but only after overtly contrasting ideas of idealism and realism, and of artificial views and natural ones.

The title of the work reveals Coleridge's interest in pictorial imagery. However, the narrative associates pictures with a naively romantic mindset, and it demonstrates the lover's inability to preserve an imaginary portrait. From the beginning, the poem makes it clear that the lover (and the poem) must find a way to reconcile the reality of the rural environment with the workings of his imagination. The actual landscape, with all of its thorns and brush, challenges the veracity of the narrator's pastoral visions. Importantly, though, the poem refuses to portray the real landscape as the problem; instead, the setting appears as a stable, given reality, with which any romantic vision must be reconciled. In fact, the narrator is drawn to the tangible elements and visual details that he gleans from the wild. As mentioned earlier, the poem begins and ends with the lover's rambling through

dense foliage, and the narrative shows a delight in the step-by-step revelations that accompany the speaker's movement. Note, for example, a passage from the middle of the poem:

> I pass forth into light -- I find myself
> Beneath a weeping birch (most beautiful
> Of forest trees, the Lady of the Woods),
> Hard by the brink of a tall weedy rock
> That overbrows the cataract. How bursts
> The landscape on my sight! Two crescent hills
> Fold in behind each other. . . .
> At my feet
> the whortle-berries are bedewed with spray,
> Dashed upwards by the furious waterfall. (135-46)

At other points in the poem, the narrator speaks of how he "here" sees one thing, and "here" another, and he adorns his descriptions with phrases of discovery, such as, "And lo!" and "But what is this?" (97, 152). In a sense, each of these sudden images is a picture in itself, but these types of views are hardly akin to a portrait. One might instead describe the narrator as examining the individual brushstrokes of the landscape, and his shifting eyes constantly present new revelations.

The poem actually presents two framed "pictures" for consideration: the first is the narrator's vision of a maiden by the stream, and the second is the real tree-bark sketch drawn by his beloved. Importantly, the narrator's vision of the first "picture" begins when he stops walking. He sits down in a shady nook in the woods which seems "As safe and sacred from the step of man / As an invisible world" (53-54). He begins to meditate on his setting, but he initially observes that it presents no romantic tableau: the nearby stream has never reflected "the stately virgin's robe, / The face, the form divine, the downcast look /

Contemplative" (74-76). Within this dark, stationary setting, though, the narrator's mind wanders, and it lures him into a vision of this very scene. His comment about the maiden expands into a portrait:

> Behold! her open palm
> Presses her cheek and brow! Her elbow rests
> On the bare branch of half-uprooted tree
> That leans towards its mirror! (76-79)

The narrator also imagines how his romantic alter-ego would stealthily observe her by looking at this reflection:

> He now . . .
> Worships the watery idol, dreaming hopes
> Delicious to the soul, but fleeting, vain,
> E'en as that phantom-world on which he gazed. . . . (81-85)

The fact that the narrator observes only the "mirror" of her image underscores the pictorial nature of this vision. Not surprisingly, in this imaginary realm, the narrator's eyes no longer shift, but "gaze" at the phantom image. As the passage suggests, though, his gaze is in vain, for this picture has no connection to reality. As Kelly observes, this vision of the maiden is "conventional, general, fanciful, and static," and the lover's gaze is reminiscent of the "lifeless, unimpassioned 'gazing on the western sky' in 'Dejection'" (85).

Kelly's use of the word "static" hints at a crucial shortcoming of this image. Like that of the lovers on Keats's urn, this portrait of an idyllic maiden is troubled by time: the picture is incapable of change. Coleridge makes this clear with the poem's next lines. This lover's gaze is "not unheeded" by the maiden. She coyly gathers flowers, and suddenly, "as one that toys with time," she scatters them on the pool:

> Then all the charm

Is broken -- all that phantom world so fair

Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,

And each mis-shapes the other. (91-94)

Whereas Keats could at least examine the individual elements of the static urn, this narrator is not able to study the mirror's image in more detail. His vision cannot survive scrutiny, for he has not yet reconciled reality with his imagination. Within this general opposition, meanwhile, there seems to be a corresponding separation of Real and Imaginary Time. If one recalls Coleridge's wave-ocean analogy, the fact that a disturbance of the water destroys the static image is telling. The rippling waves show that the narrator's thought is incompatible with succession and change, and this fact makes the vision "vain" indeed. After these ripples destroy the scene, the loving observer patiently waits for the pool to settle. When it does so, the reflected picture reappears, but with the crucial absence of the maiden. The imagined episode ends in dejection, and the bitter narrator returns to his wandering.

This dejection is only temporary, though, and the poem ends on a positive note. Of course, "The Picture" is not as ambitious as the conversation poems, and it makes no claim of a harmonious realization of the "one Life." However, the poem does conclude with the narrator's decision to return to his beloved, and it appears that he has reconciled his romantic idealism with his keen realism. The poem symbolizes this union with the narrator's discovery of the picture (of a rustic scene) drawn by his beloved. As Raimonda Modiano observes, this sketch on bark is distinguished by its tangibility; it is not another figment of the narrator's imagination (92). At the same time, this real object retains an imaginative quality in that it leads the narrator into a romantic -- but realizable -- fantasy. Regarding the description of this latter picture, Modiano writes, "He is not drifting into reverie but merely focusing on another object of sight. The picture is not the narrator's fantasy in any way but has an independent, objective existence, being the product of a

separate human being and not of a fictitious youth who is the narrator in disguise" (92). According to Modiano, the introduction of this tangible portrait serves as an "affirmation" of the possibility of positive imaginative activity (92). This reconciliation of imaginative activity with the real, natural world is underscored by the fact that the sketch is made with tree bark and berry ink.

Again, though, the preceding parts of the poem reflect a Keatsian frustration with the static nature of pictorial scenes. The fact that this last picture is tangible and not a mere apparition does not resolve this problem. The bark sketch nicely represents the intersection of realistic and idealized romantic intrigues, and it also gives the narrator a sense of contact with the mind of another. By itself, though, this device fails to resolve the problems of time and vision that the rest of the poem has emphasized. Accordingly, when describing this picture, Coleridge makes use of an ingenious narrative technique, and his method gives the image an integrity on which the conclusion of the poem relies. The trick is this: Coleridge describes this picture before explaining that it is a picture. The description of the sketch appears within a lengthy presentation of similar but real scenes. The sketch initially appears to be one more view that the narrator has suddenly encountered, and only after a complete description does he reveal that this is a unique, hand-made picture. The passage begins by describing the appearance of various cottages and then shifts to a concentration on a single cottage scene:

> But what is this?
> That cottage, with its slanting chimney-smoke,
> And close beside its porch a sleeping child --
> His dear head pillowed on a sleeping dog --
> One arm between its fore-legs, and the hand
> Holds loosely its small handful of wild-flowers,
> Unfilletted, and of unequal lengths.

> A curious picture, with a master's haste
> Sketched on a strip of pinky-silver skin,
> Peeled from the birchen bark! (152-61)

As Modiano observes, this sly integration of actual landscape and pictorial representation contributes to a positive "blurring" of the boundaries between nature and the imagination (92). Importantly, this narrative technique also provides a sense of temporal reconciliation in that it allows Coleridge to maintain a sense of a Real Time, successive exploration of the segments of this portrait. Because this detailed examination of the scene precedes the reader's understanding that this is a picture, the reader learns of the picture with simultaneous senses of the scene as a whole and as a series of parts.

In his analysis of "The Picture," Kelly acknowledges that the poem is not one of Coleridge's greatest. He observes that the poem's lack of rich ambiguities (when compared, for example, to the "Ancient Mariner") could be regarded as a sign of Coleridge's "declining poetical powers" after 1800 (75, 91). One could also say that Coleridge's use of a narrative gimmick (albeit brilliant) in order to capture the poem's sense of resolution further suggests that the work is not a masterpiece. However, Kelly maintains that the poem is more subtle than it initially appears:

> [In the poem] there is a more discernible and coherent center than has been widely recognized, and it lies in Coleridge's efforts to depict the mind creating stability out of conflicting emotions and fragmented images and trying to cope with the subtleties of poetic inspiration and poetic expression. For "The Picture," as its very title suggests, is a poem about the bringing together of disjointed images, emotions, and experiences into a meaningful wholeness. (92)

"The Picture," then, is typical of Coleridge's poetry in that it strives to unite the subject with the objective world, and the individual fragment with the whole. Meanwhile, the

poem further reveals Coleridge's recognition of the need to balance imaginary visions with complementary senses of visual and temporal particularity.

"There passed a weary time": The "Ancient Mariner"

Of course, there may be a connection between the positive conclusiveness of "The Picture" and the fact that it is a minor, seldom-read poem. Such a pleasant narrative as this does not readily fall into place within the Coleridge canon. With the exception of "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," his greatest and best-known works are, in a sense, works of great failure: "Kubla Khan" portrays a false paradise gone awry; "Dejection" addresses the poet's stagnation; and "Frost at Midnight," though hopeful in part, candidly acknowledges the shortcomings of the narrator's life. Coleridge's greatest work, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," may contain positive overtones, but clearly the general tenor of the tale is one of senseless terror. Its world is one where, as Macduff says, "Confusion hath made his masterpiece."

This masterpiece of confusion and artistry has appropriately become the locus of Coleridge studies, for as many have shown, its tensions parallel those within the poet's religious, metaphysical, and aesthetical formulations. Coleridge was generally more adept at recognizing problems than posing solutions, and some of his best art merely dramatizes unresolved conflicts. In fact, Coleridge's greatest talent may have been his ironic ability to portray failures at perceiving the world properly. For most of the poem, at least, this is the Mariner's problem, and Coleridge captures the Mariner's distorted perception in a number of ways. One important but seldom-recognized technique involves the narrative's representations of time.

Before considering the treatment of time in the poem, it is necessary to establish a general, interpretive context for this complex work. It is also appropriate to begin with a consideration of Robert Penn Warren's analysis, which appeared in the middle of the

twentieth century, but which is still the most influential critical study of the poem. Warren regards the poem as a system of symbols, and he decodes this system to reveal two central themes. The primary theme, according to Warren, centers on a familiar storyline of "crime and punishment and reconciliation" (222). The Mariner's shooting of the albatross is a crime against nature (and also a symbol of original sin), and it leads to a period of torturous penance. However, his safe passage home demonstrates his graceful acceptance back into the universal order. The poem therefore functions primarily as one of "sacramental vision," and it shows the potential of an alienated soul to be re-initiated into the "one Life," or the natural harmony of things (214). Meanwhile, the poem parallels this process with a secondary examination of the imaginative faculty of the mind. According to Warren, the poem's symbolic system establishes a connection between the Mariner's suffering and a failure of imaginative perception. By contrast, when the Mariner is redeemed, a number of positive symbols appear to demonstrate the restoration of the imagination. Warren notes that the two themes of the poem achieve a "fusion," for the imaginative mind's capacity to perceive unity becomes equivalent to a spiritual induction into the "one Life" (245).

Warren's essay is a thoughtful one, and it provides valuable insight into many specific aspects of the poem. However, the heart of his argument depends on generalizations which may be unacceptable. Perhaps the greatest weakness of Warren's analysis is that he presumes the poem's themes are positive ones. In short, the two themes he describes accept as granted that the poem's ending is happy. Warren's reading is thorough enough to show that the poem does treat themes involving the imagination and the question of sin. Still, these points in no way prove that all is well -- with regard to both plot and theme -- at the poem's end. In fact, this optimistic claim seems to contradict the practical evidence of a reader's reaction to the poem. Though the story may be quite enjoyable in a way, no one ever leaves the Mariner's tale with a sense of warmth and

happiness. Rather, one may more accurately say that readers, like the listening wedding guest, somehow feel "sadder and wiser" after experiencing this bizarre tale (624).

One sees a specific manifestation of Warren's interpretive problem in his extensive commentary on the poem's sun and moon imagery. Warren writes, "There is a constant contrast between moonlight and sunlight, and the main events of the poem can be sorted out according to the two kinds of light in which they occur" (233). He next argues, "In the poem the good events take place under the aegis of the moon, the bad events under that of the sun" (234). With this generalization in mind, Warren notes Coleridge's life-long habit of attributing positive associations to the moon, as well as his frequent linking of moonlight and the imagination (234-35). In the poem, then, the daytime occurrence of horrific events (such as the appearance of Death-in-Life and Life-in-Death) and the moonlight occurrence of benevolent events (such as the arrival of the thirst-quenching storm) symbolically correspond to the absence and presence of imaginative perception. According to Warren, the general movement of the work shows that the Mariner's crime against nature symbolically "brings the sun," for his act is also "a crime against the imagination" (239-40). Under the stark sunlight, the Mariner feels alienated and terrified. After he is redeemed, though, his proper understanding returns, as does the moonlight.

However, Warren also acknowledges the apparent inconsistencies that arise within this symbolic framework. For example, in Part Three of the poem, the rising of the moon seems to arouse a corresponding sense of fright in the Mariner. His reaction hardly sounds pleasant: "Fear at my heart, as at a cup, / My life-blood seemed to sip" (204-05). Warren also notes that when the Mariner's fellow crewmen look upon him with a curse, their eyes "in the Moon did glitter" (436). Here Warren's framework begins to crumble, but he brushes off the inconsistencies by claiming that even the benevolent imagination must "exact vengeance" on occasion (242).

Subsequent critics have focused on these apparent inconsistencies in imagery as a means of challenging Warren's general conclusions. Abe Delson, for example, builds on Warren's consideration of the appearances of the sun and the moon, but he demonstrates that the connotations of both images shift throughout the tale. Delson writes, "Both sun and moon function at times benevolently and at times malevolently" (709). He goes on to say that any attempt (like Warren's) "to make one good and the other bad" distorts the actual design of the poem (709). Indeed, the inconsistencies in Warren's system are more abundant than he allows. The sun does appear "bloody" at one point, for example, but the Mariner describes it about a dozen lines earlier as "glorious" (112, 98). Also, Delson points out more instances of negative events arising under the glow of moonlight (713-14). For Delson, the contradictory associations within each image promote a "horrifying" and confused view of the universe. Though both sun and moon "have alternatingly benevolent and malevolent associations," this alternation creates a sense of instability, and therefore "their final association is malevolent" (719-20).

Delson's study reflects the post-Warren critical trend that refuses to attribute any type of positive theme to the poem. This movement has been led by Edmund Bostetter, who argues that Warren's reading "can only be maintained by forcing key episodes into conformity with the pattern and ignoring others" (241). According to Bostetter, the tale does not represent an affirmative study of the imagination (as Warren portrays it); it only presents a "nightmare world" (241). To make his point, Bostetter focuses on elements of the story that puzzle and disturb most readers. For example, he emphasizes the motiveless nature of the Mariner's killing of the albatross; this is "a compulsive sin which strips away the illusion of freedom and reveals just how helpless he is" (251). Furthermore, one can find little sense of justice in the criminal Mariner's survival and the death of hundreds of his "passive" and "ignorant" crewmen (245). Bostetter also dwells on the fact that the Mariner's fate is determined by the chance of a dice game between two spirits. This detail

proves that the "moral conception" of the Mariner's world is "primitive and savage -- utterly arbitrary in its ruthlessness" (244-45). After considering these and other elements of the story, Bostetter concludes that "the whole tenor of the poem" opposes any sense of just morality or divine providence (248). Instead, the Mariner's experience is "essentially negative and irrational" (253).[11]

As a result of Bostetter's argument, subsequent critics have tended to refrain from finding wholly positive themes in the work. In spite of their different critical methods, many of these critics essentially arrive at Bostetter's conclusion. Paul Magnuson, for example, studies the comments made by Coleridge's contemporaries about the poem, and he concludes that the poet's interest was in "depicting the nightmare state" (50). Meanwhile, the more positive of the recent studies hardly claim to find pleasant, "one Life" themes in the poem; instead, they humbly seek to demonstrate the poem's irreconcilable tensions between balanced elements of good and evil and of order and chaos. Arden Reed pursues this line of thinking when he argues that both Warren and Bostetter are wrong to find any conclusions -- positive or negative -- within the tale's complexity. Instead, the poem creates an "undecidability" through its apparent inconsistencies, and its results are "not either/or, but both/and" (173). Of course, one cannot say that readings such as Reed's prove that the poem has a neutral tone. The Mariner may be caught in a limbo between salvation and damnation, but Coleridge, unlike Blake, would never delight in such an

[11] For Bostetter, the poem captures a rare occasion in which Coleridge's fears dominate his creative product. Though Coleridge generally tries to make his personal doubts and anxiety conform to his religious principles, the "Ancient Mariner" represents a capitulation to a terrifying, modernist portrayal of an "outrageous" universe (253). At the same time, though, the poem demonstrates the human habit of transforming senseless events into a code of "moral statement" and "universal law" (253). Bostetter finds such a movement in both the poem and its critical commentaries. As many have observed, the Mariner's own summary of the moral to his story ("He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small" [614-15]) seems absurdly disproportionate to the experiences he has described. According to Bostetter, though, critics like Warren follow the same process of over-simplifying and whitewashing things when they claim to recognize a logical, positive order behind the poem.

equilibrium. From a Coleridgean perspective, any result that falls short of reaching a sense of the "one Life" can only be viewed as a disturbing failure.

One final, contextual consideration further suggests that Coleridge did at least intend to create a nightmare state in the poem, and it also provides insight into Coleridge's methods of doing so. In a sense, the "Ancient Mariner" has its origins in a prose fragment titled "The Wanderings of Cain." As Coleridge explains in a headnote to "Cain," he and Wordsworth planned to collaborate on a mystical tale that would chronicle Cain's suffering. The plan was quickly abandoned, however, and Coleridge wrote the tale of the Mariner "instead" (CW 287). Coleridge's notes which summarize the plan for "Cain" are unclear regarding Cain's outcome, but they hint that the tale would have ended with his redemption. What is clear, however, is that the bulk of the piece would have centered on Cain's misery. This is certainly true for the fragment which Coleridge actually wrote. The brief episode describes Cain's wanderings through dark, scary landscapes. Cain's body is "wasted as by fire," his eye is "sullen," and his long locks of hair are "stained and scorched" (289). Cain is so feeble that he must be assisted by his innocent son Enos, who constantly questions why the world seems to treat them so strangely. The landscape is "desolate" everywhere, and animals unnaturally flee when Cain and Enos draw near. Coleridge makes the horror of the situation clear through Cain's words: "The mighty one that persecuteth me is on this side and that. . . . O that I might be utterly no more! I desire to die" (288-89).

Like Tithonus, Cain must exist forever within time but without time's blessing of death. He will suffer continuously; as the narrative explains, Cain's face speaks "in a strange and terrible language of agonies that had been, and were, and were still to continue to be" (289). Like this sentence, the narrative as a whole methodically measures this continuous suffering with a torturous sense of succession. To understand this, one must first realize that "Cain" presents many images of particular elements within general ones.

For example, Cain arrives at a vast stretch of desert that is oddly interrupted by the presence of a single rock. Similarly, Coleridge often interrupts the flow of Cain's wanderings with punctual episodes. The fragment begins with a description of Cain's journey through a thick forest which light cannot penetrate. As he and Enos grope their way through the woods, though, they arrive at an abrupt change in scenery and a corresponding shift in the narrative's sense of time: "The path was dark till within three strides' length of its termination, when it turned suddenly; the thick black trees formed a low arch, and the moonlight appeared for a moment like a dazzling portal. Enos ran before and stood in the open air; and when Cain, his father, emerged from the darkness, the child was affrighted" (290).

Eventually, Cain and Enos find another bleak scene, where "as far as the eye could reach it was desolate: the bare rocks faced each other, and left a long and wide interval of thin white sand" (289). This image of rocks appearing at intervals among the sand is an emblem of the story itself, for the narrative measures a sterile continuity with a contrasting -- but also tedious -- punctuality. Meanwhile, the tension symbolized by these landscapes is complemented by a similarly disturbing sense of sight. Consider, for example, how Coleridge uses both language and vision as a means of adding a tragic rhythm to Cain's continuous suffering: "Then Cain closed his eyes, and hid them with his hands; and again he opened his eyes, and looked around him" (291).

John Livingston Lowes has shown that the characters of Cain and the Mariner are both derivatives of the traditional Wandering Jew figure (257-59). This fact further promotes the idea that the two works have a shared interest, and it also suggests that this interest is in chronicling the torment of these protagonists. Regardless of whether one views the misery of the Mariner as being a result of warranted, divine justice or of mere misfortune, it is clear that the tale's central focus is on this process of suffering. As one of the unnamed spirits in the story observes, the Mariner "hath penance done, / And penance

more will do," and the tale only represents a segment of his purgatorial wandering (408-09). Also, like "The Wanderings of Cain," the "Ancient Mariner" conveys the horror of his situation in part by contrasting particular elements and episodes within the poem against general ones. The individual Mariner is alienated from the rest of the 200-man crew, and the ship floats by itself against the endless background of the empty ocean. The Mariner and the ship are "Alone, alone, all, all alone, / Alone on a wide wide sea" (232-33). Many other aspects of the story reinforce this sense of alienation; for example, when the Mariner describes the nearby songbirds, he notes that their sound alternates between that of "all instruments" and that of "a lonely flute" (363-64). Even the listening wedding guest is described as being separated from a group of three (2).

Since Coleridge held that positive results in art arise from its reconciliation of the particular and the general, it is not surprising that his tale of horror repeatedly separates the two. The Mariner seems to express an ideal similar to that of Coleridge when he expresses the need to love "all things both great and small," but the Mariner's troubled mind promotes a sense of separation between them (615). To use Coleridge's terms, the Mariner does not see the relationship between pebbles and planets. As described earlier, Coleridge associated a proper recognition of the unity of things with a corresponding "command of time," and this observation prompts an insight into part of the Mariner's problem. The Mariner's worldview suffers from many distortions, but his failure to command time is a significant aspect of his horrible experience.

In fact, the tale maintains a constant tension between the senses of objective and subjective time. In his brief discussion of time in the poem, Avery Gaskins notes that both sun and moon serve as external markers of clock time; they "help to objectify the time of individual events in the Mariner's story and help to create a fairly accurate sense of time for them" (47). Presumably, Gaskins has in mind descriptions such as the following, which transitionally marks the passage of the first day of the Mariner's adventure:

The Sun came up upon the left,

Out of the sea came he!

And he shone bright, and on the right

Went down into the sea. (25-28)

Descriptions of the moon's movement similarly help to count the passage of nights. In addition, throughout his tale, the Mariner often refers to the position of the sun as a means establishing settings at morning, noon, or evening. He even establishes the equatorial position of his ship at one point by noting that the sun's apex was directly above the mast, and thus the sun offers yet another means of providing an objective standard (111-14). Gaskins notes, however, that the narrative counters this temporal objectivity with other, vague statements about time's passage. According to Gaskins, the Mariner makes many subjective remarks about time (e. g., "How long in that same fit I lay, / I have not to declare [393-94]) that result in a "blurring" of objective time (47).

Gaskins concludes that the "Ancient Mariner" "divides time into subjective and objective categories" (47). However, Gaskins appears uncertain as to the purpose or implications of this division, and he observes only that Coleridge seems to be expressing a dualistic view of time along the same lines as "Time, Real and Imaginary" (46). He also speculates that this blurring works to reflect the "hypnotic" effect of the Mariner's tale. When the Wedding guest loses track of time's (and the wedding's) progress, the poem demonstrates the power of the Mariner's story and personality. This point is an incidental one, but Gaskins' fundamental observation about the division of time is provocative.

In addition to this division of subjective and objective time, the poem presents a corresponding tension between continuous and successive sensations. The best example of this is found in Part Three of the poem, which includes the appearance of Death-in-Life and Life-in-Death on a ghostly frame of a ship. The section opens with the Mariner's subjective and vague representation of time's passage:

There passed a weary time. Each throat

Was parched, and glazed each eye.

A weary time! a weary time!

How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld

A something in the sky. (143-48)

Coleridge's use of repetition in this passage has two noticeable effects. First, it reveals the poem's concern with time; and second, it provides another hint of his association of the sense of time with eyesight. Here, though, the sailor's eyes are not gazing but "glazed," and this detail emphasizes that the "time felt" in this case is blurry and wearying.

However, a shift in the sense of time is precipitated by the Mariner's turning and looking. The next lines, which describe the approach of the Death-ship, convey a Real Time representation of the view from the Mariner's perspective:

At first it seemed a little speck,

And then it seemed a mist;

It moved and moved, and took at last

A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!

And still it neared and neared. . . . (149-54)

The radical shift in the ship's appearance -- from a "little speck" to a "mist" -- provides another example of the poem's contrasts between the particular and the general. Also, the sudden, absolute shift between these images exemplifies the whole work's tension. Meanwhile, this passage counters the vague sense of time promoted by the passage just before it: although the Death-ship presumably approaches at a gradual pace, the Mariner

describes the event as a series of images. The narration has assumed a specific and successive representation of time.

The appearance of this ship occurs just before sunset, but importantly, the ship's movement blocks the view of the sun's descent. The Mariner explains that the skeleton of the ship's frame "suddenly" moves "Betwixt us and the sun" (175-76). From the Mariner's perspective, the resulting view is anything but pleasant:

> And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
> (Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
> As if through a dungeon grate he peered,
> With broad and burning face. (177-80)

A grid has been imposed on the sun's movement, and its visual qualities, which are elsewhere so appealing to Coleridge, are now imperceptible. After being imprisoned by the obstruction of the ghost ship, the sun disappears abruptly: "The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out: / At one stride comes the dark" (199-200). Coleridge's marginal, one-line gloss further emphasizes the fact that this normally-harmonious event has been perverted: there is "No twilight within the courts of the Sun" (199-202).

Meanwhile, other elements of the narrative help to portray the scene as a rhythmic series of moments. The Mariner's heart beats loudly as he views the scene, and he describes the way in which fear seems "as at a cup . . . to sip" from his lifeblood (204-05). The ensuing appearance of the moon only adds to this sense of moments, for the moon in this case is not a full one that wanders through the clouds. Instead, it is "horned," and it appears with the visual tangent of "one bright star / Within the nether tip" (210-11). Also, the rising of the moon corresponds with the death of the crewmen, who depart in steady succession:

> One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
> Too quick for groan or sigh,

Each turned his face with ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one. (212-19)

These sequential deaths only punctuate the movement of the entire scene, which thoroughly establishes a disturbing sense of rapid succession.

Though this series of deaths is followed by a temporary lull in the tale's action, the following stanzas further emphasize the Real Time of the Mariner's experience. As in "The Wanderings of Cain," Coleridge concentrates on his protagonist's vision as a means of measuring his prolonged suffering. Nothing happens in the next several stanzas, but note how the Mariner's eyes measure this nothingness:

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;

For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky

Lay like a load on my weary eye,

And the dead were at my feet. (240-52)

Here, the Mariner's eyesight literally has a pulse, and his deliberate looking in separate directions further enhances the scene's plodding rhythm.[12]

Soon hereafter, though, the narrative shifts back into a vague and qualitative representation of time's passage. One sees this in the description of the moon's next appearance:

The moving moon went up the sky,

And no where did abide;

Softly was she going up,

And a star or two beside. . . . (263-66)

The last three lines of this passage seem overtly to encourage a comparison to the moon's previous appearance. Earlier, the moon appeared in a distinctive, "horned" phase, and its position was marked by its odd contact with "one bright star." Now, the moon proceeds gradually and "softly," and it is only vaguely accompanied by "a star or two." Such a description signifies that the narrative has lost its sense of discrete, objective time and has returned to a representation of "time felt."

---

[12] Keats, who probably read the "Ancient Mariner," uses the exact same technique in "The Fall of Hyperion." Keats constantly emphasizes the mortal narrator's wearying sense of the permanent deterioration of the defeated Titans. Like Coleridge, he measures the unending tragedy with the narrator's eyes. In the following example (one of several in the poem), the narrator looks at an altar within the Titans' temple:

I looked thereon,
And on the paved floor . . .
-- then again
I looked upon the altar, and its horns
Whitened with ashes, and its languorous flame,
And then upon the offerings again;
And so by turns. . . . (233-40)

The placidity of this latter description of the moon also contrasts the horror of the deaths that accompanied the moon's prior appearance. This difference poses another challenge to Warren's portrayal of the moon as symbolically benevolent, and it demonstrates Delson's point that neither the sun nor the moon has a consistently favorable association. Importantly, one can regard the problem of time in the poem in a similar manner. The narrative clearly contrasts its representations of temporal duration and temporal succession, but one cannot say that the poem favors one sense of time over the other. Instead, the poem seems to convey the horror of the Mariner's experience in part through the mere opposition of these two conceptions. The Mariner is in a state of limbo between Real and Imaginary Time, and he cannot reconcile the two. Accordingly, the narrative abruptly shifts from conveying vague senses of the general duration of his experience to emphasizing marked and measured moments within that process.

This tension is further reflected in the poem's overall structure. For example, Gaskins observes that the framing of the tale contributes to the sense of separation between objective and subjective time. The setting of the wedding feast gives the reader a "frame of reference" for the passage of time during the Mariner's story, but the wedding guest loses track of this time as he is drawn in by the strange adventure. At the end of the story and the poem, though, the vesper bell rings, and this makes the guest conscious of how much clock time has passed (46). Also, the current plight of the Mariner captures another inexplicable contrast between the duration of his experience and sudden, momentary episodes that counter it. The Mariner explains that he spends his days wandering: "I pass, like night, from land to land" (586). He also says that "at an uncertain hour," he feels the compulsion to tell his story. This agonizing compulsion is not relieved until he encounters the proper listener, whom the Mariner recognizes "that moment that his face I see" (582, 588).

Finally, one should note that one function of the poem's marginal glosses is to dissect the flow of the Mariner's narrative into segments. In a way, their appearance on the page is analogous to the ship's skeleton that casts a framework onto the image of the sun. More importantly, the cursory marginal remarks provide a clear contrast to the continuity of the Mariner's narrative. Note, for example, the terseness of the following gloss, which summarizes the action of about 15 lines: "At the rising of the Moon, / One after another, / His shipmates drop down dead" (203-19).

Conclusion

The "Ancient Mariner," then, differs from poems such as "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "The Picture" in that it does not unite the two conceptions of time of which Coleridge is so aware. Instead, the Mariner's narrative radically shifts between and contrasts the two as a means of representing his disturbing plight. Of course, this difference hardly suggests that the "Ancient Mariner" is an inferior poem; rather, it may be the best example of Coleridge's ability to infuse some poems with a desirable ambiguity. The poet himself seems troubled by time in many of his other works, and it is appropriate that he is able to make use of temporal tension while creating the mood of his masterpiece. Here one is reminded of Coleridge's comments in the Biographia about good poetry. There, he does not say (as Wordsworth would) that the creative imagination appears only in the reconciliation of opposite qualities. Rather, the powers of the imagination are seen in the "*balance or* reconciliation" of them (BL2 16, emphasis added). As shown in this chapter, some of Coleridge's most sophisticated poems (including "This Lime-Tree Bower," "The Picture," and the "Ancient Mariner") are characterized by either a balance or reconciliation of the senses of Real and Imaginary Time. In this context, "Imaginary Time" is a misnomer, for this conception is only half of the imaginative formula.

By contrast, problems and inconsistencies arise in those works where Coleridge shuns his perception of the objective sense of Real Time. This dismissal corresponds with Coleridge's uncertainty about the validity of discrete sensations as well as his wavering opinions on the very nature of time. In some works and writings (such as "Life," "Ode to the Departing Year," "Religious Musings," and "Limbo"), time appears to be a hindrance to Coleridge's pursuits. There, he strives to "gaze" past worldly time and assume an imaginary middle-ground between time and eternity. Yet the whole of Coleridge's poetry reveals a fondness for documenting details of vision and perspective, and an awareness of the successive passage of Real Time tends to accompany his visual inventories. In some poems, Coleridge seems to resolve this problem by acknowledging that he cannot think without a sense of time; in fact, he can show the powers of his thought by allowing his mind to "toy" with the relationship between moments and continuity. As a result, wherever Coleridge creates unity between object and subject, one also finds a unity between "time objective and subjective."

Chapter Three

Wordsworth's Spots of Narrative

"Time Is Everything"

Clocks, sun dials, church bells, repeating watches: these appear frequently in Wordsworth's work. As a result, his poetry often maintains the sense that time is ticking away in the background. Yet Wordsworth's attitude toward these tools of timekeeping seems inconsistent; time can be both an enemy and an inspiration. In The Prelude, for example, a tolling bell at Cambridge interrupts the young poet's visit to Milton's former residence, and his wine-induced revelry is halted by the chapel's "wearisome" summons (iii.312).[1] Later in his career, though, Wordsworth wrote a surprisingly lofty apostrophe to "The Cuckoo-Clock," and he underscored his praise by ranking the work among the most important of all, his "Poems of the Imagination."

Meanwhile, many of the poems themselves are comparable to a Swiss clock, for they mark time with fine precision. Usually, though, they do not measure time with numbers and chimes but rather with detailed representations of motion and position. Regardless, it is clear to any reader that Wordsworth's poetry is largely made up of well-defined moments. Though one might not be able to attribute a historical date to them, a reader nevertheless receives a keen sense of the exact timing of Wordsworth's great poetic scenes: the leech-gatherer appears to the narrator at a sudden instant (in "Resolution and Independence"); the boy-poet rowing a boat reaches a crucial threshold upon which the view of the cliff emerges (in The Prelude); Matthew recalls a vivid mental picture of the

[1] Due to my personal preference for the 1805 version of The Prelude, I have chosen to quote from it. My source is the Norton edition (ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, 1979). All Prelude quotations are cited by book and line numbers. Unless otherwise noted, all other quotations of Wordsworth's poetry are from the Oxford Poetical Works (ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt, 1904) and are cited by line numbers. All quotations of The Excursion are taken from this edition and are cited by book and line numbers.

moment a girl walked by his daughter's grave (in "The Two April Mornings"). Much has been said about these and similar moments (often loosely categorized as "spots of time") in Wordsworth's poetry. As with his treatment of clocks, however, Wordsworth's use of moments remains paradoxical, for many of these precise instants work to represent timeless truths.

In Wordsworth's poetry, according to Hazlitt, "time -- the recurrence of impressions -- is everything" (v. 20 p. 252). In Wordsworth criticism, the same is true. One cannot begin to understand even a selection of the poet's works without reflecting on his manipulations of time. Accordingly, critical discussions of Wordsworth's treatment of time abound. The topic is not a simple one, though; after all, one is dealing with a poet who could disparage church bells and venerate cuckoo-clocks. As with most of the major issues of his artistic career (including his ideas about nature, epistemology, and politics), Wordsworth's poetic comments about time often sound vague or contradictory. Also, unlike Coleridge, Wordsworth simply did not write at length about the subject of time. Critical studies of this subject are therefore understandably muddled. Collectively, they testify to the importance of time in Wordsworth's work, but they also inadvertently magnify and reflect the small flaws that are inherent in their subject.

Hazlitt's statement anticipates the typical critical approach to Wordsworth's treatment of time. Hazlitt defines time as "the recurrence of impressions," and thus he essentially equates time with memory. This is also the case with more recent Wordsworth scholarship, which either treats "time" and "memory" as interchangeable words, or portrays time as Wordsworth's enemy and memory as his weapon against it.[2] As will be

[2] Unlike some modern critics, however, Hazlitt never overemphasized the role of memory in Wordsworth's poetry. One should note that his statement that time is "everything" arises in the midst of a comparison between Wordsworth and Byron. There, Hazlitt wishes to make the point that Byron's poetry seldom involves reflection or recollection, and the statement about Wordsworth serves as a point of contrast. In his portrait of Wordsworth in The Spirit of the Age, on the other hand, Hazlitt only briefly mentions the poet's use of memory.

seen, though, there are some lingering problems in the prevalent summations of Wordsworth's approach to time. First, some critical assumptions about this subject are truly mere assumptions, and they are not supported by the poetry itself. Some of the more recent studies of Wordsworthian time build not on the poetry but rather on the unfounded statements of earlier critics. However, the greatest disservice to Wordsworth's legacy lies in the blurring of the relationship between time and memory. The general opinion on this subject seems to underestimate Wordsworth; it portrays an artist who is lost in a myriad of shifting sympathies and contradictory ideas, but who finds a single, harmonizing solution in the reliable powers of the reflecting mind. At their worst, discussions of memory maintain the implicit sense that Wordsworth is powerless without it, for (the argument suggests) he is generally not adept at creating self-contained poetic scenes which have immediate significance. This idea oversimplifies the complexity of The Prelude, and it complicates the reception of works by Wordsworth that simply do not involve memory or reflection. To be sure, Wordsworth's presentation of the psychology of memory was both keen and innovative, and memory plays a crucial role in his work. Nevertheless, memory is not the sole foundation of Wordsworth's artistic structures, just as time is not merely a troubling, ticking foil to his pursuits. Like Coleridge, Wordsworth manipulates time in various ways, and his work often treats time as a conduit to his poetic goals.

Along with the following chapter, this chapter will seek to clarify Wordsworth's ideas about and representations of time, and it will consider the extent to which time is a problem and memory is a solution. For three key reasons, much of this analysis will focus on The Prelude. First, The Prelude presents Wordsworth's most complex and extensive treatment of time. The work nicely demonstrates the interplay of time, narrative, and memory that is typical of his art in general, and it also contains many examples of the crucial relationship between time and vision, which will be considered at length in the next chapter. Second, The Prelude has become the nexus of Wordsworth criticism, and if one

seeks to clarify critical statements about Wordsworthian time, one must stay close to this autobiography and discussions about it. Finally, and on a related point, one should observe Jonathan Bishop's statement that "The Prelude is at the center of our experience of Wordsworth" (45). In many ways, to understand The Prelude is to understand Wordsworth.

The "Matter-of-factness" of Time

One of the more thorough studies of Wordsworthian time has been written by Herbert Lindenberger, who dedicates two chapters to the subject in his book-length study of The Prelude. Lindenberger regards The Prelude as Wordsworth's most important work, and he suggests that time is the most important issue within it. As he puts it, Wordsworth's epic is "inextricably bound up with the problem of time" (137). This "problem of time" arises because Wordsworth is aware of different conceptions of it. Lindenberger observes what is clear to many readers: The Prelude presents a constant contrast (if not battle) between Wordsworth's awareness of external objects and that of the free-flowing processes of his internal mind. Lindenberger writes, "Taken as a whole, The Prelude can be looked upon as a struggle between both worlds, outer and inner, for primacy over its hero" (169). For Lindenberger, this dialectic amounts to a temporal one. "The difference between outer and inner reality in The Prelude," he writes, "is essentially the difference between two conceptions of time, the one regular and mechanical, the other unpredictable and allusive, in tune with the rhythms of nature" (167).

External, mechanical time appears in the poet's references to clocks, such as "Trinity's loquacious Clock, / Who never let the Quarters, night or day, / Slip by him unproclaim'd" (iii. 51-53; Lindenberger 167). On the other hand, there is nature, which Lindenberger describes as knowing "its own immeasurable organic time, which reveals its pulse to the poet on privileged occasions" (167). Presumably Lindenberger has in mind

any of the many times in which Wordsworth describes a mystical experience that promotes a mental withdrawal from the external environment. These events create a vague and anti-linear understanding of experience. In Book Three, for example, Wordsworth describes the sense of detachment that accompanied his days at Cambridge. He recalls "A feeling that I was not for that hour / Nor for that place." Wordsworth therefore spent much of that time walking in rural fields: "I looked for universal things, perused / The common countenance of earth and heaven," with the belief that "I was ascending now / To such community with highest truth" (iii.80-81, 110-11, 119-20). According to Lindenberger, one can categorize each book of The Prelude according to which realm of experience -- outer or inner -- presently dominates Wordsworth's mind. Since these realms are also distinguished by different representations of time, and since Wordsworth wavers between the two realms, one may regard the entire work as a struggle between temporal conceptions.

However, the struggle between outer and inner time is not the only temporal conflict in the work. Lindenberger claims that The Prelude also presents a fundamental dialectic between time and eternity. At points in the poem, the world of nature (and natural time) serves as a "catalyst" through which Wordsworth is "gradually removed from the distractions of the temporal realm" (178). In short, Wordsworth comes close to achieving a sense of timelessness. One does not need to search long in The Prelude for an instance of Wordsworth's referring to infinity. Lindenberger cites as an example the poet's description of "awful visitings" wherein he perceives "The invisible world," and which make him realize that "our home / Is with infinitude" (vi. 533-34, 538-39; Lindenberger 179). Here Lindenberger sees a kinship between Wordsworth and Rousseau, who similarly sought this "suspension" of time through deep contemplation (178).

Lindenberger acknowledges that this time-eternity dialectic is vaguely conceived in The Prelude. He finds a problem in Wordsworth's treatment of nature, which at times appears to have innate value, but at others is only a means to a mystical end. He writes:

> Yet a close reading of Wordsworth reveals a certain discrepancy, even during his major period, between his conceptions of the eternal realm. At times he seems content to regard nature as an image of eternity, at others . . . to insist on the inadequacy of nature except as a means beyond itself. (179)

Although Lindenberger does not mention Coleridge in this context, it is interesting to note that this depiction of Wordsworth's varied conceptions of eternity is remarkably reminiscent of Coleridge's wavering on the same issue. Lindenberger also indirectly identifies a point of contrast between the poets when he claims that Wordsworth's imprecision results from his philosophical shortcomings. Lindenberger holds that Wordsworth (unlike Coleridge) did not quibble over the philosophical foundations or implications of his statements, and Wordsworth's work is therefore inconsistent in its treatment of time. The Prelude, Lindenberger says, is not "a body of doctrine" but rather "a record of the *process toward* that doctrine" (180, his emphasis).

Actually, part of the problem may lie in Lindenberger's attempt to categorize various types of Wordsworthian passages according to rigid dialectics. In his study of Time and Mind in Wordsworth's Poetry, Jeffrey Baker observes that Lindenberger seems too eager to portray temporal relationships according to pairs (e.g., outer versus inner time, and time versus eternity). Baker argues that one should instead recognize a hierarchy of temporal conceptions in Wordsworth's poetry, for "there is in Wordsworth's time schemes a distinguishable, qualitative order" (16). Baker slightly modifies Lindenberger's categories of Wordsworthian time and then rearranges them in an ascending scale:

> Thus the lowest time is clock time, mechanical in the narrowest sense, inflexible and uncreative. Next there is nature's time, Newtonian, a a mathematical continuum, and also inflexible, but less artificial than clock time and more conducive to spiritual well-being. Above these two is inner

time . . . This time is liberating and creative. (17)

Here Baker dissects Lindenberger's notion of inner time (which is associated with nature) into the two conceptions of "nature's time" and "inner time." It is difficult to recognize a true distinction here; in fact, it seems that Baker is only seeking to clarify Lindenberger's portrayal of Wordsworth's vague representation of personal time. Furthermore, like Lindenberger, Baker observes that the notion of eternity also functions prominently in Wordsworth's work: "There appear to be occasions when inner time obliterates not merely the two inferior schemes, but itself also, bringing the mind to a visionary moment, an eternal present where 'we see into the life of things'" (17). Baker therefore places eternity at the top of Wordsworth's temporal ladder. In so doing, he really only draws out a point toward which Lindenberger's discussion constantly drifts: eternity is not the balancing antithesis of Wordsworthian time. Rather, achieving a sense of the infinite is his consistent, transcendent goal.

Wordsworth's reverence for the eternal does permeate his work. First, there is The Prelude, which, as noted above, often speaks of infinity and occasionally presents "symbols of eternity" (vi.571). Similarly, in "Stepping Westward," the poet concludes with a realization of the "endless way" before him; in "It is a beauteous evening," he hears the "eternal" motion of the "mighty Being"; and in the "Immortality Ode," Wordsworth venerates the child who perceives "the eternal deep" and "the eternal mind" (26, 6-7, 112-13). As Raymond Havens writes, Wordsworth "'looked for universal things,' he sought the one behind the many, the real behind the flux, the eternal behind the transitory, the changeless behind the mutable, the perfect behind the incomplete" (v. 1 p. 2).

This is Wordsworth's ideal, yet he must of course create poetry within the limitations of time and space. These facts do not necessitate that the poet be contemptuous of temporality, but this is how some critics portray his attitude. A typical line of critical reasoning concludes that since Wordsworth seeks the infinite, he must disdain the

temporal. Lindenberger, for example, argues that Wordsworth desires to "defy the demands of clock time" (167). Lindenberger supports this claim with a reference to a single, childhood scene in The Prelude in which Wordsworth is ice skating; as the village clock tolls six, the child ignores this implicit summons home and continues his play (i.457-60). Baker picks up on this idea but qualifies Lindenberger's sense of conflict or struggle in this process. He writes, "The world of outer time is not defeated by inner time, it is simply left behind -- and all time schemes are finally left behind in the supreme moments of vision" (17).

There is certainly an element of truth in this idea, for by definition, to achieve a sense of eternity is to dismiss the conception of time. Indeed, Wordsworth at points claims to have attained a glimpse of infinity. Furthermore, as will be seen in the next chapter, Wordsworth, like Coleridge, could sometimes pursue a middle-ground between the realms of time and eternity. After recognizing these facts, though, one must question what it means to say that time is "left behind" at the key moments in Wordsworth's work. Can poetry abandon time? Some maintain that Wordsworth at least signifies this desire through disparaging remarks about measured time. Like Lindenberger and Baker, Geoffrey Durrant has described (with similarly little support) how Wordsworth could be critical of "the absurd clock-time by which men so foolishly live" (15).

As suggested earlier, it is difficult to determine Wordsworth's opinion of actual timepieces. Though he mentions them frequently, he seldom comments on them at length. On occasion, the poet seems to mock clocks a bit. As mentioned above, the clocks at Cambridge sound antagonistic to Wordsworth; also, in "The Fountain," he lightheartedly refers to the "bewildered chimes" of the "crazy old church clock" (71-72). By contrast, in his strange celebration of "The Cuckoo-Clock," the poet describes how its "mimic notes" can send one's imagination to a "delightful land of verdure, shower and gleam" (31-32). Thus Wordsworth's opinion on timepieces is inconsistent, if not irrelevant.

Such a point may seem to be of little importance in considering Wordsworth. In the critical studies cited above, however, "clock time" serves as a shorthand phrase for a particularistic, objective sense of time. In this regard, it is a crucial inaccuracy to say that Wordsworth shuns this conception of time in his work. To begin with, a significant conflict arises between this understanding of Wordsworth's bias against time and the evidence of the poetry itself. As Mary Wedd observes, Wordsworth "would not give a rush for any landscape that did not express the time of day, the climate, the period of the world it was meant to illustrate" (Wedd 231). The Prelude, for example, is dotted with all sorts of temporal denotation. The poet makes occasional mention of a clock's chiming of the hours, and he more frequently marks the time by observing the sun's position. In Book One, for example, he notes that the sun has been "Two hours declined towards the west," while in a scene in Book Two he mentions that the sun has been up for one hour (i.76, ii. 363). He also often remarks on the sunrise (and/or cock's crowing) and sunset.

Baker acknowledges the poet's unusual attentiveness to these and other types of temporal detail. He writes, "Wordsworth's use of the sun, moon, stars, earth and atmosphere to measure time . . . has a sharp focus that makes it quite different from imagery produced by literary habit" (30). Baker goes on to note that some of Wordsworth's landscapes even function as "sundials." Yet after making this crucial observation of what he calls the "unseen clock" in Wordsworth's poetry, Baker returns to his thesis with an inexplicable dismissal of this measured temporality: "But sundials do not tell the time, people do. . . . For Wordsworth the space-time arrangement includes his mind and its moods. Human time is finally the only time that matters" (30-32). It is conceivable that Wordsworth might occasionally create a sense of temporal particularity as a first step in showing his ultimate ability to transcend time. If this is the case, though, Wordsworth has given himself a formidable challenge, for the "unseen clock" pervades many of his poetic settings.

In addition to this type of specificity, Wordsworth seems fond of locating events within the boundaries of calendar or historical time. Book Six of The Prelude provides many examples. There, Wordsworth mentions his age (34) at the time of the book's composition (vi.61). He also provides the date of his arrival in France for a walking tour (exactly one year after Bastille Day), the number of days between certain events during the tour (e.g. "three days," "two days afterwards," "we advanced / Two days"), and the length of his stay there ("fourteen weeks") (vi.356-57, 366, 423, 618, 434). The rest of The Prelude contains many similar historical markers, as well as a single reference in Book Seven, which is reminiscent of Tristram Shandy, to the amount of time the author has spent composing work thus far (five years) (vii.1). Wordsworth's habit of including this type of detail is not limited to The Prelude, however. In fact, the presence of such references in The Excursion is among the points of criticism in Francis Jeffrey's scathing review of the work. Jeffrey fixated on the poet's comment that one of the story's characters, the Wanderer, began tending cattle in "his sixth year" (i.118). Such a detail was trivial enough in itself to draw the mockery of Jeffrey, but his greatest disgust arose (as he sarcastically explained) with the fact that the poet repeats the comment "a few pages after, that there may be no risk of mistake as to a point of such essential importance" (460).

This type of detail also prompted the gentler criticism of Coleridge, who cited Wordsworth's "minute adherence to *matter-of-fact* in characters and incidents" as one of the poet's five major flaws (BL2 129, his emphasis). One might quibble with Jeffrey or Coleridge over the extent to which this matter-of-fact detail damages Wordsworth's poetry, but their comments indisputably raise a point that is obvious to many readers: these factual, temporal references appear to be distracting, superfluous hindrances to the flow of the poet's elevated discourse. One is left wondering whether this ornamentation is merely a habitual flaw in Wordsworth's style, or if this detail contributes to his poetry in any way.

The Virtues of Details

Here it is helpful to consider the work of M. M. Bakhtin, who has shown that one can gain a better understanding of a literary work by considering that work's representation of space and time. Bakhtin coins the term "chronotope" ("time space") to capture the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). According to Bakhtin, "It is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions." The chronotope also "determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature," for "the image of man is always chronotopic" (85).

Bakhtin's analysis of chronotopic distinctions appears within his theory of the development of the novel. As his definition of the chronotope suggests, however, his generalizations apply not just to novels, but to all types of literature (Bakhtin also conceives of the novel in a broad way, for he focuses much of his study on Greek literature from the second through the sixth centuries A. D.). In his study, Bakhtin attempts to trace "the process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature" (84). He acknowledges that this process has "a complicated and erratic history," but one can nevertheless recognize some basic chronotopic patterns in the history of the novel, as well as that of literature in general (84). Essentially, Bakhtin's analysis of literature's evolution recognizes a corresponding increase in the density of time and space in literature. For example, early Greek romances (and other adventure stories) are comparable to ancient epics in that they represent time and space in a vague way. The plot "unfolds against a very broad and varied geographical background," while the action "constitutes time sequences that are neither historical, quotidian, [nor] biographical." Time and space are limited by a "principle of abstraction," and they appear only in the vaguest of terms, as determined by the simplest demands of plot and setting (88, 91, 101).

As Bakhtin explains, such a non-restrictive portrayal of time and space is necessitated by the conventions of adventure stories and romances. These stories cover

vast expanses of space (often several different countries), and they cannot be hindered by the logistical demands which a sense of real time would impose. Bakhtin notes that Voltaire shrewdly satirizes this disregard for spatial and temporal realism in Candide (91). There, in keeping with adventure story convention, Candide and Cunegonde experience many sensational events throughout the world. Their adventures end with the formulaic marriage, but Voltaire breaks from convention by adhering to a realistic sense of time's passage: the adventures have taken a long time, and the couple is old and ugly at the story's end!

In Candide, Voltaire also satirizes the potential absurdity of the adventure-romance's reliance on the powers of chance, and the work therefore demonstrates a crucial Bakhtinian point regarding chronotopes and character development. Bakhtin notes that events in adventure stories are so loosely connected to space and time that one can often interchange those events without affecting the story in any significant way. According to Bakhtin, the adventure story's need for an abstract, superficial chronotope requires that chance function as the controlling element. For a story to dismiss the function of chance, the plot must be more firmly grounded in time and space. Only then does the plot become more linear, and processes of causation and agency begin to appear. Once a story grounds itself in a truer sense of time and space, however, it narrows the scope of its adventures and can no longer take liberties with so many settings and events. It now takes time to sail to a distant lands and to pursue one's beloved, and reality limits the story's potential for sweeping adventures (100). Adventure stories must maintain a vague representation of time and space, but this type of chronotope prohibits a sense of ordered logic in the story's world.

Furthermore, when chance is the primary force behind a story, it is impossible for the story to create a sense of the hero's depth of character. Bakhtin writes: "How can a human being be portrayed . . . where the initiative belongs everywhere to chance? It goes

without saying that in this type of time, an individual can be nothing other than completely *passive*, completely unchanging. . . . To such an individual, things can merely *happen*" (105, his emphasis). Of course, as literature continued its evolution toward modernism, an interest in the personal development of protagonists arose. Since the depth of a character's will is proportional to the specificity of the chronotope, works sought a firmer grounding in real time and space. Literature began to establish chronotopes that would allow the representation of a realistic individual's inner changes, but would also preserve a sense of public significance. As Bakhtin puts it, "The process of working out private genres began" (123).

One sees such a "working out" process in The Prelude. The work is a deeply introspective autobiography that seeks to chronicle the subtle and gradual development of its hero; as the subtitle explains, its subject is "The Growth of a Poet's Mind." Throughout the work, Wordsworth suggests that this "growth" is difficult to represent. Like the breeze that appears in the work's opening line, the poet's life has shifted gently and sometimes imperceptibly. Wordsworth also makes it clear that his character has hardly matured in a direct and linear manner. He repeatedly compares his life and his narrative to a wandering stream or river. In the opening of Book Nine, for example, he likens the chronological shifts in his poem to a river that "Turns and will measure back his course -- far back, / Towards the very regions which he crossed / In his first outset" (ix.5-7). In the concluding book, Wordsworth also draws on river imagery to make the point that emergence of his imagination -- the true subject matter of The Prelude -- is still somewhat indeterminate:

> We have traced the stream
> From darkness, and the very place of birth
> In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
> The sound of waters; followed it to light
> and open day, accompanied its course

Among the ways of Nature, afterwards

Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed,

Then given it greeting as it rose once more. . . . (xiii.172-79)

One might say that Wordsworth makes this point about the subtlety of his development too well, for such a theme challenges his ability to demonstrate his growth in a narrative fashion. In The Prelude, Wordsworth repeatedly expresses his discomfort with the need to present his life story as an ordered and quantifiable history. For example, a discussion of the poet's changing relationship with the natural world prompts him to return to the river motif:

But who shall parcel out

His intellect by geometric rules,

Split like a province into round and square?

Who knows the individual hour in which

His habits were first sown even as a seed,

Who that shall point as with a wand, and say

This portion of the river of my mind

Came from yon fountain? (ii.208-15)

Wordsworth clearly suggests that he cannot "parcel out his intellect," and he cannot identify the fonts of the present currents of his mind. As he says a few lines later, it is a "Hard task to analyse a soul" (ii.232).[3]

---

[3] Coleridge's summation of The Prelude in his poem "To William Wordsworth" (written just after hearing the epic) expresses the same idea, and it nicely captures the difficulties of Wordsworth's project:

Theme hard as high!

Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears . . .

Of tides obedient to external force,

And currents self-determined, as might seem,

Or by some inner Power; of moments awful

Now in thy inner life, and now abroad. . . . (12-17)

Yet this is the task that Wordsworth has given himself, and it is clear that he strives to counter the inherent vagueness of his subject matter with sundry particulars. When one recognizes Bakhtin's demonstration of the connection in narrative between personal change and specific chronotopes, Wordsworth's odd attentiveness to localizing details becomes more understandable. Since the primary purpose of The Prelude is to portray the changes of its hero, and since such change can only be represented within a dense temporal framework, it is not surprising that Wordsworth constantly adorns his narrative with objective markers of time and space. In Book Two, for example, Wordsworth again describes his concerns about trying to demonstrate the course of his development. He questions, "How shall I trace the history, where seek / The origin of what I then have felt?" In a revealing manner, however, Wordsworth expresses this frank question only after describing the season (winter), location (sitting upon a "jutting eminence") and hour (dawn) of the moment in his narrative that prompts this reflection (ii.361-66). The term "chronotope" would have meant nothing to Wordsworth, of course, but the poet candidly expresses the need to anchor his narrative in the manner that Bakhtin describes. As the poet says at an early point in The Prelude, "Time, place, and manners, these I seek . . ." (i.169).

However, as Coleridge and Jeffrey noted, Wordsworth includes spatial and temporal benchmarks in works other than The Prelude. In fact, though the theme and scope of The Prelude magnify the presence of such detail, one finds a similar dynamic in many of the poet's shorter works. An extreme example appears in "The Thorn," in which the poet includes numerous matter-of-fact details not as a supplement, but rather as the sole content of his story. In "The Thorn," Wordsworth presents a dubious tale involving a mother's murder of her newborn child. As Wordsworth explains in a note to the poem, he sought to create a narrator with the persona of a superstitious sailor and to study the manner in which such improbable tales are related (WPW 701). As the reader finds, there is very

little evidence that suggests the story is true. However, the narrator constantly fills in the gaps of his story with abundant, superfluous details relating to time and place. He especially fixates on the exact size of the pond near which the child is supposedly buried: "I've measured it from side to side: / 'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide" (LB p. 32 l. 33).

Usually, though, it is clear that Wordsworth does not create dense chronotopes as mere padding but rather as a means of presenting a context for his character studies. "There was a boy" provides a good example. This short work (originally an independent piece, but later incorporated into The Prelude) describes a boy's interaction with the newfound mysteries of nature. It essentially presents two feelings: the boy's awe as he listens to the sounds of the wilderness, and Wordsworth's solemnity as he reflects on the boy's death. Revealingly, in a mere 32 lines, the poet manages to include several temporal references in the poem. He notes the specific time of day when the boy would begin his wanderings ("At evening, when the stars had just begun / To move along the edges of the hills, / Rising or setting), the boy's age at the time of death (ten years), and the amount of time Wordsworth has spent "at evening" by the child's grave ("A full half-hour together") (LB pp. 134-35, ll. 3-4, 31-32).

Meanwhile, Wordsworth presents a single episode from the boy's experience to capture his character. The poem describes his hobby of calling to the owls and listening for a reply, and it focuses on a particular moment within that activity:

> And, when it chanced
> That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill,
> Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
> Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
> 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. . . . (LB p. 34, ll. 16-23)

As this passage reveals, Wordsworth is trying to have it both ways here, for he is not describing a one-time episode but rather a recurrent type of scene from the boy's experiences. Wordsworth seems to think that if the boy only engaged in this activity in nature once, his character would not be sufficiently established. Accordingly, Wordsworth oddly juxtaposes the specific timing of the scene with the observation that the boy did this "many a time" (LB p. 34, l. 2). Similarly, though the conclusion of the poem describes a vivid scene in which Wordsworth stands at the boy's grave, Wordsworth also suggests that he has stood there many times.

This is a favorite technique of Wordsworth's. He often mitigates the unique nature of his scenes by noting that a certain type of episode occurred repeatedly. In The Prelude, for example, the poet explains that he spent his evenings at Cambridge wandering among the local groves (of course, he also notes that he would do so until nine o'clock, when the porter's bell would ring). He next recalls his fondness for a particular ash tree which he encountered during his walks. After providing a detailed, ten-line description of this tree, Wordsworth recounts his reaction to it: "Oft have I stood / Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree / Beneath a frosty moon" (vi.100-03). Here, Wordsworth's diction makes the scene both singular and common. The image of the "frosty moon" sounds rather specific, but the word "Oft" prevents one from thinking that this experience was a one-time occurrence.

It is plausible that Wordsworth did in fact stand before this particular tree on several occasions. However, this passage, like the description of the boy at Winander, further reveals the tension between the qualitative and the demonstrable in Wordsworth's narratives. Also, both passages show his commitment to adorning his narratives with another type of temporal particularity. One finds that in addition to his inclusion of factual

references to time of day, time of year, and so forth, Wordsworth more fundamentally structures his narratives around specific, well-defined scenes. "There was a boy" again serves as an example. As Ted Holt and John Gilroy observe, the opening of the poem suggests that it will present a story. However, "It turns out to be no story as such, or at best a very slim one" (112). Instead, as noted above, the story of the boy essentially consists of the episode of his owl-calling. Importantly, the poem does not merely present a single event (albeit a repeated one), but also a particular moment within that event. As shown in the passage quoted above, the scene focuses on the moment of relative silence that interrupts the noises of the wilderness. Wordsworth's own note on the poem reveals his interest in this instant within the scene: "The Boy . . . is listening, with something of a feverish and restless anxiety, for the recurrence of the riotous sounds which he had previously excited; and, at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquilizing images which the poem describes" (LB pp. 299-300).

Narrative and Moments

In order to understand Wordsworth's emphasis on moments, one must first consider his recognition of the general, structural demands of narrative. In The Prelude Wordsworth seems compelled to place limitations on the range of his story; as he says in the introductory book, "The road lies plain before me. 'Tis a theme / Single and of determined bounds . . ." (i.668-69). In fact, this concern reappears at later points in The Prelude as the poet repeatedly worries that he has drifted beyond these boundaries (e.g., iv.286-88, vi.658-61). Meanwhile, Wordsworth supports the claim that he has "measured back" his past by creating distinct narrative markers (ii.3). For Wordsworth, the process of measuring back is equivalent to presenting a series of emblematic episodes from his life. In Book Nine, he describes how he saved a single stone as a souvenir from the rubbish of

the fallen Bastille, and this gesture symbolically represents Wordsworth's approach to his own history (ix.63-66). He presents numerous other images to represent the elemental nature of his story, including those of cards within a deck and fragments of a broken boulder (vi.299-301, ii.33-41). This imagery of piecemeal experience is inconsistent with that of the flowing river of the poet's development, but such is the paradox of his task. Wordsworth does reconcile this tension with one brilliant, recurrent image. The poet repeatedly compares his life to a river, but he also adorns his history with references to islands (e.g., viii.98, viii.271, x.441). Life is a river, but a story is a series of islands.

All writers must create "islands" within their stories, but Wordsworth is especially attentive to making his scenes as discrete and well-defined as possible. As M. H. Abrams writes, "Wordsworth is preeminently a poet of the revelatory and luminous Moment" (387). The Prelude contains many examples of these revelatory moments, including the poet's entrance into London and his encounter with a blind beggar within the city. Of course, Wordsworth paradoxically presents these precise moments as a means of conveying the qualitative, timeless ideas associated with the work's theme. The encounter with the beggar provides a good example. In Book Seven, the poet describes this momentary, profound meeting that occurred during his wanderings through the streets of London. Wordsworth explains that it was "my chance / Abruptly to be smitten with the view / Of a blind beggar" (vii.610-12). Here, one should note that the diction of these lines emphasizes the sudden punctuality of this episode. As he sees this man, who is propped against a wall and wearing a sign that explains his situation, Wordsworth perceives something that is otherworldly. He writes:

> My mind did at this spectacle turn round
> As with the might of waters, and it seemed
> To me that in this label was a type
> Or emblem of the utmost that we know

Both of ourselves and of the universe,

And on the shape of this unmoving man,

His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked,

As if admonished from another world. (vii.616-23)

Within several lines, Wordsworth has elevated his poem from a particular encounter in a particular place to the level of transcendent insight.

According to Abrams, though, this odd technique is not a unique one. Rather, one sees a similar tension between moments and temporal transcendence in The Confessions of St. Augustine. This observation by Abrams is telling, for Bakhtin cites Augustine as an innovator in the development of autobiographical chronotopes (144-45). In fact, Abrams's comparison of Augustine and Wordsworth nicely supplements Bakhtin's claims about time, change, and narrative. According to Abrams, Augustine "established the lexicon for all later treatments of self-formation and self-analysis" (193). Like Bakhtin, Abrams observes that The Confessions straddles the public and private realms: it is an open declaration of the inner changes that have taken place during a man's life. Such changes are subtle ones and difficult to document, but even spiritual autobiographies must demonstrate change for the reader through some type of external actions and events. Accordingly, Augustine selects from "the raw data" of his experiences "only those few which are heavy with spiritual significance, as indices of a stage in his toilsome journey" to salvation (85-86). These "indices" (such as Augustine's theft of pears as a child) seemed inconsequential when they occurred, but their importance within a guided, divine plan becomes clear when they are reviewed by the enlightened memory. As Abrams explains, such a narrative structure inevitably creates a sense of tension between the linear progression of time and the circular processes of memory. In The Confessions, Augustine

consciously explores this tension, along with the related, paradoxical issues that arise from his famous question, "What is time?" (86-87).[4]

Abrams believes that Augustine's philosophical struggles endow his work with richness, and he suggests that similar conflicts in The Prelude also create an appealing tension. However, Abrams further observes that there is a recurrence of temporal specificity throughout Wordsworth's poetry, and he therefore hints at the pervasiveness of the problem of time in the poet's work. For example, one finds transient -- but profound -- events in poems such as "The Two April Mornings," "Stepping Westward," "The Solitary Reaper," and some of the Lucy poems. In order to understand the purpose of such a technique, Abrams again turns to The Confessions, which he identifies as the "prototype" of momentary events in Romantic literature. Augustine's work describes several occasions in which he achieved sudden, epiphanic glimpses of God's invisible powers and plans. Though most Romantic writers (such as Rousseau) do not share Augustine's deep theological concerns, their narratives often follow a similar pattern in which a sudden experience allows the narrator to see past the present limitations of time and space. As in the art of Augustine, climactic narrative moments in Romantic literature actually represent "an intersection of eternity with time" (385).

Problems With Moments and Memory

At this point one can recognize a pair of related temporal tensions in Wordsworth's poetry. First, as shown especially in The Prelude, the need for a dense temporal structure

---

[4] Abrams does not conclusively establish that Wordsworth read Augustine. However, a passage in Wordsworth's "Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora" contains a passage that strikes me as sounding thoroughly Augustinian, and it contains an echo of Augustine's question about time:

> In that Being's sight
> From whom the Race of human kind proceed,
> A thousand years are but as yesterday;
> And one day's narrow circuit is to Him
> Not less capacious than a thousand years.
> But what is time? (8-13)

in his narratives complicates their themes, which tend to be qualitative and nebulous. Second, Wordsworth's poetry often claims to achieve or represent a timeless insight through a particular moment in time. Precedents notwithstanding, one must reflect on the fact that this latter aspect of Wordsworth's technique is inherently paradoxical. Of course, Wordsworth's poetry often expresses the idea that the imagination "reconciles / Discordant elements," but one should question whether these moments truly reconcile discordant elements, or merely present them (P i.354-55).[5] It is easy -- especially for one who is familiar with Wordsworth's work -- to disregard the profound complications that such paradoxes create, and merely to regard the paradoxes themselves as harmonizing functions.[6] Since Abrams recognizes precedents for describing a momentary recognition of eternity, he seems willing to accept the device without much quibbling. However, his concluding remarks about Wordsworthian moments expose the significance of reading these moments superficially. Abrams writes: "In the fact that Wordsworth is a poet of the Moment lies, I believe, the key to the literary mystery, why a man capable of a *gravitas* and sublimity equal to Milton's should have written what Robert Frost once called, in real if ironic admiration, the 'sweet, insipid' poems in his Lyrical Ballads and related pieces" (389). Abrams observes that certain Wordsworthian moments "succeed" in conveying a sense of timeless insight. However, he also notes that such a technique always runs the risk of communicating "the ordinary but not the epiphany, and then we get the untransformed 'matter-of-factness' to which Coleridge objected." Abrams cites "We Are

---

[5] It is perhaps appropriate to note again a subtle distinction between Coleridge's and Wordsworth's theories of the imagination. Wordsworth, unlike Coleridge, associates the powers of the imagination only with the reconciliation -- and not a mere balancing -- of opposite elements.

[6] One would expect that Cleanth Brooks, the great champion of literary paradoxes, would regard the mere presence of paradoxical elements as a sign of effective poetry. In fact, many of his general statements about "The Language of Paradox" promote this generous aesthetic standard. As seen in his essays on Wordsworth, though, Brooks's studies usually proceed to demonstrate how various poetic techniques create the sense that an initial paradox has been thoroughly explored, if not resolved. In his essay on the "Immortality Ode," for example, Brooks first acknowledges the paradoxical nature of the poem's general theme. However, his subsequent close-reading of symbolism, diction, and imagery makes it clear that the poem's tension is not superficial (see The Well Wrought Urn, pp. 3-21 and 124-50).

Seven" as an example of this type of failure, for its simple dialogue between Wordsworth and a girl "wavers just on the edge of bathos" (389).

It appears that part of the "literary mystery" Abrams describes actually arises from this type of understanding of Wordsworth. Abrams suggests that much of Wordsworth's poetry merely creates a temporal moment and then makes a claim for a paradoxical insight into a timeless truth. This seems to be a reasonable assessment, for it essentially restates the pattern of thinking which Wordsworth promotes in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. There, Wordsworth explains his efforts to show how the imagination (catalyzed by sudden feeling) perceives a universal insight within a common situation. Wordsworth also uses this technique in works other than the Lyrical Ballads; the encounter with the beggar presents just this type of passage.[7] As the next chapter will show, however, Wordsworth can be quite adept at making the "invisible workmanship" of the imagination manifest (P i.353). Although they are hardly wrongheaded, Abrams's statements reflect a critical tendency that dismisses the significance of thematic support created by the scenes themselves. Too often Wordsworth is regarded a poet who does not show, but only tells.

Many portray Wordsworth as undercutting the quantitative temporal elements in his narratives in a similar manner. Whereas Abrams describes a poet who transcends the momentary nature of a scene by simply claiming to perceive eternal truths, others suggest that Wordsworth's powers of retrospection subvert his dependence on historical particularity. In short, most believe that Wordsworth solves his problem of time through the use of memory. Lindenberger, for example, states that memory works to "confound" time in The Prelude. Although Wordsworth explicitly acknowledges the need to document his growth with a degree of temporal specificity, the fact that he presents details through his encompassing memory preserves the thematic idea of his indeterminate -- and almost

[7] Nevertheless, one should note that the rhythm of the description of the beggar is masterful, and the passage creates a crescendo that corresponds with the sense of Wordsworth's surging perception.

timeless -- sense of character. Lindenberger notes that memory has the ability "to fuse together events from diverse periods with imaginative power and thus to reconstitute the conventional order of time." He therefore believes that memory is a crucial "force in the conquest of time." It is, in fact, "the instrument he employs to move from the temporal order to the timeless" (140, 142, 187).

Furthermore, Wordsworth's appeals to the powers of memory are not limited to The Prelude. According to John Beer, the function of memory is "talismanic" in much of Wordsworth's poetry. Beer observes that Wordsworth is fond of describing the beauty of particular landscapes and events, but his reverent descriptions of the objective world threaten his philosophical and thematic commitment to showing the powers of the subjective mind. By presenting most of his descriptions retrospectively, Wordsworth subverts his reliance on the external. Within the context of memory, "the laws of space and time are strangely irrelevant" (24-25).

Memory is certainly important to Wordsworth. For example, it is the stimulus as well as the subject matter of "Tintern Abbey": there, Wordsworth's memory of his earlier visit leads to a glorification of the powers of memory in general.[8] Similarly, in the "Immortality Ode," the "embers" of memory both provoke and resolve Wordsworth's expression of loss and remorse (133). With facts like this in mind, one might agree with Christopher Salvesen's statement that "memory is the great force of Wordsworth's poetry" (169). It is possible, though, that the recognition of this crucial aspect of Wordsworth's work has led to a rather one-dimensional portrayal of the poet. In the conclusion to his lengthy study of the poet's use of memory, Salvesen drifts toward this type of

[8] More than any other poem, "Tintern Abbey" also represents an occasion in which Wordsworth does seek to escape boundaries of time and space. Like the smoke that rises from the cottages within the landscape, Wordsworth's thoughts rise above the scene at hand and dissipate imperceptibly. Even in this most anti-temporal of Wordsworth's poems, however, there is a revealing attentiveness to historical detail. The poet begins by repeating the fact that it has been five years since he first visited the area (1-2). Also, it is easy to forget that the poem's actual title is "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798."

overstatement. He notes that "Wordsworth may be said to have been given over organically to the powers of memory. To remember was, for Wordsworth, to be a poet" (169).[9] Also, like Lindenberger and Beer, Salvesen acknowledges an anti-temporal significance in memory's function: "At its most intense, Wordsworth's memory dissolved all boundaries of time and space" (200).

Such an emphasis on the device of memory may not seem inappropriate in summations of Wordsworth's work. Nevertheless, this understanding of the poet leads to some problems when interpreting individual passages in his poetry. For example, consider a certain type of Wordsworthian moment: the "spot of time." His familiar definition of these moments appears in Book Eleven of The Prelude:

> There are in our existence spots of time,
>
> That with a distinct preeminence retain
>
> A renovating virtue. . . .
>
> A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
>
> That penetrates, enables us to mount
>
> When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.

After defining their function, Wordsworth next identifies the source of these spots of time:

> This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
>
> Among those passages of life in which
>
> We have the deepest feeling that the mind

[9] It is necessary to mention that Salvesen also recognizes a shift in Wordsworth's poetry after 1807. Salvesen observes that the function of memory is "completely inactive" in this later poetry. Implicit in his remark, however, is the idea that Wordsworth's "exhausted" memory resulted in similarly exhausted poetry (201). Salvesen does not elaborate on this idea, but it is a common one. The introduction to Wordsworth in The Norton Anthology to English Literature, for example, attributes Wordsworth's poetic demise to the simple fact that he had used up all of his memories: "Wordsworth is above all the poet of the remembrance of things past. . . . But the memory of one's early emotional experience is not an inexhaustible resource for poetry. As Basil Wiley has remarked, Wordsworth was 'living upon capital,' and he knew it" (Volume 2, 128-29). Although there is probably some truth in this idea, such a statement also presents a caricature of the poet (and his use of memory) that is typical in Wordsworth criticism.

Is lord and master, and that outward sense

Is but the obedient servant of her will. (xi.257-72)

Although Wordsworth goes on to cite just two specific examples of these "passages of life," he also remarks that "Such moments . . . / Are scattered everywhere" (xi.73-74). As Abrams notes, "they are celebrated everywhere in his poetry" (388).

Wordsworth's definition of these renovating episodes seems simple enough. Certain events create an awareness of the shaping powers that accompany perception, and the retention of these events by the memory further demonstrates the primacy of the subjective mind. Unfortunately, the two examples which Wordsworth provides fail to demonstrate this concept. In the first of these, Wordsworth describes his childhood encounter with the remains of a gibbet in a rural moor. Such a discovery was undoubtedly scary for the boy, and it appears his fear ensured that the scene would be remembered long into adulthood. Wordsworth's second example also contains a sense of a child's fear. Just before a Christmas vacation during his grammar school days, an impatient Wordsworth ascended a summit in order to look for the horses that were sent to bring him and his brothers home. As the poet explains, it was a stormy day, and the rain and sleet enhanced the boy's feelings of loneliness and anxiety.

After presenting each of these spots of time, Wordsworth goes on to explain how his memory retained these events. He also describes the manner in which his mental associations altered and expanded the significance of these scenes over time. For example, Wordsworth's father died just ten days after the boy's experience of waiting for the horses. Upon his father's death, the boy recalled the sensation of this scene from days before, and the poet suggests that the latter event strangely reshaped and enhanced the memory of the former. With observations such as this, Wordsworth certainly demonstrates his fascination with the mental faculties of memory and association. However, it is not certain that these episodes show that memory -- or, more generally, the subjective mind -- is "lord and

master." Sybil Eakin, who has studied the spots of time closely, observes the following:

> Most readers . . . have experienced a good deal of difficulty in understanding exactly how Wordsworth intended these two incidents to demonstrate his general and theoretical contentions. . . . Wordsworth's argument seems at variance with his examples; the two incidents, striking and memorable as they are, do not, for most of us, seem to do what Wordsworth said they did. (389-90)

Wordsworth says that these episodes prove the dominance of the mind, but this claim appears to be subverted by the weightiness of external elements within the scenes. The problem is that his two examples are deeply rooted in the objective world. Consider, for example, the poet's attention to detail in this passage from his second "spot of time" example:

> There was a crag,
> An eminence, which from the meeting-point
> Of two highways ascending overlooked
> At least a long half-mile of those two roads. . . .
> 'Twas a day
> Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
> I sate half sheltered by a naked wall.
> Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
> A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
> With those companions at my side, I watched. . . . (xi.349-60)

This episode essentially consists of an itemized setting. The fact that Wordsworth recalls such detail may show the strength of his memory, but his description of the event primarily conveys the controlling influence of the scene itself over his thoughts. As the poet establishes the length of the roads and locates objects to his left and right, a keen sense of

spatial relationships arises. One therefore senses that an episode intended to celebrate the mind is in fact deeply indebted to the powers of place.

Perhaps the main reason for this tension lies in the fact that Wordsworth wrote these episodes before he achieved his belief in the primacy of the mind. Both "spot of time" examples initially appeared in the two-part Prelude of 1799. There, Wordsworth similarly introduces them as examples of the events that restore and renovate our minds over time. However, that early version does not express the idea that such moments prove "the mind is lord and master," for Wordsworth in 1799 had not yet arrived at this idealistic position. Instead, at that point, Wordsworth still acknowledged that the outer world holds sway over the mind. As Eakin describes, the passages therefore initially served "to vindicate an education by nature" (391). Thus, in later versions of The Prelude (dating from 1805 and on), one finds the poet incorporating old material as a demonstration of a new philosophical principle. With this in mind, the tension between Wordsworth's examples and his claims becomes more understandable.[10]

However, this history of the poem's composition only draws out an issue that is imbedded within the "spots of time" themselves. There is an inherent problem in

---

[10] Eakin's portrayal of changes in Wordsworth's approach to nature raises an important issue regarding the poet's epistemology. As many critics have shown, Wordsworth's representations of the relationship between the mind and the external environment are inconsistent. In an oft-quoted passage from "Tintern Abbey," for example, the poet describes a balanced interaction between the two by claiming that the eye and ear "half create," as well as half perceive, one's surroundings (106-07). As noted above, though, Wordsworth elsewhere speaks of the primacy of the mind and of its role as "lord and master." This inconsistency is at the heart of many studies of Wordsworth, and it has led to similarly inconsistent critical conclusions. Some, such as Geoffrey Hartman, paint a rather dramatic portrait of a poet who spent his career masking his guilt-ridden realization that he had no need for the world of nature. Other, more plausible theories, such as those offered by W. J. B. Owen and Alan Grob, generally regard the poet as simply evolving from a somewhat empirical treatment of nature toward more idealistic, subjective beliefs (see Hartman's Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814, Grob's The Philosophic Mind, and Owen's articles on "Two Wordsworth Ambivalences" and "'The Most Despotic of Our Senses'"). The issue is truly a complex one, but it is probably a safe generalization to say that Wordsworth's poetry consistently locates imaginative insights in the interaction of mind and matter, though it also privileges the role of the mind in this dynamic. Regardless of one's conclusions about the whole of Wordsworth's career, an important fact remains: the poet's emphasis on external elements threatens to demonstrate the dominant role of the poet's surroundings. With the possible exception of his earliest works, such an implication is inconsistent with the statements and themes of Wordsworth's poetry.

understanding these moments as demonstrations of the powers of mind and memory. An analogy between the process of memory and the process of composition illustrates the crux. Over time, Wordsworth attributed new meaning to the "raw data" of his experience; in a similar manner, his later poetic statements attributed new significance to selections from his earlier poetry. However, as his later poetry cannot erase the earlier representations of his experience, so retrospect cannot subvert the fact that these memories initially arose as a result of a strong external influence. Wordsworth clearly realizes that the processes of time and memory enrich past and present experiences, and he delights in the associative intricacies involved therein. Nevertheless, if these remembered episodes contain no sign within themselves of the observer's subjective, shaping powers, they are somewhat unsuccessful at demonstrating the mastery of the mind.

Scenes and Vision

The previous "spot of time" examples reveal another important aspect of Wordsworthian scenes in general. When creating these "spots," the poet does not merely plunge into a description of a particular episode. He instead presents the details of his movements that led him to the scene, and he thereby enhances his poetry's sense of visual revelations. For example, the poet does not relate the episode of his waiting for the horses without first establishing how he crossed a field and ascended a summit in order to do so. One sees this more clearly, though, in the story involving the gibbet. Wordsworth first recounts the fact that he and a friend were riding horses but somehow became separated; from there, the narrative explains that he moved "down the rough and stony moor / . . . stumbling on" and "at length / Came to a bottom" where he suddenly saw the gibbet. There, he "chanced to espy" the small monument bearing the hanged murderer's name. Finally, Wordsworth concludes the scene by describing his movements away from the gibbet and the shifts in view that resulted:

Forthwith I left the spot,

And, reascending the bare common, saw

A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,

The beacon on the summit, and more near,

A girl who bore a pitcher on her head

And seemed with difficult steps to force her way

Against the blowing wind. (xi.301-07)

Once again Wordsworth is keenly aware of the spatial field within his "spot of time." Also, though these lines lack the crisp, temporal demarcation that accompanies Coleridge's early poetry, they contain a similar emphasis on the relationship between motion and shifts in vision.

Elsewhere, though, one finds that Wordsworth surpasses even Coleridge in monitoring the sudden sights that accompany the observer-narrator's movement.[11] Although Wordsworth is often regarded as a poet of visionary moments, he is first a poet of visual moments. Whereas Coleridge typically advances this idea with a description of scenes "bursting" onto his sight, Wordsworth similarly remarks on the "gleams" and "glances" which his eyes encounter.[12] As James Roy King has shown, these two words

---

[11] There is an interesting correspondence between this fact and the fact that Wordsworth's interest in Hartleian associationism seems to have been more sustained than Coleridge's interest. Coleridge introduced Wordsworth to Hartleianism and later gave Wordsworth reasons for rejecting it. However, whereas Coleridge's belief in Hartley's doctrine was passionate but short-lived, Wordsworth's was less ardent but more enduring. For an account of the relation of Hartleianism to both poets, see Rader, pp. 10-29 and 39-51.

[12] One noteworthy use of the word "glance" appears in "An Evening Walk," which contains yet another passage that dwells on the temporal dynamics of the setting sun. In the poem, Wordsworth, like Coleridge, emphasizes the tangential nature of the sun's contact with and disappearance behind the horizon. The passage begins with the sun's emergence from behind a cloud:

Just where a cloud above the mountain rears
An edge all flame, the broadening sun appears
A long blue bar its aegis orb divides,
And breaks the spreading of its golden tides;
And now that orb has touched the purple steep,
Whose softened image penetrates the deep. . . .
Sunk to a curve, the day star lessens still,

appear repeatedly in The Prelude. When Wordsworth and friends ride horses on the beach, they are "Lighted by gleams of moonlight by the sea"; when he leans over a slow-moving boat to peer at the water, he notes how the images below the surface are "crossed by gleam / Of his own image"; and, when he roams through the mountains, his eyes "glance upon" a mysterious shepherd (ii.143, iv.258-59, viii.400; King 105-06). In fact, the lines following this last example underscore the connection between fleeting sights and the observer's motion. There (in Book Eight), Wordsworth elaborates on his chance, boyhood encounters with these awe-inspiring shepherds:

> At other times,
> When round some shady promontory turning,[13]
> His form hath flashed upon me glorified
> By the deep radiance of the setting sun;
> Or him have I descried in distant sky,
> A solitary object and sublime. . . . (viii.402-07)

Both of these encounters are characterized by crisp, visual demarcation. However, the description of the first type of encounter is especially revealing. The very notion of a "flash" conveys the sense of a transient image. The passage further emphasizes its sense of particularity by suggesting that this flash depends on the precise, fleeting positions of the shepherd, the setting sun, and the moving narrator. By portraying this "flash" as the result of a sudden convergence, the lines emphasize the temporal, momentary dimension of this event.

The Prelude is not the only source of Wordsworth's visual moments. Among his "Poems on the Naming of Places," for example, one encounters phrases such as, "At

---

> Gives one bright glance, and drops behind the hill. (168-73, 190-91)

[13] In his edition of The Prelude, Jonathan Wordsworth notes that this line refers to the movement of the poet rather than the shepherd.

length I to a sudden turning came . . . " and "Along the indented shore, when suddenly / Through a thin veil of glittering haze was seen . . ." (i.20, iv.44-45). These lines, like many others in his work, introduce sudden, new views that correspond with the narrator's motion. In other poems, Wordsworth does not present a moving observer but still appeals to the idea of momentary glimpses. Consider the opening of a love poem to his wife:

> She was a Phantom of delight
> When first she gleamed upon my sight;
> A lovely Apparition, sent
> To be a moment's ornament. . . . (1-4)

Thus, though Wordsworth may or may not be fond of the measurement of temporal moments by clocks, he is certainly fond of measuring temporal moments with his eyes.

Given Wordsworth's idealistic sympathies and his pursuit of eternity, it seems odd that his poetry (even later drafts of The Prelude) presents visual moments that are so well-grounded in time and space. Here again, though, one can find an explanation for this in Wordsworth's understanding of narrative needs, for he associates the idea of narrative with that of distinct sights. For Wordsworth, scenes are just that.

As shown earlier, Wordsworth recognizes that narratives must present distinct episodes (or "islands") in order to convey their themes. His poetry further reveals that he regards these episodes as visual occasions. The first sign of this appears in the abundant amount of physical motion in his works. Wordsworth walked enormous distances in his life, and his poetry covers a lot of ground as well. This characteristic appears even in his earliest poetry; with one exception ("Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew Tree"), all of his "Poems Written in Youth" begin with physical motion. Generally speaking, they also present visual inventories in the manner described above.

However, some of these early poems also anticipate a recurrent technique in which the narrator's movements appear both realistic and metaphorical. For example,

Wordsworth describes the appearance of the actual landscape in "An Evening Walk" with painstaking detail. As in the "Immortality Ode," though, he also compares the course of a man's experiences during a particular day's progress to the general pattern of human aging and development. The same technique appears in Wordsworth's later poetry. "Stepping Westward," for example, describes a real episode that is documented in Dorothy's journals, but it also addresses the symbolic ramifications of Wordsworth's stepping into the darkening wild. Similarly, though The Excursion is grounded in realistic descriptions of landscape views, it also assumes a somewhat allegorical and archetypal tone as it describes the journeys of nameless characters such as The Wanderer, The Pastor, and The Solitary.

The Prelude reveals a similar commingling of the real and metaphorical presence of the road. As R. A. Foakes explains, "The track pursued by the poet seems to be at once the literal 'high-way' of his wanderings, and the course along which his mind developed on the ascent to truth" (62). Wordsworth introduces the road motif early in his narrative: "The road lies plain before me" (i.668). Having established this metaphor, he repeatedly speaks in a figurative manner of the journey of his life. In Book Twelve, he describes his narrative's purpose: "Be mine to follow with no timid step / Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride / That I have dared to tread this holy ground" (xii.249-51). In fact, the idea of stepping permeates The Prelude. After declaring "A Traveller I am" in Book Three, Wordsworth asks Coleridge for help in assisting the "fainting steps" of his narrative (iii.196, 201). Also, Wordsworth repeatedly uses the word "step" as a term for a point of transition in his life (e.g., xiii.245, xiii.326). This idea is of course common in other literature as well as in everyday conversation. However, the fact that many of these transitions coincide with Wordsworth's actual stepping complicates matters in an unusual way. According to his narrative, many transforming insights in Wordsworth's life coincided with real encounters while walking (or traveling by horse or carriage). These

include his meeting with the discharged soldier at the end of Book Four, the crossing of the Alps in Book Six, and the "moment" in which Wordsworth realizes he has entered London in Book Eight (iv.400-504, vi.493-548, viii.693-710).

As with stepping, the idea of seeing retains both literal and figurative senses in Wordsworth's poetry. As shown above, Wordsworth's scenes closely monitor the real shifts in sight that accompany the observer's movement. Meanwhile, Wordsworth often injects the idea of vision into his poetry in an odd yet revealing manner. For example, in The Prelude, he refers to "The eye and progress of my song"; elsewhere, instead of saying he had a "sense" of humor as a youth, he says that he had an "eye" for humor (vi.526, iv.200). Wordsworth also uses the words "sight" and "example" interchangeably. In London, for example, the poet encounters many "individual sights / Of courage and integrity, and truth, / And tenderness . . ." (viii.839-41).

Phrasings such as this underscore Wordsworth's understanding of the relationship between the ideas of steps, sights, and narrative episodes. However, the equation between sights and episodes further demonstrates the problematic nature of Wordsworth's concept of narrative, for he often disparages the function of eyesight. Though vivid scenes in Wordsworth's poetry challenge his statements about the value of vision, the statements themselves are unequivocal. In a well-known passage in The Prelude, for example, the poet refers to sight as "the most despotic of our senses," and he disparages the days in his life when "the eye was master of the heart" (xi.171-75). Yet as the epic chronicles Wordsworth's escape from this "tyranny" of sight, it also seems to show his dependence on it (xi.179). The same is true not only for The Prelude but also for Wordsworthian scenes in general, for they usually work to represent ethereal themes through descriptions of the narrator's actual movements and vision. In other words, much of Wordsworth's poetry contains the tension that appears within the specific "spots of time" cited above.

These "spots" are rich with visual, objective detail, yet they are intended to demonstrate the primacy of the subjective mind.

Two Problems

One finds, then, that the inner workings of Wordsworth's narratives counter his thematic goals. Though he often seeks to represent indistinct notions of his development or the perception of timeless insights, his narratives contain distinct, momentary scenes that are anchored to specific times and places. Furthermore, Wordsworth helps to delineate his emblematic scenes through appeals to vision. As his attentiveness to the dynamics of eyesight enhances the temporal particularity of his scenes, it also threatens to show the dominating influence of the objective realm. For Wordsworth, such a result would be unacceptable.

Wordsworth often portrays these "individual sights" as elements within his memory, and the context of memory greatly subverts the tension between theme and dramatization. However, a critical overemphasis on the poet's use of memory dismisses the scenes themselves too readily, and it creates a sense of "mystery" (to use Abrams's term) regarding which of Wordsworth's scenes are and are not effective. Also, this caricature of Wordsworth's technique leaves one unprepared to discuss works where the use of memory simply does not appear. Accordingly, through further consideration of The Prelude and other works, the next chapter will analyze the manners in which Wordsworth uses vision to resolve the problem of time, and time to resolve the problem of vision.

Chapter Four

Wordsworth's Plain Pictures

Dramatizing Time

In the midst of one of many metaphysical discussions in The Excursion, the poem's wise hero, the Wanderer, interrupts the religious theorizing with a practical demand. Turning to the Pastor, he says, "Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts; / For our disputes, plain pictures" (v.637-38). Like the Wanderer, Wordsworth was conscious of the need to demonstrate abstract thoughts in "plain pictures"; in fact, he intended for the whole of The Excursion to dramatize the ethereal ideas expressed in The Prelude and the rest of The Recluse. As his "Prospectus" to The Recluse reveals, his themes in that work (as in his poetry in general) are lofty ones. He wishes to speak "Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope" (14). Above all, he desires to show "how exquisitely . . . / The external World is fitted to the Mind" (66-68). As the previous chapter has shown, the desire to dramatize such themes poses a significant challenge. His narrative episodes require anchors in time and space, but the weightiness of localizing details threatens to drown his "high argument" in an unintended bathos (71). Many have remarked on Wordsworth's ability to escape temporal limitations through his use of memory, but less has been said about his resolution of this problem within the poetic scenes themselves. This chapter will analyze three methods with which Wordsworth's scenes manipulate the sight-time relationship in order to preserve a thematic integrity. The three techniques are identified below by the subheadings of "Gazing at Eternity," "The Disappearing/Appearing Line," and "Panoramic Vision." These methods represent various degrees of narrative complexity. However, Wordsworth uses all of these techniques frequently, and one cannot understand his approach to time without recognizing each of them.

Gazing at Eternity

As with Coleridge, the poetry of Wordsworth reveals a constant interest in eyesight. Throughout his work, variations on the word "eye" appear about 700 times.[1] Wordsworth often refers to his "bodily eye," and the fact that he adds such an adjective hints at his consciousness of different types of sight. The bodily eye -- the real, physical eyeball -- is what creates "the most despotic of our senses" (P 1850 xii.129-30). Wordsworth often disparages raw eyesight, for he believes that it encourages a dependence on the external, and this hinders the function of imaginative powers. Other words associated in his poetry with the bodily eye include "mortal," "untaught," "unaccustomed," "careless," and "vacant."[2]

The poet frequently suggests that his desire is somehow to see beyond the limits of normal perception. For example, a passage in Book Two of The Prelude mentions this mysterious process. After describing some solitary episodes among the hills during which he listened to the sounds of nature, Wordsworth writes:

> Oft in those moments such a holy calm
> Did overspread my soul that I forgot
> That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
> Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
> A prospect in my mind. (ii.367-71)

Here Wordsworth describes the stirrings of his mind's eye, which he reveres throughout his poetry. This passage suggests that this higher faculty subverts the bodily eye, but this is the price of imaginative understanding. As Oswald says in The Borderers, "Cast round you your mind's eye, and you will learn" (1534). Wordsworth makes it clear that the

---

[1] I arrived at this number by counting the relevant entries in Lane Cooper's Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth.

[2] Respectively, these quotations come from "A Night Thought" l. 3, P viii.788, P xi.428, P 1850 ix.14, and "The Matron of Jedborough" l. 19. For other references to the "bodily eye," see P 1850 iii.155, P 1850 vi.471, and E iv.172.

mind's eye is a superior organ, for he elsewhere associates it with "spiritual," "serene," "raptured," "piercing" and "penetrative" sight.[3] The mind's eye is, in fact, the "Eye of Truth" ("White Doe" 1272). Accordingly, this higher form of vision accompanies many emblematic episodes in Wordsworth's poetry. For example, in the aforementioned encounter with the beggar in The Prelude, it is the poet's "mind," and not his bodily eye, which looks at this "spectacle" and finds in it a message from "another world" (vii.616, 622).

Thus Wordsworth's distinction between the bodily eye and the mind's eye serves as a means of contrasting visual and visionary faculties. It is important to note, though, that these two types of perception correspond with two different representations of time's progress. As the previous chapter mentioned, Wordsworth often monitors the shifts in real, visual data as he moves through landscapes, and these shifting views create a successive progression of discrete instances. By contrast, the views seen by the mind's eye promote a sense of enduring experience. One means of promoting this sense of duration involves the association of the mind's eye with the function of memory. When Wordsworth remembers certain experiences, he often describes them as being projected through his mind. In other words, the mind's eye is sometimes equivalent to the lens of memory. In the adaptation of "There was a boy" in The Prelude, for example, the poet's inner vision recalls his visits to the boy's grave in a churchyard: "Even now appears before the mind's clear eye / That self-same village church; I see her sit / . . . On her green hill" (P 1850 v.397-99). Wordsworth is able to recall this momentary scene at will, and therefore the experience of visiting the boy's grave endures in his mind.

An even better example of the enduring perception of the mind's eye appears in "I wandered lonely as a cloud." In typical Wordsworthian fashion, the poet describes the

[3] Respectively, these quotations come from "Vernal Ode" l. 3, "She was a Phantom of delight" l. 21, "The most alluring clouds that mount the sky" l. 3, "At the Grave of Burns" l. 25, and E vi.257.

sudden appearance of the daffodils to his wandering, bodily eye: "When all at once I saw a crowd, / A host of golden daffodils" (3-4). Wordsworth further emphasizes the particularity of the scene by noting that the flowers appeared "Along the margin of a bay" and that he saw them "at a glance" (9-10). However, Wordsworth's memory has appropriated this momentary event, and the conclusion of the poem describes the scene's recurrent, renovating power:

> 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. (19-24)

Here, Wordsworth's use of the word "flash" acknowledges the memory's origin in a particular moment. Nevertheless, the poem primarily shows that his mind has dislodged the event from its initial location within a successive process.

Elsewhere, though, the mind's eye does not function within the workings of memory, but rather within the actual experience. This fact hints at Wordsworth's desire to dramatize a superior form of perception without resorting to mere statements about his memories. "Resolution and Independence," for example, is comparable to the encounter with the beggar in The Prelude. On both occasions, the poet is stunned by his immediate recognition of the other characters' lasting significance. As the narrator interacts with the leech-gatherer, his mind projects an understanding of the old man's being:

> While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
> The old Man's shape, and speech -- all troubled me:
> In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
> About the weary moors continually. . . . (127-30)

"Continually" is a key word here, for it signifies that the narrator has begun to recognize the enduring power of this character and scene. Through the use of his mind's eye, the narrator is able to perceive the Godly attributes of the leech-gatherer, and this will encourage the narrator to "persevere" as the old man does (126).

Similarly, in "She was a Phantom of delight," the poet contrasts his first meeting with his wife ("When first she gleamed upon my sight") with his subsequent, gradual recognition of her character. Whereas the opening of the poem describes the initial beauty of her "dancing Shape" and "Image gay," the conclusion remarks on the more enduring traits which his mind's eye has recognized (9). Wordsworth "now" sees "with eye serene" her inner "spirit," which is made up of "The reason firm, the temperate will, / Endurance, foresight, strength and skill" (21, 25-26). Here again, the mind's eye sees through physical appearances and is able to perceive insights of permanence.

Often Wordsworth presents this technique by using one of his favorite words: "gaze."[4] For Wordsworth, gazing represents the immediate, heightened functioning of the mind's eye. One should note that Wordsworth's encounter with the beggar in London concludes with the poet's gazing on him (P 1850 vii.649). Generally, whereas visual "gleams" and "glances" flash upon the moving observer, the gazing poet is stationary, for the cessation of motion is the first phase of this type of enhanced perception. The opening lines of "Admonition" reveal this key characteristic of Wordsworthian gazing: "Well may'st thou halt -- and gaze with brightening eye! / The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook . . ." (1-2). Once one has prevented the presentation of any new visual data, the eye can "brighten" as it gazes through the scene at hand, whether it is of a cottage or a character. In a sonnet celebrating a solitary evening star, the poet describes how "A moment I was startled at the sight" of it ("It is no Spirit" 8). After this initial surprise, however, he

[4] According to my counting in Cooper's concordance, Wordsworth's poetry uses variations of the word "gaze" about 130 times.

"gazed" until he identified with that star, and he realized his life's course could become equally distinguished.

Wordsworth sometimes associates gazing with the experience of viewing paintings, and this association further demonstrates his concept of staring through a scene in order to achieve profound insights. In "Lines Suggested by a Portrait from the Pencil of F. Stone," the poet describes a monk's viewing of Titian's "Last Supper." For the monk, the unchanging portrait provides an inspiring contrast to "daily" rigors and the "lapse of years" (109, 115). Wordsworth twice refers to the monk's reverent "gaze" in the presence of this painting (113, 119). Furthermore, this act of gazing leads to a transcendent insight into the greater reality of the painted subject. By the monk's own account, he gazes at the figures "Until I cannot but believe that they -- / They are in truth the Substance, we the Shadows" (116-17).

Similarly, in a pair of sonnets on an unidentified portrait, the poet analyzes the effects of looking at a painting. In the first sonnet, Wordsworth disparages this process. The portrait is a good likeness, he says, but its presentation cannot compete with the superior visions provided by the poet's "inward eye" ("To a Painter" 10). A painting cannot represent this type of sight, and "Then, and then only, Painter! could thy art / The visual powers of Nature satisfy" (11-12). In the second sonnet, however, the poet explains that he has reevaluated the merits of this painting (and possibly of paintings in general). "I now have gazed on it so long," Wordsworth writes, that "I see its truth with unreluctant eyes" ("On the Same Subject" 2-3). Wordsworth's gaze, like that of the adoring monk, has made him aware of the constancy of the painting, and in the second sonnet he contrasts this constancy with the day's progress (6-11). By the conclusion of the sonnet, Wordsworth has recognized in the portrait "one vision" of "future, present, past" (11). Here, though, it is clear that this sense of timelessness is not inherent in the painting itself, but rather in the imaginative projection of the reflecting observer.

In these "gazing" situations, it appears that the viewer does not merely see past the immediate significance of a scene, but actually approaches a conception of timelessness. Gazing subverts the discrete moment presented in a natural or painted scene and promotes a preferable conception of duration. As Coleridge does in some poems, Wordsworth seems to push this action toward the realm of the eternal. His gazing leads to a pleasant position between temporality and Godly eternity. In other words, gazing often provides the bridge between the immediate and the permanent realms within Wordsworthian moments. As in Coleridge's early poetry, however, this temporal two-step by Wordsworth is a vaguely conceived gesture. Although this type of gazing once again reveals a poetic connection between one's sight and one's sense of time, it hardly suggests that the paradox of the enduring moment has been reconciled. Also, claims of looking through and beyond a scene only superficially demonstrate the imaginative interaction of mind and environment. Thus one returns to the crux of Wordsworthian moments addressed in the previous chapter. In his study of Wordsworth and Schelling, E. D. Hirsch precisely identifies these problems:

> For both Wordsworth and Schelling, the mind of man has the divine power to perceive the immortality of the moments which are seemingly caught in a finite flux. This faculty seems to come into play at special moments in man's experience. But this psychological explanation describes only one aspect of the matter. By itself, it is inherently unsatisfactory. If the insight into present immortality requires a special, occasional faculty which is unconditioned by the objects of sense experience, then man's intercourse with the world becomes disvalued. The realm of time and of sensory

> experience would become a kind of illusion. This static 'abyss of idealism' is the reverse of what Schelling and Wordsworth desire.[5] (67)

In a similar manner, one can say that gazing alone fails to embrace the objective realm, and the action also represents little more than an abandoning of one's real senses.

Later sections of this chapter will show that Wordsworth sometimes offers more demonstrable signs of his different conceptions of time within the same scene. On occasion, Wordsworth still appeals to the idea of gazing in order to provide reinforcement for those other methods. Before considering those methods, though, it is interesting to note that even the superficial instances of Wordsworthian gazing sometimes reveal an inclination to make the mind's imaginative processes manifest. "Lines Left Upon a Seat in a Yew-tree" provides a good example. This poem from the Lyrical Ballads commemorates the Hawkshead gentleman who made a seat under the tree and trained the tree in order to provide pleasing shade. Wordsworth explains that the man was unsuccessful in public dealings, and he retreated to the rural environment -- especially the spot of the yew tree -- to spend the rest of his days in solitude. The narrative describes the man's thoughts as he sat beneath the tree and took in the view:

> And on these barren rocks, with fern and heath,
> And juniper and thistle, sprinkled o'er,
> Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour
> A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here
> An emblem of his own unfruitful life. . . .

However, the position under the tree offered another, more appealing prospect:

> And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze

[5] Wordsworth's phrase "abyss of idealism" appears in his note on the "Immortality Ode": "Many times while going to school I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or a tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality" (PG3 194).

On the more distant scene, -- how lovely 'tis

Thou seest, -- and he would gaze till it became

Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain

The beauty, still more beauteous! (28-32, 33-37)

In this case, the "beauteous" view disturbs the man, for it provides painful contrast to his desolate life. Also, this passage is not as profound as other, visionary moments in Wordsworth's work, and it offers no suggestions of a sudden glimpse of eternity. However, it is revealing that Wordsworth here works to convey different states of mind by describing alternate views from the same position in space. The main effect still results from the observer's gazing, but his sense of beauty is precipitated by literally looking beyond his immediate surroundings. The latter passage also supports the notion of a more enduring insight by refraining from the successive, particularistic description (of fern, juniper, and thistle) that appears in the former passage.

Wordsworth and Perspective

In order to understand Wordsworth's more complex manipulations of the time-sight relationship, one must first recognize the poet's thoroughgoing concern with physical perspective. This consciousness seems to have derived largely from his lifelong study of the visual arts. His aforementioned, occasional poems about paintings reveal an interest in the non-literary arts, but this interest was hardly a casual one. In his study of Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape, Russell Noyes summarizes the poet's expertise in the sister arts: "Wordsworth was not only England's foremost poet of Nature; he was also a knowledgeable critic of landscape painting, an expert gardener, and a master of the art of travel. In short, Wordsworth was a rounded and eminent practitioner of the art of landscape on its highest levels" (4). A brief survey of Wordsworth's experiences in these

fields will demonstrate his keen awareness of visual dynamics, which are crucial in his poetry.

The influence of the art of painting on Wordsworth is well-established. According to his own account, the poet came of age during the twilight of the Picturesque movement, and it appears that he felt its influence. In a well-known passage in Book Eleven of The Prelude, he first claims that this "strong infection of the age / Was never much my habit." He further states that he was never very interested in the "superficial" rules of the Picturesque approach to landscapes. However, he goes on to characterize his youth as a time when "the eye was master of the heart" (xi.156-57, 159, 170). Also, in the 1850 version, Wordsworth again acknowledges that for a time the "visible Universe / Fell under the dominion of a taste / Less spiritual" in which he looked at nature "with microscopic view" (P 1850 xii.89-93). According to Noyes, Wordsworth is understating things here. Noyes describes Wordsworth's interest in this movement as a "thraldom to the Picturesque," and he cites passages that reveal the poet's life-long struggle to shun this visual despotism (161-64). He also notes that Wordsworth as a young man owned some books written by William Gilpin, the patriarch of the Picturesque movement (55). As Matthew Brennan has shown, Wordsworth later employed Gilpin's Picturesque principles while describing landscapes in his Guide to the Lakes in 1809 (127-29).

Regardless of these mixed sympathies toward Picturesque art, Wordsworth was clearly accomplished in the study of painting. To begin with, he had a thorough knowledge of the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Also, through his friendship with Sir George Beaumont, he was able to view many contemporary landscapes, and he became well-versed in their analysis. Beaumont also introduced Wordsworth to many of the painters themselves, and he developed a lasting relationship with John Constable (Noyes 55-56, 64-86). Wordsworth fancied himself an art critic, and he occasionally purchased some of the works he encountered (Noyes 59, 88).

Wordsworth's knowledge of painting has encouraged a number of interdisciplinary comparisons of him and figures such as Constable and J. M. W. Turner.[6] In these studies, three key conclusions repeatedly appear. Like Noyes, most other critics agree that Picturesque principles influenced Wordsworth's own approach to choosing and describing natural scenes. Second, these studies more fundamentally establish that Wordsworth's general interest in the art of painting enhanced his observational skills. As Brennan suggests, there is a logical, simple connection between this interest and the fact that "Wordsworth typically begins by describing landscapes as objective, picturable scenes" (23). Finally, interdisciplinary comparisons place Wordsworth within the context of the contemporary development that James Heffernan calls "the re-creation of landscape" (xviii). When one compares this poet to artists such as Turner, one recognizes an emerging, early-Romantic transformation in the representation of landscape. Along with that of Coleridge, Constable, and others, the art of Wordsworth embodies the transition between eighteenth-century, mimetic representations of landscape and arch-Romantic interpretations of them.

When considering Wordsworth's descriptions of scenes, it is helpful to keep this development in mind. However, this study is more basically concerned with the fact that Wordsworth's interest in painting partially accounts for his dogged attentiveness to visual dynamics. Also, one can find another source of this interest -- as well as more signs of its manifestations -- in the art of landscape gardening. Wordsworth was as interested in gardening as he was in painting, and his gardening pursuits provide further demonstration of his interest in sight lines and visual revelations.

---

[6] Fine examples of these studies include James Heffernan's The Re-creation of Landscape: A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner, Karl Kroeber's Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth, and Matthew Brennan's Wordsworth, Turner, and Romantic Landscape: A Study of the Traditions of the Picturesque and the Sublime.

Wordsworth so respected the art of landscape gardening that he encouraged his youngest son to pursue it as a profession. His own expertise in the field is evident from his extensive writings on the subject, which mainly appear in his letters. He was an active enthusiast, and over the course of his lifetime he oversaw the creation of three sizable gardens. The first of these projects occurred around 1800. To establish a garden at their Dove Cottage home in Grasmere, he and Dorothy built walls, laid stepping stones, and imported numerous plants and trees. In 1806, when the Wordsworth family moved to a larger residence on the grounds of Beaumont's Coleorton Hall, Wordsworth created a new, one-acre Winter Garden on the premises. Once again Wordsworth transformed the environment, not only with new plantings but also with great alteration of the actual landscape. He oversaw the plotting and construction of new paths and walks, he altered water routes, and he adorned certain views with new monuments that presented his own inscriptions. Wordsworth's final garden project began in 1813 when he moved to Rydal Mount. There, the poet accomplished his gardening masterpiece, and he reconstructed the landscape more than he ever had before. He created new terraces, walks, paths, walls, gates, and fish pools. He also added on to the original feature of a grassy mound which served Norsemen as a lookout point. In short, as Noyes, explains, Wordsworth created a "garden paradise" (126).[7]

As an accomplished gardener, Wordsworth was keenly aware of the need to create bounded and varied views for the garden visitor. This awareness is especially evident in the poet's letters to Lady Beaumont regarding his plans for the Winter Garden. Upon reading these letters, one first notices the poet's enthusiastic tone and his self-assured didacticism as he lays out the plans (and accompanying, justifying principles) in vivid detail. As Wordsworth relates this detail, one next realizes that he consistently does so by

[7] All of the information in this paragraph is taken from Noyes' Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape, pp. 91-142. These pages also include helpful photographs of Wordsworth's three gardens.

imagining the views which would greet a visitor as he strolled through the garden. While imagining how the garden should be constructed, Wordsworth draws on the strength of his mind's eye to envision what the bodily eye would encounter.

The best example of this appears in his letter to Lady Beaumont from December, 1806. In this letter -- "the longest letter I ever wrote in my life" -- Wordsworth describes the "compartments" of the proposed garden and the various stages of a visitor's walk through it (LWD2 120, 115).[8] After begging the Lady's patience for the extensive plans he is about to present, Wordsworth begins by describing the prospect at the garden's entrance. From there, Wordsworth "walks" Lady Beaumont through the garden paths. The following passage, which appears in the middle of the letter, is a lengthy one, but it nicely captures the method and thoroughness of the letter as a whole. At this point, the garden visitor is in a deep, secluded nook:

> You would appear to be shut up within this bottom, till, turning with the Path round a rocky projection of the mound of rubbish you are fronted by a flight of steps, not before visible, which will be made to bring you out of the quarry close under the clipt holly hedge spoken of before. Here you open into a large Glade, one side formed by the trees on the mound of rubbish, the other by the Holly hedge, and still further by those other steps near the Witch elm Cottage, which now lead down into the Garden; these steps, not visible till you come at them, and still further on, by the principle object in the Glade, the waterfall, for so I will call it, from the root of the Witch elm. Having passed through this Glade, you go on a few steps through a thicket, and before you come to the new-built Wall you cross the other end of the alley spoken of before. This alley to run down from the

[8] The fact that Wordsworth's longest letter ever is on the subject of gardening is revealing and remarkable in itself, for he was seldom reserved while corresponding about the merits of his verse.

> Boundary path the whole length of the Garden in this part, as you will see in the Plan. (LWD2 117)

The letter continues in this manner for several more pages, but this passage sufficiently displays several of the letter's remarkable aspects. The first is the degree of clarity and specificity in Wordsworth's vision; its copious nature attests to both his observational skills and his fastidiousness in creation. One might also note that the method of description here is comparable to his poetry. As with the "spots of time" discussed in the previous chapter, Wordsworth presents his garden scenes by taking an inventory of elements within them, and he relates how the observer's movements make certain views possible. Related to this is Wordsworth's notable interest in visual discoveries. In the passage above, he twice notes how two sets of steps are invisible from certain vantage points but then appear as the observer proceeds. It even sounds as though Wordsworth will be cautious to construct his garden in a manner that will ensure that these visual boundaries exist.

As will be seen, the construction of these boundaries plays an important role in his poetry as well. First, though, it is necessary to consider the third landscape "art" that demonstrates his interest in perspective dynamics. This is the art of travel, to which Wordsworth was dedicated throughout his life. He was a master of both the principles and the practices of deliberate travel. As Noyes explains, he was "a keen student of the literature of travel and touring," and over time his library included dozens of books on scenic tours (145, 268-69). Of course, Wordsworth was also a great traveler in his own right. In addition to his ramblings throughout England, he toured Wales, Scotland, France, and Switzerland.

The best accounts of some of these tours appear in Dorothy's journals, which, as Noyes observes, demonstrate that the pursuit of striking prospects was often a chief motivator and concern. Her Grasmere journal, for example, reveals a constant interest in specific views and vantage points: "Walked to Ambleside in the evening round the Lake,

the prospect exceedingly beautiful from Loughrigg Fell" (JDW1 39). "In the morning walked up to the rocks above Jenny Dockeray's, sate a long time upon the grass, the prospect divinely beautiful" (JDW1 42). "After William had composed a little, I persuaded him to go into the orchard. We walked backwards and forwards. The prospect most divinely beautiful from the seat; all colours, all melting into each other" (JDW1 66-67). Similarly, her account of their tour in Scotland, which (in 1803) took place well after William's "thraldom to the Picturesque," further reveals their abiding interest in the pursuit of prospects. Two entries from their visit to Loch Lomond are typical of the account as a whole: "We had some beautiful distant views, one in particular, down the high road, through a vista of over-arching trees" (JDW1 245). "We had not climbed far before we were stopped by a sudden burst of prospect, so singular and beautiful that it was like a flash of images from another world" (JDW1 251).

The prose work that best reflects the poet's own interest in scenic travel is his Guide to the Lakes. He wrote this lengthy travel book in 1809 as an accompaniment to Joseph Wilkinson's engravings of the Lake District. However, Wordsworth's description of his native area is so thorough that no pictorial supplements are necessary. Wordsworth knew the Lake District better than anyone, and his Guide describes its various charms with an almost pedantic devotion. As in his letter to Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth often presents the area through the eyes of an imaginary traveler working his way from prospect to prospect. Meanwhile, Wordsworth's account in the Guide reveals his constant concern with three key variables. He repeatedly notes how one's experiences in the area are dependent on point of view, the time of day, and the order in which views are seen. The following passage from an early portion of the Guide shows how Wordsworth could be detailed to a fault, but it also demonstrates his obsessive awareness of differences in timing and position. Here, Wordsworth explains that interior areas of the District offer vantage points that make many different scenes visible:

> For example, in the vale of Winandermere, if the spectator looks for gentle and lovely scenes, his eye is turned towards the south; if for the grand, towards the north: in the vale of Keswick, which lies almost due north of this, it is directly the reverse. Hence, when the sun is setting in summer far to the north-west, it is seen, by the spectator from the shores or breast of Winandermere, resting among the summits of the loftiest mountains, some of which will perhaps be half or wholly hidden by clouds, or by the blaze of light which the orb diffuses around it; and the surface of the lake will reflect before the eye correspondent colours through every variety of beauty, and through all degrees of splendour. (POS2 174)

Wordsworth goes on to contrast this view with an equally detailed account of the view of the sunset from the vale of Keswick. He next notes, "Of course, there is as marked a difference between the *noontide* appearance of the two opposite vales" (POS2 174, his emphasis). He accordingly concludes the passage with a description of this contrast.

As this passage suggests, Wordsworth's Guide is not only attentive to differences of season (which in fact the Guide, like any good travel book, is) but also to differences in time of day. A typical section contains practical, but also overwhelmingly detailed, advice:

> A stranger to a mountainous country may not be aware that his walk in the early morning ought to be taken on the eastern side of the vale, otherwise he will lose the morning light, first touching the tops and thence creeping down the sides of the opposite hills, as the sun ascends, or he may go to some central eminence, commanding both the shadows from the eastern, and the lights upon the western mountains. But, if the horizon line in the east be low, the western side may be taken for the sake of the reflections, upon the water, of light from the rising sun. In the evening, for like reasons, the contrary course should be taken. (POS2 230)

In addition to providing cautions about time of day, Wordsworth also promotes an understanding of the proper timing or order of successive views. He provides general advice on "the most favourable approach[es]" available to travelers coming to the District from various locations (POS2 260). More specifically, though, he often speaks of "the order in which objects are best seen" in certain areas (POS2 229). In one passage, he explains his theory behind the proper way to approach a lake:

> A lake being composed of water flowing from higher grounds, and expanding itself till its receptacle is filled to the brim, -- it follows, that it will appear to most advantage when approached from its outlet, especially if the lake be in a mountainous country; for, by this way of approach, the traveler faces the grander features of the scene, and is gradually conducted to its most sublime recesses. Now, every one knows, that from amenity and beauty the transition to sublimity is easy and favourable; but the reverse is not so; for, after the faculties have been elevated, they are indisposed to humbler excitement. (POS2 229)

Having made this observation, though, Wordsworth adds a footnote in which he describes the specific locations where his rule does not apply. This type of cautious specificity is clearly important to the author, for he believes that subtle changes in a traveler's position and perspective make the difference between ordinary and sublime experiences. Accordingly, the Guide usually orients its descriptions around an individual viewer. It is important, he notes, that "wherever it is possible, these Lakes and Vallies should be approached from the foot; otherwise most things will come upon the Spectator to a great disadvantage" (POS2 260). He also explains that when a spectator approaches a certain scene in the proper manner, the area will "improve in appearance with every step" (POS2 260).

In his Guide, then, Wordsworth reveals his overriding concern with how, when, and where a traveler approaches a landscape. His account of a spectator's experience fixes on that man's footsteps, and he argues that subtle variables determine whether or not that spectator's movements lead to visual and spiritual rewards. As a result, Wordsworth's Guide contains even more "matter-of-fact" information than his poetry. Along with his interest in painting and gardening, however, the Guide shows that his concern with visual dynamics amounts to more than a quirky habit. Moreover, his experiences in the landscape arts suggest that factual details of time and space in his poetry are hardly incidental ones. For Wordsworth, these circumstances are crucial.

The Disappearing/Appearing Line

James Heffernan's The Re-creation of Landscape provides one of the best studies of the connections between the visual arts and Wordsworth's poetry. Heffernan's study, which compares the work of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner, argues that Romantic-era gardening, painting, and poetry reflect enough similarities that one can describe them as being "triangulated" during this period (3). Heffernan establishes that Romantic poets and painters alike sought to demonstrate the subjective, "half-creating" power of the artist. Accordingly, their works often present landscapes that are "not so much seen as seen through" by the artist (23). Heffernan further explains that these artists worked to show how their interpretations of landscape allowed them to transcend the immediate scene.

Heffernan's analysis of Wordsworth's poetry draws on the poet's self-proclaimed interest in geometry. He argues that the poet's consciousness of geometrical relationships provides Wordsworth with a means of achieving his ever-present goal, which is to represent his intimations of eternity. Heffernan's study cites two specific ways in which Wordsworth manipulates landscape to create a "geometry of the infinite" (170). The first

of these involves the mere presence of geometrical forms and patterns in Wordsworth's poetic scenes. According to Wordsworth's own account in Book Six of The Prelude, he was drawn to the study of geometry because geometrical shapes provide tangible, visual symbols of transcendent principles. He explains that he liked to "meditate" on the "pure / Proportions and relations" of geometry, and he drew from them "a still sense / Of permanent and universal sway. . . ." In fact, geometry provided a mental image, "which -- out of space and time, / Nor touched by welterings of human passion -- is, / And hath the name of, God" (vi.144-45, 154-57). Heffernan therefore argues that Wordsworth presents landscapes made up of stark geometrical forms in order to "elicit from the fleeting or fragmentary shapes of the natural world a vision of transcendent permanence" (181). Heffernan cites a powerful description in a draft of The Prelude of an "immovable" and "colossal" rainbow as a an example of the poet's interest in natural forms (183). Presumably, a more memorable example of this emphasis on shape appears in the boat scene in Book One of The Prelude, where the angular lines of the horizon and the uprising cliff impress "huge and mighty forms" on the boy's mind (i.424).[9]

A more complex effect of Wordsworth's geometrical awareness involves his frequent creation of visual boundaries within his scenes. Heffernan writes, "The geometry of the infinite begins on the boundaries of the finite. . . . Wordsworth knew only too well that in order to create [a] feeling of limitlessness, the poet had to establish -- implicitly or explicitly -- the limits he was crossing" (171-72). In short, Wordsworth's awareness of boundaries makes him conscious of escaping from them. The poet expresses this idea in Book Twelve of The Prelude when he describes how he viewed roads as a child:

> I love a public road: few sights there are
>
> That please me more -- such an object hath had power

[9] For a more thorough study of the function of geometry in Wordsworth's poetry, see Flemming Olsen's "Geometry and 'Forms' in Wordsworth's Prelude."

O'er my imagination since the dawn

Of childhood, when its disappearing line

Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep

Beyond the limits which my feet had trod

Was like a guide unto eternity,

At least to things unknown and without bound. (xii.145-52)

For a good example of a Wordsworthian crossing of this type of boundary, one can once again consider the boat scene in The Prelude. When describing his movement in the boat, the poet emphasizes his inability to see beyond the "horizon" in order to enhance the sudden, climactic appearance of the huge cliff beyond. Heffernan writes, "Towering between him and the stars, the cliff appears to cross the line between earth and sky, animate and inanimate, nature and supernature. The line is crossed, however, only after it is has been decisively drawn" (172).

This comment, like Heffernan's study as a whole, seems accurate and enlightening. Also, because his analysis recognizes Wordsworth's ability to represent abstract themes within the scenes themselves, Heffernan's study is particularly productive. However, Heffernan at times appears unable to follow through on many of the implied ideas within his commentary, for his chief interest is in comparing poetic scenes with painted ones. As a result, his study de-emphasizes the fact that poetic scenes -- especially Wordsworth's -- arise through a narrative process, while painted scenes are necessarily static and instantaneous. For example, Heffernan shrewdly observes that a Romantic artist's interest in geometry and visual dynamics primarily works to emphasize "the observer's relation to the world by the angle from which he sees it" (192). He also rightly acknowledges the emphasis on subjectivity that accompanies this interest: "geometry serves to express at once the subjectivity and the power of the individual consciousness" (192). Due to the interdisciplinary nature of his study, though, Heffernan can only emphasize momentary

and entirely visual representations of this subjectivity, and he disregards the sequential nature of narrative scenes. However, Wordsworth's emphasis on the process within his scenes is crucial, for it creates a temporal framework against which the poet's movements may be measured. In other words, he depends on the unique ability of narrative to create a sense of exact timing. In so doing, Wordsworth manages to show how the external world is perfectly "fitted" to his eyes.

A fine example of this is the discharged soldier scene in Book Four of The Prelude. Although the poet does not explicitly portray his encounter with the soldier as a "spot of time," Raymond Havens notes that one can properly classify the event as such. According to Havens, this scene, like the "spots of time" proper, provides another example of those "visitings of imaginative power" which show "the mind is lord and master" (xi.252, 271; Havens v. 2 p. 368). However, the soldier scene also shares with those "spots" a bit of mystery regarding the exact meaning and significance of the event. The occasion itself appears to be an unremarkable one. Wordsworth explains that while walking alone one evening during a summer vacation from his university days, he rounded a bend to find a weak, "meagre" soldier who was working his way home after a recent discharge (iv.408). After briefly speaking with the man, Wordsworth helped him secure lodgings through the hospitality of a local cottager. This gesture marks the conclusion of the story, and here Book Four ends. Oddly, though, the poet offers no summary of how this encounter displayed or enhanced his imaginative powers. Wordsworth seems to think that the event speaks for itself.

With this in mind, it is enlightening to analyze the manner in which Wordsworth relates such a simple experience. In doing so, one sees that the poet carefully monitors the visual elements of his scene. First, though, one finds Wordsworth emphasizing that the episode began in solitude. His introduction to the story includes the following:

A favorite pleasure hath it been with me

From time of earliest youth to walk alone
Along the public way, when, for the night
Deserted, in its silence it assumes
A character of deeper quietness
Than pathless solitudes. (iv.363-68)

These few lines are remarkably efficient. Primarily, they set the scene of the poet's solitary walk down a road and underscore the silent loneliness within this setting. Meanwhile, the passage establishes the poet's general love of walking and also offers a comment on how the public nature of the road emphasizes (by contrast) his sense of solitude. Finally, the lines look toward the poet's statement (in Book Twelve) that he finds in public roads a conduit to "infinity."

Having introduced his solitary journey, Wordsworth next mentions the views that appeared along the way. As with the other "spots of time," he prefaces his encounter with an account of the movements that led up to it:

I slowly mounted up a steep ascent
Where the road's wat'ry surface, to the ridge
Of that sharp rising, glittered in the moon. . . .
    On I went
Tranquil, receiving in my own despite
Amusement, as I slowly passed along,
From such near objects as from time to time
Perforce intruded on the listless sense. . . . (iv.370-72, 375-79)

In typical fashion, Wordsworth here slights the influence of his eyes -- he says he enjoyed the sights in spite of himself -- even as he describes the moonlit views he encountered. In a similar manner, he continues to relate his impressions of his evening walk as he progressed, but he also notes that he drifted away from his visual sensibility. He allowed

his thoughts to roam, and in this pleasant setting he reached a "happy state" which catalyzed his imagination (iv.392). Over the course of several lines, he suggests that his perception drifted toward a gazing recognition of visionary insights. Suddenly, though, the passage reverts to a consciousness of the bodily eye and a startling revelation:

> While thus I wandered, step by step led on
> It chanced a sudden turning of the road
> Presented to my view an uncouth shape,
> So near that, slipping back into the shade
> Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
> Myself unseen. (iv. 400-05)

From here, the poet goes on to describe his interaction with the soldier.

In his brief discussion of this entire episode, Havens acknowledges the curious fact that the poet dedicates so many lines (243 in the 1805 version) to describing "an incident apparently so trivial" (v. 2 p. 369). Similarly, one might wonder why the above-quoted passage describing the revelation of the soldier requires more than 40 prefatory lines. However, when one reflects on the fact that most of those lines describe Wordsworth's physical approach toward this point of revelation, the reasoning behind the poet's method becomes more clear. In his narrative, Wordsworth emphasizes two key aspects of this experience, and these aspects come into focus with the "sudden turning of the road." The first is the abrupt nature of the appearance of the soldier. Second, the lengthy prefatory passage makes it clear that this scene was utterly oriented around the eyes (and feet) of Wordsworth himself. The fact that he remained "unseen" in the shade as he viewed the soldier is crucial, for it underscores the idea that there is only one visual consciousness in this event.

As the narrative continues, Wordsworth repeatedly describes how things appeared to his eyes. When he mentions that the soldier picked up his walking stick, the poet oddly

comments that it was "By me yet unobserved." The poet also explains that there was a nearby village which could provide lodgings for the traveler. In a way, though, the village seems to have existed only because Wordsworth could see it:

> In a glen
> Hard by, a village stood, whose roofs and doors
> Were visible among the scattered trees,
> Scarce distant from the spot an arrow's flight. (iv.425-28)

Similarly, the rest of the episode refers to the poet's views as he "turned and looked," and he continues to describe the event as it "appeared to" Wordsworth (iv.450, 465).

When marking the soldier's position by the roadside, Wordsworth notes that "A milestone propped him" (iv.412). This detail provides an apt symbol of the episode itself, for the story provides a much needed benchmark within the vague history of Wordsworth's development. Again, though, the significance of this scene remains somewhat unclear. Part of its power results from the unexpected and mysterious presence of the soldier; like the leech-gatherer, he seemed "sent from another world" to teach Wordsworth. In a way, though, the passage centers on the revelation of the scene to Wordsworth's eyes as much as it does on the soldier himself. Thus, in the midst of the general mystery that shrouds the event, Wordsworth's narrative makes one thing clear: though his mind may have given the episode an added significance, the episode originated in the poet's motion, and was completely measured by his sight and footsteps. The encounter is significant only because and insofar as it "appeared to me."

Throughout The Prelude, one finds a similar emphasis on a viewer-centered representation of landscape. Wordsworth mainly demonstrates the subjectivity of his physical perspective by creating and crossing visual thresholds. The two most famous of these appear in the first and last books of the work. As mentioned earlier, the boat scene in Book One monitors his view of the horizon in order to emphasize the abrupt appearance of

the jagged, uprising cliff. In Book Thirteen, Wordsworth notes how each "step" in his ascent of Mount Snowdon altered the view. Upon a final step, "instantly a light upon the turf / Fell like a flash," and he found he had emerged above the cloud line (xiii.36-40). From this sudden vantage point, the poet was able to view the "huge sea" of mist below him, and the description of this view introduces the epic's climactic commentary on the imagination (xiii.37-44).

However, both of those scenes are so profound and symbolic that they obscure the fact that Wordsworth creates these visual moments in many other scenes as well. For example, several books of The Prelude begin with an account of the poet's motion and the corresponding revelations that met his eyes. Consider the opening of Book Three, which describes his first arrival at Cambridge:

> It was a dreary morning when the chaise
> Rolled over the flat plains of Huntingdon
> And through the open windows *first I saw*
> The long-backed chapel of King's College rear
> His pinnacles above the dusky groves. (iii.1-5, emphasis added)

Stendhal compared the novel to a mirror moving down a road; for Wordsworth, poetry is viewing the road through a moving, empty frame held at arms' length. With that frame, Wordsworth is able to view the world directly but in an utterly self-centered way. Consider also the visual threshold in the opening of Book Four, which describes the poet's return home for summer vacation:

> A pleasant sight it was when, having clomb
> The heights of Kendal, and that dreary moor
> Was crossed, at length as from a rampart's edge
> I overlooked the bed of Windermere. (iv.1-4)

As Heffernan has shown, Wordsworth sometimes establishes boundaries as a means of provoking a consciousness of "crossing" through the external realm into some sort of metaphysical unknown. Often, however, boundary crossing functions in a simpler but equally important manner. By measuring his environment according to the ranges of his sight and motion, Wordsworth orients nature around himself as he simultaneously demonstrates his harmonious movements within it.

As one might expect, The Excursion, which was intended to present the themes of The Recluse in a more dramatic and recognizable way, shows an even greater attentiveness to dynamics of sight and timing. In a revealing manner, the work opens with a description of how the narrator "paced along" and observed the landscape (i.25). The opening also establishes the real, physical presence of the environment in a manner reminiscent of the Guide to the Lakes. The very first line makes a note of the sun's position, and the passage that follows compares the corresponding, shadowy vagueness of the view to the south to the preferable, "determined and unmoved" view of the landscape to the north (i.1-17). Plot-wise, the beginning of the book functions to introduce the characters of the narrator (or "The Author") and the Wanderer. It also establishes the setting of an abandoned, ruined cottage, which appears at the center of the Wanderer's subsequent tale. In typical Wordsworthian fashion, the cottage and the Wanderer appear in the story just as they appeared to the Author's eyes:

> Upon that open moorland stood a grove. . . .
> Thither I came, and there, amid the gloom
> Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms,
> Appeared a roofless Hut. . . .
> I looked round,
> And to my wish and hope espied
> The Friend I sought. . . . (i.26-32)

In a gesture that is reminiscent of the discharged soldier episode, the narrator explains that he proceeded to observe the Wanderer from a hidden position. The poet also follows the pattern of the encounter with the soldier by describing things purely from the narrator-observer's perspective. The narrator makes a note of what he could see as well as what he could not see; he mentions, for example, that the face of the Wanderer initially "was hidden from my view" (i.44).

The rest of the book, and The Excursion as a whole, maintain the attention to detail that is present in the opening. Jonathan Wordsworth has observed that "The Ruined Cottage" (which was later incorporated into Book One of The Excursion) is "remarkable for the extent to which Wordsworth has visualized the movements and positions of his characters" (Music 143). Indeed, the work presents numerous, matter-of-fact asides about where characters were standing or how they were moving. The narrator frequently mentions that characters turned and looked in various directions, and he diligently relates their respective views.

As Book One proceeds, the narrative shifts to the Wanderer's story of Margaret, the former inhabitant of the now-dilapidated cottage. As he explains, Margaret, her two children, and her husband once lived in peaceful prosperity, but her husband eventually abandoned her by joining a troop of soldiers and leaving the country. When the traveling Wanderer checked in on her from time to time, he always discovered that she and her household had declined. During one of his last visits to the cottage, the Wanderer found a dismal environment, which the poem presents through a precise series of details:

> The sun was sinking in the west; and now
> I sate with sad impatience. From within
> Her solitary infant cried aloud. . . .
> From the bench I rose. . . .
> And, looking round me, now I first observed

The corner stones, on either side the porch
With dull red stains discoloured, and stuck o'er
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,
That fed upon the Common, thither came
Familiarly, and found a couching-place
Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell
From these tall elms; the cottage-clock struck eight;
I turned, and saw her distant a few steps. (i.734-750)

The description here is rhythmic and deliberate, and it works to define the two powerful views of the sullied threshold and Margaret's sudden appearance. Meanwhile, the passage underscores its particularistic sense of timing with temporal references to both the sun's position and the clock's chiming. Wordsworth has carefully measured out the elements of this scene.

Presumably, one motive for the inclusion of this type of time/space detail involves Wordsworth's aforementioned desire to quantify and solidify his plotlines. Fastidious accounts of characters' positions and views might strike some as matter-of-fact superfluities, but Wordsworth's narrative needs the structure that this information creates.[10] More importantly, by continuing to present his story through the eyes of his characters, the poet promotes the idea that these men are truly "fitted" to the external world. Of course, the Wanderer is not Wordsworth, and in that sense, the whole of The Excursion does not present a single, author-centered point of view. However, as Hazlitt observed, "The Recluse, the Pastor, and the Pedlar [i.e., the Wanderer] are three persons in one poet" (v. 4 p. 113). In other words, the Wanderer embodies some aspects of an ideal Wordsworthian character. The poet portrays the Wanderer as having a "sublime and

[10] On a related note, Jonathan Wordsworth observes that Wordsworth's use of detail enhances the story's verisimilitude, which in turn makes the reader more sympathetic toward the characters (Music 95).

comprehensive" being (i.234). The same section of the poem describes the Wanderer's imaginative perception of the natural environment, especially among the mountains:

> All things . . . 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*. (i.227-32, his emphasis)

Here Wordsworth venerates the ability to see infinity, and in The Excursion as a whole, he tries to show this idealized perception in action. Often, this amounts to more descriptions of how the characters "gazed" through settings and projected these positive sensations onto the landscape.[11] However, the story more fundamentally establishes this harmony between man and environment by defining the action according to a series of subjective perspectives.

Throughout his poetry, Wordsworth often acknowledges that one's impression and understanding of a given setting largely depend on one's physical point of view. In The Prelude, for example, he refers to the legend of two knights who approach a crossroads from opposite directions. In the center of the crossroads hangs a single shield; one of its sides is gold, and the other is silver. Wordsworth describes the knights as fighting "to the death to attest / The quality of metal" which they see (x.662-65). The moral, of course, is that perspective is everything. In The Excursion, the Pastor makes the same point with a more detailed example. He describes alternate views of a local churchyard:

> If from the sullen north
> Your walk conduct you hither, ere the sun
> Hath gained his noontide height, this churchyard, filled

[11] For examples of this type of "gazing" in The Excursion, see viii.533-40, ix.451-57, and ix.609-12.

With mounds transversely lying side by side

From east to west, before you will appear

An unillumined, blank, and dreary plain. . . .

If, however, you view the churchyard from the opposite side, the different angle of light will make all the difference:

Then will a vernal prospect greet your eye,

All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright,

Hopeful and cheerful: -- vanished is the pall

That overspread and chilled the sacred turf. . . . (v.532-37, 545-48, his emphasis)

In The Excursion, passages such as this mainly demonstrate that one can view life either optimistically or pessimistically. However, such an analogy also reveals Wordsworth's awareness that a faithful description of one's environment inevitably shows the individuality of that viewer's perspective. One can display the subjectivity of his consciousness by merely describing exactly how objects appear.

Once again, a key element within this technique involves precise timing. Wordsworth does not just relate what characters saw; rather, he monitors how objects came within their range of view. Almost every page of The Excursion describes a visual shift. The reader receives a continuous update of what "forth appeared in view," what "opened to my view," and what "glistened upon our sight." As a result, the reader gains a vivid spatial awareness of what was "kenned afar" or "to our ken appearing."[12] In the following passage, which describes the arrival of the Author and the Wanderer at the valley of the Solitary, Wordsworth characteristically emphasizes the suddenness of the visual revelation:

Savage region! which I paced

Dispirited: when all at once, behold!

[12] Respectively, the quotations in these two sentences come from ii.386, ii.831, ii.127, v.761, and ii.94.

Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale. . . . (ii.326-28)

Such punctuality makes it clear that these enlightened characters provide the measure of their world. As it turns out, even the movement of the sun is defined in a self-centered manner. Consider this odd description of an observer-specific sunset, as seen from a valley:

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached,
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,
He had become invisible. . . . (iv.1298-1301)

Generally, this viewer-centered representation of the environment creates an ideal situation for Wordsworth. It allows for a direct appreciation of the external world, but it also maintains a purely subjective pretext that ensures the integrity of this experience. In this way, Wordsworth is able to delight in the true splendors of the bodily eye while still subverting its potential dominance. Also, by crisply defining the moments in which the seen appears to the seer, this technique promotes a sense of harmony between man and his environment. Of course, this manner of narration does not overtly convey the idea that the poet is perceiving "intimations of immortality." It is therefore different from gazing perception, during which the raptured eye somehow recognizes a hazy, heavenly image. Like Coleridge, though, Wordsworth often suggests one can also achieve a Godly sense of the eternal by bridging the apparent separation between subject and object. As he explains in his essay on "The Sublime and the Beautiful," "infinity . . . is a modification of unity" (POS2 357). By creating visual and temporal links within his range of sight, Wordsworth makes this unity evident.

Panoramic Vision

On other occasions, Wordsworth creates scenes which allow him to assume a broad, fixed point of view from a high position. He is especially fond of mountaintops. The Prelude, for example, presents a number of vistas from various peaks. As mentioned earlier, the Mount Snowdon section of Book Thirteen emphasizes the motion and boundary-crossing of the poet's hike. After this, though, the passage also presents a memorable image of the view at the culmination of the ascent. As he looks from the peak at the cloudbanks and waters below, Wordsworth sees a "universal spectacle" in which he recognizes a symbol of "The soul, the imagination of the whole" (xiii.60, 65). Also, in Book Six, Wordsworth describes the Alpine peaks and the pleasing vistas that they provide (albeit to a lesser extent than Snowdon). His trip through the Alps was not an altogether inspiring one, for some of his expectations (especially regarding the view of Mont Blanc) surpassed the real views he encountered. However, he also says that "My heart leaped up when first I did look down" upon the valleys from high altitudes (vi.446).

The Prelude also manages to present grand prospects without the use of mountains. Generally, Wordsworth finds clever ways to enjoy panoramic vistas from real positions in space. Upon his first entrance into London, for example, the narrator sits on top of a carriage. From this vantage point, he is better able to view his chaotic surroundings in a single "moment" (viii.699). Occasionally, though, Wordsworth must use his poet's license to create the vista he desires. He does so to present another chaotic scene in London, specifically the activity of St. Bartholomew's fair:

> For once the Muse's help we will implore
> And she shall lodge us -- wafted on her wings
> Above the press and danger of the crowd --
> Upon some showman's platform. (vii.656-59)

The phrase "For once" is revealing here, for it accurately suggests that the poet can usually create such a view within the real action of his narrative. The reader even encounters a literal panorama in London, for at one point the poet mentions his visit to a painted model of the city. Wordsworth describes this tourist attraction with a slightly sardonic tone, but the model nevertheless draws attention to the poet's own panoramic inclinations. Near the end of The Prelude, he even compares the encompassing process of autobiography to the attainment of a bird's-eye view:

> Anon I rose
> As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
> Vast prospect of the world which I had been,
> And was. . . . (xiii.377-80)

In both literal and figurative passages, he shows his preference for viewing things from sweeping perspectives.

When presenting superior prospects, Wordsworth occasionally simply follows the pattern of eighteenth-century topographical poetry. "View from the Top of Black Comb," for example, conventionally describes the general grandness of this vista and then concludes with a patriotic reverie. As the poet look from Cumberland all the way to Scotland, he gains a sense of "Britain's calm felicity and power" (34). Nevertheless, even in this generic poetic process, Wordsworth reveals a more distinctive concern with the temporal dimensions of the scene. Though the conclusion of the poem celebrates British heritage, Wordsworth seems equally interested in the fact that the view promotes an awareness of the eternal "one Life": "The spectacle, how pure! -- Of Nature's works / In earth, and air, and earth-embracing sea, / A revelation *infinite* it seems" (30-32, emphasis added).

Overall, Wordsworth sometimes creates panoramic vistas as a means of promoting a simple, symbolic sense of his encompassing, visionary powers. On other occasions,

however, he reveals an interest in the way he can manipulate representations of sight and time while maintaining a fixed position. This ability, in turn, allows for settings that can demonstrate or reconcile the abstract themes of his poetry.

In order to understand this method, it is helpful to consider Book Eight of The Prelude. This book is generally regarded as one of the epic's more forgettable sections. J. H. Alexander, for example, observes that this book "has been much disparaged" and also offers his own disparagement: "Even for those who can follow Wordsworth into his metaphysical and apocalyptic speculations there are likely to be moments in this long book when the eyes feel heavy" (79). Jonathan Wordsworth's criticism is more succinct and more piercing: "Judged by Wordsworth's own frequently stated intentions, Eight is not a success" (Borders 282). Even in the midst of the book's failure, however, one can recognize Wordsworth's shrewd response to his self-induced predicament.

The major problem in Book Eight relates to the temporal tension described in the previous chapter. More than any other book, Book Eight exposes the poet's conflicted goal of capturing his timeless character through the presentation of punctual episodes. The subtitle of the book establishes its subject: "Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind." As the word "leading" suggests, and as Wordsworth cautiously explains throughout the book, this respect for humanity arose imperceptibly. However, Wordsworth adheres to the dramatic methodology of the rest of The Prelude and tries to relate stories that capture this development. As a result, a reader of Book Eight encounters a seemingly haphazard presentation of several unremarkable scenes from the poet's life. For example, in a desperate grasp for a plotline, the poet reverts to telling an old shepherd's story which he had heard from Ann Tyson.[13] The story focuses on a shepherd's search for a lost sheep. Ironically enough, the shepherd finds the straggler trapped on an island in the middle of a flooding brook.

[13] Wordsworth wisely removed this story from later drafts of The Prelude.

The sheep drowns; the fate of Book Eight is not much better. One finds tortured qualifications throughout the book. His stated purpose is clear: "My present theme / Is to retrace the way that led me on / Through Nature to the love of human-kind" (viii.586-88). However, other statements in the book suggest that all types of knowledge -- including a love of man -- evolve mysteriously: "And so we all of us in some degree / Are led to knowledge, whencesoever led, / And howsoever . . ." (viii.441-43). "Whencesoever," "howsoever," "some degree": these are hardly precise wordings. Nevertheless, the book counters this vagueness with images of quantity. Wordsworth refers to the "gradations" of his maturation, and he suggests he is going to measure his development with "a scale of love" and an "index of delight" (viii.862, 868, 415).

Wordsworth hedges the scenes themselves in a similar manner. He notes that his childhood interaction with shepherds helped to promote his reverence for man; accordingly, he describes a couple of particular encounters with shepherds to show their impact on his mind. However, he qualifies the singularity of those episodes by explaining that he did not recognize their influence at the time. Similarly, he refers to the epiphanic moment in his life when he recognized that he had gradually acquired a love of humanity: "There came a time of greater dignity, / Which had been gradually prepared, and now / Rushed in as if on wings . . ." (viii.624-26). Thus, one again encounters the Augustinian paradox of self-analysis in The Prelude. Wordsworth wishes to present his development as both a linear series of individual events and a circular, holistic entity. This dual approach seems to cause unnecessary complications in Book Eight as well as in the rest of The Prelude. Nevertheless, the self-conscious, explicit nature of this struggle shows that Wordsworth wishes to preserve both types of self-representation.

Through a clever choice of settings, Wordsworth does find a means of balancing these different portrayals of experience. The opening scene of the book provides the best example. The book begins with a description of Grasmere Fair, which Wordsworth views

from the 3,000 foot pinnacle of Helvellyn. At the fair is "a little family of men -- / Twice twenty -- with their children and their wives" (viii.7-8). Such a scene is appropriate for the introduction, since the book as a whole works to show Wordsworth's love for people. Importantly, from this vantage point, Wordsworth is able to describe the action of the scene in two different ways. At Grasmere, the villagers are full of motion and activity, and they reflect a linear temporal scheme. The cattle are "driven down," farmers bargain over the sheep, and a "sweet lass of the valley" walks among them selling fruit (viii.19-22, 37-43). Also, the individuals at the fair, including the children, the "sweet lass," her father, a lame man, and an "aged woman" represent life in all of its stages. Wordsworth uses about 36 lines to describe these characters -- or "punctual visitant[s]" -- and he delights in the variety of their specific activities (viii.10-46).

In the next stanza, though, Wordsworth reassesses the view. He now sees the fair within the surrounding, panoramic vista. Rather than recognizing specific individuals, he returns to his initial impression of the group as a "crowd" (viii.6). He writes:

> Immense
> Is the recess, the circumambient world
> Magnificent, by which they are embraced.
> They move about upon the soft green field;
> How little they, they and their doings seem. . . . (viii.47-51)

Thus, Wordsworth is able literally to look at his beloved companions in two different ways. He first presents the scene as a series of dynamic, individual elements, but he next describes his impression of the group within the "circumambient" whole. Although this clever opening does not eliminate the rest of the book's tensions, it does provide a real situation that shows how alternate perspectives can be valid.

In fact, a section of Wordsworth's prose writings makes it clear that he was conscious of this technique. In the introduction to his Guide to the Lakes, the poet describes another panoramic model, and he focuses on the two possible ways of viewing it:

> At Lucerne, in Switzerland, is shewn a Model of the Alpine country which encompasses the Lake of the four Cantons. The spectator ascends a little platform, and sees mountains, lakes, glaciers, rivers, woods, waterfalls, and vallies, with their cottages, and every other object contained in them, lying at his feet. . . . It may be easily conceived that this exhibition affords an exquisite delight to the imagination, tempting it to wander at will from valley to valley, from mountain to mountain, through the deepest recesses of the Alps. But it supplies also a more substantial pleasure: for the sublime and beautiful region, with all its hidden treasures, and their bearings and relations to each other, is thereby comprehended and understood at once. (POS2 170)

Wordsworth here displays his awareness that a single point of view from a high position makes two types of views possible. From such a vantage point, one can focus on the parts, or one can form a complete, instantaneous impression of the whole.

In this passage, Wordsworth indirectly explains the logic of the introduction to Book Eight, in which he strives to validate both types of analysis. The narrative demands of The Prelude force Wordsworth to provide particularistic details and scenes throughout the work, yet he maintains that his life is best understood as a holistic, indivisible entity. Accordingly, some passages, such as the introduction to Book Eight, create settings that make these contradictory representations of experience compatible. However, Wordsworth repeatedly argues that the superior impression is the holistic one. As he says in his description of the model, the all-encompassing view provides "a more substantial pleasure." This is true for assessing one's life as well for viewing real landscapes.

Wordsworth especially makes this clear in his essay on "The Sublime and the Beautiful," which provides theories on selecting and viewing sublime natural scenes. There, Wordsworth writes, "For whatever suspends the comparing power of the mind and possesses it with a feeling or image of intense unity, without a conscious contemplation of parts, has produced that state of mind which is the consummation of the sublime" (POS2 353-54). Accordingly, most of his poetry's mountaintop vistas display a two-step process in which the imagination collects individual elements and presents them as a more pleasing totality.

In The Excursion, for example, Wordsworth is not hindered by the paradoxes of autobiographical analysis.[14] Rather, his task is to make the work's philosophical theme -- his belief in the Godly, unifying, "active Principle" of the universe -- manifest in the natural environment (i.3). As a result, Wordsworth chooses settings which help to demonstrate an enlightened perception in action. As described earlier, The Excursion often emphasizes the synchronization between landscape and observer by deliberately creating and crossing distinct visual boundaries. However, Wordsworth also makes use of high, stationary vantage points to promote the work's theme.

The climactic demonstration of gifted perception appears in the work's final book, which culminates in a description of a panoramic vista. In the concluding section, the narrator explains that the characters from the story joined in a walk up a hillside. Once they reached the top, they began to admire individual parts of the valley below. Wordsworth explains that each man was "over anxious to make known / His own discoveries," and each directed the attention of the others "to favourite points" (ix.584-86). However, the narrator next says that these diverse, individual viewpoints suddenly coalesced into a single vision,

[14] Narrative demands do constrict The Excursion in the sense that one again finds matter-of-fact plot and time references mingling with prolonged philosophical arguments. In his review of the work, Hazlitt recognized the potential for bathos that results from this detail: "He has chosen to encumber himself with a load of narrative and description, which sometimes hinders the progress of the general reasoning . . ." (v. 4 p. 113).

which was recognized by the group as a whole: "That rapturous moment never shall I forget / When these particular interests were effaced / From every mind" (ix.587-89).

Remarkably, this shift in perspective corresponded with the transition of sunset. Wordsworth next explains that the sun had "attained his western bound," and this resulted in a marked shift in the landscape's lighting. Rays of light were "now suddenly diverging from the orb," and "shot" throughout the entire land and sky. At this transitional moment, the whole landscape appeared "vivid as fire" (ix.592-600). Wordsworth's description of the clouds at this sublime moment is a powerful one:

> Innumerable multitude of forms
> Scattered through half the circle of the sky;
> And giving back, and shedding each on each,
> With prodigal communion, the bright hues
> Which from the unapparent fount of glory
> They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
> That which the heavens displayed, the liquid deep
> Repeated; but with unity sublime! (ix.601-608)

The language here is reverent, and it emphasizes the holiness ("glory," "heavens") and the continuous nature ("ceased not," "repeated") of the scene. Upon seeing this view, the Pastor expressed praise for the "Eternal Spirit! universal God," for he and the others had recognized the "active Principle" of the cosmos (ix.614).

Just before this, however, the passage describes how the characters "gazed" at the view, which was "diffused / Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space" (ix.609-11). Wordsworth clearly wishes to ensure that the reader recognizes the sublimity of this occasion, and he therefore supplements the scene with a familiar description of looking beyond the landscape as a means of seeing heaven itself. However, the fact that Wordsworth uses this secondary technique should not prevent one from recognizing the

complexity of the scene itself. Like many Wordsworthian scenes, it contains an inherent paradox, for it presents "that rapturous *moment*" in which the characters perceived the eternal. Yet this paradox is not a superficial one, for the poet finds both precedent and cause for this type of display in the process of the sun itself. As shown earlier, both Coleridge and Wordsworth were sensitive to the temporal complexity of a sunset. In this case, the poet shows how the particular instant of its setting triggered an awareness of the general duration of its course.

In order to better understand this method, it is helpful to consider an intriguing "Lucy" poem, "Strange fits of passion have I known." This short, strange poem relates the narrator's memory of visiting his beloved Lucy one evening. The poem focuses on the narrator's travelling by horseback, and it mainly describes the motion of the horse and the appearance of the "bright moon" (24). After retracing this journey in several stanzas, the poem abruptly ends by describing the rider's sudden fears. He had just seen the moon drop behind Lucy's cottage, and this event inexplicably startled him: "'O mercy!' to myself I cried, / 'If Lucy should be dead!" (27-28).

This seems like an irrational and confusing reaction. As a result, Wordsworth encourages the reader to analyze the details of this brief poem in order to understand how this fearful reaction arose. As Geoffrey Durrant has shown, time plays an important role in the narrator's response as well as in the poem as a whole. In fact, the description of the narrator's trip establishes a contrast between two representations of time's progress. The first of these portrays time as a series of successive moments. Durrant notes that the narrator's journey "is marked out in definite stages, from the 'lea' to the 'orchard plot' to the 'hill'; and as he rides on, the horse's 'quickening pace' marks the passage of time" (12). Specifically, the poem states, "My horse moved on; hoof after hoof / He raised, and never stopped" (21-22). In so doing, the poem emphasizes the discrete movements of the pacing horse. Meanwhile, though, the poem places an equal emphasis on its description of

the moon's appearance. The poem twice notes that the narrator had "fixed" his eyes on the moon; he apparently stared at it continuously as his horse plodded along (9-10, 19-20). According to Durrant, this continuous view, as well as the nature of the moon itself, represent a second conception of time: "The undivided curve that the moon describes in its descent through space belongs to duration rather than clock-time" (13).[15] Importantly, though, the narrator cannot recognize the continuity the moon represents until it disappears at a precise moment: "The moon is sinking all the time, but the Lover is not conscious of its inevitable setting until suddenly it has gone" (13). Furthermore, this disappearance precipitates the narrator's fears since it suddenly makes him realize that we continuously approach death. The recognition of flowing duration therefore coincides with an insight into the process of life. Paradoxically, though, one only recognizes duration through its apparent interruption.

In this "Lucy" poem, the truthful insight is a disturbing one. In the climax of The Excursion, however, the recognition of time's flow enhances the characters' appreciation of the "active Principle." With his panoramic vista, Wordsworth is able to show how one can reassess the individual elements of the landscape and consider them as a harmonious, perpetual whole. Also, he makes use of the sunset to show how a visual instant can alter one's interpretation of natural processes. One best recognizes the sun's flowing movement at the moment of its setting; similarly, one can achieve a sense of boundless time (and perhaps the eternal) in a temporal moment. Thus the scene is not paradoxical in a superficial way. Rather, it mimics the very logic of nature.

Here Coleridge might have objected, for after extended rumination on the subject of time, he concluded that the conception of duration is not superior to the conception of succession. Rather, he held that duration and succession are equal and opposite "modifications" of the human interpretation of eternity. By contrast, Wordsworth in this

[15] One will recall that Coleridge also uses the moon as a symbol of duration on many occasions.

regard maintains a temporal hierarchy in which duration appears very much like infinity. As he desires to "suspend the comparing power of the mind" and only recognize unity among things, so he strives to blend moments of time into a holistic flow. Again, though, Wordsworth's poetic approach, unlike that of Coleridge, does not stem from a systematic philosophy. Rather, he operates with the twofold concern of creating a sense of harmonious immortality while still grounding his narratives in real, localized settings.

Conclusion

Wordsworth's treatment of time is not hierarchical in the sense that he disparages clock time or the momentary. His narratives need the structure that temporal and spatial details provide. Furthermore, he finds in the momentary a means of introducing his intimations of immortality. At times, he does so in a relatively superficial manner. He describes how his memory absorbed and continuously reshapes a particular occasion, or he portrays himself as gazing through a scene to recognize its greater, lasting significance.

Sometimes, though, the poet manipulates the relationship between sight and time to demonstrate the integrity of his paradoxical gestures. In a way, both sight and time oppose Wordsworth's goals. The views that greet the bodily eye threaten to make him a slave to external objects, and the inclusion of localizing, temporal details places a tether on his metaphysical ascension. In each of these obstacles, though, the poet finds a means of circumventing the other. By taking visual inventories from their range of sight according to exact moments in time, his narrator-observers define the landscape in an utterly self-centered way. Also, by showing that one can find visual demonstrations of two different conceptions of time within the same setting, Wordsworth supports the idea of an enduring "spot of time."

In a way, it is inappropriate to describe these techniques as simple ones. Wordsworth's narrative methods reflect a lifelong study of perspective dynamics, and they

show how an impression of a scene varies according to subtleties of motion, timing, and position. In another sense, though, Wordsworth answers the challenge of capturing his ideas in "plain pictures," for he shows that knowing is a matter of looking and seeing.

Epilogue

At the end of The Prelude, Wordsworth announces the mission that he and Coleridge will pursue: "What we have loved, / Others will love, and we may teach them how" (xiii.444-45). Generally speaking, one can say that these poets were successful in this effort. One finds the influence of their Romanticism (especially their love of nature) in works by such diverse writers as Dickens, Emerson, Yeats, and Millay. Wordsworth and Coleridge survive as household names, and Wordsworth, at least, still ranks in surveys as one of the most popular of all poets. With regard to their complex treatments of time and perspective, however, these teachers seem to have found fewer pupils. Nevertheless, these particular aspects of their lessons are still instructive.

This study has shown that both Coleridge and Wordsworth recognized that the representation of time played a crucial role in their poetic experiments. They realized the manipulation of time was essential in creating a sense of harmony between the poet and his environment, and they showed that time was best addressed in visual terms. One sees that these men grappled with complex, abstract themes by immersing their narrative personae in poetic settings which are rich in visual and temporal data.

To be sure, subsequent authors adopted these poets' clever techniques. For example, Keats's poetry, which best shows the connections between second- and first-generation English Romanticism, often reveals an interest in perspective dynamics. As mentioned earlier, parts of "The Fall of Hyperion" suggest that Keats borrowed from the technique of the "Ancient Mariner," which represents the horrors of endless time by presenting a succession of measured views. In other, more pleasant sections of the poem, however, Keats explores the positive capabilities of his ken. In one of the poem's insightful moments, Keats's narrative persona achieves a Godly point of view:

Whereon there grew

> A power within me of enormous ken
> To see as a God sees, and take the depth
> Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
> Can size and shape pervade. (302-06)

Like Coleridge and Wordsworth, Keats recognized the close connection between the faculties of the bodily eye and the mind's eye. His poetry also reveals a similar interest in the power of sudden, visual revelations. For example, he captures the profundity of his encounter with Chapman's Homer with an emphasis on viewing. Keats does not speak of reading, but rather of "first looking" at the volume, and he relates the experience through a series of similes involving striking visions. There is a familiar sense of self-centered but harmonious interaction with the environment in these comparisons; he says, for example, that during his encounter he "felt like some watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken" (9-10).

One can also look beyond Romantic poetry to find a similar attentiveness to views and timing. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein refers to the "Ancient Mariner" on several occasions. As a result, there is little doubt as to the inspiration for the monster's gothic account of the setting of the moon as he burned the DeLaceys' cottage:

> I lighted the dry branch of a tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb at length was hid, and I waved my brand; it sank, and, with a loud scream, I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes. . . . (102-03)

This passage, like many in the works of Coleridge and Wordsworth, suggests that the transient motions of the moon (or the sun) are somehow significant. Depending on the artist's treatment of these vivid occasions, they can be exhilarating (as in "A Sunset" and The Excursion), or they can be horrifying (as in "The Ancient Mariner" or "Strange fits of

passion have I known"). What is clear is that the mind thrives on crisp, visual displays of time's activity, for they promote a greater depth of feeling.

One can even follow the moon across the sea and the century to arrive at the poetry of Robert Frost. In "The Death of the Hired Man," for example, the abrupt intersection of the moon and a cloud grimly corresponds with the titular event. Frost, of course, is one of the more Romantic Modern poets. He inherited, among other things, Coleridge's interest in the moon, Keats's fondness for star-gazing, and Wordsworth's compassion for the poor and the elderly. In addition to his general indebtedness to Romantic themes, Frost reveals some similarities in narrative technique. In "The Tuft of Flowers," his encounter with the tuft follows Wordsworth's pattern of creating both a literal and a figurative "spot of time." Furthermore, the theme of the poem centers on a spiritual connection between the narrator, the absent mower, and the landscape. While conveying this theme, Frost provides yet another example of the role of viewer-centered revelations in establishing a sense of unity. He also presents a scene that is made up of particular elements, including a tuft of flowers, an "isle" of trees, and a solitary butterfly (5). One wonders if the following passage would have been written had it not been for the groundbreaking efforts of Coleridge and Wordsworth:

> And once I marked his [the butterfly's] flight go round and round
> As where some flower lay withering on the ground.
> And then he flew as far as eye could see,
> And then on tremulous wing came back to me.
> I thought of questions that have no reply,
> And would have turned the grass to dry;
> But he turned first, and led my eye to look
> At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook. . . . (15-22)

In this manner, Frost explains, he and the butterfly "lit upon" a "message from the dawn" (31-32). Such messages, it seems, arise during momentary visual encounters. In fact, Frost almost parodies this idea in a poem titled "An Encounter." There, Frost personifies a tree he has suddenly seen in order to emphasize that he has "met" it. Overall, these types of correlations suggest that a consideration of Frost's treatment of views and moments would provide a better means of understanding his latter-day Romanticism.

Coleridge's and Wordsworth's treatments of time and vision, then, seem to have influenced later literature. However, it does not appear that their specific methods created a powerful literary momentum. In this particular regard, the two men seem to have failed at their mission of teaching many others how to think and feel. Part of the problem here lies in the poets' own inconsistencies. Many studies have shown, and this study further suggests, that both poets frequently wavered and waffled in their aesthetical and philosophical opinions. After the passage from The Prelude quoted above, for example, Wordsworth goes on to explain that "the mind of man" is "A thousand times more beautiful than the earth / On which he dwells . . ." (xiii.446-48). In a way, this is a happy conclusion for Wordsworth, but such a claim also subverts his great accomplishments in revealing the interactive and half-creative roles that both man and nature play in finding "a lasting inspiration" (xiii.443). Coleridge fluctuated in his beliefs to a much greater extent. As a result of his endless mental wanderings, his opium addiction, and his generally irresolute personality, he never fulfilled his lifelong goal of completing the *magnum opus* which would define the unifying principle that orchestrates the universe. It is possible that the mixed results of these poets' ambitious pursuits prevented subsequent writers from identifying some of the instances of genius in their methods.

Perhaps a greater hindrance to their legacy involves the general, literary trend in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries toward themes of pessimism and alienation. In second-generation Romantic poetry, one finds all of the problems and complications of earlier

Romanticism, but less of its accompanying hope for pleasant resolutions. In "When we two parted," for example, Byron's memory fixes on the moment when he and his lover split. In Wordsworthian fashion, this brief poem dexterously demonstrates the role of this "spot of time" throughout the narrator's past, present, and future. However, the reader learns that the effect of this memory is agonizing, and the particularity of that episode only accentuates its bitterness. Beginning with later Romantic literature, more and more characters appear to be like Frankenstein's monster: they are alienated from all other people and surroundings, yet they find no solace in their own, morbid thoughts.

When one considers the literature that came after them, the works of Coleridge and Wordsworth assist in identifying some crucial components of this evolution towards Modernity. It has been shown that Coleridge and Wordsworth created harmony by measuring an observer's experiences according to precise visual and temporal frameworks. By contrast, many later authors do not treat time as a dramatic, dynamic process, but rather as a burdensome presence. Also, in these later works, visual data is less often related with respect to the eyes of a single, absolute observer. One finds subtle but important signs of this development in later Romantic poems such as "Ozymandias." In that work, Percy Shelley provides a vivid image of Ozymandias' visage, but one should note that the poem's narrator has not actually seen the statue. He has only heard of this sight from an anonymous traveler from a distant land. In fact, "Ozymandias" offers little contextual information. The poem presents no scene in which someone encounters the statue at a particular time, and the statue does not have a punctual presence. Rather, it has always decayed imperceptibly in the sand, and it will always continue to do so.

Of course, "Ozymandias" is as much about time as it is about a despotic king, and one should not make the mistake of saying that time became less important as literature evolved. The subject of time is present throughout Victorian and Modern literature; but generally the difference in this later literature is that time no longer happens -- at least not in

an immediate sense. Instead, time only oppresses. Shelley, in fact, appears to have been an important figure in this transition. In spite of their distinctive obsession with the dynamics of time, the poems of Coleridge and Wordsworth seldom treat time as a villainous character. By contrast, Shelley dedicated poems to the concept of burdensome "Mutability." He was also fond of using phrases such as "O Time" (e.g., "O World, O Life, O Time"), which is an apostrophe that Coleridge and Wordsworth did not utter.

One might say that the literary treatment of time has undergone a gradual dissociation of sensibility since the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth. For another example, consider Arnold's "Dover Beach." There, the narrator is more concerned with time than Coleridge and Wordsworth ever were, but he has no sense of its present passage. He hears -- and only hears -- a rather vague testimony of time's destructive effects in the slow rhythms of the ocean's tidal movements. Within his dark surroundings, however, he cannot visualize time's flux, and he has no conception of the complexity of its process.

Ironically, one of the great schismatics in this dissociation was T. S. Eliot. Prufrock makes it very clear that there is plenty of time, and that there indeed will be time, but he does not *see* it anywhere. Here again, the legacies of Coleridge and Wordsworth draw attention to a key aspect of this discord. "Prufrock" is filled with powerful images, but in spite of its ambulatory, first-person narration, the poem presents a relatively static cityscape, and sights seem to appear to the reader rather than to the narrator. In The Waste Land, Eliot exaggerates this technique by essentially removing narrator-observers from the poem. A clock chimes menacingly, but no character hears it; a stranger lurks ahead on the road to Emmaus, but no one is there to meet him. Of course, in other Modern literature, the problem is not the lack of a point of view, but the presence of too many. Time weighs heavily on most of Faulkner's characters, for instance, but the whole of their collected narratives cannot offset its burden.

One could cite many other examples of this abject fear of imperceptible but omnipresent time in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. However, this brief survey will conclude by jumping ahead to the culmination of the increasing emphasis on time's revenges. This appears in the plays of Samuel Beckett. In a way, Beckett's great theme of inexplicable human suffering recalls the story of the Ancient Mariner. Nevertheless, even that most disturbing of Romantic poems is made up of well-defined events and experiences. Although time is out of joint in the Mariner's world, he can recognize this corruption in the dynamics of his environment (especially the shifting appearances of the sun and the moon). By contrast, in many of Beckett's plays, including Waiting for Godot and Endgame, one does not experience change. If any changes occur, they do so in the dark abyss between acts. Yet throughout Beckett's works, it is obvious to both the characters and the audience that time is destroying everyone.

Of course, mixing the names of Beckett, Frost and other disparate authors with those of Coleridge and Wordsworth threatens to dismiss the radical individuality that most of these authors display. The previous statements here are generalizations, and Blake cautioned that "To generalize is to be an idiot" (451). Indeed, continuing debates about the boundaries and definitions of artistic periods show that literary works do resist summations. This is a fortunate fact, for it reaffirms the complexity of the great works which scholarship strives to comprehend. Nevertheless, Blake's generalization is not always true, and it runs counter to the guiding principle of Coleridge and Wordsworth themselves, who always sought to recognize the relationships between parts and wholes. This study has drawn attention to specific parts of their poetry, especially those involving the representation of time and vision. However, it is possible that the monitoring of these types of details provides another means of tracing literature's broader evolution. It is hoped that this study will help to establish an additional avenue for following trends and revolutions, both in Romanticism's various manifestations, and in literature in general.

Bibliography

Bibliography

Primary Works

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Aids to Reflection. Ed. John Beer. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993. Vol. 9 of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 16 vols.

- - -. Anima Poetae. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895.

- - -. Biographia Literaria. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983. Vol. 7 of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 16 vols.

- - -. Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. 6 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956-1971.

- - -. The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1912.

- - -. Logic. Ed. J. R. de J. Jackson. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981. Vol. 13 of The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 16 vols.

- - -. The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. Kathleen Coburn. 4 vols. New York: Pantheon, 1957-1990.

- - -. The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Ed. T. Ashe. London: George Bell, 1896.

Wordsworth, Dorothy, and William Wordsworth. The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Ed. Ernest De Selincourt, revised by C. L. Shaver et al. 2nd. ed. 6 vols. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967-82.

Wordsworth, William. Poetical Works. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1936.

- - -. The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. New York: Norton, 1979.

- - -. The Prose Works of William Wordsworth. Ed. Alexander B. Grosart. 3 vols. London: Edward Moxon, 1876.

- - -. The Prose Works of William Wordsworth. Ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1974.

Wordsworth and Coleridge. Lyrical Ballads. Ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1991.

Secondary Works

Abrams, M. H. Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature. New York: Norton, 1971.

- - -, et al, ed. The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume Two. 6th ed. New York: Norton, 1993.

Alexander, J. H. Reading Wordsworth. London: Routledge, 1987.

Appleyard, J. A. Coleridge's Philosophy of Literature: The Development of Coleridge's Poetry, 1791-1819. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965.

Audi, Robert, ed. The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Ayers, Michael. Locke, Volume One: Epistemology. London: Routledge, 1991.

Baker, Jeffrey. Time and Mind in Wordsworth's Poetry. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1980.

Bakhtin, M. M. The Dialogic Imagination. Ed. Michael Holquist. Tr. Caryl Emerson and Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

Bate, Walter Jackson. Coleridge. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Beer, John. Wordsworth in Time. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.

Bergson, Henri. Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness. Tr. F. L. Pogson. London: Allen & Unwin, 1910.

Bishop, Jonathan. "Wordsworth and the 'Spots of Time.'" ELH 26 (1959): 45-65.

Blake, William. The Complete Writings of William Blake. Ed. Geoffrey Keynes. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969.

Bostetter, Edward E. "The Nightmare World of the 'Ancient Mariner.'" Studies in Romanticism 1 (1962): 241-254.

Brennan, Matthew. Wordsworth, Turner, and Romantic Landscape: A Study of the Traditions of the Picturesque and the Sublime. Columbia: Camden, 1987.

Brooks, Cleanth. The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry. New York: HBJ, 1975.

Brundell, Barry. Pierre Gassendi: From Aristotelianism to a New Natural Philosophy. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1987.

Byers, John R. "Coleridge's 'Time, Real and Imaginary.'" Explicator 19.7 (1961): 46.

Cooke, Michael G. "The Manipulation of Space in Coleridge's Poetry." New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth: Selected Papers from the English Institute. Ed. Geoffrey Hartman. New York: Columbia UP, 1972. 165-94.

Cooper, Lane, ed. A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth. London: Smith, Elder, 1911.

Delson, Abe. "The Symbolism of the Sun and Moon in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 15 (1974): 707-20.

Durr, R. A. "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' and a Recurrent Action in Coleridge." ELH 26 (1959): 514-30.

Durrant, Geoffrey. "Zeno's Arrow: Time and Motion in Two of Wordsworth's Lucy Poems." Mosaic 2.3 (1969): 10-24.

Eakin, Sybil S. "The Spots of Time in Early Versions of The Prelude." Studies in Romanticism 12 (1973): 389-405.

Fletcher, Angus. "Positive Negation': Threshold, Sequence, and Personification in Coleridge." New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth: Selected Papers from the English Institute. Ed. Geoffrey Hartman. New York: Columbia UP, 1972. 133-64.

Foakes, R. A. The Romantic Assertion: A Study in the Language of Nineteenth-Century Poetry. New Haven: Yale UP, 1958.

Foster, John Wilson. "The Measure of Paradise: Topography in Eighteenth-Century Poetry." Eighteenth Century Studies 9 (1975): 232-56.

Frost, Robert. The Poetry of Robert Frost. Ed. Edward Connery Lathem. New York: Holt, 1969.

Gaskins, Avery F. "Real and Imaginary Time in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.'" North Dakota Quarterly 37.4 (1969): 43-47.

Grob, Alan. The Philosophic Mind: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry and Thought, 1797-1805. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1973.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814. 1964. New Haven: Yale UP, 1971.

Havens, Raymond Dexter. The Mind of a Poet. 2 vols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1941.

Hazlitt, William. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt. Ed. P. P. Howe. 21 vols. London: J. M. Dent, 1934.

Heffernan, James A. W. The Recreation of Landscape: A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner. Hanover: UP of New England, 1984.

Hirsch, E. D., Jr. Wordsworth and Schelling: A Typological Study of Romanticism. New Haven: Yale UP, 1960.

Holt, Ted and John Gilroy. A Commentary on Wordsworth' *Prelude*, Books I-V. London: Routledge, 1983.

House, Humphry. Coleridge: The Clark Lectures, 1951-52. London: Hart-Davis, 1969.

Howard, Claud. Coleridge's Idealism: A Study of its Relationship to Kant and the Cambridge Platonists. Boston: Gorham, 1924.

Jackson, Richard. "The Romantic Metaphysics of Time." Studies in Romanticism 19 (1980): 19-30.

Jeffrey, Francis. Contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* by Francis Jeffrey. New York: Appleton, 1881.

Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. Tr. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's, 1965.

Keats, John. The Complete Poems of John Keats. Ed. John Barnard. London: Penguin, 1973.

Kelly, Michael J. "Coleridge's 'Picture, or The Lover's Resolution': its Relationship to 'Dejection' and its Sources." Costerus 5 (1972): 75-96.

Kessler, Edward. Coleridge's Metaphors of Being. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979.

King, James Roy. The Literary Moment as a Lens on Reality. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1983.

Kroeber, Karl. Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1975.

Lindenberger, Herbert. On Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963.

Logan, Eugenia, ed. A Concordance to the Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Gloucester: Smith, 1940.

Lowes, John Livingston. The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1927.

Magnuson, Paul. Coleridge's Nightmare Poetry. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1974.

McFarland, Thomas. Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969.

McGuire, J. E. "Predicates of Pure Existence: Newton on God's Space and Time." Philosophical Perspectives on Newtonian Science. Ed. Phillip Bricker and R. I. G. Hughes. Cambridge: MIT P, 1990. 91-108.

Milton, John. Paradise Lost. Ed. Alastair Fowler. New York: Longman, 1971.

Modiano, Raimonda. Coleridge and the Concept of Nature. Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1985.

Muirhead, John H. Coleridge as Philosopher. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930.

Noyes, Russell. Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1968.

Olsen, Flemming. Geometry and 'Forms' in Wordsworth's Prelude." Orbis Literarum 26.1 (1971): 20-41.

Orsini, G. N. Coleridge and German Idealism. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1969.

Owen, W. J. B. "The Most Despotic of Our Senses." Wordsworth Circle 19 (1988): 136-44.

- - -. "Two Wordsworthian Ambivalences." Wordsworth Circle 11 (1980): 2-9.

Perkins, M. A. Coleridge's Philosophy: The Logos as Unifying Principle. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.

Pike, Nelson. God and Timelessness. New York: Schocken, 1970.

Prickett, Stephen. Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970.

Rader, Melvin. Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.

Raven, A. A. "Coleridge's 'Time, Real and Imaginary.'" Explicator 3.4 (1945): 32.

Reed, Arden. Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire. Hanover: Brown UP, 1983.

Saint Augustine. The City of God Against the Pagans. Tr. Philip Levine. Vol. 4. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966. 7 vols.

Salvesen, Christopher. The Landscape of Memory: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965.

Schulz, Max F. The Poetic Voices of Coleridge. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1963.

Shelley, Mary. The Mary Shelley Reader. Ed. Betty T. Bennett and Charles E. Robinson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.

Sklar, Lawrence. "Real Quantities and Their Sensible Measures." Philosophical Perspectives on Newtonian Science. Ed. Phillip Bricker and R. I. G. Hughes. Cambridge: MIT P, 1990. 57-76.

Snyder, Alice D., ed. Coleridge on Logic and Learning. New Haven: Yale UP, 1929.

Stafford, Barbara Maria. "Toward Romantic Landscape Perception: Illustrated Travels and the Rise of 'Singularity' as an Aesthetic Category." Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture. Ed. Harry C. Payne. Vol. 10. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1981.

Suther, Marshall. The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. New York: Columbia UP, 1960.

Warren, Robert Penn. Selected Essays. New York: Random House, 1958.

Watson, George. Coleridge the Poet. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.

Wedd, Mary R. "Light on Landscape in Wordsworth's 'Spots of Time.'" Wordsworth Circle 14 (1983): 224-32.

Wheeler, Kathleen. Sources, Processes and Methods in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.

Wordsworth, Dorothy. The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth. Ed. Ernest De Selincourt. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1941.

Wordsworth, Jonathan. The Music of Humanity: A Critical Study of Wordsworth's "Ruined Cottage." London: Nelson, 1969.

- - -. William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.

Vita

Will Harris was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1971. After graduating from Chattanooga's McCallie School, he attended Rhodes College in Memphis. While a Rhodes student, he participated in the British Studies at Oxford program at St. John's College. He graduated from Rhodes with a major in English in 1993.

Due to his desire to be an English professor, Harris enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in the fall of the same year. He was awarded a graduate teaching associateship and began teaching at UT in 1994. After completing his M. A. work in 1995, he immediately began work on his doctorate. Harris taught English courses as a graduate student for five years at UT. For two years, he also served as a College of Liberal Arts representative on the Graduate Student Association. In 1998, he was awarded a Norman Sanders Dissertation Fellowship. Harris received his doctoral degree in August 1999.