

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS
LITERATURAS ESTRANGEIRAS MODERNAS
LITERATURAS DE LÍNGUA INGLESA**

TESE DE DOUTORAMENTO

Márcio José Coutinho

**THE EXPERIENCE OF NATURE AND THE GROWTH OF THE POET'S
MIND IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM *THE PRELUDE*, BY WILLIAM
WORDSWORTH**

Orientador: Prof^a. Dr^a. Kathrin Rosenfield

PORTO ALEGRE, 2012.

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To my parents and siblings. For the unconditional and unrestricted love!

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EPIGRAPHS:

„Da ich noch um deinen Schleier spielte,
 Noch an dir, wie eine Blüte, hing,
 Noch dein Herz in jedem Laute fühlte,
 Der mein zärtlichbebend Herz umfing,
 Da ich noch mit Glauben und mit Sehnen
 Reich, wie du, vor deinem Bilde stand,
 Eine Stelle noch für meine Tränen,
 Eine Welt für meine Liebe fand,

Da zur Sonne noch mein Herz sich wandte,
 Als vernähme seine Töne sie,
 Und die Sterne seine Brüder nannte
 Und den Frühling Gottes Melodie,
 Da im Hauche, der den Hain bewegte,
 Noch dein Geist, dein Geist der Freude sich
 In des Herzens stiller Welle regte,
 Da umfingen goldne Tage mich.“
 (*An die Natur* – Friedrich Hölderlin)

“One adequate support
 For the calamities of mortal life
 Exists – one only; an assured belief
 That the procession of our fate, howe'er
 Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
 Of infinite benevolence and power;
 Whose everlasting purposes embrace
 All accidents, converting them to good.
 – The darts of anguish *fix* not where the seat
 Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified
 By acquiescence in the Will supreme
 For time and for eternity; by faith,
 Faith absolute in God, including hope,
 And the defence that lies in boundless love
 Of his perfections; with habitual dread
 Of aught unworthily conceived, endured
 Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone,
 To the dishonour of his holy name.
 Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world!
 Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart;
 Restore their languid spirits, and recall
 Their lost affections unto thee and thine!”
 (*The Excursion* – William Wordsworth)

RESUMO:

Em seu poema autobiográfico *O Prelúdio* William Wordsworth relata o modo como os principais eventos de sua vida levaram ao seu desenvolvimento espiritual a fim de tornar-se um poeta. Na chamada poesia de Natureza isso pressupõe a influência da experiência direta e viva com os objetos e elementos do mundo natural. Meu intento nesta tese consiste em investigar a qual ponto a formação individual representada na narrativa é resultado da experiência vivida – estética, moral e intelectual – do sujeito em relação às formas belas e sublimes do mundo exterior em paralelo com a constituição imaginativa de sua consciência; ou da elaboração retórica e associativa de imagens, analogias, metáforas, símbolos, conceitos e concepções tomados de um conjunto de saberes literários, filosóficos, religiosos, psicológicos e científicos da tradição ocidental em voga na época de Wordsworth. Além disso, busquei examinar de que modo a experiência da Natureza se associa ao papel da educação formal e da observação impactante da estrutura social e política advinda das transformações da modernidade, vindo a formar a visão de mundo do poeta e a crença no papel fundamental da poesia como depositária laico-sagrada da sabedoria essencial da humanidade. Os argumentos que dão sustentação à minha interpretação do poema baseiam-se na análise de uma estrutura narrativa de história individual de nascimento em meio ao mundo natural, de criação de laços de pertencimento a este meio, de afastamento da Natureza e de retorno a ela. A região natal de Wordsworth no Distrito dos Lagos Ingleses, no Norte da Inglaterra, é vista como equivalente primeiro da Natureza. Portanto é representada analogicamente como um parâmetro físico e sensível que fundamenta aquilo que o herói deverá entender como Natureza: primeiro enquanto mundo visível, e a partir deste corolário em suas dimensões sensoriais e sentimentais, intelectuais e emocionais, morais e espirituais. Destarte, esta pesquisa organiza-se em três partes. Na primeira parte, procurei reconstruir as experiências do herói ao longo dos principais eventos de seu percurso autobiográfico, com vistas a reconstituir o seu sentido para a construção (*Bildung*) da sensibilidade do sujeito, emocional, intelectual e espiritualmente, de acordo como estas experiências tenham sido vividas ou recordadas. Na segunda, tratei separadamente dos tipos de contato empírico do herói com as formas naturais em momentos de observação, contemplação e meditação, dando ênfase à percepção sensorial, especialmente em suas funções visual e auditiva; aos impulsos sentimentais e emocionais ligados à sensibilidade corporal; e finalmente à intuição transcendente e à visão metafísica que acompanha as relações espirituais sentidas na responsividade anímica e espiritual do sujeito – em comunhão tranquila ou êxtase elevado – com a essência mais profunda manifestada na vida das coisas que o rodeiam. Por fim, na terceira parte, voltei-me para a análise dos recursos empregados para a construção estética e reelaboração retórica dos conteúdos da experiência humana representados na narrativa a partir da associação de conteúdos imaginários, metafóricos, simbólicos, conceituais e alusivos que indicam a apropriação de um conjunto de saberes e conhecimentos tomados de empréstimo a uma tradição intelectual e letrada. Enquanto resultado, sustento a tese de que Wordsworth combina dois elementos fundamentais na construção poética de *O Prelúdio*. De um lado há a expressão emocional dos efeitos interiores causados pela impressão das formas naturais, com base no que se pode conceber enquanto representação realista, ou seja, fiel às formas empíricas da percepção humana e relativa à atenção do sujeito ao ambiente circundante e à cor local. De outro, constatei a reelaboração de imagens, motivos e topói, bem como noções conceituais e alusões que remetem à afirmação de uma visão de mundo cara ao espírito Romântico, assim como a crítica cortante, apesar de velada, a um conjunto de práticas institucionais, sociais e políticas que ameaçam a integridade de um mundo orgânico que o eu-lírico julga ideal para o aperfeiçoamento do espírito humano em condições de harmonia com o universo onde vive – a Natureza.

Palavras-chave: Autobiografia; Experiência Vivida; Contato com a Natureza; Desenvolvimento Espiritual; Tropos e Concepções da Tradição Ocidental.

ABSTRACT:

In his autobiographical poem *The Prelude* William Wordsworth relates how the main events of his life led to his spiritual development in order to become a poet. In the so-called Poetry of Nature this presupposes the influence of the direct and living experience of the objects and elements of the natural world. My intent in this dissertation consists of investigating to what extent the individual formation represented in the narrative results from the subject's lived through experience – aesthetic, moral and intellectual – in relation to the beautiful and sublime forms of the outward world paralleled to the imaginative constitution of his consciousness; or from the rhetorical and associative elaboration of images, analogies, metaphors, symbols, concepts and conceptions taken from a body of literary, philosophical, religious, psychological and scientific knowledges of the western tradition in vogue during Wordsworth's age. Furthermore, I sought to examine how the experience of Nature associates to the role of formal education and striking observation of the social and political structure derived from the transformations of modernity, thus forming the poet's worldview and belief in the fundamental role of poetry as the laic-sacred depository of humankind's essential wisdom. The arguments which sustain my interpretation of the poem are based on the analysis of a narrative structure of individual history of birth amid the natural world, of creation of pertainment bonds to this environment, of distancing from Nature and return to her. Wordsworth's native region in the Lake District in the North of England is seen as the primary equivalent of Nature. Therefore it is represented analogically as a physical and sensual parameter that founds that which the hero must come to understand as Nature: firstly, as the visible world, and up from this corollary in her sensorial and sentimental, intellectual and emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions. Thus, this research is organized into three parts. In the first, I attempted at reconstructing the hero's experiences along the main events of his autobiographical course, aiming at reconstituting their meaning for the building (*Bildung*) of the subject's sensibility, emotional, intellectual and spiritually, according to the way these experiences have been lived or recollected. In the second part, I dealt separately with the hero's types of empirical contact with the natural forms in moments of observation, contemplation and meditation, emphasizing the sensorial perception, especially its visual and auditory functions; the sentimental and emotional drives linked to the sensibility of the body; and finally to the transcendent intuition and metaphysical vision which accompany the spiritual relations felt in the subject's animical and spiritual responsivity – in quiet communion or lofty transport – with the deepest essence manifested in the life of the things surrounding him. Finally, in the third part, I turned my efforts to analyzing the resources employed for the aesthetical construction and rhetorical re-elaboration of the contents of human experience depicted in the narrative out of the association of imaginary, metaphorical, symbolical, conceptual and allusive contents that indicate the appropriation of a set of wisdom and knowledge drawn from an intellectual and literate tradition. As a result, I sustain the thesis that Wordsworth combines two fundamental elements in the poetic textualization of *The Prelude*. On one hand, there is the emotional expression of the inner effects aroused by the impression of the natural forms based on what might be conceived as a realistic representation, i.e. faithful to the empirical forms of human perception and regarding the subject's attention to the surrounding environment and the local colour. On the other hand, I testified the re-elaboration of images, motifs and topoi, as well as conceptual notions and allusions which remount to the assertion of a worldview dear to the Romantic spirit, so as a sharp (although veiled) criticism against a number of institutional, social and political practices that menace the integrity of an organical world that the lyrical speaker considers ideal for the perfectioning of the human spirit in conditions of harmony with the universe where man abides – I mean Nature.

Keywords: Autobiography; Living Experience; Contact with Nature; Spiritual Development; Tropes and Conception from the Western Tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

General proposition

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth relates how the main events of his life – especially those linked to the contact with Nature – led to the growth of his mind. The speaker relates first the main events of childhood, boyhood and youth; then the main experiences lived through as an adult man. Through autobiography the poet made a fiction out of his life. The chief adventures of his early life happened in Cockermouth, where Wordsworth lived in the bosom of his family until the death of his mother when he was eight years old; and at Hawkshead, where, together with his brothers, he attended the Grammar School until turning seventeen years old. Childhood and school time have provided the hero with the liberty to rove among the natural recesses and to observe the beautiful and sublime landscapes of his native region. Then Wordsworth was sent to Cambridge to attend St. John's College, where he got the degree of Bachelor of Arts. During the period of graduation, the narrative highlights two remarkable moments to season the rough life of studious labour: the first and the third summer vacations. In the first occasion, back to Hawkshead, Wordsworth felt his sensibility reinvigorated by the presence of the mountains, groves and lakes; and at a striking moment of vision before the scenery brightened under the rising sun the hero received the revelation that he was destined to become a poet devoted to the worship of Nature. In the second moment, Wordsworth traveled across the Alps. There, the speaker claims, Nature led him to recognize the poet's soul in himself and the type of the supreme existence in the external forms of the region, as well as to find the type of the workings of an ideal mind and the symbols of eternity in the visible Nature. After leaving college the protagonist resided for about one year in London, where he got the shock of urban, modern social life, getting the opportunity to observe the unnatural taints of evil, disorder, confusion, depravity and deprivation in the passions and relations among people. Then the speaker makes a pause in the linear narration of life events in order to reflect on the way the love of Nature led to the love of humankind. From London, where the hero had the most powerful experience of the bonds of society, he moved to France, where he witnessed the on goings of the aftermath of the Revolution and the

degradation of the political ideals of justice, liberty and humanity into tyranny and oppression. Having left France in time to escape the deflagration of Terror, yet already shaken by the greatest moral shock and aesthetic crisis of his life, Wordsworth returned to his native land where the healing and revealing power of beautiful and sublime Nature restituted his sensibility and renewed his faculties of taste and imagination which had long been impaired: the contact with Nature restored his poetic craft. Finally, Wordsworth closes the autobiographical account by reporting the moment when Nature rewarded his lifelong search by revealing an image of her spiritual, intellectual, metaphysical structure from the top of Mount Snowdon: a symbolic image of the soul of the world pouring from a fountain of light over the vast universe, forming a macrocosmic emblem of the microcosmic structure and the activity of man's mind.

A deep problem emerges from the autobiographical structure of *The Prelude*. The dynamics of the poet's passionate look at Nature and the reverence paid to the worth of the external objects and the living events among them in relation to the spiritual growth of humankind reflect a faithful attempt to resist against the issues of the emerging modern life. Historically, Wordsworth lived during an age when he felt both poetry and life were menaced by the structure of the modern society as represented by the industrial modes of production and urban modes of living. The traditional forms of life had been threatened by the utilitarian worldview of capitalism, whereas Wordsworth saw the human subjectivity menaced by the objective worldview of the eighteenth century, by the mechanical, rationalized and analytical logic that spread out of the sciences in his time. In this sense, the life in big cities had been regarded as a threat for an organic conception of life. Ifor Evans gives an account of how the Romantic poets felt in that context: "It was as if, frightened by the coming of industrialism and the nightmare town of industry, they were turning to nature for protection. Or as if, with the declining strength of traditional religious beliefs, men were making a religion from the spirituality of their own experiences"¹.

Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century sciences and civilization had advanced much but still not enough to end up all the values dear to the poet. *The Prelude* is motivated by Wordsworth's ultimate belief that something in Nature still remained immune from those pernicious influences – that the natural world continues organic, thus constituting a safe model for the human spirituality. In the periods of residence in Cambridge, London and France the poet rehearsed the sense of being distant from

¹ EVANS, Ifor. *A Short History of English Literature*. 3 ed. 1974, p. 65.

Nature and lost in the educational, social and political systems of the eighteenth century. Therefore, the speaker represents in the movement of return to his native land the healing power of Nature against the shocking experience of being thrown off the possibilities of continuing integrated in the organic world of Nature. Depicting his return to his original rural region in the Lake District and finding it in strong organic integration Wordsworth intends to show that Nature remains the best model for the integrity of human life in front of the threat of the idea of progress. The speaker tries to convince his audience that Nature provided him with the intellectual and emotional elements for the spiritual growth of his mind. This research is an attempt to answer the inquiry to which extent Wordsworth might actually have believed that the hero's spiritual growth was really induced by the living experience of Nature and to which measure that idea constituted a mere inspiration for his Romantic over-affectedness – therefore being no more than a rhetoric mockery.

Experience as a Central Issue in Wordsworth's Approach to Nature and Growth of Mind

Analyzing Wordsworth's autobiographical poem *The Prelude* I intend to start out from his claim that his poetry stages the poet's spiritual growth through the experience of Nature, which can be inferred from the speaker's statements that Nature "hast fed / My lofty speculations" (Book II, ll. 447-448); and that from Nature's gifts of "emotion" and "calmness" the genius receives the energy to seek the truth (book XII, ll. 1-10). This claim involves two complementary sides: one is the naïve idea that the contact with Nature nourishes the soul and enables the poet to represent this enriching experience in order to offer his public a poetical model of formation; the second is the less naïve hypothesis that even the first contact with Nature is not a natural event which then can be represented, but the result of very complex rhetorical devices which consist in poetical, philosophical and social tropes which determine even the most genuine individual experience.

The point of departure for this inquiry lays in the common claim among the criticism that Wordsworth's poetry derives in general from his personal experience. Ifor Evans and Herbert Read, for instance, partake of this point of view and consider issues

of biography and experience in the configuration and evolution of Wordsworth's poetry. Evans considers that all Romantic poets "had a deep interest in nature, not as a centre of beautiful scenes but as an informing and spiritual influence on life"². For my part, I would claim that the beautiful scenes provide the informing and spiritual influence on the human life. The recurring emphasis on the term "experience" among the critics made me ask apropos of *The Prelude* what kind of experience Wordsworth represents and how the term experience might be defined in order to provide a relevant comprehension of the recollected events along the hero's life. My interest falls particularly on Wordsworth's representation of the experience of Nature, i.e. the living and striking contact with the world without through which the affections of the objective universe leave their emotional mark in the development of the subject's consciousness, forming it as a chain of meaningful moments in his memory. The notion of hero is central to understand Wordsworth's spiritual story since in Romantic autobiographies the poets themselves assume the heroic role. Like the German Bildungsroman hero, the autobiographical protagonist's action consists in a mode of experiencing the world and so what matters is the representation of an inner process of subjective transformation. Considering Wordsworth's tribute to perception, imputing the infant baby with the origin of sensibility and poetic power at its highest degree through intercourse of touch, Stephen Prickett³ asserts that Wordsworth's concept of Imagination can be defined as "the total contact with the external world". Therefore, Wordsworth's conception of Imagination is bound to experience. As to the concept of experience, three are the commonly accepted implications of this term for the Romantic poetry: I) the possibility of composing poems based on events really lived through by the poet, be the subject matter either literally translated into poetic images or transfigured by the poet's imagination; II) the Romantic poets demonstrate a strong eagerness to store their minds with so diverse a repertoire of sensations, feelings, emotions and thoughts that they search for those possibilities in the direct contact with the world without in living moments of playful activities among natural environments, sensory observation of natural objects, or passionate and ecstatic contemplation of numinous aspects in the motion or constitution of the visible phenomena; III) in his devoted search for truth the feelings and thoughts aroused by the relationship with the external world produce a specific body of knowledge that transforms the subject's

² Idem. Ibidem. p. 65.

³ PRICKETT, Stephen. Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth. 1970. p. 90-92.

sensibility and imparts him with a lofty sort of wisdom and virtue valid to be transmitted to mankind.

The fact that Wordsworth sets his protagonist in a special relationship with Nature requires an account of his personal position in relation to the type of social and historical world in which he lived. That is why the narrative structure of autobiography formed a necessary pattern upon which to frame the subjective organization of experience. For Herbert Read, in order to understand the perspective through which the poet manifests his worldview as well as the manner he conceives his subject matter and the kind of treatment he wants to employ, his poetry must be situated in relation to the phases of his personal-spiritual development. Accordingly, Read analyzes the points where the experiences narrated in Wordsworth's poetry accord with or diverge from the biographical facts. In his critical purpose, Read asserts to "believe that Wordsworth in his life and literary activity reveals [...] the delicate relations that exist between poetry and the poet's experience"⁴. Given the polysemous and manifold implications of this term, it is reasonable to mention that by the term experience as applied to Wordsworth the critic means "the conditions under which most of his poems were written"⁵. The development of the poet's consciousness can be related to the experience of shocks received in the course of personal, social and historical events. This justifies the revision of the influence of Nature on the formation of the poet's character and of the way the protagonist returned to a mode of life closer to Nature after the crisis provoked by the oppressive relationship with the social, political, economic and historical dimensions of the world. If, as the above mentioned scholars have demonstrated, the concept and experience of Nature involves the powerful manifestation of the aesthetic, moral, religious and metaphysical dimensions of the world as they are linked with the sensational, sentimental and intellectual state in the human subjectivity, thus awakening the enchanted aspects in the human life; the socio-historical dimensions experimented by the protagonist bare the negative effects of disenchanting the world.

W. H. Auden and Norman Holmes Pearson⁶ explain the trend for autobiography in Romantic literature by the conclusion of the development of self-consciousness in which the poet and the hero are celebrated in the same character, since his own consciousness is conceived to be the only one accessible to him, so that

⁴ READ, Herbert. **Wordsworth**. 1957, p. 21.

⁵ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 21.

⁶ AUDEN, W. H.; PEARSON, Norman Holmes. **Romantic Poets: Blake to Poe**. Introduction. 1986. p. xii-xxv.

knowledge implies self knowledge – the possibility of knowing himself and of analyzing the process through which one gets to develop his own knowledge and worldview. In this sense, Auden and Pearson define the key to identify the Romantic hero with the poet's own consciousness in the will for experience – a strong desire for the sensations, feelings, thoughts and affections produced by the exposure to everything. It is the peculiar experience of Nature during lifetime that endows Wordsworth's hero with his extraordinary vision, provided that the development of imagination emanated from the knowledge obtained by means of that sequence of responses to the surrounding world, thus bringing to the subject's conscience the awareness of being in this world. Thus, even during the erring steps of his life the protagonist achieves an exemplary formation that enables him to build what Geoffrey Hartmann would define as an "inalienable knowledge" worthy of being communicated to men.

The idea of knowledge, self understanding and human formation as derived from the experience of Nature demands that a brief outline of the meanings implied by the concept of Nature must be provided in order to situate what kind of world the Romantics believed to be worshiped in their poetry. The conception of Nature involved the notions of the outer, physical world, visible things and the inner world of the processes of mind and imagined realities. Nature had an empirical dimension that could always (or at least eventually) be presented to the human senses through observation or merely by man's being there inserted into the elemental environment; and to the human feelings through the emotional and sentimental affections aroused by the images of the natural forms or through passionate contemplation of deeper realities beyond the natural objects. However, the word also implies a conceptual body of meanings derived from the philosophical, religious and scientific usages since Plato and Aristotle to Newton, Spinoza, Shaftesbury and Rousseau or to the natural theologians, for instance. Denoting the objects of scientific inquiry the term Nature⁷ (*Physis*) implied three main definitions: the term *a Nature* denotes the being or the process whose source of activity is internal to it. It is uncreated and has its activating principle inside itself. The term *the Nature* means the dynamic source or center of a being, related to the substance or essence of a thing and constituting its principle of generation. The word *Nature*, without the precedence of the article, signifies a combination of the two previous meanings as applied to the totality of things. It consists in the dynamic unity or order of the universe,

⁷ Nature, Idea of. In **Crowell-Collier Dictionary**. 1953, p. 394-395.

which even as things change confers them unity of matter and form; keeps the dynamic continuity in all events or phenomena; and warrants the conception of the totality of existence as an organized cosmos. In the current meaning of physical/visible world Nature thus implies four main oppositions: to the supernatural or spiritual world, either in religious or metaphysical sense; to the represented world of human art; to the inner, psychological world of human mind; and to the artificial world of human made things which includes civilization, society and social conventions. Therefore, in terms of visible reality, Nature can be conceived either as the world where the humankind feel at home and which fosters their full development in every human dimensions, or the world which opposes the human perfection by hindering the spiritual elevation through mere emphasis on material, physical and biological dimensions, from which man must be severed in order to fulfill humanity. Or still Nature can be regarded as the world which integrates both corporeal and spiritual dimensions, bringing man to the harmony with his niche and opening the possibility of realizing his due perfection and happiness. In this sense, the phrase “state of Nature” implies the ambiguity derived now from Hobbes definition of uncontrolled impulses and immoral brutality, now from the benevolent virtues and moral goodness inherent to the human nature, as postulated by Rousseau. On the other hand, Nature might be conceived as that transcendent, spiritual and intellectual principle that organizes the material world and animates the living beings by means of emanation, known by the Neoplatonic phrases Soul of the World or Spirit of the Universe, or simply identified with God.

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth depicts the evolution in his conception of Nature from an elemental world of beautiful and sublime forms which foster his imagination by means of being haunted by fairy and archaic potencies during physical contact in childhood rambles and boyhood sports; to the visionary intuition of the transcendental source behind the living forms during youth; and, finally, to the passionate assertion of earth as the proper world of justice and happiness where man is to achieve perfection in life, where he would be able to realize both his virtue and liberty. To this last meaning, specially as regards the reference to the French Revolution, Wordsworth associates a sort of conception of Nature as a type of Spirit of the Age (*Zeitgeist*), a historical intelligence that determines and organizes the chain of social and political events similarly to Hegel’s Dialectics.

Division and Steps of Analysis

This research has been divided into three parts. The first part, composed by chapters I and II, aims at discussing the place of the sensations and feelings aroused by the experience of Nature and the importance of the sensibility turned toward Nature for the protagonist's process of subjective formation both as a man and as a poet in *The Prelude*. The central key to understand Wordsworth's rhetoric of interaction between the "Mind of Man" and the "external world" in his confessional narrative had already been stated in *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* as the active interaction between his "moral being" and "Nature" through "the language of the sense". In the confessional account of his life, the speaker privileges the influence of an existence of liberty to roam among rural scenes rather than the weight of formal education for the development of the hero's mind and character. Nevertheless, the speaker rehearses the association of Nature and Books. In this sense, Wordsworth suggests an ideal type of education, which is based on a mode of life regulated by the free commerce with the elements of Nature, where the subject enriches his spirit emotionally, intellectually and morally through the exposure to the sensory impressions of the world without – overall the visual and aural experience of natural scenes. Yet, such modes of experience combine with the emotions found in the universe of ballad, pastoral and romance.

In the core of the narrative, it has been signaled that since childhood the experience of Nature consists in roaming alone among secluded places or playing with the band of fellow boys in an adventurous mood. As the hero grows toward youth and adulthood, his acts and attitudes reveal an excursive character manifested in habits of traveling to distant countries and returning to his native land. In both cases, the image of the native land plays a prominent role in horizon of the subject's spiritual life, overall since it represents the ideal place for the ideal mode of education. The beauty and simplicity of rural sceneries as well as the solemnity and sublimity of wild landscapes prefigure the model of the ideal ground for the development of the human faculties: this ideal ground coincides with the central aspect of Wordsworth's conception of Nature as it manifests in the outward world, viz. a system of organic and benevolent order. As the hero's mind evolves, it manifests a tendency to inwardness, recognizing Nature in her intellectual essence, in his own mind, without need of what is meant to be the despotic use of the senses upon the external forms.

The speaker affirms the blessing of having been bred under the agencies of Nature. According to Joseph Beach, what Wordsworth had in mind, behind his taste for

Nature and the praise of his native land “was the reduction of some of the complexities of urban life, and the sacrifice of vanity and worldly ambition to an ideal of strenuous intellectual and purified spiritual life”⁸. In this sense, there are three main moments in the hero’s autobiographical trajectory in which he abandons the power of Nature to reverence or succumb to sources that have proved illusory and damaging for the human sensibility, namely the periods of residence in Cambridge, London and France where the protagonist underwent the influence of the formal education, the urban life and the French Revolution. In a significant way, those instances are confronted with Wordsworth’s formative ideal. The education received through the experience of Nature led the poet to the love of natural objects like woods, hills, fields and rivers; and of Nature herself as a cosmic, spiritual and intelligent principle that animates the world. On the other hand, it consists in a process of development of the human sensibility, above all preparing the faculty of Imagination for the passionate interpretation of the deep, spiritual and symbolical meanings underwritten in the sensory aspects of the natural forms. The expected maturity of mind is equated with the possession of clearer insight and lofty vision, terms that concur for the definition of the activity of the Imagination. The mind of man must be developed to become creative, imparting a pattern of spirituality and creativity similar in power and greatness to those of the Soul of Nature or Universal Mind – the ideal principles that represent Nature in her pure ideal, spiritual and intellectual essence.

The second part of this research, which includes chapters III, IV and V, aims at analyzing and interpreting the aesthetic level of naïve experience for the formation of the subjectivity in Wordsworth’s autobiographical narrative. As it deals with the levels of sense, feeling, intuition and thought aroused both by the physical and transcendent affections in the presence of the aesthetic objects found in Nature, this part should be divided into three main topics: I – the role of the visual experience for the development of the poet’s mind throughout his autobiographical course; II – the influence of the aural experience for the hero’s formative process; III – the representation of the feelings of body and soul in the poet’s experience of Nature as they configure an aesthetic play between the poles of sensory and transcendent sentimental experience.

The third part of this dissertation, which includes chapters VI, VII and VIII, is destined to the analysis of the traditional tropes and rhetorical references implicit in the depiction of the experiences of Nature and narrative of individual development; to the

⁸ BEACH, Joseph W.. **The Concept of Nature in the Nineteenth-Century English Poetry**. 1956, p. 38.

arrangement of sensory and sentimental images in relation to their re-elaboration by means of traditional allusions, tropes and symbols; and to the theoretical, educational, social, political and economic implications present in references that point to specific problems of the historical context in which Wordsworth lived. Thus, this final part has been divided into three sections: in the first place, the main naïve experiences referred to in the autobiographical account should be related to the elaboration of tropes and rhetorical suggestions available in the literary, philosophical, religious and scientific tradition of the Anglo-Saxon and Western cultures. Second, it has been shown how the rhetorical, tropological and symbolical lore identified in the deeper layers of the autobiography appears in the fabric of recollected events of life whose rhythm is dictated by the lyric mood aroused by sensory, sentimental and emotional affections. Finally, the autobiographical events should be related to the educational, social and political configuration that sets the subject's personal worldview (*Weltanschauung*) against the historical transformations of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. In this section, it has been carried out an inquiry concerning the function of the above-mentioned moments when the protagonist had been severed from Nature by the adverse powers derived from the social structure and historical dynamisms whose effect tended to dehumanize the subject.

The instances met in Cambridge, London and France – moments of deviation whose analysis responds to the theoretical elements that are discussed in the final part of this research – represent, or at least, bear some level of connection with certain factors of modern life that disturbed the hero as elements that affect the basic layers of the human subjectivity, bringing moral and aesthetic disorder to it. Wordsworth alludes to the Enlightenment-based pedagogic systems of the eighteenth century; to the effects of the Industrial Revolution and growing urban life; and to the tyrannical distortion of the ideals of the French Revolution into Terror, considered as treason to the values of humanity. The narrative in Books XII and XIII of Wordsworth's late return to Nature as he settles back in his native land indicates the instances of the effect of the modern society upon the human integrity. In Wordsworth's autobiographical story, recovering from his personal crisis and saving the human mind from those adversities have been a matter of recovering aesthetic sensibility, imaginative faculty, moral strength and human rectitude. The remedy for that situation lies in the healing effects of Nature to correct the human senses, feelings and thoughts, as well as her pedagogic agencies designed to provide a direct process of education to the human beings through the

meaningful, self-conscious experience of the natural objects – no matter if this cure by means of an integration with Nature consist in a naïve original notion or in a culturally inherited conception intentionally rehearsed in the rhetoric of autobiography.

Part I

Chapter I

1 The Experience of Nature and the Formative Process in *The Prelude*

1.1 Presenting *The Prelude*

The Prelude is Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, written to relate in a confessional manner the facts of Wordsworth's poetic life. The composition has been suggested by Coleridge, his friend and collaborator in the composition and publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*; and its structure recalls a poetical form developed in Coleridge's ode compositions that suggests the exchange of ideas between the two poets in an interaction which established the basis of the Romantic thought: the so called conversation poems: "I speak bare truth / As if alone to thee in private talk" (Book X, 372-373). As regards the subject matter, the poem is concerned with personal experiences lyrical in kind, yet it was composed as a narrative poem of epic extension, modeled in and in concurrence with John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, echoing in many passages the manner, phrase and cadence of his master. On the other hand, the narrative of *The Prelude* recalls the structure of the poetry of landscape and reflection, following the tradition of Thomson and Cowper, for whose lyrical speaker the images of Nature arouse thoughts and emotions. Its position in the epic tradition ensures the greatness, nobility and lofty conception of its theme: the history of Wordsworth's poetic education along the course of his personal development – the epic hero is now the poet himself. Nevertheless, its autobiographical content points to a specific literary form which characterizes *The Prelude* as "a fully developed poetic equivalent of two portentous innovations in prose fiction, of which the earliest examples had appeared in Germany only a decade or so before Wordsworth began to write his poem: the *Bildungsroman* [...] and the *Künstlerroman*"⁹.

⁹ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature.** 1973, p. 74.

In the core of Wordsworth's aesthetical project *The Prelude* was designed to be a preparatory work whose composition would serve to mature his power for a greater and more objective enterprise, the unfinished poem entitled *The Recluse*. Wordsworth represented the whole project within the analogy of a great gothic church, to which *The Prelude* was to be just the antechapel. *The Recluse* was planned to comprehend three parts, of which only the first book of the first part, e.g. the personal narrative called *Home at Grasmere*, and the second part, the more fictional poem named *The Excursion* were concluded. At the end of *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth addressed the verse part that was to announce the design of the whole project and later to be published in the Preface to *The Excursion*, in the edition of 1814, as the Prospectus to *The Recluse*. The whole writings were finished in 1814, yet Wordsworth spent much of his further poetic craft in the correction of his works.

It is commonly accepted that *The Prelude* is Wordsworth's best poetic achievement. Thus, it marks the highest point of Wordsworth's genius, in the sense that alongside with *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* it is the product of a powerful rebirth of poetic imagination and a full mastery of the proper style for the expression of his designed matter. Evidence of it is provided by Herbert Read's contrasting of the corresponding episodes in *The Prelude* with the early results of *An Evening Walk* (composed 1787-1789, published 1793) and *Descriptive Sketches* (composed 1791-1792, published 1793). Those pieces were written in heroic couplet, which reveals that at this time he is still attached to the eighteenth century tradition and reflects a poetic diction inherited from Pope. The *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude* make the double road character of aesthetic renovation-revolution, which led him to ground the typical Romantic poetry. In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, he proposes that "a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality, and in the multiplicity of its moral relations". Inspired by the democratic and revolutionary verve, Wordsworth linked the urgency of reform in poetry with the necessity of reforming society and its taste. Thus, he claims for the needs of giving "a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country", of determining "how far this taste is healthy or depraved". Therefore, he considers "pointing out in what manner the language and the human mind act and re-act on each

other” and “retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself”¹⁰.

1.2 The Poetic Education as Received from Nature

Wordsworth claims to have received his poetic education from Nature. *The Prelude* is designed to tell the story of Wordsworth’s own life, turning it into a great poetic fiction. However, this proposition concerns the chief happenings of his poetic life, and the narrative should be understood as a report of a series of fundamental events that represent experiences in which the autobiographical character undergoes a spiritual transformation of which, in retrospective meditation, the mature speaker is aware in the present of the narrative. The story of his life has been Wordsworth’s theme.

The first book of *The Prelude*, named Introduction – Childhood and Schoolltime, deals with the recollections from early life. The speaker:

endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods and fields.

(Book II, ll. 2-5).

This statement of intention indicates precisely a mode of life that propitiates a type of education turned to the development of passions and feelings for the natural objects. The expression “ways in which my childhood walked” implies a figure of speech, which connotes the pathways where the hero walked in childhood but also the objective (empirical) and subjective (mental) means through which he got to develop his sensibility along the personal events. Replacing his childhood for himself as the subject of the action the speaker equates his own personality with the course of his life, thus joining concrete experience with abstract notions of temporal experience, implying ontological sameness between himself in each stage of life and the phase itself in which he lived. In this movement of memory, the action represented by the verb “to walk” suggests the excursive process that made possible the formation of a poet through sensory and sentimental experience of the world without.

¹⁰ WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In WORDSWORTH, William. **The Poetical Works of Wordsworth**. HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). 1959, p. 734.

Conversely, the act of walking also implies that the hero stops for contemplation arrested by the charms and signification of natural spots. The formulation of the Romantic image is based on an attempt of the poet to achieve in the forms of familiar sceneries a trace of humanization that, emerging from recollection, could connect the subject to the place evoked by means of recalling deep passionate meanings, mainly those connected to and fuelled by the amalgamation of the speaker's own image with that of the place. Striving for a definition on the structure of the Nature imagery of Romanticism W.K. Wimsatt¹¹ proposes to sketch an answer for the question whether Romantic Nature poetry exhibits any imaginative structure which may be considered a special counterpart to a number of constituting aspects – a subject, simply considered, the natural world; a metaphysics of an animating principle; a special sensibility; and a theory of poetic imagination. According to his scheme, metaphysics has to do with a worldview shared among the Romantics, compatible with their kind of imagination which tends to see a deal of spiritual forces bound to the visible world and emanating from it. The sensibility has to do with that necessary “poetic quality”, i.e. “the poetic structure adequate to embody or objectify the new feeling”, for the generation of Wordsworth had the strength “to work upon the objects of their feelings a pattern of meaning which could speak for itself”.

The scholar explains that the complexity of the Romantic poets impels them to overcome the flatness of Hartleyan associationism, even departing from his ideas. Coleridge, for instance, was already concerned in 1796 “with the more complex ontological grounds of association, where mental activity transcends mere associative response through the appeal to the unifying activity of imagination”. The poets seek an indissoluble union between the intellectual and the material world, as Coleridge requires. Later in 1802, explains Wimsatt, in a letter to Southey he will be more emphatic in asserting that “the poet's heart and intellect should be [...] combined and unified with the great appearances in nature”, which implies that the Romantic poetry is essentially marked by the lyrical connection between the mood and the appearances in nature, so that the “descriptive details” of the world link to an intense “metaphoric coloring” which arouses intense and strong mood, feelings and states of mind inside the self.

¹¹ WIMSATT, W. H.. The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery, In: **English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism**. ABRAMS, Meyer H. (Edited by). 1957, p, 123-124.

One common theme both in Coleridge and in Wordsworth, as Wimsatt remarks, advanced in William Lisle Bowles' sonnets, is "the sweet scenes of childhood" reminded by the natural places that "have to be remembered to bring beguilement and melancholy". The presence of the scenery brings back remote moments from "the depth of memory". In this process, as we can imply from Wimsatt's analysis, the scenery acquires a special state since a past experience rises from the place, arousing the image of the past moment and "gleaming up" upon the lyrical speaker, so that the self fuses with the scene by the reminiscence of the gone by instant. On the one hand the landscape image flooded over the subject with intimate emotion; on the other hand, provoked by the intimation of the scene to recollect spontaneously meaningful moments from the past the subject projects images out of his memory on the place, just as happens in *Tintern Abbey*, where in a first moment the poet experiences the dazzle of the Wye, in order to recover subsequently the images and states of mind of his previous time there, projecting the images of those moments on the present place.

As Wimsatt argues regarding the structure of the Nature imagery, in the romantic perception the landscape is both "the occasion of reminiscence and the source of the metaphor by which reminiscence is described". Wimsatt asserts that among the Romantics "The metaphor [...] is scarcely noticed by the main statement of the poem". Since the "descriptive details" have been "invested [...] with significance"¹² Wimsatt demonstrates that such a particular feature was to become a dominant structure of Romantic poetic attitude, based on the suggestiveness rather than the open statement of similitude.

Wordsworth advocates for the soundness and richness of his breeding among natural things in his native region, composed of places whose sensory appeal and connection with the young Wordsworth's emotions bring them back to him in the forms of visitation and reminiscence. Nature provided the ideal elements for a powerful sensibility like his. From the vantage point of the mature poet, such a power has been blocked by a period of spiritual crisis and deadening mood, which preceded the present corresponding to the beginning of composition of *The Prelude*, which by its turn, coincides with the moment when the hero sets for good among the natural sceneries of his native country. As the winding ways of the narrative end up to reveal most of the composition of the poem coincides with the autobiographical moment when Wordsworth the poet starts to overcome his crisis through the definitive return to the

¹² The emphasis is mine.

Nature of the Lake District. The speaker experiments a double return that confers structure to the introduction of the poem: a walking journey through the countryside leading him to the cottage at Grasmere where he was supposed to settle after having escaped from the “vast city”, i.e. London; and a verbal journey through the scenes of infancy and childhood, boyhood, youth and adult life. From the report on his early life, he attained the end of reviving his mind with such “genial mood” needed to compose the story of his life. The restoration of creative power coincides with the autobiographical renewal which takes place with his living-symbolic flight from the “great city” in search of the ideal clime for the execution of the work to which, following his faith, he had been designed by vocation.

Situating the conception and composition of *The Prelude* in the course of Wordsworth’s autobiography, it is set in the phase when the speaker feels the tokens of recovering from the long spiritual crisis that disturbed his capacity to interpret the affections of Nature and draw her own passions. This is a crisis of imagination, as narrated in the Books XII and XIII, where the speaker gives an account of how his power had been impaired and how it has been restored, a process the speaker sums up telling that for a time he had:

Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed;
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity and God.
(Book XIV, ll. 199-205).

Projecting the image of home in his mind allowed the poet-wanderer to guide his steps towards that cottage where he meant to be designed to carry on his project in the harmonious presence of Nature, in order to transpose his plan from the ideal sphere into the hope of realization:

A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
(Book I, ll. 106-107).

Realizing there the imperfection in his theme as well as a mutual wanting in the work and in himself impairing the composition of the poem, the speaker recognizes the perplexing consequence of a poor feedback paid for so careful ministries and glorious breeding as he has found in Nature. Then the speaker makes an inquisition whose response is to reflect the type of relationship maintained with Nature during his early

life. He addresses the Derwent River, the stream that runs behind the Wordsworth's House, where Wordsworth had his birth at Cockermouth, asking:

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams?

(Book I, ll. 269-274).

Yet this question might be rephrased in general terms that orientate Wordsworth's arguments along the whole narrative: Was it for this result that Nature dispensed such a high education for the poet? The answer should be "No". Nature's instruction can only lead to the formation of a powerful mind and to the execution of a glorious and durable work. The river provides such elements to young Wordsworth's sensibility ready to be addressed by the faculty of imagination, bringing him:

Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

(Book I, ll. 279-281).

Wordsworth created the poetic model for a naïve belief in the power of Nature's forms to provide for the formation of the human spirit. As he conceives, Nature informs and feeds the faculty of imagination, whose fitting presence can be recognized spontaneously through the emotions, thoughts and dreams. The correspondence between the external influence of Nature and the internal activity of the imagination may be acknowledged through a parallel syntax describing the course of a stream from the remotest places into the most accessible sites:

We have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature,

(Book XIV, ll. 198-194).

Imagination grows because of the interfusion of sensory, emotional, spiritual and intellectual affections from Nature's elements. Nevertheless, it is through imagination that the poet is able to converse with Nature, to interpret and understand her language.

1.3 Nature's Extrinsic Affections: Intercourse with Fairy Powers and the Ministries of Beautiful and Sublime

An eight year-old boy, Wordsworth was sent with his brothers to the Vale of Hawkshead, in order to attend the Grammar School. There the boys used to be let free to range the region in sports where the contact with external Nature stored their minds with joy and emotion. Beside the sensory and sentimental affections, there Wordsworth recognizes the intervention of fairy or daemonic powers in the natural environment. Those manifestations are the agents through which Nature exerts the passions of beauty and fear upon the subject's sensibility:

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear;
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale to which erelong
We were transplanted – there we were let loose
For sports of wider range.

(Book I, ll. 301-306).

Of his boyhood at Hawkshead Wordsworth recollects three remarkable moments of instruction by the ministries of Nature, either empirical or mythical-symbolical: I) the night ramblings to entrap birds on the open heights; II) the habit of roving over the ravens' nest on the dangerous ridges; III) the nightly episode when the boy found a boat on the shore and took it to sail on the lake. In the recollection of living actions among natural spaces and objects, when the subject communes with the external world through the objective impressions, Wordsworth recognizes the addition of a metaphorical, symbolical and mythical significance: the representation, in the first plan, of natural affections through which the conscious and unconscious layers of the protagonist's subjectivity are built received the addition of a second plan of rhetorical, tropological and allusive implications – in this case the speaker's poetic language remits to the confessional tradition. All acts of living experience, which were stored in the hero's mind, were troubled by the consciousness of the boy's wicked character and of misdemeanours, which awoke a living, punishing Nature that rewarded his consciousness with terror. The interventions through fear serve to create that rational principle that combines and organizes the speaker's thoughts and feelings. That is what Wordsworth uses to call "inscrutable workmanship", an emotional activity through which Nature manages to balance man's spiritual complexion in order to compose his character, subjecting the material part of the human Being by the rules of the immaterial, transcendent component:

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark

Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, makes them cling together
 In one society. How strange that all
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
 Within my mind, should e'er had borne a part,
 And that a needful part, in making up
 The calm existence that is mine when I
 Am worthy of myself.

(Book I, ll. 340-350).

Those episodes of visitation to the quiet seclusion of Nature disturbing her peace caused the young boy to get the acquaintance with Nature's uncanny aspects, bringing forth a pagan conception of her living powers and mysterious creatures and spirits. Sailing on the lake, the boy reports the scary occasion in which he saw a huge peak lifting his head as if alive to pursue him. After that his mind became peopled with "Unknown modes of being" (Book I, l. 393) and "huge and mighty forms, that do not live / Like living men" (Book I, ll. 398-399). Such gloomy and haunting aspects perceived or imagined in the presence of Nature, especially in the strange manifestations that seem to rule over isolated spaces during sole hours, arises a mood akin to that caught in the magical and mysterious tales read in ancient myths and romance.

Stephen Prickett distinguishes in such moments as the bird's entrapping at night, the boat stealing and the hanging on the crags above the raven's nest a sort of "moral ambivalence" related to what Wordsworth himself calls obstinate questionings of the sense and outward things. That sense of ambivalence follows the loss of the pastoral joy and innocence that appears in the unity of childhood or fair seedtime. The scholar notices that co-extensive with the "ecstatic animal vitality" are the feelings of "terror and guilt" ostensibly for the alluded moments, which are but "out of proportion for the nature of the deed". For the scholar, Wordsworth's passages of fear "are the very opposite of innocence". He argues that "What makes the child in Wordsworth's eyes the 'best philosopher' is, on the contrary, his capacity to be 'haunted for ever by the eternal mind': the openness to irrational fear in the face of a felt moral (or rather numinous) judgment of a 'living universe'"¹³.

In a similar sense to Weiskel's notion of "naturalization of the archaic, daemonic, divine sources of power", Prickett conceives these haunting experiences as "moments when the child encounters inarticulately *values* outside himself". Hence,

¹³ PRICKETT, Stephen. **Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth**. 1969, p. 122-123.

“The terrifying moments of insight with which Wordsworth is struggling is of man’s moral interdependence with nature”¹⁴. Prickett argues that:

The impact of these ‘unknown modes of being’ on Wordsworth’s growth is, he discovers on looking back, much more significant than the ‘simple creed of childhood’ – the original schema which he applied to his memory. His first naïve and conventional impression is found wanting, and has to be modified on two levels. On the first, and simplest, he succeeds in isolating the actual ambivalent moments of ‘renovating power’ from the golden haze of nostalgia which surrounds them; simultaneously, the simple amoral idyllic picture of childhood bliss has been modified to a much more complex moral awareness. [...] Just as all sense-perception is ambiguous, so too memory is capable of a variety of conflicting or equivocal interpretations¹⁵.

From Prickett’s considerations, I derive the implication that even though perception and memory might be ambiguous, the act of recollection and the content of remembrance cannot be created out of nothing. Although they might bear a range of interpretations linked to the adult poet’s mental schemes, recollection and remembrance imply the existence of previous moments in life whose meaningful image urges to be brought back to the subject’s consciousness, because the subject needs to feel the emotion and face the meaning of the original experience again.

Therefore, any critic must pay attention to a more basic and elementary fact in the boy’s experience. Before embarking in an attempt to identify what those presences or modes of being signify from the intellectual perspective of the full grown poet – for doing so we run the risk of falsifying the manifestations of Nature by applying abstract or cultural inherited notions to an experience which seems to start as elemental – we must trust in the basic impulses caused by the poet’s witnessing representation in which he makes the reader feel so close as possible the same feeling as the boy had experimented in those situations.

Thus, in order to understand what Wordsworth implied by those presences or modes of being we must depart from a faithful empathy with the elemental feelings and affections attributed to the boy in the middle of the natural world. As we may draw from Wordsworth’s description of his nocturnal adventures, the boy felt fear, and throughout the actions narrated and scenes depicted the reader realizes how that feeling was produced and how it acted upon the boy’s brain and body, leading his reaction from feeling to action, from getting scared to trembling and finally fleeing from the site.

Then the question about what might have caused fear in the boy leads us to suggest that it implies, for the basic level of the subjective constitution, the most

¹⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 123.

¹⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 124.

naturalistic causes: the boy's physical response to the environmental Nature, the natural motions of the elements and, finally, the affection of fear, after Burke's definition, as the natural effect raised by night over the human affections. By understanding this basic response between subject and objective world, we may have a point of departure to interpret the poetic treatment that Wordsworth dispensed to those incidents. Bearing this assumption in mind we can make a proper sense of the interpretations proposed by Newlin, Hough, Read, Durrant, Bloom and Prickett.

The primary kinds of response given by the boy are sensuous and sentimental, of animal-like, muscular character, so that the reader must understand the image of the hero simply as a child involved in childish sports, rambling and hunting among concrete, exciting and haunting sceneries. Secondly, the reader might see the boy analogically and metaphorically as a predatory animal seeking in the wild after a prey. The snare, as an instrument of human manufacturing, a device for capturing animals, in one sense suggests the identification in Nature between the boy and the predatory animals, and on the other side, indicates the human superiority over the animals based on his capacity to create and use artifacts to supply his needs. Like an animal, the boy feels initially a perfect harmony with the compass of Nature, and no fear resulted from that. In the second moment, when the speaker affirms to have heard low breathings coming after him in the hills, sounds of undistinguishable motion, and silent steps on the turf (Book I, ll. 322-325) fear comes upon him. In the level of sense association we may infer that from predatory animal he turned to the role of prey and got the inner feeling of strange beings chasing after him: such impressions caused Wordsworth to suggest the identification between the gloomy aspects recognized in outward appearances and the moral (guilty or sorrowful) issues that might have disturbed either the young hero or the mature speaker.

Nonetheless, we assume that, as a primary issue, the boy must actually have felt and sensed some motion at the level of sensation, which unleashed the assault of fear – a sort of sensation coming from the motion of Nature without. Harold Bloom would be prompt to admit this idea: “We make a mistake if we read this as a projection of the child's conscience upon the external world. That he heard it is warrant enough for his reality”¹⁶. Considering that he heard something in a very indefinite way, we might draw a reasonable explanation from the proper characteristics of the natural events: the motions perceived might probably have belonged to the effects of the wind blowing

¹⁶ BLOOM, Harold. *The Visionary Company*. 1971, p. 147.

along the plain, swinging and rustling the branches of the trees and waving the turf or even carrying dry leaves along the ground, producing sounds akin to steps, breathing and panting. In the darkness, the hero could not see what produced those motions.

Thirdly, we may consider that before the passion of guilt could be projected on the natural appearances – as Newlin, Hough and Durrant would claim – the primary affection of fear must have been felt along the visceral layers. The natural connections between fear and the night, with the spontaneous intensification of that feeling through the action of darkness, have been explained by Edmund Burke in the following principle: “Obscurity is more affecting to the imagination than clearness”¹⁷.

Besides these pagan, fairy modes of being, which the speaker fancied to have encountered among the sceneries of Nature, Wordsworth also invokes the pantheistic principle that supports the intellectual relationship among man, Nature and the Universal Mind:

Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of Thought,
That givest to forms and images breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul.
(Book I, ll. 401-407).

At this point, the boy gets to know the spiritual principle that animates all forms of the outer world. The intercourse with the Universal Soul in the affections of lonely and agitated places – the gloomy hills and the margin of the trembling lake – serves to purify the elements of thought and feeling, thus elevating the mind. Also during the rapturous time of winter sports when the icy surroundings echoed back the boys’ uproar Wordsworth had the chance to contemplate the Wisdom of the Universe. The speaker also exhorts the Presences, Visions and Souls of Nature for the ministry they employed haunting him among his sports, and impressing “the characters / Of danger and desire” (Book I, ll. 471-472) upon the outer forms of the natural places. In this phase, Nature manifests her pedagogic powers infusing the earth’s visible surface with intellectual terror, inspiring awe before an organized world, which nevertheless resembles the force of the original chaos:

And thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?

¹⁷ BURKE, Edmund. *Philosophical Inquiry on the Forms of Beautiful and Sublime*. 1975, p 52.

(Book I, ll. 472-475).

Thus far the speaker described how:

Nature by extrinsic passion first
 Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair
 And made me love them,
 (Book I, ll. 545-547).

Beside the experience of fear and beauty, brought by means of true or illusory encounters that hint at the haunting and possession by mysterious entities in Nature, the speaker recollects a second kind of experience that he got walking in solitude, through either sensation or contemplation. It is a double experience, which consists in a complementary play of emotion and calm. From the habit of observing both the motions of the elements and their quiet, slow and durable images the speaker registers how “pleasures” and “joys of subtler origin” have formed feelings within his body and soul that indicate the subjective union with the world in passionate mood:

I have felt,
 Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
 Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
 Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
 An intellectual charm; that calm delight
 Which, if I err not, surely must belong
 To those first-born affinities that fit
 Our new existence to existing things,
 And in our dawn of being, constitute
 The bond of union between life and joy.
 (Book I, ll. 549-558).

Contemplating the quietness and motion in the outward elements the subject feels the bond between himself and the world: through sensory and sentimental contact with the natural elements, the speaker recognizes, on one hand, the transcendent plan of an intelligent and powerful mind, the spiritual design of the Creator; and on the other hand, the sympathy between man and the other livings and objects present in Nature, also the tokens linking the present things with the eternal forms set in the beginning, since the Creation. This inner play of calm and emotion can be recognized in the changing forms, shades and images imprinted on the landscapes along the course of the seasons, feeding the speaker’s memory, as a child, with the sense of a continuous aesthetic craft exerted on the material face of earth by a transcendent artistic intellect. The enchanting impression of such a model constitutes an early and significant part of the speaker’s poetic education and comes to be remembered by the mature poet as if the essential creative bonds between Nature’s agencies and the poet’s consciousness were pictoric in kind. For Wordsworth those images and forms will be remembered and acquire, through

association, a higher meaning due to the feelings that they convey to man's heart. Essentially, these feelings end in joy, bliss and happiness that dignify the impressions of those objects and scenes. Thus, even if the precise idea of what was felt had been lost, the "force / Of obscure feelings representative / Of things forgotten" (Book I, ll. 605-607) remains and links the forms of those objects and scenes to the poet's "affections" (Book I, l. 612).

1.4 Passions that Came Unsought and Nature Sought by her Own Sake: Palpable Access of Knowledge and the Register of Permanent Relations

In the beginning of the second book of *The Prelude*, the speaker emphasizes the attention paid to the description of the process through which he got to love the external objects of Nature – rivers, woods and fields – during the adventures of childhood. Following his own declaration, the passion was "sustained as might befall / By nourishment that came unsought" (Book II, l. 7). Usually Wordsworth and the boys of his fellowship gave little conscious notice to Nature's motions, actions and reactions, for they were all the time entertained in their own games, in a way isolated – in a joyous, imaginative world of childhood integrity – by the noise they used to make, as the speaker confirms:

for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult.

(Book II, ll. 7-9).

This notion of spontaneous breeding is related to a mode of living enjoyed by Wordsworth as a boy together with his brothers and schoolfellows. Wordsworth endowed the simplicity of such a way of life proper of childhood and boyhood with the underlying ideal of society, whose essential bond is love, signaled by the delight of being together, playing outdoors. The joy aroused during those group sports opened the canal for the spontaneous breeding of the inner passions by the external affections. Many a time prolonging their games until late at night, the boys' activities used to produce such a noise that the speaker depicts as a continued "revelry" and a "loud uproar" (Book II, ll. 14-15). Even without realizing this fact, the mood and temperament of the boys had been affected by Nature through the transmission of certain seasonal

dispositions. This is hinted at by the correspondence between the external motions proper of each season and the quality of the agitation moving the boys' sports and reflected in the strength of the noise they made according to the particular period of the year. The uproar appears stronger during the period covered by school toil, since autumn to spring, with maxim strength during the frosty season. Yet when summer came bringing the half-year vacation, the external motions affected the boys with an appeasing mood, altering their dizzy and noisy behaviour into calmer spirits:

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round
 With giddy motion. But the time approached
 That brought with it a regular desire
 For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms
 Of Nature were collaterally attached
 To every scheme of holiday delight
 And every boyish sport, less grateful else
 And languidly pursued.

(Book II, ll. 47-54).

The boys' pastime during summer was to sweep across the lake of Windermere coming to land on each of the three islands: the first, for the song of its birds; the second, for the flowers spread on its green extension; the third, for the ruin of a shrine once dedicated to St. Mary.

A second kind of adventure performed by the boys during the summer consisted in, having been returned to school from the half-yearly holiday, whenever they had to buy provisions in the inn, they used to get out of the way in order to visit a distant site, viz, some old temple where the Druids worshipped or the ruins of the ancient abbey built in honour of St. Mary in the Vale of Nightshade. Those were scenes where the speaker felt a holy peace, filling his spirit with calm.

One remarkable time refers to once when they played on the green plain above the garden of an old tavern in the mid of Winander's eastern shore. There the "bursts of glee / Made all the mountains ring" (Book II, ll. 163-164) through half an afternoon. When they were returning home, they left the so-called Minstrel of the troop on the shore of one island and sailed forth listening to the music he drew out of his flute. The joint calm brought by the effects of evening and music prompted the speaker's heart to be invaded by the beauty of the sky and his mind by the stillness of the water. With the power of myth associated with the power of contemplation, music and evening brought the subject into altered states of consciousness: into the subconscious sphere of the trance and the imaginary sphere of the dream. It resulted in an increase of love for the visible things:

Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
 Daily the common range of visible things
 Grew dear to me:

(Book II, ll. 175-177).

The speaker then gives an account of the kind of love he started to feel for the natural elements like the sun and the moon. From that moment on, he began to love those things no longer because of the vital power they exert upon the living things, but because of the beautiful and enchanting images they compose in association with the surroundings in Wordsworth's native land. Furthermore, the effect when the sun or the moon was beheld touching the surrounding hills caused such "motions of the sense" (Book I, l. 551) in which the speaker's body seems to be immediately animated by the joy brought by contemplation. The images of brightness seem to have the above-mentioned "intellectual charm" (Book I, l. 553), a philosophical idea which moves man's sensibility with joy, bliss and happiness. These types of feelings establish and signalize the bond of communication of man with the Universal Source of Intellect, God, the Creator or the Uncreated Being.

Together with the sequence of dizzy and noisy games during the periods of hard weather, and with those sports of calmer delight during the summer vacations, in which the love for Nature seems to have come unsought, on the one hand; and on the other hand, with those encounters in which the mysterious forces of Nature haunted the boy in his night ramblings, where a terrorizing effect seems to have resulted from the boy's wicked provocations; come those moments of contemplative solitude in which Nature presented her beauties to the protagonist as a gift for a still not conscious desire to contemplate her charms, whose effects are those "vulgar joys" before the bright scenes which made the senses move according to the rhythm of contemplation, which nonetheless advance those moments that I will venture to call "sought grace", in which moved by patient desire the protagonist seeks the revelation of tokens of the Universal Spirit through the natural forms. However, up to this stage in boyhood, Nature had been sought unconsciously, as if by a physical, animal-like instinct, only for the external beauties of rural objects like hills, lakes and woods, and the love for those things was provided or infused as a gift, according to the speaker's own statement, by nourishment that came unsought, as a side but powerful affection drawn from the joy of their boyish sports among natural sceneries.

From this phase on, when Wordsworth was passing from mature boyhood into youth, he started to become conscious of his mutual relationship with Nature and started

to search Nature as a major purpose, sure to find in her the main ground of his aesthetic formation. The main cause through which the boy used to be attracted toward Nature had been specifically the fascination exerted by the rural objects. At this point in the story of his life, the speaker starts to develop the awareness of a greater impulse to follow Nature as a conscious act of knowledge, to contemplate her magnificence for her own, ideal essence:

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

(Book II, ll. 198-203).

Those half-conscious moments of contemplation in solitude have been preceded by an unconscious type of contact in which Nature – the Metaphysical principle of spiritual and intellectual animation – affects the subject not through the beauties infused into the material forms accessible via senses, but in its transcendental essence through a direct and original source of feeling. Wordsworth believes this high sensibility to belong to the infant baby:

Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep,
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his mother's eye!
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.

(Book II, ll. 235-240).

Wordsworth understands that in the baby's veins is "interfused" "the filial bond / Of Nature that connects him with the world" (Book II, ll. 243-244). The baby partakes that which the speaker calls that "calm delight" which belongs to those "first-born affinities" that fit man's "new existence" to the existing things and form "the bond of union between life and joy" (Book I, ll. 553-558). In this sense, Wordsworth considers the baby in arms:

An inmate of this active universe:
For feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.

(Book II, ll. 254-260).

This possibility of access and contact with the High Spiritual and Intellectual Principle consists, following the speaker's account, in "the first / Poetic spirit of our human life"

(Book II, ll. 260-261), which Wordsworth strived to strengthen and sustain along his whole poetic life. This is the starting point for his genial sensibility and poetic education through Nature: the ground for the growth of his mind as depicted in his autobiographical poem.

In Book II of *The Prelude* Wordsworth claims that joy and love of Nature are a direct extension of the child's intercourse of touch, the same by which he held contact with his mother's heart:

I was left alone,
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why,
The props of my affections were remov'd,
And yet the building stood, as if sustain'd
By its own spirit! All that I beheld
Was dear to me, and hence to finer influxes
The mind lay open, to a more exact
And close communion.

(Book II, ll. 277-284).

In this sense, Coleridge states a similar relation of touch and vision in the development of the self in contact with Nature:

The first education which we receive, that from our mothers, is given to us by touch: the whole of its progress is nothing more than [...] an extended touch by promise. The sense itself, the sense of vision itself is only acquired by a continued recollection of touch¹⁸.

According to Prickett, Wordsworth's conception of Imagination at this point can be defined as "the total contact with the external world". The love for his mother was extended to the perception of the natural world, and here the poet could distinguish the two levels of experience which characterize Imagination: sensation and emotion, which were naturally experienced by the child as a unity. The unity of sense and feeling is extended in the moments of experience into "physical perception" and into "growing consciousness". Wordsworth, like Coleridge "was looking for an intellectual framework that would formalize his vivid intuitive and observational grasp of mental development". The scholar complements his statement that "here we can see Wordsworth's idea of the Imagination in the actual process of being formulated – as a direct response to what he saw and knew". Prickett verifies a Hartleyan cast in Wordsworth's explicitness of observation: "Hartley, like Wordsworth, insisted that a growing knowledge of the 'external' world went hand-in-hand with the growth of 'internal' consciousness", a recalling of the Associationist idea of the "inexorable

¹⁸ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. *Philosophical Lectures*. p. 115.

growth of spirituality from simple sensations which was [...] ‘the necessary consequence of passing through this world’¹⁹.

The workings of the seasons in their visible access are endowed with more than the external power of affecting the human mind through sensorial impressions: they are tokens of the transcendental principle, and convey through the “motions of the sense” an idea of the high intellectual principle ordering the Universe. Observing the seasons during that passing stage from boyhood to youth Wordsworth recovers the powerful sensibility whose ground was set in infancy through “intercourse of touch”. This intellectual power of the mind which keeps it open to finer influxes and closer communion with Nature became a conscious potency in youth. Later on Wordsworth will call this power Imagination; and the sentiment that stimulates the poet to go out there in search of Nature and fuels his intuitive and passionate comprehension of her elements is what the speaker is to define in the Conclusion as “intellectual love”. Love opens the sensorial and sentimental canals of the youth’s mind to commune with the intellectual and sentimental values charming the sensible – visible, audible and tactile – motions of the natural elements, hidden in the cosmic order and energy of the seasons:

The seasons came,
And every season wheresoe’er I moved
Unfolded transitory qualities,
Which but for this most watchful power of love,
Had been neglected; left a register
Of permanent relations, else unknown.
(Book II, ll. 288-293).

At that time, the youth, attracted by the charms brought by the seasons, walked in solitude to pursue the active principles in Nature that elevate his mood under the silent stars or provided him with visionary power through the roaring sound of a fierce storm. In such contemplative activities before calm and tempestuous times Wordsworth recognizes the “hallowed and pure motions of the sense” that “owe an intellectual charm” and the “calm delight” proper of those original “affinities” that fit man’s existence to the objective world, and hence constitute the principle through which, in experiencing the relationship with the outer world along the events of life, the subject can be imbued with feelings, especially joy:

’Twere long to tell
What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
And what the summer shades, what day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and waking thought,
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth

¹⁹ PRICKETT, Stephen. **Coleridge and Wordsworth**: The Poetry of Growth. 1970, p. 90-92.

To feed the spirit of religious love
 In which I walked with Nature.
 (Book II, ll. 353-358).

The episodes in question represent that which I defined as sought grace. In them Wordsworth reveals the essence of the pleasure contained in the contemplation of Nature, the principle behind the feelings roused by man's relationship with outer objects, the nature of "Those human sentiments that make this earth / So dear" (Book II, ll. 422-423). This essential principle of pleasure before the Beauty and the Sublime concerns the "bond of union between life and joy" (Book I, l. 558) and consists in a perceptive and sentimental mediation through which both the material and transcendental essences of things are captured by, transferred to and translated into the feelings inside the human being:

And not alone,
 'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
 And tranquil scenes, that universal power
 And fitness in the latent qualities
 And essences of things, by which the mind
 Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
 Came strengthened with a superadded soul,
 A virtue not its own.

(Book II, ll. 323-340).

Wordsworth draws from the external motions the intuition of a transcendental element kindred to that intellectual essence ruling the human mind; and conceives the essence of Nature as a higher Mind or Intellectual Soul governing the material forms, hence, from the vantage point of the speaker in *The Prelude*, amid calm or motion the poet is that man able to recognize the "universal power" which establishes the connections between man and things, for the human feelings are the correspondent of the essence and qualities of the objective world.

The correspondence between Nature and the poet's mind concerns the close kinship between Nature's Soul and the human soul. The most poetic workings of the human soul manifest themselves in those states of mind close to sleep and the dreams, in which, no matter the stage of life development he finds himself in, man resembles the most the type of sensibility represented by the baby. It is useful to remember that the Derwent River blending his murmurs with the nurse's song sent a voice that flowed along the baby's dreams and made ceaseless music that composed his thoughts (Book I, ll. 269-281). It works as an echo of his constant need to go back home. Besides, it is when sunk to sleep in his mother's arms that with his soul the baby communes with the eternal essence of the world in her feelings (Book II, ll. 233-244). That kinship consists

in that, as well as Nature is endowed with creative power, so the human soul is creative, engaging both man and the objective world in the same context involved by the act of beholding, thus blending the visible (outward) scene with the personal (inward) emotion it aroused, for the acts of seeing and feeling unite man and world in one only aesthetic act. And it is most creative as the outward senses enter into a dormant state that activates the inner intuitions of the soul. Contemplating a scene of extreme quietness, the speaker does not know what source might have originated the spectacle he saw: if it was a work of Nature or if it comes from his own soul, a doubt resulting from the correspondence between the calm in the world without and the sleepy disposition inside the subject:

Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.

(Book II, ll. 348-352).

Wordsworth advocates for the strength of his creative mind in one habit which was most remarkable as his seventeenth year approached, viz, the continuous search for:

that interminable building reared
By observations of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To passive minds.

(Book II, ll. 383-386).

In his passage to youth Wordsworth presented a high maturity of poetic sensibility and genial mind that enabled him to translate the natural motions into sentiments, to recognize the inner passions inherent in the dispositions of the outward objects given to the senses, and to perceive and intuit the intellectual enchantments with which he identifies the presence of the spiritual Being animating the created things either moving or in stillness:

From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;

(Book II, ll. 397-402).

Nature had fed Wordsworth's "lofty speculations" (Book II, l. 448) and in her the speaker announces to have found "A never-failing principle of joy / And purest passion" (Book II, ll. 450-451).

Completing his seventeenth year of age Wordsworth was sent to Cambridge. There, between the very beginning of the school year, when everything dazzled him with novelty, and the period of hard studious toil, it is possible to infer that the youth's faculty reached a climax in terms of visionary power. The speaker tells how, many times leaving the surrounding of the college and walking into the fields, he tested his mind having the original strength of his sensibility confirmed:

Oft when the dazzling show no longer new
 Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit
 My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves
 And as I paced alone the level fields
 Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
 With which I had been conversant, the mind
 Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
 With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.
 At least I more distinct recognized
 Her native instincts:

(Book III, ll. 90-99).

If in his passage to youth the protagonist had attained the power to intuit "the sentiment of Being" spread among the natural things, so that Nature bred his "lofty speculations", at Cambridge he "looked for universal things" (Book III, l. 106). In those walks of which the speaker gives an account the youth attained moments of higher vision where, looking outward, he identified in the images of earth and sky the characters of Paradise and Heaven; or turning the mind inward, felt the presences of the transcendental Being that animates the human soul, in her relationships with temporal things, with elements from Eternity:

Incumbencies more awful, visitings
 Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
 (Book III, ll. 90-99).

Wordsworth conceives this visionary power as the higher goal in the education of the poet's mind and source of poetry. The speaker defends the content of his visions as "prophecy", "things viewed / By poets in old time" (Book III, ll. 149-150). The youth seeks to attain "such community with highest truth" (Book III, l. 123) beyond the limits of thought or consciousness, in which he intuits the moral feelings emanated out of the natural forms and the soul pervading the material objects. In this sense, Wordsworth affirms the sublime power of the mind to partake with Nature of the process of creation of the things it beholds. Through imagination, the poet helps Nature to create the scene contemplated. Thus, the world observed belongs to the speaker's own mind, as he takes it for a half-creation of his own faculty:

I made it, for it only lived to me,

And to the God who sees into the heart.
(Book III, ll. 142-143).

By the assurance of having attained this high faculty through which his senses – which the speaker represents by the “bodily eye” – scrutinize the essential foundations intrinsic in the external elements, the speaker believes to have:

retraced my life
Up to an eminence, and told a tale
Of matters which not falsely may be called
The glory of my youth.
(Book III, ll. 167-170).

Wordsworth’s ideas on Nature have been filtrated by his conceptions about his own mind, in the sense that everything he tells about the natural objects is reflected within himself:

Of genius, power,
Creation and divinity itself
I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What passed within me.
(Book III, ll. 170-173).

Meyer H. Abrams²⁰ and Stephen Prickett²¹ represent a critical point of view which claims for the central Romantic worldview a shift of emphasis from the primacy of the objective forms in the exterior world mimetically apprehended by the artist to the inner processes in the mind as the emotional and intellectual content in the poet urging its expression, especially having the beautiful forms of the external Nature as stimuli. A characteristic trace which both scholars highlight either in Poetry or in Poetics is the usage of the forms and processes of Nature as analogies or symbol for the structure and inner activities of the mind. Abrams proposes the balance between the external matter of Nature and the internal matter of the mind, the combination of objective and subjective data. Stephen Prickett claims Isaac Newton’s scientific influence on the Romantic thought. He focuses on the influence of Newton’s *Optics* as a paradigmatic work in that it brought a shift in the way man observed Nature, making possible for the poets to require that the properties seen in the world dwell not only in the external forms but also depends on the contributive counterpart of the beholder’s perceptive faculties. In this sense, the qualities perceived in the objective world would not reside in the objects out there, but in the active – sentient – relationship of man and Nature.

Up to this point in the narrative Wordsworth relates the steps with which his mind ascended to its climax. From now on he starts to report how the life at Cambridge

²⁰ ABRAMS, Meyer H. **The Mirror and the Lamp**. 1953.

²¹ PRICKETT, Stephen. **Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth**. 1970.

also contributed for his “Imagination” to sleep, even though “not utterly” (Book III, l. 227-228). Then, as the speaker represents his situation by means of analogy, he compares himself to a traveler who, I dare say, from the height of Universal Nature descends into the “populous plain” of social and human attractions and studious occupations. Therefore the youth could spare few opportunities for contemplative walk in solitude, for most of his time had been spent in toil or wasted in “unworthy vanities” (Book III, l. 320). The youth’s lot was a neglect of Nature, hence:

The memory languidly revolved, the heart
Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
(Book III, ll. 329-331).

The report of his life at Cambridge both marks the height of Wordsworth’s poetic imagination as to the communion with universal things; and signalizes the motif of the great crisis of poetic imagination that resulted from the conflicts which went with the failure of the ideal of the French Revolution. In this work, I prefer to focus on the spiritual aspect of that crisis instead of the political one. I argue that this crisis of imagination has much to do with the natural development of the human spirit, with the natural process through which having reached adulthood the human sensibility tends to go weaker along the course of life:

how awful is the might of souls,
And what they do within themselves
While yet the yoke of earth is new to them, the world
Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
(Book III, ll. 177-180).

The power of imagination to commune with the transcendental elements goes weaker as the body ages, for Wordsworth hints at a conception according to which the infant baby has the imparted power to commune with the Creator, whereas the human being goes losing this strength as life goes on, hence attaching man more and more to earth and the material, external part of the world.

1.5 The Return to the Native Land: The Rising of the Former Passions with Nature Restoring Imagination

After eight months of study in Cambridge, Wordsworth was released for the summer vacation and returned to visit his native land. His destination was the Vale of

Hawkshead, precisely the cottage of Anne Tyson, the old woman who lodged him and other boys during his school time. The want of leisure, the engagement in social activities and mundane vanities, and finally the learning regime conceded little time to devote to Nature and poetic activities. Those impediments set his imagination into that which the speaker called “deep vacation”. The signs of this crisis appear symbolically during his journey back; and analogically during the welcoming reception by his “old Dame” and salutation of the dwelling places and things. The protagonist crossed “a dreary moor” and climbed “a bare ridge” (Book IV, ll. 2;3), images that allude to the mythical commonplaces in which the moor associates the ideas of darkness and sorrow; whereas the ridge suggests the Biblical images of a prophet or patriarch climbing the mountain seeking to get illumination. On the top of the ridge Wordsworth caught a sudden glimpse of the bed of Windermere lighted by the noon sun. Having arrived, he was received by the old woman who guided him along the domestic environment. There, approaching the brook, the youth scorned at the stream which “dimple down” into a paved channel “(Without an effort and without a will)” (Book IV, l. 55), mocking of it for its passive surrender to man’s domination. But then the speaker recognized in the brook an emblem of his own situation, whose creative imagination had been tied by the rigorous discipline of doctrines and labour imposed by the College. Once more in the dear presence of Nature, the native clime brought spontaneous tokens of recovery through the recollection of the protagonist’s old joys among those places, as well as his early contemplative power and poetic rehearsals. The renewal comes with the thankfulness with which the speaker received those joys. When he lied on his old bed, the tall ash outside the chamber window reminded him of the way he used to hear the beats of rain and wind; and, at night, to look at the full moon through the boughs of the tree swinging with the breeze. In seeing the house’s dog again the youth was reminded of the time:

when first
 The boyish spirit flagged and day by day
 Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
 The fermentation and the vernal heat
 Of poesy, affecting private shades
 Like a sick Lover,

(Book IV, ll. 100-105).

During his boyhood and early youth, accompanied by this dog, the protagonist used to busy himself with verses during long walks, sauntering along the fields and public

ways. The memory of those meditative walks kindled the youth's heart to do them again, thus reviving his mind:

Those walks in all their freshness now came back
Like a returning Spring.

(Book IV, ll. 136-137).

This impulse led the protagonist to make his formerly habitual walk around the lake again, and his feelings of joy and happiness awake the poetic spirit seeking Nature's universal power in his mind:

When first I made
Once more the circuit of our little lake,
If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine,
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.

(Book IV, ll. 137-141).

That moment set the speaker free from the impediments blocking his mind, and allowed him to enter into such a mood that appeased his senses before the external scene and elevated his soul to achieve a higher vision and communication with the transcendental spheres of the Universal Being:

Gently did my soul
Put off her veil, and self-transmuted, stood
Naked, as in the presence of the God.

(Book IV, ll. 150-152).

That moment lasted until the youth had a visionary glimpse of how life pervades the human mind, how the lofty Soul informs her so as to allow man to perform works of higher worth; and there stayed musing until darkness spread over the scenery.

In the same period the speaker reports a number of transformations in his mind. First, he claims to have felt fresh feelings for "human Life" (Book IV, l. 192), observed in the daily life of those known people whose occupations he used to love. In this sense, the youth manifests a certain pride about what he calls a "subtler sense" (Book IV, l. 209), a deeper skill to observe, interpret and understand the kinds of thought, feeling or passion stamped on the faces of common people, such as the woodman and the shepherd, now contemplated with "clearer knowledge" (Book IV, l. 214). Especially, the manners of his Old Dame were observed with "new delight" (Book IV, l. 216).

Besides, the protagonist started to feel at this same time a sentiment that he called a "human-heartedness" about objects loved only in relation to his "private being". Objects formerly considered for what they meant to the protagonist's individual self, have now been considered by carrying along a sense of humanity, thus rousing a

“pensive feeling”: the natural objects such as the trees, the mountains, the brooks and the stars, which used to inspire those passions of the sublime, awe and terror, due to the haunting power exerted during his boyish adventures, serve in youth to inspire enthusiasm, delight and hope, drawn from a sense of enduring power which linked their life to eternity, overcoming the forces of perishability:

Whatever shadings of mortality,
 Whatever imports from the world of death
 Had come among these objects heretofore,
 Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong,
 Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings
 Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way
 In later youth to yearnings of a love
 Enthusiastic, to delight and hope.

(Book IV, ll. 248-255).

Remarkable of Wordsworth’s summer vacation was that avowed moment of consecration of his poetic gifts before a magnificent vision of Nature, confirmed by present joy:

I made no vows, but vows
 Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
 A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
 In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

(Book IV, ll. 334-338).

In the ground of this moment of consecration, the speaker hints at the action of the Soul of Nature, the Intellectual Principle or God, revealing and conceding grace through the spontaneous vision granted to the subject’s eyes. The activity of transcendental agencies through the forms of Nature is confirmed by the startling brightness of that image, “drenched in empyrean light” (Book IV, l. 328). Yet the whole conceptual and tropological suggestions receive validity through the sensory fascination exerted by the visual images.

The moment of consecration came as a sign of renewal and redemption of that crisis of poetic imagination already manifested in Cambridge due either to Wordsworth’s excess of labour or to his own idle nature, social heart, and “unworthy vanities” which used to divert him from the contemplative applications in solitude. Therefore, even though in later youth, as the speaker asserts, he “Loved deeply all that had been loved before” (Book IV, l. 279) in that night he had been taken by an “inner falling off” (Book IV, l. 278), for the worldly attractions of feast dance, public revelry, sports and games,

all conspire
 To lure my mind from firm habitual quest

Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
 And damp those yearnings that had once been mine.
 (Book IV, ll. 286-289).

The idea of the “unworthy vanities” referred to those charms is reiterated here, when the speaker meditates on how to portray these “vanities” (Book IV, l. 293) with their “haunts” (Book IV, l. 294) where they are unknown. Wordsworth’s idle nature made his mind subdue to those “trivial pleasures” that were “a poor exchange / For books and nature at that age” (Book IV, ll. 298-299). Yet, his idleness has been redeemed by its own purpose, by the haunts of his chase of trivial pleasures and by Nature, since it was after a night of feast, mirth, and dance that he was granted that radiant vision at the rising of the morning consecrating him with the blessing of poetry. Both his “idleness” and his “unworthy vanities” have their utility in the extent to which they make the hero appreciate Nature even more since he finds in her the inspiration for the firmness of belief in the personal value, character and vocation.

The last remarkable moment narrated about Wordsworth’s adventures during his summer vacation, in which his intuition recognized the presence of Nature’s spiritual and designing power, consists in the encounter with a stranger on the road along the margin of a brook near Winander. Autumn was already come. One night, after a day-long of idleness at one neighbour’s house, when the protagonist was returning home he met the figure of a man “clothed in military garb”, who at the first glance appeared like:

an uncouth shape,
 Shown by a sudden turning of the road,
 So near that, slipping back into the shade
 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
 Myself unseen.
 (Book IV, ll. 387-391).

More than human qualities this character represented for Wordsworth the incarnation of a spiritual potency, whose apparition imparts the essence of lofty provinces. His shape and motion as a spontaneous force of Nature aroused sublime passions which the speaker could not disguise:

I beheld,
 With an astonishment but ill suppressed,
 His ghostly figure moving at my side.
 (Book IV, ll. 432-434).

Finally the military man represented the healing power of solitude as it impressed the mind from the sacred emanation identified in the human form. Like the figures of

hermits and pilgrims, the military man was a living, human image of that great spiritual power of Nature moving in solitude, sometimes manifested:

as the soul of that great Power is met
Sometimes embodied on a public road,
When, for the night deserted, it assumes
A character of quiet more profound
Than pathless waste.

(Book IV, ll. 366-370).

The speaker affirms the core of his theme stating that up to this point in the autobiography his mind has looked:

Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
Established by the sovereign Intellect,
Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
A deathless spirit.

(Book V, ll. 13-18).

Immediately between the register of the end of his summer vacation in Book IV and the return to Cambridge narrated in Book VI, Wordsworth inserts a meditation on books and the achievements of human craft, through thought and toil, which forms the axe of Book V. The speaker marks the importance of the subject uttering a deep concern with Man for those works which form the human lore, culture and traditions. Thus he feels moved by grief:

for those palms achieved,
Through length of time, by patient exercise
Of study and hard thought;

(Book V, ll. 8-10).

His great concern consists in the prospect that the things made by the human craft are destined to “perish” (Book V, l. 22) because the form under which they are kept – that of books – belongs to too frail and non-renewable a constitution. However the motto of the perisha’bility of books and, correlatedly, that of human deeds, constitutes the first part of this canto, which starts with a philosophical meditation about his concern; followed by the narration of the famous dream of the Arab, which, in the symbolic language of the dream, illustrates a vision of the apocalyptic catastrophe supposed to bring destruction upon the humankind’s works.

The second part is devoted to an equally or rather more important issue, since it concerns the poet’s formative course. It has to do with a kind of education in which the influence of books comes associated to the influence of Nature. For analyzing this issue it is essential to understand the role of inserting such a reflection upon books in the middle of the narrative of the events related to Wordsworth’s formal education at

Cambridge during his youth. Wordsworth stated some words of criticism on the too conservative teaching regime of Cambridge, embodied in its conceptions and doctrines:

Be wise,
Ye Presidents and Deans, and till the spirit
Of ancient times revived, and youth be trained
At home in pious service, to your bells
Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
(Book III, ll. 409-414).

Implicitly one finds the claims that too much tutoring is damaging to the development of the human mind, since it cuts off the liberty that allows one to choose his own ways and means of education, according to his own nature and according to the mysterious design of the higher spirit that presides every individual's life. Then, musing on the influence of books in his spiritual development, Wordsworth is to criticize the excess of mechanic control and common sense with which the Enlightenment and Rationalist models have attempted to conduct the education at that time. The speaker expresses his thankfulness for having escaped such a deadening regime, opposed to the principles which Nature employs to educate the human beings; a criticism addressed to a model of child whose wisdom derives from a pure mechanic training:

that common sense,
May try his modern system by its fruits
Leave let me take to place before her sight
A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.
(Book V, ll. 294-297).

For Wordsworth, the first process of education comes with the liberty for one to live by his own pursuits and to cull the pleasurable things which Nature has to give. The benefit of books can only come if associated with this liberty to get the power provided by Nature:

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
Of living nature, which could thus so long
Detain me from the best of other guides
And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised.
(Book V, ll. 166-169).

In the speaker's praising speech it is possible to find certain apology suggesting the existence of two kinds of books according to their appropriateness or not for the human education from childhood through youth. Accordingly, one finds the praise of books related to and imparted with Nature's genius; and, implicitly, the despise of books fashioned on the basis of a series of artifices developed by some men to establish a standard of education to accord with the rules of the civilized society. The latter is apt to foster a damaging growth, for it empties man's soul.

In this sense, Poetry – especially that represented by romance – is a gift of Nature and fosters alike the human heart, because Poetry imparts Nature’s power and hence mediates a high sort of communication between Nature and man’s heart. The speaker confirms this conception recollecting those moments when he combined the rudiments of his verses with the music of the landscapes, singing among the natural beauties:

Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
By intermingling strains of thankfulness
With their own thoughtless melodies; at least
It might have well beseemed me to repeat
Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now.

(Book V, ll. 174-180).

Along those combined activities of thoughtless enjoyments of natural pleasures and the delightful recitation of verses during childhood and boyhood, Wordsworth learned through Nature’s own interfusion, receiving her wisdom while absorbing sensory and sentimental pleasures. In this sense, the speaker considers power and pleasure as elements “sown” (Book V, ll. 193-194) into his soul.

The activities of fashioning a known tale into verse and singing it again, especially during outdoor walks, as far as they consist in an activity of the human genius, reveal the influence of Nature as followed and complemented by the fundamental influence of books inasmuch as they lay the intellectual basis of the hero’s mind. Therefore, honouring “the memory of all books which lay / their sure foundations in the heart of man, / Whether by native prose or numerous verse” (Book V, ll. 198-200); as well as of “the men that framed them, whether known, / Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves” (Book V, ll. 214-215), the speaker considers:

That I should here assert their rights, attest
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
Their benediction; speak of them as Powers
For ever to be hallowed; only less,
For what we are and what we may become,
Than Nature’s self, which is the breath of God,
Or his pure word by miracle revealed.

(Book V, ll. 216-222).

Those mighty books framed by “inspirèd souls” (Book V, l. 201) whose genial content is aligned with Nature’s own power sort from erudite to popular cultures, from the “loftiest notes” (Book V, l. 206) of Homer and the Bible up to the tones of national poets like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton; “Down to the low” (Book V, l. 207) tradition of romance, tales, lyrics, songs, and “ballad tunes” (Book V, l. 210) that

accompanies the activities of workers and travelers, making the pleasure of young and old people as well. These sorts of books are imparted with a pedagogical principle similar to Nature herself, providing Wordsworth with the foundations of a privileged formative course that makes him grateful to dedicate his song “to Nature’s self / And things that teach as Nature teaches” (Book V, ll. 230-231).

Thanks to his education through books composed by genial minds and through the freedom to rove among Nature culling her pleasures at will the autobiographical hero feels grateful for having escaped from that kind of education which directs too much the creative faculties of the subject so as to train him for what Wordsworth calls “servitude” (Book V, l. 241). He expresses his gratitude that:

I was reared
Safe from an evil which these days have laid
Upon the children of the land, a pest
That might have dried me up, body and soul.
(Book V, ll. 226-229).

This evil consists in a tutoring and controlling educational system, both at home and at school, which, as it did to too many other children, could have prevented Wordsworth and his brothers of acquiring a full imaginative growth had they been cut off from the contact with Nature:

If in the season of unperilous choice,
In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
Each in his several melancholy walk
Stringed like a poor man’s heifer at its feed,
Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
(Book V, ll. 234-241).

Wordsworth attributes to his mother the primary prop of his education of freedom with Nature, “the heart / And hinge of all our learning and love” (Book V, ll. 257-258). Accordingly, the speaker praises her liberality as a source of good based on a simple creed that imbibes all her acts in virtue. She conceded freedom to her children due to a pious and faithful trust in God and Nature, in a powerful design guiding all creatures in their lives. But more than that, she trusted the human nature. Thus, paying due homage to her, the speaker confesses:

that she, not falsely taught,
Fetching her goodness rather from times past,
Than shaping novelties for times to come,
Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
Nor did by habit of her thought mistrust
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
Who fills the mother’s breast with innocent milk,

Doth also for our nobler part provide,
 Under his great correction and control,
 As innocent instincts, and as innocent food;
 Or draws for minds that are left free to trust
 In the simplicities of opening life
 Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.
 (Book V, ll. 266-278).

Wordsworth believes in the virtuous and providential power of the spiritual and universal infusion which guides the creatures of the world spontaneously into the path of moral good and firm realization of their intellectual growth.

The opposite pole to this lovely and genial education is represented by the tale of the infant Prodigy, the figure of a boy educated under that mechanical training and over-monitored directions, well instructed yet poor in spontaneity, individual passions and imaginative emotion. For this boy, as the speaker expresses, Nature herself grieves:

Meanwhile old granddame earth is grieved to find
 The playthings, which her love designed for him,
 Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
 Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.
 (Book V, ll. 337-340).

Wordsworth is making his claim for the benefit of playful habits and sound sports among fields, hills, rivers and groves, thus establishing a spontaneous communion with Nature, since early childhood to form man's personal life, intellectual and imaginative faculties. In this sense, Wordsworth believes far more on the pedagogical power of the transcendental intelligence than on the instructing premises employed by most of the educators according to the fashion of the time. Hence, as he had criticized the short-mindedness of the presidents and deans of the College at Cambridge for their Scholasticism, now he criticizes the chief eighteenth-century educators for their blind rationalism that manages to control all accidents logically, mechanically and analytically, asking then with indignation:

When will their presumption learn,
 That in the unreasoning progress of the world
 A wiser spirit is at work for us,
 A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
 Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
 Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?
 (Book V, ll. 337-340).

Against the example of the infant prodigy, Wordsworth posits the example of the Boy of Winander, who at evening used to blow hootings to the owls, provoking them to respond with shouts and screams, until at length they respond with silence, amid which Nature herself acted to fill his heart and mind:

Then sometimes in that silence while he hung

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

(Book V, ll. 381-388).

This playful, patient and unconscious process is representative of the procedures through which Wordsworth used to receive the contents of his mind from Nature's external affections as a revealed gift of images and sounds, prompted by passion and emotion to be carried into his inner subjectivity. Nature's inspiration activates his knowledge and disposes him to enter that genial mood that makes him productive.

Yet, the case of the Boy of Winander reveals a problem which Wordsworth must overcome if he wants to become a poet. The boy died young without never having surpassed his close contact with Nature and thus without having his sensibility put into question. In order to lead his sensibility towards its full development and his poetic gift into enduring power, Wordsworth had to pass through that crisis of sensibility that hardens the human senses, sentiments and intellect as the adult life and ageing come. The protagonist started to feel the symptoms of that imaginative crisis already in youth, despite the fact that it was in youth that he felt the strongest manifestation of his visionary power. This is one of the paradoxes of poetic growth. Overcoming this crisis, he was free to return to Nature with his poetic faculties purified and his Imagination strengthened by Intellectual Love. Beside the process of sensibility hardening, Wordsworth's crisis resulted from the series of obligations and toils which he was destined to obey and fulfill as a College student, which deprived him of his early liberties to rove and play among Nature. As to the Boy of Winander, early death deprived him of the experience of suffering with the separation from Nature, that other side of the coin which comes to make man meditate in order to, in the due moment of renovation, consolidate his powers with the love of Nature. He died before that unconscious intercourse with Nature could have become a conscious desire in his mind. His death came before he could have become aware of the conscious process by which the unconscious intercourse with Nature awakes man to seek the grace of poetic power. This character could neither have reached that stage in life when the love of things seen requires the cloth of beautiful verse:

When sober truth and steady sympathies,
 Offered to notice by less daring pens,
 Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves

Move us with conscious pleasure.
(Book V, ll. 542-545).

The reading of romances fulfilled the function of fostering the sense of marvelous in children's imagination. Wordsworth hints at a conception according to which the form and content of romance manifest a hallowed and ideal sense that combines with Nature's own character. The sound of the revelry made by the boys playing in the rural school when Wordsworth was visiting the churchyard at Hawkshead, while looking at the Boy of Winander's grave, reminded him of his own boyhood, playing noisy sports with his band of school fellows. Then, addressing his will to the boys he utters the deep desire of a fair education like that he received from books and Nature:

May books and Nature be their early joy!
And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name –
Knowledge not purchased by loss of power!
(Book V, ll. 423-425).

Books and Nature refer to the close association of the beauties of the natural world and the mysterious atmosphere of romance. The recollection of a moment came to the speaker's mind. Soon after being removed to the Vale of Hawkshead, when the protagonist was an eight-year old boy, once rambling among the fields, coming near the shore of Esthwaite's Lake he saw on the opposite shore a heap of garments of someone who had been bathing. Yet twilight brought gloom upon the water but nobody appeared. The day after, a multitude amounted around the lake to watch while others attempted to rescue the man, until the corpse finally emerged "with his ghastly face, a spectre shape / Of terror" (Book V, ll. 450-451). The scene of death among a beautiful landscape caused no terror in the protagonist's feelings, because his soul had been prepared by the fairy atmosphere found in the world of romance:

yet no soul-debasing fear,
Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
Such sights before, among the shining streams
Of faery land, the forest of romance.
Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
With decoration of ideal grace;
(Book V, ll. 451-457).

This benefit is justified by Wordsworth's creed in a power – similar to the animating and tutelary spirit of Nature – from the transcendental order guiding the steps of the human beings toward knowledge and moral good:

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, it works of unreprieved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those

Sure of imparting that power the narrative voice sets the youth in intellectual condition to integrate that community of mighty poets whose aura pervaded the atmosphere of Cambridge in Wordsworth's time:

Those were the days
Which also first emboldened me to trust
With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
By such a daring thought, that I might leave
A monument behind me which pure hearts
Should reverence.

(Book VI, ll. 52-57).

Such intent was accompanied by one contemplative habit performed during free time along the winter nights. Whenever the protagonist had time he used to visit the college groves and walks where he stayed alone until the bell gave the ultimate sign for retiring at nine o'clock. There the hero revered the elms, for the composure bestowed upon that site. But mainly he paid reverence to a huge ash whose trunk and branches were wreathed with green ivy, and whose boughs were beautified with hanging clusters of yellow seeds. Staring at the fairy image of the tree beneath the moon, bathed in moonlight, the youth had such visions that allowed him to assert his own power in competition with the mighty genius of Spenser:

Often have I stood
Foot-bound up looking at this lovely tree
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
Of magic verse, verse of mine perchance
May never tread. But scarcely Spenser's self
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth
Or could more bright appearances create
Of human forms with superhuman powers
Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

(Book VI, ll. 85-94).

At that same time, as the speaker reports, Wordsworth drew from the treatises on Geometry a general pattern to understand the laws and structure of Nature. More than that, the geometric schemes represented for Wordsworth not only the system of the Universe but also a framework of that spiritual intelligence which designs and animates the world, thus establishing, through infusion, the bonds of communication – and participation – between the Intellectual Principle of the Universe and the mind of man through the mediation of the sensory images of the external Nature. The enthusiasm with the intellectual possibilities opened by that knowledge fostered meditation:

On the relation those abstractions bare
To Nature's laws, and by what process led,
Those immaterial agents bowed their heads
Duly to serve the mind of man;

(Book VI, ll. 123-126).

The geometric lore imparted a cosmological charm that enchanted the youth's soul with the enthusiasm of finding the key to understand the secret power animating and informing the world. The speaker states his belief that the knowledge of the cosmological agencies was the foundation of the poetic wisdom since the beginning of the times. It consists in a special kind of knowledge, associated to a special power of observation capable of deducing the laws and systems and conversely inducing the workings of Nature out of its predictions. The foundations depicted in the diagrams of geometric science embody the truth of the transcendental reality underlying the sensory appearances of external Nature. Wordsworth conceives the poet as the man destined to preserve that lore and capable of recognizing and understanding how that universal system appears in the structure and motions of Nature. Wordsworth recognizes the origin of poetry in the practice of observing the external world and depicting its underlying system, since it constitutes a natural and spontaneous disposition of intellectual minds which link them to the eternal foundations of Nature:

Mighty is the charm
Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by herself,
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
So gracefully;

(Book VI, ll. 158-163).

If the drawings of Geometry constitute a world "Created out of pure intelligence" (Book VI, l. 167) it implies, beyond that observing sensibility, the visionary power to communicate with the pure Intellectual Source of the Universe.

Perusing books of Geometry the hero found "A type for finite natures, of the one / Supreme Existence" (Book VI, ll. 133-134) and identified this Being with "God" (Book VI, l. 139). The study of Geometry provided Wordsworth not only with a scheme for the universe, but also for the human mind. The homage paid to Isaac Newton is more than pure admiration. It means a big deal of indebtedness to his *Principles*, where Wordsworth found the most coherent explanation for the laws of the universe, but, more than that, the attribution of the ultimate cause of Nature's activating reason to God. This identification of God as the ultimate principle of life, order and intelligence in Nature provided the ground for Wordsworth's Pantheism, in which he conceived Nature as the material and sensory realization of God. Pantheism, as a half philosophical, half religious conception of the world, derived from the treatises on Geometry. John Tolland's *Pantheistikon* for instance is a work based on Spinoza's *Ethics*, whose ground

consists in the principles of Geometry. The speaker utters what he received from that science: “A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense / Of permanent and universal sway” (Book VI, ll. 130-131). This rudimental knowledge provided a pattern for a comprehensive observation of the world order in the motion of the stars. Besides, the “Transcendent peace / And silence” (Book VI, ll. 139-140) that brought comfort to the speaker’s soul refer to the recognition of the spiritual Being and the soothing effect produced by the cosmic music of the All.

Elsewhere Wordsworth asserts that this narrative speaks only “of himself”, of the world created by himself. Then Wordsworth considers himself a co-creator with Nature, for he conceives that both Nature and the poet share the same creative power granted by the higher Intellectual Principle. However, now, addressing his story to Coleridge as a mighty poet and comparing his trajectory to that of his friend as to how, despite having been nursed and reared under different climes and through different elements, both have been framed to follow the same discipline and serve in the same temple, Wordsworth confesses the matter of his narrative to be the process through which his soul has been fed and stimulated from without by the affections and presences of Nature:

I have borne in mind
For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth,
Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
And joyous loves, that hallow innocent days
Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
And groves I speak to thee, my Friend!
(Book VI, ll. 260-265).

In whatever involves knowledge, judgment and taste, the observation of Nature – specially the bonds of living things – provided the paradigm to guide the hero’s relation with the objective world, including his opinions about books. Hence the ground to praise the value of Geometry:

for, having scanned,
Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms
Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed
A standard, often usefully applied,
Even unconsciously, to things removed
From a familiar sympathy.
(Book VI, ll. 100-105).

Trusting the verdict of that evidence one draws the belief that the poet and Nature are cooperators, co-creative labourers, inmates, but more than that, sometimes they became mutual creators of themselves if not the same being: on one side, Wordsworth is convicted that if Nature created the poet, the poet also created Nature; on the other side,

in speaking of Nature he speaks of himself whereas in speaking of himself he cannot help speaking of Nature.

Wordsworth's collegial life at Cambridge was crowned with the travel of his third summer vacation. His walking tour across the Alps was one of his excursions in which the hero read the characters of Nature. The speaker confirms this fact in two statements where he confessed to Coleridge that "I, too, have been a wanderer" (Book VI, l. 252) and that the inner motivation justifying the interest of his voyage against the pains and censures was that:

Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
And mighty forms seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
(Book VI, ll. 333-335).

The sensory forms became a symbol for the transcendent meaning. Regarding this aspect, the Alpine landscapes bear a parallel with the scenery found in the climbing of Snowdon, in whose exuberant forms Wordsworth will recognize later the "emblem of a mighty mind". This journey last for "fourteen weeks", almost three months and a half, yet the narrative gives an account of only a few events among those adventures. Wordsworth and his companion landed at the shores of Calais, in France, when the Frenchmen were commemorating the first anniversary of the Revolution. They joined the crowd returning from the centre of the festival in Paris to their own homelands; and took place in their dances and mirth motivated by the conquered liberty. The travelers went towards the South. They prolonged their journey together with the Frenchmen for three days, walking on the public roads, among hills and fields, passing through the villages in thankful mood for the blessedness and glory of emancipation. Then, they sailed together on the waters of the rivers Saone and Rhone, among the hills of Burgundy, enchanted with the view of towns, farms and vales.

Leaving the society of that host of French travelers, Wordsworth and his friend followed their course on foot and, ere the second night after, they reached the convent of the Grand Chartreuse, where they "Rested within an awful solitude" (Book VI, l. 419). Yet, despite the peace breathed around that region, those Englishmen witnessed the negative side of history, for that place had been disturbed by the contradictions resulting from the Revolution – those contradictions, as they will be witnessed in their full consequences in Wordsworth's period of residence in France, were later to cause the protagonist to lose hope in humanity and hence suffer of his spiritual, moral and aesthetic crisis. Apropos of these political-historical episodes Wordsworth presents a

conception of Nature that varies between Rousseau's conception of Nature as a totality that integrates both the natural and cultural orders which might be contradicted by men and Hegel's dialectical conception of *Geist*, as that ordering spirit that regulates harmoniously the cultural, political and social steps of History. The travelers met with:

Arms flashing, and a military glare
Of riotous men commissioned to expel
The blameless inmates, and belike subvert,
That frame of social being, which so long
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm.
(Book VI, ll. 424-429).

The speaker gives an account of having heard the landscape make such sounds and murmurs, out of which he claims to have listened to Nature expressing her indignation against the foolishness of men, manifesting her voice for the preservation of the temple, since it was a building devoted to eternity. The hero responded with passion, reinforcing Nature's request, for the convent was seen as a quasi natural extension of God's creation capable of bringing that calm which elevates the human faculties to such states where contemplation allowed the communication with the transcendent order, where piety and religion serve the sovereignty of Nature.

Then, as a counterpoint to the previous experience, they crossed the dark groves of Vallombre which fed their souls with "darkness" (Book VI, l. 481), conveying the experience of the intrinsic aesthetic affection immediately linked with the solid and opaque quality of the natural forms, an influence immanently attached to the over-sensible quality of the object, which thus influences the subject's soul with feelings qualified more by the sensory objectiveness, close aggressiveness and material opposition effected by the external affections than by the inward light of the soul kindled when the outward senses sleep in contemplative surrender. A similar effect was to be noticed at the night when, lost in the region of Lake Como, the travelers felt the terrorizing influence of:

The mountains more by blackness visible
And their own size, than any outward light;
(Book VI, ll. 714-715).

After that, they crossed the valleys and hills of many provinces in such speed that did not allow them to last their eyes upon the beauties of the landscapes, yet enough to marvel them with the charms of pastoral scenes and to please them to see the men involved in rural toil. Among their views were included the summit of Mont Blanc and the Vale of Chamouny, where they saw reapers gathering the sheaves of corn and

working on the haycock. The freshness of the scenes beheld on Mont Blanc and the Vale of Chamouny corresponded to the travelers' spiritual growth:

Whatever in this wide circuit we beheld,
Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
Of intellect and heart. With such a book
Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
And universal reason of mankind,
The truths of youth and old.

(Book VI, ll. 541-547).

They recognized in the landscapes the characters offered to powerful minds enthusiastic yet still not mature by experience and training.

The images of Chamouny represented one type of feeling that the speaker classifies as "soft luxuries" (Book VI, l. 557), which is set into contrast to those sentiments awakened by the spectacle of Mont Blanc, which provoked a state that the speaker defines as a "stern mood" and an "underthirst of vigour" (Book VI, ll. 558-559). In this sense, the state of mind applied to the sight of Mont Blanc belongs to the same nature as that which characterized the main incident of this long journey: the climbing of the Simplon Pass after having turned from the Vallais. The speaker still retains, in the present moment of the narrative, that melancholy state of mind roused with that moment which confronted the hero's hopes for the ideal beauty against the anxiety which the speaker calls a "different [...] sadness" (Book VI, l. 560) provoked by the awareness of the material limits of Nature against man's longing for the striking power of the ideal:

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
Mixed something of stern mood, an underthirst
Of vigour seldom utterly allayed:

(Book VI, ll. 557-559).

This "stern mood" has to do with a lofty, tragic and melancholy state related to the poor condition of the outer object, whereas the "underthirst of vigour" respects the poor capacity of the object to fill the subject's soul, since the soul is greater than the object's power to satiate it. In the Mont Blanc scene the aesthetic power of the object appears weaker than the youth's inner longing for the aesthetic satisfaction achieved in the experience of beholding the object: its beauty is not enough to satisfy the desire inside the subject and thence derives the sense of emptiness in the poet's heart. The visions of Mont Blanc and the Vale of Chamouny contrast in a balancing relation. The height produced a disestablishing effect upon the beholding subject who felt the disturbance of a sense of broken compass between the sensory experience and the ideal image projected beforehand upon that spot. The valley, through the power of motionless

movement contained in its forms, fulfilled a conciliatory function that “made rich amends / And reconciled us to realities” (Book VI, ll. 532-533). Thus, if the subject needed an image of Nature to restore the balance between his aesthetic desire and the natural forms, between the real and the ideal, this state of astonishment, daze, fuddle or bewilderment results from the previous moment of disappointment with the image offered to his senses. The image of Mont Blanc was not enough to fill the longings of the youth’s soul. It lacked the sense of perfection embodied in the splendid beauty earlier imagined by the poet; and hence the naked image lost the ideal and spiritual essence endowed by the hero’s imagination. The image created by his faculty required the correspondence in the sensory approach to the natural object. The expectation of correspondence became a desire in the soul which came to be irretrievably frustrated when the youth first saw it. Then the speaker grieved:

To have a soulless image on the eye
That usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be.

(Book VI, ll. 526-528).

In the episode of the Simplon Pass Wordsworth and his companion were following a band of muleteers since they did not know the way. As the band halted to have their meal at noon, they soon stood up and kept on walking. The fellow travelers lingered one short moment and soon started following the group. However it took no longer until Wordsworth and his fellow lost the track of their guides. They stepped the way downward up to the point when the road was cut off by one stream, and in the opposite brink of the stream they saw a path that led upwards into a huge mountain. The characters crossed the stream and followed that ascent but, as they could not see the guiding men, fear, doubt and anxiety dominated their mood. Then, they met there a peasant who informed the right way: they should get back to the stream and thence follow the path that goes downwards along the margin of that stream. With grief, they ended to accept that truth:

Loth to believe what we also grieved to hear,
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
We questioned him again, and yet again;
But every word that from the peasant’s lips
Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
Ended in this, – *that we had crossed the Alps.*

(Book VI, ll. 586-591).

In that spot, the travelers had three moments of perplexity: the first when their path was broken off by the stream and the only way found ascended from the opposite brink into the mountain; the second when the road started to scare and confuse the travelers with

the possibility of being lost; the third when they learnt that the true road to follow *along* the Alps was a *downwards* course. The ascent through the lofty mountain might have fulfilled the hero's hopes of aesthetic – sensory and transcendent – experience. However the longings for the sublime, embodied in the grand, lofty and vast of the mountain, have been frustrated by the truth that the site belonged to the region beyond the Alps. In other words, the ascent, which corresponded to the hopes created by the travelers' imagination, did not belong to what the travelers had expected that their real course should cover. That is the reason why the creations of the hero's imagination and desires of his soul appear in disconnection with the forms beheld in the external reality. That is why the protagonist needs and trusts in the vision of a beautiful and sublime scene capable of redeeming the want found in the referred spot, and thus, like the view of Chamouny, able to *reconcile* him to *realities* again by presenting scenes whose dimensions fit the vastness of the hero's soul.

The fact that the travelers felt perplexity and forlornness, had fear, doubt and anxiety in the moment when they realized to be lost indicates a deep concern not only with the limitations of the reality of Nature's forms, but grief for the limitless hopes and desires of imagination, which bound with infinitude lacks the substantial ground and hence dwells in a province non-achievable or without purposes within the human designs. Maybe the ideal region sought by Wordsworth and his companion dwelled on the top of that mountain, but that site would divert them from what they conceived – and the reality of Nature imposes – as their true course through the majestic scenarios of the Alps. As the former experience of Mont Blanc revealed, Wordsworth believed in the truth that it is better to let unseen a sight too bound with the ideal in order not to empty it of its soul. It is better to trust in and wait for the gift that may come. Unexpectedly. Therefore, half disappointed, half eager to recover the time lost, the travelers returned in their way, downwards, in order to find and follow that road which, along the river side, would lead their travel to its destiny. Their actual path suggested the limits imposed by reality over ideality, and the necessary substratum of sensory forms to guarantee the permanence of the ideal. The notion of limitation is indicated in the presence of the “stony channel of the stream” (Book VI, l. 582), an artifact which, like the channel addressed in the youth's return to Anne Tyson's cottage for the summer vacation, imposes limits upon a natural power. The path led them into a gloomy chasm, where, through “Tumult and peace” (Book VI, l. 635) resulting from the sensory experience of the surrounding Nature the travelers found their souls reconciled with the reality and

found in the material forms of the landscapes the characters that resemble the “workings of one mind”, the “types and symbols of Eternity” (Book VI, ll. 635-640).

The travelers passed overnight at a sole house in the further vale, in the margin of that stream they had been following since the Simplon Pass. Rising up early in the morning, they started their journey again and followed the stream amid the mountains until at noon they saw it turned into a broaden river which was to flow into Lake Locarno. The speaker praises Locarno as a magnificent mirror of heaven: a place of day-lighted, celestial and illumined peace. In complementary contrast, the speaker chants the praise of Lake Como, with its woods, crops, steeps and winding pathways, whose beauty impressed the youth with such sweetness and graciousness similar in kind to those of thoughts, feelings and human values. Como contrasted to Locarno in that it comes to assume a sterner aspect reflected into a more melancholy mood. Both lakes are described as if they were either celestial or daemonic personifications of Nature, since the speaker attributed a certain “character” to them. The travelers advanced for two sunny days along the banks of Como. The second night of that course brought a sinister incident which influenced the travelers’ heart with the grave power of fear. Spurred by the sound of the church clock in Gravedona, but without having understood the time; and believing it to be dawn soon after that, they stood up and left the town desiring to see the region resting before daylight would come. However, they got confounded and bewildered by the strangeness of that night. It was too long before the dawn, and soon they saw themselves lost among huge woods. Perplexed, they sat upon a rock whence they watched the red reflex of the moon bedded on the lake water, often getting the winding form of a snake as the water shook with the waves. In sleepless vigil they felt disturbed by the sense of a spell spread over the night; and the gloomy strangeness contained in those sights and sounds thrilled and fed their hearts with “personal fear” (Book VI, l. 720).

The images of “darkness” amid the groves of Vallombre and of “blackness” drawn from the mountains near Lake Como offered a meaningful element to counterbalance the subjective activity of the imagination in perceiving the transcendent gleam of the invisible world when the light of the senses fades out with the over-sensory might of the objective world which over-loaded and invaded the hero’s senses with the thick and opaque power of immanence present in the images and forms of the external Nature.

1.7 The Residence in London: the Consciousness of the Love of Nature, the Love of Man and the Benefit of Rural Life

The seventh book of *The Prelude*, in which Wordsworth recounts his experience as a resident in London, serves as a counterpoint to the theme I have been studying, since the hero, still in his youth, had the chance to observe the nature of human life “among / The unfenced regions of society” (Book VII, ll. 57-58). The opposition between Nature and society is a Romantic motif which aligns one with virtue and the other with vice. It was during his escape from London that the speaker felt in the motion of the breeze the power of Nature quickening his soul with a corresponding burst of inspiration out of which he uttered the preamble to his “promised work” (Book VII, l. 15).

Actually the hero’s abhor of London reflects Wordsworth’s resistance against a number of new factors through which the modern urban world affects the general life in Wordsworth’s day: the industry, trade, the commerce, the money, the capital, the financial calculation and their oppressive consequences over the people who lived and worked in the city. The image of the city presses the hero’s memory as a vestige of disturbance intuited out of dehumanized historical and social structure whose virtual potential has been penetrating into every possibility of man’s living, either in terms of material or spiritual production. The historical and social configurations in Wordsworth’s days present themselves as traumatic to the subject’s eyes. The traumatic moment reaches the subject’s perception and sensibility yet it still appears as inaccessible to his consciousness. Out of Thomas Pfau’s²² writings we learn that the trauma provides the unconscious basis for the construction of poetic knowledge. Thomas Pfau examines the “process of constructing knowledge that is primarily located in the poetic genre of the ballad”. His interest falls in that the ballad constitutes a genre particularly remarkable for “its interpretive effects of a momentous awakening”²³. Pfau departs from the premise that “certain kinds of knowledge refuse to be embodied in discursive, propositional statements, and, instead, demand the circuitous form of the ballad and its open-ended economy of reading”²⁴. Moreover, according to the scholar, “The ballad form typically revolves around a moment of interpretive crisis, which,

²² PFAU, Thomas. **Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy – 1790-1840**. 2005, p. 192.

²³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 192.

²⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 192.

however local, incidental, or even apocryphal, may be considered as a symptom of deep-seated antagonisms”²⁵.

Pfau considers Wordsworth’s pastoral poem *Michael* a piece whose object consists in the limitations of the ballad form as they are reflected in the protagonist’s story. In a way it is worth considering that not only the pastoral *Michael* but also the autobiographical poem *The Prelude* is marked by some features found in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Such features transcend the problem of form and dimple into the content, since the praise of humble life and countryside Nature still constitute the core of Wordsworth’s conception of the world. The above mentioned concern with the construction of poetic knowledge creates a line of continuity between the *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Prelude*, since following the critical pathway opened by Geoffrey Hartman against the view of the “aesthetic form” as the possible unconscious evasion of a latent social knowledge Thomas Pfau considers the appraisal of “Wordsworthian symbolism as the embodiment of an inalienable ‘knowledge’”²⁶. Thus, “rather than constituting an evasion of history [...] the symbolical over-determination at work in *Michael* [...] suggest[s] that some kind of awakening is imminent”.

Similarly, it is possible to note that in the personal formative process *The Prelude* is also informed by a type of “awakening” which transforms the protagonist’s mind by bringing her a certain kind of knowledge – which transcends the logical and discursive spheres – that helps fostering the poetic growth of his mind. Not only in the “spots of time” passages is the protagonist surprised by a presence whose meaning haunts his consciousness until reiterated motions of remembrance bring a conscious understanding of it; but also when the “Presences of Nature in the sky and on the earth” (Book I, ll. 464-465) employed a pedagogical ministry along the years, haunting the boy in his sports by impressing “upon all forms the characters of danger and desire” (Book I, ll. 471-472); and still when the “fits of vulgar joy, / Which, through all seasons, on a child’s pursuits / Are prompt attendants” (Book I, ll. 581-583) “impressed collateral objects and appearances, / Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep / Until maturer seasons called them forth” (Book I, ll. 592-596).

Wordsworth hints at moments when the experience of Nature brings a symbolic determination whose very meaning cannot be grasped at the original moment of experience yet it forces repetition in the poet’s memory until, when the mind is

²⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 192.

²⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 195.

prepared for it, a symbolical kind of comprehension emerges from the imagistic content enclosed in the repetitive drives of recollection. The past imposes itself upon the subject's mind as its recollection deposits imagistic, emotional and symbolic layers in the protagonist's consciousness that constitute his own subjectivity. In this sense, it is useful to consider Tomas Pfau's invocation of Freud's "conception of 'trauma', whose distinctive symptomatic feature of 'repetition compulsion' is said to respond to a past so catastrophic at the time of its original occurrence as to have precluded its conscious assimilation by the subject"²⁷. Pfau justifies this theoretical borrowing by asserting that "an enigmatic past continues to trace the conscious history of its subject with an oblique insistence for which 'haunting' seems just the right word"²⁸. Pfau suggests that the bewildering experiences of London haunted the speaker in the form of desire of expression of a catastrophic reality that menaces to break the harmonious world that still remains in rural society. Thus both the moral corruption and the commercial relationship embodied in the great city affected the hero's subjectivity in his very personal essence. Thus, following Pfau's suggestions, the escaping from the city and subsequent return to Nature express this antagonism between the traumatic influence of the modern society and healing and humanizing simplicity associated with the antique values of the rural order.

In terms of autobiographical plot, it was soon after having returned from his excursion to the Alps that Wordsworth quit Cambridge and settled in London. It was a change from a comfortable to a vagrant life, yet it found the hero light in mood:

In no disturbance of excessive hope,
By personal ambition unenslaved,
Frugal as there was need, though self-willed,
From dangerous passions free.
(Book VII, ll. 62-65).

His first impression of the city was depicted as a "shock" felt "in heart and soul" (Book VII, l. 66). The hero, bound to Nature, felt a human contrast between himself and the city, for he was then "an idler":

Fixed amid that concourse of mankind
Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly
And life and labour seem but one,
(Book VII, ll. 69-71).

The shock comes from the sight of a world in total opposition to his conceptions and expectations – whose ground has been reared by converse with Nature and represented

²⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 193.

²⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 193.

in one special kind of fancy – since this world could never accord with his longings for virtue, simplicity and humanity. On the one hand, the real contact with the city frustrated the romance, marvelous image of “wonder and obscure delight” (Book VII, l. 87) which Wordsworth’s childish fancy had made of it. Out of fancy, which now the speaker calls vanity and defines as the quick spirit deep seated in the child’s heart, Wordsworth the child had created an image of London as a “Fairy-land” (Book VII, l. 98), dreaming of the figures of prelates, lords, the king and the mayor. Furthermore, his fancy had dwelled on the groves of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, as well as on permanent “marvels” such as the Thames River with the bridge, St. Paul’s Gallery, the tombs of Westminster, the statues amid the squares, and the Chamber of the Lords. As compared with the romance image fancied by the child the actual image of London left the sense of a gap between the child’s imaginative desire and the real object which led the youth to resign before the failure of an object whose presence was not enough to fill the longings of his soul:

And now I look upon the living scene;
Familiarly perused it; oftentimes,
In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
Paid to the object by prescriptive right.
(Book VII, ll. 144-147).

On the other hand, the scenes watched in the streets of London clash against the hero’s hopes for humanity, as the speaker evinces through the analogy with the image of a heap of ants:

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
Of a too busy world! Before me flow,
Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
(Book VII, ll. 149-151).

The hero was bewildered by a disorder of outdoor images and sounds: the crowd coming and going on the streets, the din of mixed talks, the visual pollution of inscriptions and pictures on the front of tradesmen’s houses; the raree-shows, animal performances and presentations of exotic beasts; the exhibitions of singers and clowns, the encounter with men of varied races. He was also dazzled by indoor spectacles, especially by mockery of art in miniature.

The vast city represents the urban and modern society’s evil, vice and corruption whose damaging influence is felt as inescapably reaching even the most secluded dominions of human life. The depiction of the city as a “monstrous ant-hill” hints at a place of chaotic and disordered motion of people apt to bring disorder to the

human faculties and passions. For Geoffrey Durrant²⁹ this image refers to “a world of confusion and din, where everything is bewildering”, a place which “presents the poet’s senses a phantasmagoria in which the confusion and disharmony” form “a bedlam from which he escapes gratefully into any quiet corner that offers a prospect of order and peace”. Besides, being represented as “superficial” and “lacking in real connection between man and man” the city is depicted as “cruel and indifferent”, a world where, accordingly, “the Modern man [...] has lost his human identity”. Durrant points out that Wordsworth’s description of London resembles Milton’s description of hell in *Paradise Lost*. The image of “hell on earth” shown in *The Prelude* constitutes a place where “men are no longer linked by ‘natural piety’”.

Nevertheless, the shocking life in London was a necessary evil for Wordsworth’s *Bildung*. It constituted a necessary step (experience) to strengthen the consciousness of what the real needs of his soul as a poet are – and this respects his reverence for Nature:

As the black storm upon the mountain-top
Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so
That huge fermenting mass of humankind
Serves as a solemn background, or relief,
To single forms or objects, whence they draw,
For feeling and contemplative regard,
More than inherent liveliness and power.
(Book VII, ll. 619-625).

The speaker found an emblematic figure of this relationship in the sight of a Blind Beggar propped against a wall on the streets of London. The hero read on the paper hanging upon the blind man’s chest to explain his story “a type” of the humankind and of the universe; and felt admonishments as if from another world when he looked at that face whose eyes could not see. As the beggar’s converse with the world was not based on the action of that which Wordsworth considers the most despotic of the outward senses the protagonist drew of his image the symbol for the work of man’s inward faculties as they capture the signs of the transcendent sphere. The speaker confirms this symbolism expressing the belief that:

Thou reared upon the base of outward things,
Structures like these the excited spirit mainly
Builds for herself;
(Book VII, ll. 650-652).

Here blindness – that stands for the general independence from the outward senses – represents one fundamental condition for the working of the inner faculty of

²⁹ DURRANT, Geoffrey. **William Wordsworth**. 1969, p. 134-139.

imagination over the forms of Nature. At this point it is worth remembering that, chanting the emotions of getting lost on the mountains as the youth attempted to cross the Simplon Pass, the speaker affirms to recognize the glory of his soul in the imaginative Power, which the speaker defines as:

such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world,
(Book VI, ll. 599-602).

The image of the blind beggar represented for Wordsworth a structure that catches the mind and soul with the sense of visionary gleam which recurs in certain specific aspects of the forms of Nature. The speaker refers to scenes that take “possession of the faculties” (Book VII, l. 654), viz:

the peace
That come with night; the deep solemnity
Of nature’s intermediate hours of rest
When the great tide of human life stands still;
The business of the day to come, unborn,
Or that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;
The blended calmness of the heavens and earth,
Moonlight and stars, and empty streets and sounds
Unfrequent as in deserts;
(Book VII, ll. 654-662).

It is a recurrent idea in *The Prelude* that the spirit of Nature or “universal power” (Book II, l. 324) manifests itself at those hours of night when the world slumbers in deep repose, for instance when Wordsworth the boy took his walks early in the morning or sat on an eminence to see the dawn light clearing the sole and quiet vale (Book II, ll. 328-345); when the hero and his companion, thinking that dawn was close at hand, waked up in the middle of the night to see the quiet scenes around Lake Como in the Alps (Book VI, ll. 688-699); and when Wordsworth and his friend left Bethgellert at the sleeping time and took their way “to see the sunrise” from the top of Mount Snowdon (Book XIV, ll. 1-6).

The narrative of Wordsworth’s period of residence in London closes with an account of the terrible things witnessed at St. Bartholomew’s Fair, an ancient festival whose spectacle effected such a “shock / For eyes and ears” (Book VII, ll. 685-686) that sets “The whole creative powers of men asleep!” (Book VII, l. 681). The speaker considers the Fair as the “epitome” of London, an extreme example of those negative aspects of society reunited by the “mighty City” and recognized by:

Thousands upon thousands of her sons,
Living amid the same perpetual whirl

Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity, by differences
 That have no law, no meaning and no end –
 (Book VII, ll. 724-728).

Law, meaning and end – lacking in the city – are the ruling features of Nature, organized upon the teleology of order and design. “Differences” here recall the speaker’s search to find distinctions in Nature, an ability proper of the poet linked to intellectual love. Through these wisdom and power of perception the active mind of the poet manages to attribute “order and relation” (Book VII, l. 761) in order to understand the disorder of the city. This power to see “the parts as parts / but with a feeling of the whole” (Book VII, ll. 735-736) results from a course of education based on the “converse with the works of God / Among all regions” (Book VII, ll. 742-743) where the poet recognizes the features of beauty and magnificence. The education of the poet consists in learning to understand the language of Nature’s forms as they quicken the mind and prompt the thoughts and feelings to apply order and relation to the range of outward experiences. The weary time spent at London served to impel the hero towards a phase of spiritual renovation. It was a crisis whose deadening effect was overcome because the youth kept in himself the poetic power inspired by Nature:

The spirit of Nature was upon me there;
 The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
 Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
 Of self-destroying, transitory things,
 Composure, and enobling Harmony.
 (Book VII, ll. 766-771).

1.8 The Love of Nature Leading to the Love of Humankind: Man Beautified and Spiritualized by the Presence of Great Objects

Book VIII consists in a retrospect in which the speaker revises those aspects leading from the love of Nature to the love of Humankind. Joseph Beach remarks that Wordsworth “finds in the ‘forms’ of nature a ‘pure principle of love’ and joy so prevailing that one who feels it is impelled to seek for objects of a kindred love and joy in his fellows. The love and joy in nature extend themselves to his relations with human

beings, thereby making the nature-lover a more humane and sociable being”³⁰. This chapter opens with a descriptive picture of a human prospect as seen and heard from the top of Mount Helvellyn, where the speaker is supposed to be standing, busying himself in observing the tiny human figures and their motions in the vale. The scene observed consists in a small group of people reunited in the village. In fact, there were not much more than one family of shepherds and some other persons. Yet, as the sound and sight appeared for the speaker amplified by the distance, the group was taken at first to be a crowd. The observer had his perceptions and sensations amplified by the effect of height and distance provided by his vantage point; thus his feelings towards those elements composing the images and sounds contemplated were also modified by the rising of joy, sweetness and endearment brought by the diffuseness created by the distance. The interference of the mediation of natural effects, interposed between the observer and the elements envisaged in the landscape, creates emotional and thinking effects, transforming and augmenting the beholder’s inner response, either in terms of perceptions and sensations, or in terms of sentiments and thoughts. This kind of interference of the natural effects brought by the presence of natural objects thus beautifying the elements and scenes beheld led to the development of a strong human sentiment and to the consciousness of a deep moral value involving – perhaps inherent to – those elements. That is how, since childhood, the hero has been developing the love for the human creatures and the belief in their good nature as he saw them in the ennobling presence of Nature.

If in the former chapter Wordsworth referred to St. Bartholomew’s Fair, now, he brings into the foreground another fair – since the “crowd” watched from the summit of Mount Helvellyn was assembled for that rural festival which used to occur yearly in the vales around that mountain – thus marking the opposition between the depravity corrupting the human nature and the natural goodness fostered by the virtuous affections of simple life. In contrast to the hubbub, the screams and din of the great city, the sounds sent from the rural valleys are sweet and dear. The opposition between a general human scene close to the vices of society and that ruled by the virtues of Nature is established by the contrast between the “anarchy and din, / Barbarian and infernal” (Book VII, ll. 686-687) of St. Bartholomew’s Fair and the paradisaic sweetness and simplicity of the pastoral scenes observed at the rural Fair of Helvellyn’s region.

³⁰ BEACH, Joseph W. **The Concept of Nature in the Nineteenth-Century English Poetry**. 1956, p. 42.

Exhorting the life in the countryside, Wordsworth finds in the rural regions the fairest examples of the goods and beauties of Nature. Hence the speaker declares that:

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel,
 In that enormous City's turbulent world
 Of men and things, what benefit I owed
 To thee, and those domains of rural peace
 Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was opened;

(Book VIII, ll. 70-75).

The verifiable fact that the eighth book of Wordsworth's autobiography, where the lyric speaker reflects on the modes through which Nature led to the love of man in his general ontological status, was placed immediately after the narrative of the hero's adventures in London is especially meaningful of Wordsworth's professed education through intercourse with Nature. The speaker hints at the implicit argument in the autobiographical speech that the experience of vice and evil was a necessary step in the formative course of a poet. However, before this step, the hero must have had his heart purified and strengthened by the influence of beauty, good and virtue found in the communication with the forms and agencies of Nature. The speaker hints at the existence of a tutelary power in Nature guiding the protagonist's steps, thus preventing him from the influence of evil and vice, as they have been embodied in the deformities found in the city, until he reached the due maturity to be exposed to it:

From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
 Preserved, I moved about, year after year,
 Happy, and now most thankful that my walk
 Was guarded from too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life.

(Book VIII, ll. 327-332).

The speaker expresses his thankfulness for having been prevented from those negative elements of the urban life which would impair the growth of that natural piety responsible for man's worship of the deity, or in Wordsworth's terms:

Those ensuing laughters and contempts,
 Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
 With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord,
 Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
 Will not permit us;

(Book VIII, ll. 333-337).

Exalting the qualities of rural life, Wordsworth pays homage to his native land and considers it a world of higher human values and charms more powerful to imagination than those found in the stories told in pastoral verse. In this sense, Wordsworth establishes a model for his poetry based on the association of the observation of life with the traditional universe of fiction. More than that, Wordsworth confers the

landscapes of the Lake District with the status of a high pastoral value. The speaker describes how the beautiful scenes of the country where he was born and reared provided such an environment which accords with the existence of a type of man naturally endowed with ennobling gifts: “simplicity, / And beauty, and inevitable grace” (Book VIII, ll. 109-110).

In order to exalt the charms of his native country, the speaker employs a comparative technique, often tracing a parallel between the reference to mythical places famous by beauty and grandeur and the familiar environment, known by direct experience since childhood. Thus, to Gehohl’s sumptuous gardens and magnificent landscapes, whose name would excite the imagination to a point where the mythic image fades into blank inexistence, the speaker compared the existence of beauties whose real presence had enchanted his senses:

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
Where I was reared; in Nature’s primitive gifts
Favoured no less, and more to every sense
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons as they change,
Do find a worthy fellow labourer there –
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object;

(Book VIII, ll. 98-105).

The speaker claims to have been fed among the natural graces of his native region. The body of images offered to the hero’s delight was complemented by one dear presence, which turns Nature a more complex whole. Man is seen as the most privileged element among the beauties of the landscapes, blessed by his toils and by the fact that his activities are determined by the kinds of natural conditions prevailing in that region. The images of Nature and the activities of man exerted a mutual influence in fastening each other inwardly to the protagonist’s sentiments. The joy and enthusiasm aroused by the human and natural images created the sentimental conditions for the hero to develop his love for the human being from a sort of feeling for particular persons to a general feeling for man as a universal entity:

when my affections first were led
From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake
Love for the human creature’s absolute self,
That noticeable kindness of heart
Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most,
Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
And occupations which her beauty adorned,

(Book VIII, ll. 121-127).

The figure of shepherds embodied the ideal image of man, adorned with natural beauty and blessed with sacred powers and virtues. Yet, the love of this creature always came as an ecstatic mood aroused by the sight of his image among the recesses of Nature, endowing him with a mysterious, charming power of sublime grandeur capable of moving the child's deeper passions:

when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images,
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks;
 (Book VIII, ll. 111-115).

The process through which the complex formed by man and natural objects enters the hero's infantine soul is the taking of dear images inwardly into the self, absorbing them into the province of the dreams, thus augmenting their emotional tenour.

The same comparative process employed to elevate the natural beauties of the Lake District above the enchantments of mythic lands is used to endow the figure of the man observable in Wordsworth's native country with a status of beauty and sublimity higher than the majestic figures chanted in the myth and pastoral. For the speaker, so powerful to the imagination as had been those figures chanted in the myths of Golden Age and Arcadia, were the realistic sights beheld in his native land:

the rural ways
 And manners which my childhood looked upon
 Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
 Intent on little but substantial needs,
 Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
 (Book VIII, ll. 159-163).

Wordsworth's quest has to do with the possibility of realistic experience of man and Nature as a source of poetic matter, as things endowed with aesthetic value. In this sense, a great deal of those ancient matters that, from the speaker's point of view, are veiled by the temporal distance of myth, had been for the ancient poets part of the empirical reality. This belief is revealed when the speaker highlights the historical differences and transformations between his own world and the world in the past of Shakespeare and Spenser, for instance. Besides, this idea becomes evident in the parallel between Wordsworth's own mode of approaching and experiencing his world, and Spenser's own mode of beholding the life affairs around him, transforming them into a poetic universe. That is the reason why the speaker highlights that he, Wordsworth, in his own time, "had heard" what Spenser "perhaps had seen" (Book VIII, l. 145), making clear that the old content of fable and pastoral belonged to a

universe in which the kind of images, figures and activities portrayed had been part of a past way of living, hence producing at that time a direct observable, near to realistic experience, different from Wordsworth's time when that mythic matter was available for the poet in a second-hand means, by hear-say the report of those men who had seen or lived it in former times. Yet, Wordsworth made of this a still living experience, since he linked those images with those natural and human activities that he could observe in his own rural environment. Hence, even though "The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have drooped / These lighter graces" (Book VIII, ll. 158-159) seen in the dances of May, in the flowery wreaths in the front of houses and churches, and in the story of couples who used to come to drink from a sacred spring, the protagonist found his model of pastoral life in the toil of shepherds seen in the vast fields where he was born which inflamed his imagination.

Thinking of the "smooth life" of pastoral myths of old time, in fictitious places like Galessus, Adria, Clitumnus and Lucretilis where Pan blew his flute, Wordsworth exalts his own experience, asserting that:

I myself, mature
 In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract
 Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
 Though under skies less generous, less serene:
 There, for her own delight had Nature framed
 A pasture ground, diffused a fair expanse
 Of level pasture, islanded with groves
 And banked with wooding risings; but the Plain
 Endless, here opening widely out, and there
 Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
 And intricate recesses, creek or bay
 Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
 The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
 (Book VIII, ll. 185-197).

His pastoral scene was described as the image of an empirically observable natural landscape belonging to a region whose geographical reference can be easily asserted. This scene was set in the region of Goslar, Germany, where Wordsworth spent a period in his visit to the continent in 1799. However, far more than the forms beheld in Goslar, the speaker praises the powers of his native region for its more sublime and fairy charms:

Yet, hail to you
 Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
 Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
 Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp!
 (Book VIII, ll. 215-219).

Amid this wild and haunting Nature, the region is blessed with the figure of the shepherd working in his daily tasks:

himself he feels,
In those vast regions where his service lies,
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear
To native man.

(Book VIII, ll. 251-256).

The vision of the shepherd among the Northern England wild plains constituted an important part in the protagonist's poetic education through the experience of Nature. In a moment of life when the props of emotion are stronger, sensibility more powerful and moral virtue, despite the boy's wickedness, not stripped off innocence, the hero met the figure of the shepherd as a spiritual presence, a numinous power of Nature or a genial creature of the Deity, representing the lofty and blessed nature of the human being:

A rambling schoolboy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and a severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By deep radiance of the setting sun:
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! Like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship.

(Book VIII, ll. 256-275).

Involved in the mysterious fumes of the mists, brightened by the sun radiance, and aggrandized by his position upon an eminence, the human figure gained a lofty spiritual status, at the same time blessing and haunting, daemonic and divine. The reference to the glory symbolizes the spiritual status of the supreme creature of Nature, revealing to the external sight of the boy the brightness emanated from the Intellectual Source of the Being. On the other hand, the loftiness indicated by the comparison of the shepherd standing on the mountain with the body of a cross hints at a religious inspiration linking man with the sanctifying power derived from the biblical God. In this moment, under

the projection of Nature's elements, the image of the human creature gained, before the boy's eyes, a spiritual, virtuous and imaginative quality:

Thus was man
 Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
 And thus my heart was early introduced
 To an unconscious love and reverence
 Of human nature; hence the human form
 To me became an index of delight,
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
 (Book VIII, ll. 275-281).

In the course of his autobiographical education through the tracks of Nature, the speaker considers himself a blessed figure for being presented to the human form thus purified, beautified, sanctified and aggrandized by the presence of natural objects "that were great or fair" (Book VIII, l. 316), composing his image into the sublime scenario of Nature. Hence, the speaker boasts of having had contact with images of good, beauty and virtue in that due phase when his character had to be guided for those affections. A far different lot would have been if, instead, he had first met those images of evil, disorder and deprivation in the human society as watched in London, although those later scenes were to compose a necessary counterpoint of the hero's poetic formation. In due time, every adventure led him to poetic knowledge of Nature and Humankind.

Chapter II

2 Adulthood and Hardening of Aesthetic Sensibility: The Social and Political Interest Complementing yet Impairing the Poet's Imagination, and the Return to Nature Bringing Restoration

2.1 The Revolution as the Consummation of Nature's own Design

It is suggested in *The Prelude* as an autobiographical strategy based on the rehearsal of a firm belief in the development of human psychology that the human formation depends both on experience and on the subject's tendency to receive it and live it through. In each phase of life the human being is inclined to receive the content of experiences in his consciousness and process them in a specific way. In this sense, the interests of an adult generally differ in nature from those of a child since in adult life the developmental continuity established until then might be broken. However, the sort of experiences which the subject receives and the environments into which he comes to be immersed influence the development of his mind, either fostering her organic growth or breaking its progress at times. As adulthood came, Wordsworth's protagonist demonstrated a growing interest for the social and political issues that were happening in the great metropolis. It implied a deviation from the strong aesthetic sensibility or imagination – naturally grown since infancy but also consciously cultivated since boyhood – towards interests of another kind, on one hand; and, on the other hand, the shocking experiences faced in the configuration of the human material reality and in the dynamics of the historical events actually diverted his senses and spirit from Nature, even though the speaker considered that Nature, in terms of a higher Providence and subliminal Presence, was all the time with him. Wordsworth suggests that Nature never abandons men, but on the contrary men oppress themselves and destroy Nature. However, this movement brought sorrow to the hero, who only found renewal and peace in his subsequent return to Nature settling among the landscapes of his native region.

The narrative technique employed in *The Prelude* follows two parallel axes: the one consists in reporting a sequence of meaningful events and the associated conceptions as regards the evolution of Wordsworth's poetic personality along the story of his life; the other consists in revising other sequences of events and conceptions which were developed beside the series that forms the central argument. In this sense, up to Book VII, where human problems were faced during a life period in London, the speaker had recorded how his education had been fostered through the love of Nature. Then, in Book VIII the speaker gives an account of how at the same time, either through the same events or involving other happenings, either through similar or different processes, the love of Nature led to the love of man. Most of the narrative of Book VIII consists in a revision of the protagonist's life since childhood until his period of residence in London in mature adulthood. Hence, it serves to recollect important arguments left aside in the main axe of the narrative. This technique is revealed analogically by means of comparison of the speaker's "old remembrances" with "a river" which:

swayed
 In part by fear to shape a way direct,
 That would engulf him soon in the ravenous sea –
 Turns, and will measure back his course, far back,
 Seeking the very regions which he crossed
 In his first outset;

(Book IX, ll. 2-7).

As spectators of Wordsworth's own story, the speaker and his addressee Coleridge participate in a process of visual reconstruction via reporting by memory in which speaker and hearer play the metaphorical part of travelers along the pathways of the narrative, who, when need is felt, stop on the top of a height to look back over the region in order to reshape the idea of their itinerary out of the backward panorama. In this conversation, the speaker turns, returns and delays:

As a traveller, who has gained the brow
 Of some aerial Down, while there he halts
 For breathing-time, is tempted to review
 The region left behind him;

(Book IX, ll. 9-12).

The axes of the narrative parallel either according to the temporal order of the incidents or according to the specific themes that the speaker chooses for presentation. In the retrospect of Book VIII, the narrative repeats the same chronological order of the seven first books, leading from infancy to later youth and touching early adulthood. The following three books – IX, X and XI – refer to the period Wordsworth lived in France

and constitute an argument “how much unlike the past!” (Book IX, l. 22). Chronologically, this sequence deals with a new phase of his autobiography, corresponding to the period of transition from later youth to adult life. Thematically, it has to do with a period in which the hero’s mind recognized the influence of Nature realized in the events of the French Revolution. The inclination towards the beauty of landscapes and natural objects started to diminish and the hero found his feelings bound to social issues and to the revolutionary sway inspired by the historical events, in which he hoped to read how the human action might overcome the bonds of oppression upon the human nature, such as that which the youth had witnessed in the streets of London. However, as he was soon to discover, the revolutionary ideals of justice and freedom were to end up in the crimes and massacres of Terror. The grounds of hope failed, bringing instead a period of personal, moral and creative crisis, as extremely deadening as the icy cold of winter, on whose account the protagonist’s mind could no longer feel the presence of Nature nor rely on her power, since his faculties had been blotted by analytical habits which impaired imagination and intellectual love in his approach to the outward world.

After less than one year sojourning in London, the protagonist was attracted to France, where he lived for about two years. He was impelled by a desire gradually kindled in his heart since his journey through the Alps in 1790, in which he had crossed the French soil when every nook cheered with the joy of a new age inaugurated by the Revolution one year before. France was kept in his memory through the nostalgia of that journey, and the passions linked to that land had, unlike those bound to Nature and humankind, a lately appeal, as the speaker confirms: “the realm that I had crossed / So lately, journeying towards the snow-clad Alps” (Book IX, ll. 34-35). If Nature motivated that travel in youth, the patriotic and revolutionary impulses have been the resulting sentiments which in manhood conducted the hero back to France in order to live in the political clime where, he believed, the power of humanity, justice and freedom had triumphed to rule humankind ever since and everywhere.

His destination was “a pleasant town / washed by the current of the stately Loire” (Book IX, ll. 40-41). Yet first he stopped in Paris to visit, for some days, the places which had been the stage of the Revolution. In loco the revolutionary power could be experienced flowing through his veins and kindling his feelings. In the halls of Paris the hero witnessed that power moving freshly in the outer spots, aware that it

should be strong enough to impress his senses and affect strong emotions. According to the speaker's testimony, in those halls:

The National Synod and the Jacobins,
I saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
(Book IX, ll. 49-51).

As one aspiring the poet-prophet's visionary power, then the protagonist thought of the times to come out of the remaining elements of the past. The symbols of the past were seen as the dust left by the fall of solid buildings melted in the air and danced in the wind. And the building of future was seen as a possibility out of the wreckage of the past. The speaker has in mind the storming of the Bastille. Nevertheless, at that time the hero was not really moved by revolutionary and patriotic convictions, but by aesthetic interests, seeking in the scenarios of the birthplace of the Revolution the same strength of emotion as he used to find in the external aspects of the natural landscapes. However, those historical scenes could not impress the subject's soul with the strength of beauty and sublimity required by his longings:

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
And from the rubbish, gathered up a stone
And pocketed the relic in the guise
Of an enthusiast;
(Book IX, ll. 67-71).

It becomes clear that at this initial phase in France Wordsworth's revolutionary and patriotic interests have been secondary to his desire of becoming a poet whose vocation has been chiefly guided by the aesthetic and divine power of Nature. Two more phases were to come: the one in which the speaker recognized in the revolutionary and patriotic desires the correspondence to the emotions linked to Nature's design and Heaven's providence: "unto me the events / Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course" (Book IX, ll. 246-247); the other in which those desires appeared in frank and deadening opposition to the elements of Nature, as well as to the imaginative and sentimental impulses required to access the lofty truth in conversion with her forms: "Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source, / My sentiments" (Book XI, ll. 177-178). This wavering motion will shake the structure of the poet's mind along the whole narrative of the French period in *The Prelude*.

That the hero converted the historical spot into a poetic thing can be drawn by his gesture of catching a stone from the remaining pieces of the Bastille and keeping it for the memory of the place. More than a metonymic reduction in which the part stands

for the whole, that stone is part of a symbolic process in which the concrete image represents the images contained in the abstract ideas. Now the stone kept by the poet represents the preservation of the Bastille as a poetic image, which thus endows the historic elements with poetic status together with Nature, the main of Wordsworth's matters. Not only were the images linked to the Revolution secondary for the subject as compared to those of Nature, but they also signalize the poetic crisis that the poet is later to suffer, advancing his state of dejection and inactivity by the recognition of a lack in the object to fill the longings of the subject's soul:

yet, in honest truth,
I looked for something that I could not find,
Affecting more emotion than I felt;
(Book IX, ll. 71-73).

From his short visit to Paris young adult Wordsworth moved to the town bathed by the Loire where he was to take a longer sojourn. At that phase, although Wordsworth had a strong interest and admiration for the deeds of the Revolution, he could not partake of the effervescence that moved the spirit of the French people, since he was still not prepared to understand their own motives nor the real dimension of those events. Such indifference for the dominant feeling whereas he wanted to offer sympathy for the revolutionary cause resulted from want of direct knowledge since the hero had not lived among the main facts and actions unleashed since 1789. Despite the protagonist's efforts to keep pace with the events, the amount of information gotten outdoors was not enough to clarify the roots of the situation since he lacked the direct experience, the immersion as an active participant and insertion as a living spectator needed for the comprehension of the true ground of the circumstances. Therefore, unable to find life in the happenings around him, nor the real vitality that might endow the information heard with a sense of praxis able to transform it into real wisdom, with real importance for the history of his age, the hero felt dislocated:

but having never seen
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power
Had sprung, their transmigration, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me
Loose and disjoined, and the affections left
Without a vital interest.

(Book IX, ll. 100-107).

The protagonist found the very meaning of the ideal of Revolution for himself in that motive that turned him into a "patriot", e.g. the love of man. This idea is hinted at when

the speaker reports the attitude of parting company from the privileged men to come close to those of humble life: “my heart was all / Given to the people, and my love was theirs” (Book X, ll. 123-124). The love of humankind is the link that bound the democratic ideals of the Revolution with the import of Nature for the hero. That convergence with Nature made Wordsworth fond of the Revolution, which he conceived as a movement prepared rather by Nature than by purely abstract politic ideas. The connection which grounds the Revolution on Nature, thus prompting Wordsworth’s sympathy with the cause of nations is found in the simple and humble life in his native land, for him a fair instance of “natural rights and civil” (Book X, l. 201), of the sense of community, equality, justice and freedom, where human and personal value had been more important than rank and wealth:

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through tenour of my school-day time,
The face of one, who whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood;
(Book IX, ll. 215-222).

The speaker argues that the education by Nature prompted him to intuit the spiritual essence of the world and recognize the natural drives of infantine liberty that in manhood have been converted into the revolutionary praise of politic liberty:

Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God’s mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature’s sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty.
(Book IX, 233-238).

The kind of life grounded on the rural environment of humble customs and natural rights that Wordsworth realized in his native region represented a way of living associated with a mode of education derived from the exposure to the gifts of Nature. Thence, the hero draws the conceptions of political rights and humanity that led him to praise the outcome of the Revolution as the unfolding of Nature’s own processes. Thence the young man derived the ideal that all goods of mankind, above all political rights, personal character and talent, justice, freedom and humanity, belong to Nature:

But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!

If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
 Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
 A gift that was come rather late than soon.
 (Book IX, 239-248).

The speaker conceives the historical events as the materialization of Nature's proper movement, ascribed in her own tendencies. Thus the historical transformation evinces that it belongs to Nature's proper design to lead from one state of things to another until the whole reaches a state of perfection in a sort of natural dialectics.

The cause of the Revolution was conceived as celestial and divine, confirmed by the proof of the emotions aroused in the hero's heart in face of the facts as the soldiers were preparing for the war to defend France against invasion:

Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
 Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
 Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.
 (Book IX, 281-287).

The speaker suggests the truth that only vice, unsoundness and foolishness – negative passions that counterpoint what Wordsworth conceived as the natural and divine design for the humankind – could justify the opposition to the ideals that had been moving France at that time.

The fellowship with Michel Beaupuy, an old French General met among the band of military officers which Wordsworth joined for companionship, represented for Wordsworth the opportunity to recognize the figure who embodied that ideal of man as the youth had conceived to be an example of fair sentiments and human dignity shaped by Nature and God. On the other hand, Beaupuy partakes of Wordsworth the youth's same conceptions, and hence in their dialogues this character helps the hero to clarify and express his own thoughts and feelings about mankind, as they corresponded to the ideals that motivated and grounded the Revolution. This idea might be confirmed if one focus on the treatment of man as the dearest matter in the conversations between the youth and the old general:

We added dearest themes –
 Man and his noble nature, as it is
 The gift which God has placed within his power,
 His blind desires and steady faculties
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
 On firm foundations, making social life,

Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure
 As individual in the wise and good.
 (Book IX, 354-363).

What made of the rural inhabitants of Wordsworth's native district worthy of the noble attributes of mankind is that quality which opposes them to the court society, thus bringing them close to the values of Nature: the humble men partake of what the speaker calls the "natural inlets of just sentiment", "lowly sympathy" and "chastening truth" (Book IX, ll. 350-351). Those men lived under the social principle of community and the rules of liberty and equality. In this sense, their laws belong to Nature, different from those men subjected to the laws of the absolute regime, a creation of men for the oppression of men. During the conversations with his French guide, the speaker despises the absolute government as an unnatural system harmful for the people, believing that if something be bad for the majority of the human beings, it must be, by principle, wrong and against Nature's design:

Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
 Is law for all, and of that barren pride
 In them who, by immunities unjust,
 Between the sovereign and the people stand,
 His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
 Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
 And love; for where hope is, there hope will be
 For the abject multitude.

(Book IX, 502-509).

For the protagonist, Beauvuy was an agent of hope in the transformation of mankind, redeeming her from all grounds of poverty and oppression whether material or spiritual. Together they believed in a superior power, a pervading spirit, linked with the cosmic energy of Nature and with the heavenly providence of God, which was to reanimate the human life with all good, kindness, dignity and creativity reserved to human nature:

I with him believed
 That a benignant spirit was abroad
 Which might not be withstood, that poverty
 Abject as this would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
 The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
 All in institutes forever blotted out
 That legalize exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
 Whether by edict of the one or few;
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 Should see the people having a strong hand
 In framing their own laws; whence better days
 To all mankind.

(Book IX, 518-532).

Figures like that of Beaupuy inspired enthusiastic and visionary characters like the autobiographical Wordsworth as spiritual forces of Nature or divine messengers of God. Wordsworth the youth paid so great a respect to Beaupuy, almost religious in kind, as if he had been associated with a true prophet. This pseudo-religious love refers to the belief that his creed embodied the very ideal of the Revolution, while the Revolution was the act through which Nature was to fulfill her own transformative design, thence emerging a redeemed mankind. Alluding to the act of the Last Judgment, the speaker hints at an apocalyptic act of consummation in which Nature's powers were prompt to start the beginning of a new, happy time. So, for both companions, it was a "sweet toil" to meditate on "rational liberty", on "hope in man", on "justice" and on "peace", in retirement in the dales and groves:

If nature then be standing on the brink
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
Of one devoted, – one whom circumstance
Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
In action, give it outwardly a shape,
And that of benediction, to the world.
(Book IX, 398-403).

The figure of Beaupuy represented the spiritual and intellectual incarnation of the "authority Divine" (Book IX, l. 406) that sanctions "truth" (Book IX, l. 404), such as that represented in ancient times by prophets, sages and philosophers. Beaupuy is seen as the revealer of that "truth", which the speaker defines as the realization of the human "hope", "desire" and "creed of zeal" (Book IX, ll. 405-406), fulfilled in life, not impaired by "danger, difficulty or death" (Book IX, l. 407). Beaupuy's association in his role with the numinous revealers of Nature and Humankind is already suggested in the depiction of his physical shape, starting with his "oriental loathing" (Book IX, l. 290):

his port,
Which once had been erect and open, now
Was stooping and contracted,
(Book IX, 146-148).

Yet, more impressive than the lack of beauty robbed of his external features by the time, his figure is beautified by the suggestion of the transparency and brightness overflowing from his soul, suggested in the form of a glory spread around the body of a saint or martyr:

a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause

Whereof he was part:
(Book IX, 315-319).

Beaupuy, like the shepherds seen in Wordsworth native land during his childhood, like the Leech-Gatherer of *Resolution and Independence*, and like the Old Soldier encountered while ascending one night along the margins of Winander during his summer vacation, represents a spiritual creature, shaped by Nature to reinforce Wordsworth's belief in the power of Providence and in the numinous nature of Man. The kinship and sympathy established between Wordsworth and Beaupuy was that which attracts higher spirits bound by a higher design: if in the moment of a bright vision of Nature during his summer vacation Wordsworth felt in the effusive joy of that instant the "bond unknown" that vowed him to the poetic vocation (Book IV, ll. 333-338), the old officer who loves man "as man" appears endowed with the "tie invisible" which links the ancient prophets to the divine order:

By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order.
(Book IX, 302-306).

Each with his mission, both of them are blessed with a sacred service. Through close interaction, Wordsworth's soul was strengthened by the joy felt in the presence of a lofty spiritual and intellectual being, through which his heart converse with the universal source of wisdom and love, where aesthetic, intellectual and religious sentiments converge to form the poetic ideas.

2.2 From Revolution to Terror: The Agony of Poet and Nature

In the tenth book of *The Prelude* Wordsworth gives an account of how the things witnessed, thought and felt in his return to Paris have influenced his mind. Having arrived at the French metropolis one month after the September massacres, the protagonist lived the agitations of seeing the Revolution turned into Terror. The King had been in jail with the royal family, and the State assumed the Government and embodied the new Republic. Neither rights nor justice, people's most expected conquest, could be seen; but crimes and persecution. The young man went to Paris

spurred by the hope that the cause of public sorrow had been a passing disturbance; that earth could be free forever from those “Lamentable crimes” (Book X, l. 41). Yet, he was soon to realize that oppression was the dominant state of affairs:

But that night
I felt most deeply in what world I was,
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
(Book X, ll. 63-65).

The speaker learnt from Nature’s examples the truth that, like the hurricane, the tide and the earthquake return their effects over the site they ravaged, “all things have second birth” (Book X, l. 83). Thus, the hero was aware that it was not different with the terrifying circumstances in France. The atmosphere of agitation was indicated by Nature’s own countenance of complacency, which tried to appease the hero’s mind, that had been affected by the air of civil and political agitation, by menace and danger. Nature’s piety was felt when he left the region of Loire to return to Paris:

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading with unusual quietness, –
A day as beautiful as e’er was given
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed,
(Book X, ll. 1-5).

The clear light of that quiet day represents reason, soundness and peace. Yet the dusky fading away of that day announces the failure of reason, vanquished by the darkness of general madness. Therefore, that night the protagonist could not sleep; his mind agitated by the subconscious forewarning of the irrationality and hopelessness of the events to come:

And in this way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole city, ‘sleep no more’. The trance
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
But vainly comments of a calmer mind
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.
(Book X, ll. 85-93).

Scary for the hero was the fact that whereas the trance vanished, the expectations of a dangerous reality stayed, gradually to gain shape, in spite of any effort of reason – the kin power of the ordering principle of Nature – to change and regulate the course of things. The agitation of Wordsworth’s mind reflected the state of contradiction which had subjugated reason and was prompt to rule the French nation. His fear and sorrow reflected his own position in a place where force rather than justice became the principle

of law. In the morning after, the youth had his bad expectations confirmed when he watched the vain procedures of denunciation of the crimes of Robespierre in the Palace of Orleans.

If earlier the speaker believed in the happy conquests of the Revolution as a gift of Nature's processes, now he understands the Terror as the triumph of unnatural forces embodied in the tyranny of few men over the people: "I revolved, / How much the destiny of Man had still / Hung upon single persons" (Book X, ll. 154-156). And the speaker is up to demand the aid of Nature's unconquerable power to intervene on the behalf of the people, surrendered under unnatural oppression, obliged to give up their rights:

I could almost
Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men,
By patient exercise of reason made
Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled
With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,
The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive
From the four quarters of the winds to do
For France, what without help she could not do,
A work of honour;

(Book X, ll. 134-142).

The speaker still kept the belief in a superior power, a life-giving intelligence, pervading the whole universe, prompt to intervene for saving and regulating the humankind whenever she loses control of her will and acts. The speaker conjures up Nature as she appears in the elemental forces – earth and wind. That is because he believed in a spiritual, transcendental source which not only moves the elements and moulds the forms of external Nature, but, furthermore, directs the character of the beings and destiny of the world:

that there was,
Transcendent to all local patrimony,
One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
That objects, even as they are great, thereby
Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
That Man is only weak through his mistrust
And want of hope where evidence divine
Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;

(Book X, ll. 156-163).

The youth conceived Nature as the source of reason in the human conscience, as it is a power infused in man's consciousness to provide him with his values, guiding him not to lose sight of them. Besides, Nature was seen as a living entity prompt to help and defend man whenever his own forces fail to sustain his struggles:

I felt
That 'mid the loud distractions of the world

A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
 Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
 Of life and death, in majesty severe
 Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
 Of truth and justice, utter sacrifice,
 From whatsoever region of our cares
 Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,
 Earnest and blind, against the stern decree.

(Book X, ll. 181-190).

In this sense, a leader for the nations was conceived as one divinely inspired man, whose mind is imparted with the intelligent power of the universal Intellect and cultivated by rational experience of Nature:

a spirit strong
 In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
 A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
 Is for Society's unreasoning herd
 A domineering instinct, serves at once
 For way and guide,

(Book X, ll. 165-170).

This belief finds its basis on the negative truth that tyranny and oppression are set and fed in the countercurrent of Nature, with no natural right to exist, irreconcilable in the terms of virtue:

tyrannic power is weak,
 Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
 Nor the support of good or evil men
 To trust in.

(Book X, ll. 200-203).

Nevertheless, the speaker did not abandon the faith in that a mighty mind would take the rule in France to lead people to their deserved state of perfection, under a just government and a redeemed State.

Imbued with this hope, after almost two years in France Wordsworth returned to England, yet convinced that his singular participation would rather have been of too small an import for the cause he wanted to defend. Furthermore, he comprehended that as if by divine providence, he was saved from perishing like many others who had been killed for their democratic and republican ideals. The problem of Wordsworth's being which resulted in his separation from Nature was a moral dilemma with severe repercussions in his aesthetic faculties. As love was the professed prop of imagination, while imagination was the faculty that allows the youth to recognize and decipher the symbolic meanings of Nature, the conflicts after the Revolution short-circuited and confounded his sense of love. In the Conclusion, the speaker refers to Intellectual love as a spiritual feeling associated with Imagination. The events in France shook another

kind of love, conceived as “patriotic love” (Book X, l. 305) by whose influence the moral aspects created a sort of unbalance in the hero’s aesthetic faculty, through which he had possessed the might to converse with the beautiful forms of Nature; but more than that, through which, as a future poet, he could get the power to contemplate the source of truth capable of integrating the human being and the world, the inner and the outer realms, the subjective and the objective universes.

Returned to England, Wordsworth still believed that the success of France would be redemptive to the world:

I brought with me the faith
That if France prospered, good men would no long
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
(Book X, ll. 200-203).

As a patriot, the protagonist believed that the crimes of the Terror were not important enough to supplant the power represented by the ideals blossomed with the French Revolution; and wished to see his own country adhering to the cause of France. However, as great as his enthusiasm was the shock when he knew that Britain joined the league of confederate states in war against France. Without knowing which to support, either his country or his ideal, knowing that one choice would imply the exclusion of the other, and seeing no way of conciliation, the young Wordsworth imputed “pity and shame!” (Book X, l. 265) for his land, passions reflected into changing and subversive impulses inside. The speaker defined this conflictive sentiment as a “shock” given to his “moral nature” (Book X, l. 269). The young man felt morally displaced in his own country, where amid a multitude of people praying inside a church for the victory of the British armies, he thought out his silent, resentful and spiteful prayers against the success of Britain. Without knowing how to define these irreconcilable feelings inside, the speaker first called it “a grief”. But soon asserted it to be “A conflict of sensation without name” (Book X, l. 290). This line indicates the transposition of his inner conflict from the moral to the aesthetic field.

The ideals of the Revolution resulted in illusion, and the protagonist ended up recognizing that it turned to become an amount of demagogic intents clothed in promises of hope:

Tyrants, strong before
In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;
And thus, on every side beset with foes,
The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
Spread into madness of many; blasts
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.
(Book X, ll. 333-338).

Apropos of this moment the speaker highlights the relevance of a powerful “change” in the historical scenario reflecting into his youthful mind “Change and subversion from that hour” (Book X, l. 268). Wordsworth’s faith reverted from an enchanted and imaginative worldview which integrated life in all, which saw every being feeling and looked for the eternal, spiritual power pervading the relations and guiding the destiny of every form within the limits of earth and sky. This worldview, fostered in freedom to run, play and rest among the fields, woods, hills and rivers has been supplanted by rationalistic and mechanic doctrines based on logical deductions and analytic methods through which “we murder to dissect”, thus aligning himself with those “who throned / The human Understanding paramount / And made of that their God” (Book X, ll. 341-343).

This opinion is reiterated in the meditations of the following chapter about that very moment when Britain’s declaration of war against France twisted the hero’s feelings and creed from the depth of his moral sense and, above all, from the foundations of love. Still believing in the promises of liberty, justice and happiness in France; and believing to see the patriotic hopes inspired by the ideals of the Revolution adopted and fulfilled in Britain, the young Wordsworth exulted by feeling that his passions would cling in perfect tune with that natural course determined for him by Nature since his infant’s first intercourse of touch with the external world:

a child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
That from the cradle had grown up with me,
And losing, in no other way than light
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.
(Book XI, ll. 168-172).

However, the hero suffered a great blow when he saw that the happenings opposed his expectation. Hence, the change in the social and political contexts made every conception about the nations’ capacity to follow virtue as dictated by Reason subjacent to the laws of Nature, as well as all feelings raised thereby, change into contemptible distrust:

In this main outline, such it might be said
Was my condition, till with open war
Britain opposed the Liberties of France.
This threw me first out of the pale of love;
Soured and corrupted upwards to the source,
My sentiments; was not, as hitherto,
A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
But change of them into their contraries.
(Book XI, ll. 173-180).

This turnabout led the protagonist to what he meant to be an error, to abandon the deep convictions of his heart and adhere to a fashion-of-the-day doctrine, taking the Rationalism of Godwin for his new master, instead of the Reason of Nature, as a hope to find a palliative for the conflicts without as well as within:

meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
To whose pretensions, sedulously urged,
I had but lent a careless ear, assured
That time was ready to set all things right,
And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
Would be oppressed no more.

(Book XI, ll. 188-194).

Then, to augment the youth's inner conflict kindled with the disappointment caused by his native nation, he got a second stroke of disappointment from his ideal nation, which then abandoned liberty, the principle to which she deserved the merit of having given a new birth:

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had turned a war of self-defence
Into one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for:

(Book XI, ll. 206-209).

Together with oppression and vexation in the historical events there came that already mentioned vogue of wrong reason drying the philosophical thought from all sources of feeling and passion:

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
To depravation, speculative schemes –
That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
Forever in a purer element –
Found ready welcome.

(Book XI, ll. 223-228).

In the verve of youth the hero adhered to these depraved philosophical schemes when the complex of facts was too close to be understood with the due distinction. Yet the speaker, speaking from the vantage point of a mature man, exerted his judging faculty to attest the degree of reasonability of his youthful inclinations and decisions, thus speaking of the use of rationalism to comprehend the grounds of society with a bit of irony. And the speaker attests the confusions of his mind toiling with those philosophical tools:

So I fared,
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day

Her titles and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
 The sanction; till, demanding formal *proof*,
 And seeking it in everything, I lost all feeling
 Of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.

(Book XI, ll. 293-305).

The above mentioned philosophical tools refer to the concepts and methods of what the speaker calls “abstract science”, where the youth found justification for the abstract exercise of his “reasoning faculty” (Book XI, ll. 328-329). The pure use of abstract thought induced the protagonist to fall into the error of forgetting the humankind’s indebtedness to Nature, leading him to focus on mere external appearances, thus ignoring the true spiritual, eternal, essential, ontological, poetic content that fills all existence:

betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
 Out of a heart, that had been turned aside
 From Nature’s way by outward accidents,
 And which was thus confounded, more and more
 Misguided, and misguiding.

(Book XI, ll. 287-293).

This state of mind summarizes Wordsworth’s worst crisis of mental depression and physical illness, metaphorically defined as “the soul’s last and lowest ebb” (Book XI, l. 307), in which the hero lost the power to commune with Nature and find the truth about mankind due to that inner delusion through which he “drooped, / Deemed our blessed reason of least use / Where wanted most” (Book XI, ll. 307-309), in which the embittered subject dismissed Nature as if the attributes of “will and choice” (Book XI, l. 310), characteristic of man’s mind, had no real ontological status; as if Nature and man had no bond with the Universal Being.

In sorrow, without hope of reconciling the moral conflict unleashed by the war between Britain and France, the hero noticed that he was abandoning the belief in the origin of life in Nature and her primacy over every other principle:

Amid the depth
 Of those enormities, even thinking minds
 Forgot at seasons, whence they had their being;
 Forgot that such a sound were ever heard
 As Liberty, upon earth: yet all beneath
 Her innocent authority was wrought,
 Nor could have been, without her blessed name.

(Book X, ll. 374-380).

If he was aware that Nature had been threatened in the province of public affairs, he also felt the pangs of seeing her place robbed in the most faithful place devoted to her praise – the inner soul:

Then suddenly the scene
 Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
 In long orations, which I strove to plead
 Before unjust tribunals, – with a voice,
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
 Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
 In the last place of refuge – my soul.
 (Book X, ll. 409-415).

Grief and confusion caused by moral pangs blotted the subject's body and soul, both senses and feelings, impairing him of seeing the real foundations of life. The speaker felt that as a change in himself:

When I began in youth's delightful prime
 To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
 And holy passion over came me first,
 Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free
 From its oppression. But O Power Supreme!
 Without whose care this world would cease to breathe,
 Who from the Fountain of thy Grace dost fill
 The veins that branch through every frame of life,
 Making man what he is, creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence,
 Above the rest raised infinite ascents
 When reason that enables him to be
 Is not sequestered – what a change is here!
 (Book X, ll. 416-428).

If on the one hand the speaker recognizes the lamentable want of sensibility in himself to commune with Nature, on the other hand he still acknowledges the insurmountable power of Nature as the origin and source of all.

2.3 The Hero's Return to his Native Land Bringing Confidence in People as Bearers of Rational Experience: Loosing and Recovering the Genial Feeling in Nature as the Place of Human Liberty and Happiness

It took no longer for the protagonist to realize that if the historical events diverted from that course prepared by the dialectics of Nature the blame should fall upon men, not upon Nature. Then the hero started to find some sights of hope in the humankind in that scenario of despair, which the speaker represents by the analogy of

green spots in the desert and small islands scattered in the sea. All delusion caused by the authorities in France had been replaced by hope in the virtues of people. Thence came a gleam of hope in the renovation of Nature. It was walking on from Leven's estuary amid the pastoral vales of his childhood, cheered with an exulting mood in a clear day – in the speaker's words: bright as if blessed by a dance of angels – that the youth heard of the downfall of Robespierre and his partners. Revisiting the dear scenes run over during childhood the youth saw the ancient chapel devoted to St. Mary on the island; and not far from there, he encountered near the ruin of St. Mary's mouldering church in the Vale of Nightshade a procession of travelers whose guide approached and informed him that Robespierre was dead. With the joyous thought on the triumph of Justice and renovation of mankind, the hero started to feel a burst of renovation inside his own self, helped by the remembrance of his old days of liberty within Nature when, in company of his band of schoolboys, they rode in wantonness along the shore towards their distant home at Hawkshead.

The end of Terror in France brought hope for the future of humankind. However, according to the speaker's account, he saw no condition there for the realization of "good by the light / Of rational Experience" (Book XI, ll. 4-5). The hero manifested no trust in the French authorities, neither in the Government nor in the Senate, since those who ruled the State seemed, in the speaker's opinion, to act as if "their wish had been undermine / Justice, and make an end of Liberty" (Book XI, ll. 72-73). Yet he grounded his confidence on the virtues and kindness of people and on the certain triumph of the universal, incorruptible principles of the New Republic. Trusting in the triumph of these ideals, the protagonist felt the strong communion maintained by youth, more than adulthood and age, with Nature and reason, and saw Power reverting to Nature, unimpaired by law, custom or habit (Book XI, ll. 27-34).

A defender of human nature, the youth got involved in the affairs of civil policy. There he proved what there is of finest in men, their passions and societies. However, he also learned that those elements were not safe from the evil creeping around during that age. Instructed on the nature of good and evil, the hero also meditated on the rules and characters of the nations. Youth was seen as a higher blessedness to be lived in a time when Reason seemed to act for the realization of a mighty work that was encompassed by her principles, spreading her paradisaic charms over the whole world:

Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,

The beauty wore of promise –
(Book XI, ll. 117-118).

Then Wordsworth convokes men to live, to construct and act on earth since her present state, more than any other ideal, corresponds to the promised world of man:

But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us, – the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!
(Book XI, ll. 142-144).

Wordsworth's argument leads to the conclusion that Nature is the proper world of man. Then, the speaker reports the autobiographical aspects which prepared his emotional bonds that link the hero to Nature since childhood:

They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The play-fellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of sweetness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers, – who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it; they, too, of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;
(Book XI, ll. 125-135).

Those who grew up fostered by the same ministries that assisted Wordsworth and his band of schoolboys understand the right of living in this world and are prepared to comprehend the deepest meanings of life because their minds have been stored by the affections of the most significant elements of Nature.

The beginning of renovation, operated like the arrival of spring, derived from the charms felt when settled back in his native country. There, especially under the admonishing and soothing voice of his sister, met after almost a decade of separation, Wordsworth found again the conviction of his profession of Poet and awakened the sensory, sentimental, spiritual and intellectual ways for Nature's beneficial affection through his heart and mind:

Nature's self,
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
Which through the later sinkings of his cause,
Hath still upheld me,
(Book XI, ll. 350-356).

Addressing Coleridge, as the blessed friend whose influence helped saving his own imaginative gifts, opening his eyes again to the bounteous beauties of Nature,

Wordsworth professes the joyous belief that man has his sanctuary in the nooks of Nature of which his native land is the most perfect example:

To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now
Stands single in her only sanctuary;
(Book XI, ll. 399-401).

Back to the land where he had been reared since childhood, Wordsworth finally discovered that the grounds of liberty which he sought so eagerly in France reside by principle in Nature and that they had always been there in his native country, where, during childhood and boyhood, he was granted with freedom either to range the region alone amid secluded and remote places, or to run and play with his fellows in delightful sport.

As Coleridge had been traveling along the Alps, especially in the French land, impelled by needs of his frail health, during the very present when Wordsworth, the mature speaker, narrates his former adventures in France, with all joys, grief and “perturbations to a youthful mind” (Book XI, l. 373) which came thereby, Wordsworth seizes the longings for his absent friend, now a sole wanderer in a distant land, to remember his own journeys, though on diverse purposes and context, along that same land. Then, invoking the remembrance of the Alps, Wordsworth asks for the possibility of healing and renewal contained in those images; which corresponded however to the pervading and beneficial effects that he now could find abundant in the images, plenty of memory and remembrance, of his native country:

and thou, o flowery field
Of Etna! Is there not some nook of thine,
From the first playtime of the infant world
Kept sacred to restorative delight,
When from afar invoked by anxious love?
(Book XI, ll. 419-423).

2.4 The Return to Nature and Rural Life in Wordsworth’s Native Country: Educational, Redemptive and Restorative Action of Nature upon the Poet’s Mind

The books XII and XIII of *The Prelude* deal with a broad theme which prepares the end of Wordsworth’s formative course, an educational process that was to make his mind ready to assume the poet’s trade, allowing him to start the composition

of his great work. This process consisted in the proper revision of his formative course through the re-visitation in his memory of all autobiographical moments of experience that constituted meaningful steps for the sedimentation and cementing of the poetic knowledge into the structure of an especial profession. The alluded theme consists in the impairment and restoration of the protagonist's taste and imagination. This reflection is set after the crisis of sorrow and despondency arose with the shocks of the French Revolution to indicate how much a moral dilemma created with the failure of hope and faith in the consummation of humanity might influence man's aesthetic, imaginative and intellectual faculties. It was stated that Nature has a redemptive role. This fact implies a religious problem: a deep and fundamental belief that the sorrows that people had to endure in the social level, displayed along the events in France, bear a corresponding component of guilt remaining from the original sin. Thus Wordsworth's patriotic period resulted in an interregnum in which his soul had been perturbed by images of depravity, deprivation, weakness and corruption:

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
 Detained us, in what spectacles of woe
 Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
 With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
 Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
 And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
 And things to hope for!

(Book XII, ll. 1-7).

Nature exerts her redemptive activity in that her beauty purifies man from his guilt and ignorance, providing his heart with peace and knowledge. Nature has also an educative power, since the interaction of her elements furnishes examples that guide the human behaviour and relationships:

ye breezes and soft airs,
 Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
 Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
 How without injury to take, to give
 Without offence;

(Book XII, ll. 10-14).

The order and laws intrinsic to the relationship among natural elements, and the feelings and ideas aroused when man contemplates them are pregnant of meaning valuable for humankind. Finally, Nature fulfills a restorative function in that, like the spring renews the earth after the rigours of winter, she infuses new spirits into man's heart. The renovation of the world reflected in the fresh appearances in any surrounding landscape heals the protagonist's soul with the return of sensations and sentiments that follow from the new conditions of pleasure spread around the visible world. On the other hand,

Reason, as the blessing power sent to man by the Intellectual Mind of the Universe, embodied in the harmonious forms of Nature and destined to be expressed in all human signs and gestures, has been betrayed by the human being's lower impulses: vice, prejudice, ambition and distemper that corrupt man, impeding the ennobling action of Great Universal Intellect.

The catastrophic happenings of the Revolution caught the hero into a state of mind dominated by the pathos of strangeness. Hence, he suffered noticing that his healthy taste, ruled by an imaginative faith in man and Nature, suddenly gave way to the traps of custom and habit, perils that blot every experience from the brightness of novelty. The speaker displays a firm awareness that he had been entrapped by bigotry: "a bigot to a new idolatry" (Book XII, l. 77), beaten by the strangeness of that state in which one person feels and expresses very strong and unreasonable beliefs or opinions, refusing to change them or accept disagreeing statements. The speaker confesses that, bigoted, he cut off his heart "From all the sources of her former strength" (Book XII, l. 80); further, that he entered such a condition as to:

unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
Those mysteries of being which have made,
And shall continue evermore to make
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.
(Book XII, ll. 83-87).

The problem here hinted at refers to the bigotry of rationalism whose scientific methods and logical precepts promoted the disenchantment of the world, mocking of the things of the heart, the spirit and the imagination, destined to perish under the sway of too mechanic, technical and measured a worldview. The speaker recollects the effects of his moral and aesthetic crisis as a perversion of the mind through which:

even the visible Universe
Fell under the dominion of a taste
Less spiritual, [which] with microscopic view
Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world
(Book XII, ll. 89-92).

The speaker conceived the idea that as the person grows up, the visual sense tends to exert dominion upon the other senses, thus weakening the imaginative and sentimental side of the human sensibility. But, the hero passed through an aggravating stage which strengthened his dependence on a superficial approach of outer objects through the external senses. The moral crisis of his mind predisposed him to empty the moral, spiritual and aesthetic values hidden in the deeper layers of the objects beheld. This crisis impaired the imaginative, emotional and passionate communion with Nature.

Then, the speaker suggests the way how that powerful sensibility evolved in his mind. At the stage of youth, when the poetic sensibility was in its height, the protagonist achieved the ability to commune with the Soul of Nature in powers like the winds, the waters, lights and shades, either through visual or aural sense, yet never without employing the heart and intellect. Thus, feeling, emotion and thinking always permeated the working of sensation. The speaker highlights that the cause of that feebleness of his imaginative faculty was less due to “suffering” than to “presumption”, by which one should understand the foolish daring of those who wanted to explain everything by the laws and schemes of logical reason. The kernel of the crisis faced by the protagonist consisted in a “twofold frame of body and mind” (Book XII, l. 125), a state of belief that used to separate the things of body and those of soul, emptying outward form of inward meaning, untying matter from spirit, and ungrounding the temporal off the eternal, the secular off the sacred, the human and the natural off the divine:

I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses,
Gained such strength in *me* as often held my mind
In absolute dominion.

(Book XII, ll. 126-131).

Too much attention to the external properties of objects, measurable and quantifiable, created insensibility towards the essential quality of those things:

giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meager novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
To affections and the spirit of the place
Insensible.

(Book XII, ll. 114-121).

Then the speaker explains:

the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each
To counteract the other, and themselves,
And make them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.

(Book XII, ll. 133-139).

The despotism of the eye over the remaining senses implies the absence of sentiment in the relation between subject and object. In this sense, man sees the world around as a

pure body of schematic combinations. There is no room for love in this relationship. Thus, everything loses its profound significance because the correspondent being is emptied of its soul, thus awaking no sympathy, no spiritual feeling in the heart of the beholder. The lack of attunement between man and the world is indicated by the impossibility of achieving, during the act of contemplation, either the full elevation of the soul with joy or the lightness of gratitude.

The speaker preaches for the communication of the sensations hosted in the outer senses with the feelings sat in the heart. This communication establishes the correlation between outer appearance and inner essence, thus configuring the genial power of the faculty to penetrate the deeper truth of things. Besides, it is grounded on the principles of human freedom: infantine freedom such as the one Wordsworth and his band of schoolboys gained in Hawkshead; freedom of the will for one to make his moral choices; social and political freedom; and freedom of sensibility, in which imagination is free to act supported by all sensations in equality of activity, without dominion of one and restriction of the others, whose inevitable result is imbalance, insensibility and unhappiness. This perfect state of mutual attunement between man and Nature, of a sweet and passionate converse, based on “love”, “piety” and “gratitude” (Book XII, l. 173) is based on having the simplicity of life and mind needed to find the perfect happiness of the soul in whatever the scene presented to his view, finding real satisfaction in them and welcoming it without craving for what is not there. Thence come the purest delight and the most genial feeling. This blessed character Wordsworth found in an unnamed maid, a sure image of the beautiful soul, or what the German poets and philosophers called *eine schöne Seele*. Similar was his state of simplicity when he was a boy among his native landscapes; even when, already a youth, he got the visionary intimations of the Soul of the World, and when enthusiastically attracted by Nature he crossed the Alps:

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills,
I loved whatever I saw: nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of what
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at this time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.

(Book XII, ll. 174-183).

In such mode of sensibility, the hero used to worship the natural objects, searching for their essence, following the guidance of a religious love and profound respect. In those contemplative activities, as the speaker asserts, the hero used to trust in the spontaneous affections of the things as a superior aesthetic power, never trying to exert the measurement of logic schemes or project a by reasoning pre-conceived image upon the living forms offered to his senses: “I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,” (Book XII, l. 188).

As the speaker gave an account of the causes of his crisis, the marks of degradation through which habit and custom leveled the grand by the mean, and, aggravated by the unruliness of the time, made the hero insensible to the poetic notes of rural life, were “transient” (Book XII, l. 201). If the protagonist found the cure for the illness of his soul, the regeneration of his mind was only possible because he already possessed the power inside himself. So it was because since early childhood he received the genial power of imagination and knowledge from Nature’s divine and daemonic sources, displayed in haunting and blissful appearances, so that all that Nature provided was actively received by a creative mind:

I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of the imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature’s presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

(Book XII, ll. 201-207).

Wordsworth found healing in Nature, especially in the remembrance of those scenes of infancy, childhood and boyhood which the speaker praised to call “spots of time” (Book XII, l. 208). Those are passages of life that:

retain
A renovating virtue, whence depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;

(Book XII, ll. 209-215).

Those passages are moments of experience in which the mysterious powers of Nature are displayed to the extent that they contain the key to solve the riddles of certain unconscious desire of self-discovery in the human heart. Those experiences remount to childhood and owe their restorative effect to the fact that they signalize how the mind governs the senses, so that even the most outward, even mechanical and superficial

components of the sensory experience of the external objects are linked to inner elements of intellect and sentiment, thus obeying the laws and following the tracks of essential, subjective passions of the heart. The spots of time are experiences of Nature that, by their shocking character, open the canal in man's sensibility to perceive, feel and understand the correspondence between the relationship of material-sensory qualities in the objects with the invisible content of spiritual animation in the depth of those objects; and the way the faculties establish the bond between the sensations and impressions captured in the external forms with the internalization of those impulses in the soul, under the form of simple or majestic feelings; exalting or melancholy thoughts; humble or lofty emotions; endearing or contemptuous, joyous or dejecting, and blessing or cursing passions. The speaker asserts that:

This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master – outward sense
The obedient servant of her will.

(Book XII, ll. 219-223).

The countenance of the external forms in the natural world predisposed the infant hero inwardly to enter, all of a sudden, into such a mood of frailty and defenselessness that forced him to accept the mysteries around him. Lost and companionless amid unknown places, the young Wordsworth saw himself at the mercy of Nature. That assault of mystery came pregnant of hidden meanings about the human nature demanding a future interpretation: that is the reason why the image of that moment endured so long in the protagonist's memory and was brought back in the due time when the subject needed its healing effect to counteract a subjective disease. Wordsworth needed the revelation of the "efficacious spirit" of poetry hidden in the secluded forms of Nature to awake the genial power of creative imagination in embryo inside himself. As, following the speaker, he received early in life the visiting of the awe-inspiring power of imagination, his crisis of bigotry, which depressed his mind with false opinion and contentious thought, could not last.

The two characteristic passages that Wordsworth called "spots of time" are the moments when the infant hero, guided by one of his father's servants, rode towards the hills and, soon, loosing himself from his companion, he crossed the moor and came to a site where in ancient times a murder had been executed. Hence, scared and excited by the inscription of the criminal's name on the grassy ground, the infant fled. Then, climbing the common again, he got the sight of a pool beneath the hills, the beacon on

the top and a girl carrying a pitcher on her head walking against the wind. The second passage refers to the long instant when, waiting for the horses that should be used to transport Wordsworth and his brothers to his father's house for the Christmas holidays, Wordsworth the boy went impatient into the fields and climbed a crag that stayed at the confluence of two roads, giving extensive visibility to both of them. It was a rainy day, and, sheltered under a huge stone on the eminence, the only company met with were a sheep and a hawthorn. Ere ten days at home, his father died so that together with his brothers the hero had to bury him. The remembrance of the "spots of time" either brought visionary inspiration, show the mysteries of man, the glimpse of the place where man's power hides, and awakened the feelings from a deadening lethargy, thus bringing "the spirit of the Past / For future restoration" (Book XII, ll. 285-286), or brought "workings of the spirit" fitted to "inner agitations" that served "to beguile / Thoughts over busy in the course they took, / Or animate an hour of vacant ease" (Book XII, ll. 333-335).

Continuing the same theme in Book thirteenth, the speaker reveals that the education of the poet by Nature, as well as the restoration of his impaired strength, depend on the human participation in the special power that only Nature can provide. Nature feeds man by means of two gifts offered in the complementary moods of emotion and calmness. The speaker expresses the belief that, by principle, the Genius, whose character transits between those two poles in search of wisdom and knowledge, receives his strength from Nature:

From her
 Receives that energy by which he seeks the truth,
 From her that happy stillness of the mind
 Which fits him to receive it when unsought.
 (Book XIII, ll. 7-10).

The idea that Nature provides and performs the education of a poet appears in close association with the notion that Nature constitutes herself a charming source of poetry, moral, knowledge and inspiration. Asserting that the attributes of calmness and emotion are the two "sister horns" (Book XIII, l. 4) that constitute Nature's strength, Wordsworth associates Nature with the symbolic idea of the horn as a magic source and enchanted container of music and poetry. This symbol belongs to a common belief during the Romantic period, found in the expression "wonderful horn" that in Germany gave title to a collection of popular poems known as *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

If the Genius is that being qualified by the privileged input of Nature's energy, it is also an attribute of the general human being the possibility to be fed in that benefit granted to genial minds. Thus, ranking himself with the "humblest intellects" (Book XIII, l. 11) Wordsworth endeavoured to report the story of how he received his lot, speaking "what I myself have known and felt" (Book XIII, l. 13) in his process of education, crisis and restoration (which are also part of this educative process):

Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now
To reappear, 'twas proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason;

(Book XIII, ll. 16-22).

The love of the natural objects and landscapes reveal that respect and devotion to the spiritual, ideal and intellectual principle of Nature, manifested in the forms, relations and modes of animation of her beings. This intelligent and providential principle was called Reason, sometimes identified with the divine power of God. Reason was the essence expressed in the outer forms of Nature. Referring to "Power" the speaker indicates the presence of an immaterial principle of the same intellectual type of that found in the human mind, and the same spiritual kind of that belonging to man's soul. However, the hero experienced that ideal "Power" as it appears materialized in the outward forms offered to the touch of his senses, manifested in "visible qualities", "shape" and "image". If the poet found his educative course in Nature, it is because she constitutes an ontological whole, an intelligent being, a self-sufficing organism, an ordered and organized system and a durable structure whose elements bear such a relation that provides pedagogical instances for the human life. Nature is endowed with a process that interferes in the human processes in a communion that can be recognized by those attentive intellects such as artists and poets. In this sense, the "Power" of Nature is not only self-turned, busied only with her intrinsic processes, but also turns her intention to the humbler creatures, among which dwells man, seeking at their maturity and perfection. Thus, Nature shuns "fallacious hope", "excessive zeal", "vain conceits" and selfish pride, but teaches for what is humble and durable:

but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;
Holds up before the mind intoxicate
With present objects, and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate show
Of objects that endure;

(Book XIII, ll. 27-32).

Intoxication with present objects designates a strong symptom of Wordsworth's crisis. The subject's activity of looking for endurable objects in the world without bears a counterpart in the healthy and sane qualities of man's faculties, for it belongs to active minds to seek the signs of durability and eternity. In passive minds the tyranny of the senses prevails, intoxicating them with the superficial impressions of the external forms, impairing the mind's sentimental, meaningful penetration into the soul of the things beheld. The presence of the natural objects from without is crucial for an observer like Wordsworth. However, the sensory image must be the inviting entrance for the poet's imagination to penetrate Nature's spiritual, moral, intellectual and aesthetic secrets; and not a barrier for it. During his crisis, the senses cast a sort of blight on the whole of his feelings and thoughts; whereas the sensory images barricaded the communication of the ideal, essential affections from inside the beautiful objects. Returning his passions to Nature's affections, the protagonist had re-established the characteristic "watchful thoughts" (Book XIII, l. 40) through which he used to see moral value in every being; those observing reflections and contemplative meditations which:

early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.
(Book XIII, ll. 44-47).

Having recovered his power to feel the cosmic energy that links every creature in a moral chain, the protagonist could penetrate once again into the life of the things using the "intellectual eye", e.g. the active device of the mind that makes sensual perception a thinking and sentimental activity, enhancing the life, divine and sublime, intrinsic to the material, external frame of things:

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
Once more in Man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love;
And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
(Book XIII, ll. 48-54).

Beauty and sublimity started again to be the proof of value found in anything in the world, as they constituted an appeal for the intellectual eye or that which the speaker had formerly called the "mind's eye". This appeal consists in an intellectual affection, i.e. an attribute that links the objects in Nature with the great Ideal and Intellectual Principle of the Universe. In this sense, the attraction exerted by the objects upon the

beholder has the power to kindle emotional response, to awaken spontaneous sentiments and thoughts that lead man to intuit the essential truth pervading humankind and Nature.

Now bearing a refined judgment on the social, political and economic rights of men, and about the injustice and corruption which based the rulers' authority upon people, the protagonist dared to inquire about society and humankind, especially as regards the possibility of reaching happiness, autonomy, self-realization and human perfection under the heteronomy conditions posed by the general and permanent struggle to build "that idol proudly named / 'The Wealth of Nations'" (Book XIII, ll. 77-78). Inquiring about the degree to which intelligence and virtue are attributes of those who lived by means of "bodily toil", under the domination of an unjust regime of work, labouring excessively beyond any human limit and condition, the hero found answers "among the natural abodes of men, / Fields with their rural works" (Book XIII, ll. 102-103); and with recourse to his earlier experience in the "great City" he found insights on "truths of individual sympathy" (Book XIII, l. 112). Yet he sought further knowledge in the pathways and roads, where he was blessed by witnessing examples of "human kindness and simple joys" (Book XIII, l. 119). Wandering among fields and groves was so lovely an activity as that of walking side by side with the beloved woman:

next to such a dear delight
Was that of wandering on from day to day
Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
To wisdom;

(Book XIII, ll. 129-133).

In the public ways the hero could meditate in the presence of natural objects and meet men. The public way exerted an appeal of de-familiarization upon the hero's mind, revealing the sense of novelty that made any poetic mind enter into an altered state of consciousness, thus recognizing an essential meaning that was hidden to those accustomed to the familiar sight. Since powerful moments of experience in early childhood attracted by the beauty of a winding road among his native hills, the public way started to exert an appeal of communication with lofty, divine and spiritual realities:

the sight,
Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
On my imagination since the morn
Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
That naked summit of a far-off hill
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,

Was like an invitation into space
Boundless, or guide into eternity.
(Book XIII, ll. 143-151).

Like that road leading into the lofty mountains in the Alps, untrodden by Wordsworth and his fellow traveler, offered a strong intimation of infinity and eternity, thus exciting their imagination; now, the unknown region and the sense of limitlessness beyond the limits imposed to the sight by the hills' ridge awakened the intimation and desire of a transcendental reality. In this sense, those human figures encountered on the lonely roads are endowed with more than human character: they are indexes of a divine, spiritual and ideal order which establishes either the aesthetic-religious communication between man and God or the intellectual communication between the human being and the Universal Mind, as they are manifested within the beauties and sublimities of Nature. The public roads allow the hero to discover the sublimity of Nature that endows the wanderers with "grandeur" (Book XIII, l. 152) and "loveliness" (Book XIII, l. 156), a turn of his education that justifies Wordsworth's excursive mind. Nevertheless, the roads and travelers met in them provided not only symbols of sublime realities. They also spoke of the pleasures of simple life and of the virtue and education of humble men, there discovering fair examples of "real feeling and just sense" (Book XIII, l. 172):

When I began to enquire,
To watch and question those I met, and speak
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs or tears revealed;
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes.

(Book XIII, ll. 160-168).

Then, considering issues such as the degree to which formal education is grounded on fair senses and feelings, the relationship between the bond of man with the kind of "toil" determined by Nature in his birth region and such oppressions like "ignorance"; and the hardships to cultivate "virtue" and "intellectual strength", the speaker rejoices in the learning found rambling in the public roads:

I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

(Book XIII, ll. 179-185).

In addition to this, the speaker meditates on the possibilities of existence of Love, the most characteristic affection of humankind. He utters the belief that when deadening oppression, want of culture, excess of labour and poverty oppose Nature and over-busy the human passion, love is impossible. Neither can love be easily found in the crowded cities, where deprivation and depravity bewilder the heart whereas Nature is not found to correct the illness through a lovely sight. Wordsworth believed that the formal Education “misled” (Book XIII, l. 208) him as it misleads the whole mankind, since it was structured by those “wealthy Few” (Book XIII. l. 209), leveling knowledge to serve an elite in detriment of the real interests of people and, as it emphasizes the external structures and logic relations, emptying wisdom of its essence:

Flattering self-conceit with words,
That, while they most ambitiously set forth
Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
Whereby society has parted man
From man, neglect the universal heart.
(Book XIII, ll. 216-220).

Contrasting the instances of a formal pedagogic system with the teaching culled by direct experience in the open school of human life manifested in man’s daily labour and family living together the speaker justifies the superiority of the values and dignities of the simple man over the constructs learnt by those shaped by formal training. Praising the rude modes of the humble men formerly observed during his travels of youth and now, in mature manhood, contemplated along his daily walking in his homely land, against the pompous and sophisticated manners of those trained in the official instruments of education, the speaker reverences the spontaneous gifts of Nature to man:

Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the power of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external man is rude in show –
(Book XIII, ll. 224-226).

The speaker preaches against the illusion of false appearance, warning that sophistication in look and gesture might denote spiritual and moral poverty. The speaker exalts the intrinsic values in the human being as a gift of Nature, a quality received, even infused, rather than taught or taken extrinsically. The speaker suggests the maxim according to which the degree of values and virtue of a man is expressed in the degree of simplicity of his external appearances. Somewhere in the narrative the speaker

affirmed Nature to be the theme of his song; somewhere else he asserted himself and the inner world of his mind to form his matter; now, he complements this three-fold subject with the praise of the simple man living amid humble activities in rural regions:

my theme
 No other than the very heart of man,
 As found among the best of those who live –
 Not unexalted by religious faith,
 Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few –
 In Nature's presence:

(Book XIII, ll. 240-245).

The educational development through which the love of Nature produced the love of man is based on the truth of man's noble, spiritual dignities, revealed while the young hero contemplated the shepherds and other labourers working among the beautiful sceneries of Nature, magnified by the divine radiance of her objects. Nature endows man with moral inclination, goodness and virtue; but more than that with aesthetic sensibility and intellectual faculties: reason and imagination, capacity to perceive, feel and think, to intuit and create. The magnificence of these natural gifts can be perceived by any attentive mind, which by its turn exults with the content of perception, but, more than that, in the very act of perceiving. Nature not only educates, but above all creates man. Nevertheless, her teaching and breeding needs the complementation of two catalytic elements: a minimum of religious faith and literate culture, for those benefits dispose man to cultivate their inward faculties either to feel or think. The first opens man's heart for the spiritual and moral values that elevate the soul towards numinous provinces; the second liberates man from the bonds of ignorance, leading him to exert the intellectual activity of his mind so as to become an autonomous being.

Nature and man living in harmony among her scenes, elements and things became an area of observation enriched with poetic status in Wordsworth's pen. In a context when the poet demands sacred authority Wordsworth dignifies his theme with the emanations of his vocation, consecrated as if by divine determination. Having been designed, educated and guided by Nature in the autobiographical course of living experience, re-visitation of spots and revision in memory, the poet now chanted the chance to tread Nature's "holy ground, / Speaking no dream, but things oracular" (Book XIII, ll. 252-253). Sanctifying his subject matter and field of contemplation, Wordsworth is able to mount to prophetic spheres and announce visionary truths. The basis of this truth resides in that the inner frame of man, the richness of his mind and soul, is that higher gift that allows him to commune with Nature's essential power

through the beauties of her outer manifestations, since Nature infuses passion into everything else:

Also about this time did I receive
 Convictions still more strong than heretofore,
 Not only that the inner frame is good,
 And graciously composed, but that no less
 Nature for all conditions wants not power
 To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
 The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
 Grandeur upon the very humblest face
 Of human life.

(Book XIII, ll. 279-287).

Thus Nature, man and every other creature live in a relation of complementariness that links them together in the great Universal All. And this presupposes the complementariness of the external and internal aspects in the objective world as well as in the perceptive, thinking and sentimental faculties that compose man's subjectivity. Hence, every sensory manifestation of external forms in the natural/material things reveals an emotional vibration of internal impulses belonging to spiritual and ideal powers. This relationship in the natural objects is captured by the contemplative subject whenever the outward channels of his senses are in perfect attunement and communication with the feelings of his heart and thoughts of his mind: this balance, grounded in the harmonious contact with Nature, elevates body and soul in perfect connection. Prophetic insight as it is consecrated by Nature is the strongest characteristic of the poetic creativity to which the protagonist had been prepared, since the speaker conceives the poet's faculty as being "Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive / Objects unseen before" (Book XIII, ll. 304-305). One powerful truth discovered by Wordsworth's prophetic gift concerns the fact that the love of Nature, felt in the affections of her beautiful and sublime images, leads to the love of man, seen glorified by the light and shade of her objects and scenes, because the intrinsic passion contained in the natural forms infuses the image of man and his toil:

I felt that the array
 Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
 Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
 What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms
 Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
 That intermingles with those works of man
 To which she summons him;

(Book XIII, ll. 287-293).

The complexity of the term passion, as it appears in the passage above, requires definition, since in this specific usage by the speaker it implies ambiguity of conception. Here passion denotes not only a feeling of the mind, but also a quality of the objects,

intrinsic to and manifested in their forms, as it is provided by Nature's intellectual principle. The natural forms consist in sentient beings, endowed with the moral and spiritual value of life or, if inanimate, with some sort of power that charms the contemplative soul. The objects of Nature are endowed not only with meanings, but with appeal and feelings that the sensible man accesses in sympathetic communication, activating his own feelings.

The poet is endowed by Nature. That is why, for Wordsworth, his designed poem is to be a powerful work like one of Nature. Recollecting one moment of vision in Sarum's plains experienced in his youth, Wordsworth confirms the strong insight about what a poet's might and mission consist in, and the certainty of being imparted with that gift. The consecrated power of poetry fits the poet's mind both to see "Our deem ancestral Past in vision clear" (Book XIII, l. 320), accessing in prophetic vision "things that may be viewed / Or fancied in the obscurity of years / From monumental hints" (Book XIII, ll. 350-352); and to exercise "Upon the vulgar forms of present things, / The actual world of our familiar days, / Yet higher power" (Book XIII, ll. 356-358). Possessed of this knowledge, the speaker ascertains the poet's status, place and dominion, as well as the origin and source of the poetic speech, inwardly convicted:

that the Genius of the Poet hence
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood
By Nature's side among the men of old,
And so shall stand forever.

(Book XIII, ll. 295-299).

More than a conviction, Wordsworth utters an implicit plea for his own place among that powerful community of men responsible for the preservation and transmission of the wisdom of humankind.

2.5 The Experience of Nature and the Vision of a Majestic Intellect

The Prelude reflects an excursive mind and a wandering self who feeds upon Nature in a series of formative journeys. The growth of the poet's mind appears reflected in the experience of Nature. The narrative of this autobiography is oriented by the search for the true model or type for the poet's own mind. And this type was finally found in one of his several excursions: that to Mount Snowdon. In this sense, the patterns to establish

the lyric speaker's relationship with the natural world is set in the arguments of Book XIV, which Wordsworth designed for concluding the arguments of his poem, a book where the speaker summarizes the goals and achievements of his narrative. The speaker recognizes in the spectacle witnessed from the top of Mount Snowdon "the type / Of a majestic intellect" (Book XIV, ll. 66-67) and "the emblem of a mind / That feeds upon infinity" (Book XIV, ll. 70-71). As a shaping and animating principle Nature bares, for the speaker, a strong resemblance with that higher mind supposed to confer order to the Universe:

When into air had partially dissolved
That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive
And cannot choose but feel. The power which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bare with their own.
(Book XIV, ll. 78-90).

The vision from the summit that gave the intimation of resemblance with an intellectual structure consisted in the image of the clear vault of the sky, illumined by the full moon and sprinkled with stars, bending over a sea of mists stretching farther than the sight could reach, where, amid the horizontal gauze, uncountable hills lifted up their ridges and tops; and nearby the great abyss of the cliffs almost under the travelers' feet, whence coming up to heaven the roar of waters, torrents and streams could be heard. The structure of the ideal realm or great intellect of the Universe can be compared to a great spring of light set on heaven outpouring its power over all regions, creatures and things on earth. That is why the images of both sun and moon illumining the firmament;

and the images of springs and fountains, as well as torrents coming out of a huge cloud represent the source of transcendent power spilling on the sensory world. The spectacle contemplated resembles the symbolic image of the Universal Soul spreading her power over the world. It reflects the structure of the one fountain of divine, ideal energy spilling it over the diversity of material elements spread on the surface and into the depth of the world in order to provide each of them with its degree of life, beauty, value and grandeur. The type of vision got from the top of Snowdon and the treatment dispensed to it can be explained with recourse to T. Archibald's considerations on the Interpretive Love of Nature.

One of the most characteristic Romantic attitudes present in *The Prelude* consists in the interpretative love of Nature. Considering Wordsworth's poetry, Archibald Strong presents two central senses in the definitions of Nature: on the one hand, it means "the whole universe, including God, the cosmos and the creatures, the mind of man, and all that is, or may be imagined"; on the other hand, "the power external to human-kind which informs earth and sky and sea and all that is in them save only man; the power which evolution has shown to be man's mother, but between which and him there is fixed a great gulf of conscience and reason – the power whom men have alternately execrated as man's cruellest enemy, and worshipped as his kindly mistress or benign saint"³¹.

Regarding the first conception, Strong considers that "every poet and thinker is consciously or unconsciously an interpreter of Nature and every being and thing a symbol of her". For Strong, the imaginative delight in Nature is no new issue in the history of poetry, manifesting perfect beauty in the expression by Virgil, the Elizabethans and the Pre-Romantics, so that the scholar infers that during Romanticism, the imaginative interpretation of Nature differed from that of the preceding ages rather in degree than in kind. We may infer that the character of interpreter of Nature already exists among Wordsworth's forerunners, yet only in his poetry it is to reach the full maturity and consciousness. Archibald Strong attributes the "deepening of the imaginative consciousness" which differentiate the Romantics from their predecessors to the quality of "close and loving observation". Wordsworth's interpretation of Nature, the critic remarks, "led him deeper into the heart of things" and "became the basis of a transcendent faith and philosophy of life" which embodies "the conception of Nature as

³¹ STRONG, Archibald, Thomas; M.A; LITT, D.. **Three Studies in Shelley and an Essay on Nature in Wordsworth and Meredith**. 1921, p. 148-149.

Healer and Revealer”³². Accordingly, before Romanticism, the loving observation of Nature had been many a time superseded by fancy, attracted by Nature’s splendour, however without consciously seeking her full revelation”. The Romantic attitude is one of impassioned contemplation, giving their imagination to the service and love of Nature. The homage paid by the Elizabethans, for instance “sprang rather from the passionate and exultant joy clothing itself in great poetry than from the conscious and profound reverence which is the soul of Wordsworth’s inspiration”³³. Thus, “To Wordsworth, Nature was the mystical Mother, brooding on wondrous secrets, whose face her children must be ever watching with the most intense scrutiny, and whose every word and gesture were fraught with mighty import”. As a conclusion, Archibald Strong leads us to infer that the differential characteristic of the Romantic poetry stands in the fact that “Man must interpret rather than embroider”, a task which could only be achieved through “constant and loving vigil”, through a thoroughness of observation which “ranges from sheer sensuous delight in Nature’s beauty to that profound mysticism which sees all earth and heaven in a single flower”³⁴.

In speaking of a mind that is sustained as it recognizes the transcendent power, that conduces through the senses to ideal forms and that finds in its soul immortal aspects, the speaker refers to the possibility of the human faculties to intuit the presence of spiritual elements in the limits of the sensory experience. As the sensory impressions delight the senses and awaken emotions and feelings in the body, the moral and spiritual affections kindle sentiments in the soul. This exchange between outward manifestations in the objective world and the inner states of mind in man is due to one common feature, in a macrocosmic level, between Nature and the Universal Mind – which, in a microcosmic level, is recognized and shared by the human mind. The speaker refers to a “mutual domination” exerted upon “the face of outward things”, by which the infusion of transcendent power within every existent object and being is hinted at. The speaker complements this idea by stating that this “power”, acknowledged by all men when moved by the sensations and feelings experienced in the presence of “outward things”, is a power that Nature exhibits to man’s senses; and, furthermore, by asserting that this power is similar to the “glorious faculty” possessed by “higher minds”: here Wordsworth establishes the pattern for the analogy and mutual activity between Nature

³² Idem. Ibidem. p. 150.

³³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 150.

³⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 152.

and Imagination. From the height, the sea of mists seemed to blot the view of earth and the sight of the great Atlantic Ocean whose presence was known yet barely perceived. The vision contemplated by the travelers was in fact an illusory effect created by Nature, disguising the presence of the real elements that compose the actual/material landscape of the region, where the temporary image of a sea of vapours “Usurped upon” (Book XIV, l. 49) the view of earth and ocean. The transitory took the place of the actual elements in the beholders’ senses, and, yet, as that image from the world without was converted into thought it gained such a powerful – for imaginative – permanence in the hero’s poetic mind which a sight of clear cut forms could not provide.

The sensuous impressions are channels not only for the bodily emotions but also for the transcendent realm and the wisdom about mankind:

in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time,

(Book XIV, ll. 105-110).

The speaker suggests the symbolic function of Nature, whose sensuous images contain the key to reveal the vision and decipher the meaning in the human and spiritual realms. The temporal relation expressed in the beginning of the passage indicates the durative moment of contemplation which dissolves the elements of sensory perception into images of thought. By asserting that the vision was “dissolved” “into the air” the speaker endows the material forms with ethereal qualities. Yet the contemplative process transformed the vision into an image “in calm thought / Reflected”, a mirroring relationship in which, in the first degree, thought actively reflects the sensory forms, and in the second degree, Nature appears reflected in the human mind as the perfect emblem of its corresponding macrostructure. This reflection needs the mediation of a common element, e.g., the intellectual power, linking the outer and the inner orders.

The universal “mind” whose emblem the hero identified in the image before his eyes “feeds upon infinity” (Book XIV, l. 71) and “broods/ Over the dark abyss” (Book XIV, ll. 71-72). The act of feeding upon reveal the nature, extension and dimension of the province to which the ideal sphere gives life and whence it takes back its own power; whereas the act of brooding over demonstrates the mind turned to the depth of a source of power whose similarity suggests the overflowing and originating structure in the ethereal province. The “abyss” means the deep place where creation

originates, springs out and flows; thus it appears as a symbol that resembles the structure of the intellectual source of all cosmic creation; its “continuous stream”, the eternal flow of energy. It is a characteristic of Nature to infuse the depth of her outer forms with an ideal, immaterial content, which man’s sensibility captures in the act of beholding, when the sensations aroused by the natural objects bring together an overflow of powerful feelings, above all the feelings of joy, peace, blessing, gratitude, sympathy, fraternity, fear, sorrow, sadness, love, adoration, elevation, exultation, ecstasy, and so on.

Considering the issues above, the “mind” which feeds upon infinity and broods over the abyss presents a double – and complementary – referent: it suggests both the universal mind, represented by the full moon shining from the vault of the firmament as if she were a great intelligent and contemplative eye looking down to earth and the limitless space around her; and the protagonist’s own mind, who, standing on the mountain summit, beholds the hybrid image in which the far stretching horizon melts its boundaries into the boundaries of the sky, while the hero could see neither the forms of the earthly surface covered by the mists, nor the ocean’s surface, whose line was confounded with the sea-like image created by the mists. What Wordsworth recognizes in Nature is one “function” similar to the working of the Universal intellect: that power of organizing the external forms of earth into an organic order with ontological bonds and aesthetic unity given to the human perception. Nature works to create the material beings, creatures and elements; to give them their forms; and to endow them with power, from bodily to spiritual, from sensory to ideal, either to affect or to perceive. Based on this truth, Wordsworth conceives his doctrine of the mutual relationship between man and Nature – the interchange between the human and the Universal minds. Like the mind of man, in her ethereal essence Nature is a great intellectual and sentient faculty, whose structure consists in a huge heavenly vault ruled by a central fountain of light that illumines the vastness of earth and the infinite space beyond her; this structure is complemented by the idea of the huge abyss from whose depth flow inexhaustible streams analogous to sources of thoughts and feelings; and whence emanate perennial vapours similar to the all involving power of imagination. Wordsworth establishes a pattern for man’s relationship with Nature through sensation and sentiment: man sees, hears, perceives and finally feels (Book XIV, l. 85-86).

On the other side, he creates the pattern for imagination as the faculty through which man communes with Nature: it is the all involving power similar to Nature’s with

which the contemplative mind provides, creatively, the naked forms of the material things with a gauze of morality, sentiment, enchantment and mystery; and conversely, it consists in the power through which man has perceptive and interpretative insights into the moral, sentimental, enchanted and mysterious power as it is a quality contained in the outward forms themselves and as it manifests to sensible minds, being converted into feelings and conveyed inwardly into the heart. The lyric speaker learnt, through the vision from the top of Snowdon, the correlation between the intellectual power in Nature and the intellectual faculty in the human mind. This analogy – but more than that, this bond – between the human and the natural spheres appears in two modes of existence: first, the link between the outer and the inner world, whose mystery transforms the external stimuli of the objects into sensation in the subject, thus carrying that sensation inward and converting it into feeling, through which the subject reaches, recognizes and intuits the intimation of the moral, ideal, spiritual and divine power within the outer objects; second, in communion with Nature, the human being shares of her own creative power.

The coextensive terms between man and the world in the act of contemplation are the act of converse and the power of creation, since mind and Nature exchange impressions and ideas, on the one side; and, on the other side, are equally creative due to their common participation in the universe's "majestic intellect" (Book XIV, ll. 67). For Wordsworth the "higher minds", which include the poets', are like Nature in that they can "for themselves create / A like existence" (Book XIV, ll. 94-95) as well as "build up greatest things / From least suggestions" (Book XIV, ll. 101-102). In the argument of the former book, considering his mind restored to the degree of allowing him to deserve the name of a Poet, belonging to that group bound by visionary power, the speaker claims the hope to possess that power which will allow him to create his masterpiece:

An insight that in some sort he possesses,
A privilege whereby a work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
Creative and enduring, may become
A power like one of Nature's.

(Book XIII, ll. 308-312).

Such higher minds form the guideline for all the poet's efforts. The speaker exalts the genial minds by justifying their divine character based on the power to converse with the natural world drawing deep meanings in which the consciousness of the outer object supports the consciousness of their own selves:

Such minds are truly from the Deity,
 For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
 That flesh can know is theirs – the consciousness
 Of whom they are, habitually infused
 Through every image and through every thought,
 And all affections by communion raised
 From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
 (Book XIV, ll. 112-118).

The genial minds constitute an ideal model to be pursued yet hardly to be achieved, whose ground is what the speaker calls “genuine liberty”, a determined course of life in which man keeps his whole life based on such principles of vocational duty that balance moral judgment and aesthetic taste. After having inquired for this abstract model that has been guiding his steps:

Who is he that has his whole life long
 Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
 (Book XIV, ll. 130-131),

The speaker inquires about the possibility of existence of such genial mind in which the intellectual power, free from all impediments, could have found full development towards the ideal perfection:

Where is the favoured being who had held
 That course unchecked, unerring and untired,
 In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?
 (Book XIV, ll. 133-135).

The speaker portrays himself in humbler shades, confessing a course of human imperfections:

A humbler destiny have we retraced,
 And told of lapses and hesitating choice,
 And backward wanderings along thorny ways.
 (Book XIV, ll. 136-138).

Nevertheless the speaker indicates the possession of a soul enriched by the search for exemplar virtues that count for his vocational fulfillment when he declares:

That whatsoever falls my better mind,
 Revolving with the accidents of life,
 May have sustained, that, howsoever misled,
 Never did I in quest of right and wrong,
 Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
 Nor was in any public hope the dupe
 Of selfish passion; nor did ever yield
 Willfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
 But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy
 From every combination which might aid
 The tendency, too potent in itself,
 Of use and custom to bow down the soul
 Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
 And substitute a universe of death
 For that which moves with light and life informed,
 Actual, divine, and true.

(Book XIV, ll. 147-162).

The hero's aim points at transcendence. The poet's formative course requires rectitude, a force of the will which keeps the subject aligned up with moral and spiritual virtues which might lead him through the simple things into the province of high and lofty values. Based on this strength of will, the speaker could avoid the mean and low objects, and thus resist the temptation of "use and custom", or the "vulgar sense" which empties the world of its living and authentic aesthetic power. Habit and custom may have a deadening effect upon the human sensibility, causing ethic and aesthetic crisis to a poetic mind. The speaker is hinting at the idea that the antidote for such a fall dwells in the "intellectual love". Love, as a pervading passion spread out among all creatures, is fundamental to renew and elevate man since it allows him to understand Nature. Love is the factor by which "subsists / All lasting grandeur" (Book XIV, 168-169), and in the narrative of Wordsworth's poetic story it involves, on the one hand, the connection with fear, through which the speaker had in the dawn of his life:

early intercourse,
In the presence of sublime and beautiful forms,
With the adverse principles of pain and joy –
(Book XIV, ll. 164-166),

Whereas, on the other hand, the human love must be elevated and purified by association with the higher, sacred and spiritual source of love in order that it:

frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.
(Book XIV, ll. 184-187).

The intercourse with love and fear, since they are affections of the beauty and the sublime, can heal a mind weakened by the tendencies of habit and custom. The form of love that fits Wordsworth's contemplative relationship with Nature consists in the intellectual love. The intellectual love comes to be realized in a playful combination of thought and feeling, according to Wordsworth's utterly conception in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* that any good poem should be oriented by a "worthy purpose":

Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived;
but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my
feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those
feelings will be found to carry along with them a purpose³⁵.

³⁵ WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In: WORDSWORTH, William. **The Poetical Works of Wordsworth**. HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). 1959, p. 735.

Love constitutes the ground of what may be called the *purpose* of *The Prelude*, the intent to reflect upon his inner development as a poet. As Wordsworth claims in his *Preface*, the feeling developed in his poems “gives importance to the action and situation”. And it is through constant meditation that the speaker connects the acts and situations of his life into a coherent autobiographical unity. Feeling, especially love comes to link the speaker with the natural universe, since feeling always comes to confirm the bonds established through meditation:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuity of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulse of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified³⁶.

This whole statement conveys the general truth of Wordsworth’s autobiographical narrative, for in the act of telling his story the speaker recollects the past feelings, in association with the events that roused them, and thinks actively about those feelings in order to discover their genuine meaning and connect them with the proper objects. In modifying his feelings by the action of thought, and further modifying his thoughts by meditating on them so as to find their true ground, the speaker has his own mind and self transformed, in the sense of fostering his own spiritual growth, enlightening himself, strengthening and purifying his own affections. A mature man, the speaker meditates on his humbled and lapsed destiny of “wanderings along thorny ways” which represents his adventurous contact with Nature since early childhood:

Yet – compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering man –
(Book XIV, ll. 139-143).

Suffering is part of the autobiographical test that the poet had to stand, since the passage from innocence to self-consciousness asked her price: the rupture with himself, with his former being in order to recover his whole being inside himself, in the world of

³⁶ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 735.

recollection. Love establishes the bond between present and past, between his present and his past being, as well as between the present state of humankind and her past circumstances. And love, intellectual or spiritual in kind, for Wordsworth, comes linked with Imagination. A life informed by such feeling and such faculty represents the joy which Wordsworth depicts of himself, a gift that made of him the one “whose soul hath risen / Up to the height of feeling intellect” (Book XIV, ll. 225-226). As he returned to his native country, his life was soon to find the blessing “Of humble cares and delicate desires, / Mild interests and gentle sympathies” (Book XIV, ll. 230-231). Wordsworth’s return to Nature in the countryside of his native land was enriched by the presence of his sister Dorothy and of his friend and co-labourer Coleridge, as well as by the aid of his friend Calvert. Together with Coleridge, Wordsworth had planned the best of his poetic universe, since the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* to the philosophical monument – *The Recluse* – of which his autobiography was to form *The Prelude*. Now that his mind is prepared to assume the attributes and responsibilities of a poet, the speaker remembers how all those projects had begun: to his mind came the vision of the summer when he and his friend walked along Quantock’s ridge, sharing that inspired spirit that blessed them with the visions of charming destinies such as those portrayed in the stories of the *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Thorn*. The presence of those dear friends contributed for Wordsworth to recover the creed in his vocation and to strengthen the promise of finishing his great work, *The Recluse*, the “monument of glory” (Book XIV, l. 432) where from the cooperation of two “Prophets of Nature” (Book XIV, l. 444) Wordsworth expected to create an inspired, faithful and durable message for mankind: “what we have loved, / Others will love, and we will teach them how” (Book XIV, ll. 446-447). Wordsworth founded an aesthetics that sets the human sensibility in the centre again as a natural and holy gift. Hence he claims the right to capture a pervading power which is in the air in his time, thus, enabling him to communicate with the higher source of it, which is spontaneously recognized in Nature. According to this aesthetic belief, in Nature Wordsworth found his guide and master, so that every step of his poetic life seemed to be pre-destined as if by a providential design. Therefore, every event, be it marked by success or hardship, represented a turn where Nature informed his soul with sensory, sentimental, intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic meanings: so, every moment became an image worthy of recollection inasmuch as each of them contributed to educate and discipline his mind for the sacred service of a poet.

Part II

Chapter III

3 The Poetic Experience of Nature: Sense, Mind and Spirit in the Poet's Formative Path

3.1 The Senses and the Mind: Focus either on Nature or on Imagination

More than once Wordsworth informs his interlocutor that his poem speaks of the inner history of his mind. The questions it arouses, which guides the central inquiries of this study, consist in “what is the specific role of the outer forms of Nature in the construction of this inner history?”. This question leads me to attempt at an answer for a second question, now about “what is the kind of treatment that Wordsworth dispenses to those natural forms and what is the kind of meaning he finds in them in order to fulfill his formative aim?”. Wordsworth's dominant treatment of Nature waver at times and the poet puts more emphasis on the importance of the prodigious achievements of the “Human Mind”. However, out of the speaker's general attitudes, it is possible to infer that he conceives Nature in four dominant lines: I) as the outer world where the humankind is to realize its live and satisfy its conditions of humanity in a perfect state of happiness; II) as a world of beautiful forms open to man's experience that excites his sensations, affects his feelings, arouses his emotions and predisposes him to activate the chief of his mental faculties: that of thinking; III) as a world whose forms and affections and whose pedagogical agencies lead man to acquire knowledge and develop his creative faculty to be employed in terms of creative activity, which constitutes the working of imagination; IV) as the ordered and animated universe which serves as a moral and spiritual guide for man, where man finds instances of virtue and love to inform his own conduct and action.

Undoubtedly, the concept of human mind is central to Wordsworth's aesthetics. However, at times the poet emphasizes it so much as to lose ground of his

essential conception of the autobiographical account of his poetic growth: that which affirms the active interaction between the outer world of Nature and the inner world of the mind. In those wavering moments Wordsworth even runs the risk of losing contact with the purpose of representing the true living man as he really lives in his actual world, converting man and world into pure abstractions isolated from the actual-social relations of life. At those moments Wordsworth manifests an egotistical imagination in which the world he creates risks to fall into an abyss of misty references totally dislocated from the human reality. These wavering moments in Wordsworth's poetry are the outcome of the strong reliance in the power of the self and the individual's consciousness which emerged with the modern Individualism proper of the bourgeois mentality. In the history of the literary tradition the individualist consciousness appeared in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and represents the rebellion of the individual against the "authority"³⁷. In Romantic terms, the claim for originality tended at times to relegate at all the authority of reference. Therefore, it must be distinguished between the Wordsworth who informs his mind in Nature to reflect about a world whose reference lays in the reality of human life, and a Wordsworth who rebels against the influence of Nature and attempts to create a powerful universe out of pure imagination. The emergence of Individualism since Renaissance culminated in the figure of human being which is "an autonomous and free agent whose standpoint is independent of any particular social order"³⁸. Thus, individualism created the pressure of an ideological hint upon the aesthetic representations of the human figure.

The reader must be attentive for the division, or faltering, in Wordsworth's thought that sometimes breaks the coherence and unity of his conceptions of Nature and Mind of Man along his work. David Aers notices this division as he states that Wordsworth believed to have taken the "incarnate nature" of the Mind of Man seriously and to have transcended the abstract idea of man typical of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature and moral philosophy, since Wordsworth's poetry dealt with "solid life" and presented the "knowledge" of the "individual Man" "whom we behold / With our own eyes" (The *Prelude*, Book XIII, ll. 82-87), yet, Aers calls the reader's attention, if one attends to Wordsworth's treatment of "the Mind of Man, / My

³⁷ WEISKEL, Thomas. **The Romantic Sublime**: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence. 1976. p. 24.

³⁸ AERS, David. Wordsworth's Model of Man in 'The Prelude'. In: **Romanticism and Ideology**: Studies in English Writing 1765-1830. AERS, David; COOK, Jonathan; PUNTER, David (Edited by). 1981, p. 65.

haunt and the main region of my Song” in its relation to the “external world” (Prospectus to *The Recluse*) “I think we will find a model of man which has marked continuities with the Crusoesque ‘abstraction’ he claims to have transcended”³⁹. David Aers did very well in remarking this distinction in the internal cohesion of Wordsworth’s thought. However, Aers goes too far in saying that “while Wordsworth has much to say about ‘creative agency’ ([Book] II. [l.] 401) he virtually ignored the role of work in shaping people’s attitudes and lives”⁴⁰, thus turning the second issue of the above mentioned division a generalized characteristic of Wordsworth’s approach to his subject-matter. In this research I decided to take Aers’ warning as a distinction and search for the points in which Wordsworth actually touches the incarnate character inherent in the themes of Man, Nature and Society seriously and takes them with clear insight and subtle perspicacity as a standpoint to criticize the oppressive and adverse forces of the modern historical context of his time.

3.2 Symbolic Nature, Visionary Perception and Formative Path

One thing must be assumed at once: Wordsworth’s personal narrative manifests a specific level of analogical suggestion on which whatever the particular situation in which Nature is approached by the poet’s experience she bares the quality of a symbol, which signifies that the natural object “remains” itself “but is also something more”⁴¹; that the pleasure taken in the “beauteous forms” of the outdoor world implies “some strain of religious feeling”⁴²; and that “what is shown is held to be only a glimpse of the whole, but this glimpse shares the nature of what is revealed”⁴³. In this sense, *The Prelude* reflects a particular worldview in which both Nature and Man are seen under the confluence of a theological yet secularized sway, in a context where all events use to be interpreted through the framework of a biblical narrative plot. In this sense, this work should operate upon the hypothesis of a great analogy between the history of the individual and that of humankind in the past rehearsing structure of the autobiographical

³⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 65.

⁴⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 66.

⁴¹ POTTLE, Frederick A.. *The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth*. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 16.

⁴² BEACH, Joseph W.. **The Concept of Nature in the Nineteenth Century Poetry**. 1969, p. 41-42.

⁴³ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **The Statesman’s Manual**. ‘Works’, Vol. I, p. 437.

poem, so that the beginning of the individual's life – infancy and childhood – reflects a pattern in the origin of mankind – Paradise and Fall – in the narratives of Genesis and pagan myths of Golden Age; as well as the idea of visionary illumination and physical-intellectual-imaginative renovation in the poet's life must bare a correspondence in the apocalyptic idea of a millennial moment of redemption and renovation in the history of mankind.

However this analogical and symbolical level is interpreted out of a structure of deeper meanings intimated in the way Nature presents her forms to man's contemplation. Geoffrey Hartman⁴⁴, one of the major critics of Romantic poetry, qualifies Wordsworth as a "subjective thinker", signifying that with him "a new attitude toward consciousness – a radical consciousness of consciousness – is brought to light". In his terms, "Subjectivity means that the [ontological] starting point for authentic reflection is placed in the individual consciousness". Thus Hartman infers that if the ontological starting point "is genuinely within the personal consciousness, dualism is overcome, for the source of inspiration (the empirical starting point) can be anything and anywhere". Hartman's statement does not imply that the poetic matter starts out of nothing in the human consciousness as a mere neglect of the world without, but that the referential reality is assimilated into the world of the individual consciousness in terms of images, sensations, sentiments emotions and ideas. In saying that Romantic subjectivity "conjures up a world in schism: here objects, here subjects"⁴⁵, Hartman refers to the same problem dealt by Meyer Abrams, for whom what distinguishes the Romantic writers:

derives from the fact that they undertook, whatever their religious creed or lack of creed, to save traditional concepts, schemes and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation, but to reformulate them within the prevailing two-term system of subject and object, [...] the human mind or consciousness and its transactions with nature⁴⁶.

For Hartman,

The expansion of sensibility characteristic of the modern period is certainly related to this free and eccentric placement of the empirical starting point. The modern mind can start any where because it has a surer homing instinct, or because it accepts what Hölderlin called "die ekzentrische Bahn": the necessity of passing through self-alienation to self-fulfillment. Wordsworth

⁴⁴ HARTMAN, Geoffrey. Nature and the Humanization of the Self. In: ABRAMS, Meyer H. (Edited by). **English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism**. 1975, p. 123-132.

⁴⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 125.

⁴⁶ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature**. 1973, p. 13.

finds his inspiration virtually anywhere: he recalls us to the simplest incidents, to words or events that would pass us by⁴⁷.

The analogical and symbolical function of Nature also implies that the natural images bear a set of enigmatic meanings for the growing schemes of the human consciousness. As to the structure of poetic experience, Hartman states that Wordsworth's originality "has to do with the way [his ideas] emerge from the depth of felt experience"; and explains that his ideas "are organic thoughts: we see them growing on him, we watch them struggling with his own – often unexpected – imaginings". We learn from Hartmann that the source for Wordsworth's "consciousness of consciousness" lies in the language of the senses, in that the poet "cleansed the doors of perception, and made a supreme fiction possible"⁴⁸. Hartman means the fiction of autobiography, the mythical ritual of passage in which the man must pass through Nature before his "spirit can be independent". According to Hartman, Wordsworth's career as a poet was started by a moment of vivid impression left in his mind by "the ordinary sight of boughs silhouetted against a bright evening sky" between Hawkshead and Ambleside. Wordsworth declares to date from that moment his "consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of our country". Hartman explains that:

Such nature-consciousness joined to an answering self-consciousness, is the 'incumbent mystery' from which Wordsworth's poetry springs. He begins with the weight of sense-experience through which [...] the 'foundations' of the mind are laid, or the soul is 'seeded' by feelings and images capable of sustaining it throughout life. There is no vision in his poetry that is not a vision of natural appearances pressing upon child or adult in this way⁴⁹.

3.3 The Structure of Experience: From Sensual Perception to Spiritual Intuition

In *The Prelude*, the poet recollects and meditates upon the main episodes which foster the growth of his mind. This autobiographical account implies a special sort of experience with Nature, which includes a complex structure of three steps: the sensuous contact with the concrete forms; the feelings, emotions and thoughts aroused by the presence of Nature; and the intuition of a spiritual reality beyond the natural

⁴⁷ HARTMAN, Geoffrey. Nature and the Humanization of the Self. In: ABRAMS, Meyer H. (Edited by). **English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism**. 1975, p. 125-126.

⁴⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 125.

⁴⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 123.

forms. The structure of poetic experience in *The Prelude* obeys a frame which brings from a spontaneous kind of sensory experience towards a sort of spiritual-mystical experience where it is possible to find ecstatic moments of illumination in which the lyrical speaker claims the possession of the power of vision, so that, seeing through an altered state of consciousness he gets the access to the realm of transcendence. As regards the experiences of being in Nature, it is possible to distinguish three main aspects: visual images complemented by the interaction of sounds and noises; feelings related to the states of the body; and feelings related to the elevation and expansion of the soul.

In so doing, guided by the horizon of Wordsworth's conception of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility" it is important to have in mind the temporal implications in the structure of recollection. In this sense, the evolution of the poet's mind will be focused in its relation to the changing modes in the treatment of natural imagery along the autobiographical events, pointing to a path of differentiation in the speaker's conception and relationship with Nature from the past of childhood experience up to the present of adulthood where the narrative takes place. In order to understand the poet's gradual yet conflictive shift in attitude towards Nature, I shall refer to Paul de Man's distinction of Romantic imagery into one mode of image that affirms the ontological priority of the natural object, with the sensory quality as a sign of its transcendental principle; and one second mode of imagination which marks the independence of the poet's consciousness as to the outside world and the turn of consciousness into itself as its intentional content⁵⁰. The passage from the perceptive-oriented mode of imagery to those more ethereal insights of consciousness becomes clear in the contrast between the attitudes of Wordsworth as an infant and as a boy towards the sensuous impressions of the outside world and the youth and adult poet expressing the reverie flights of his soul in an attempt to elevate through the language of the imagination above Nature and the language of sense. The first case can be related to Wordsworth's delighting and instructive rapport with the natural scenes of his native land in the beginning of life, when the power of senses and feelings is supposed to be intact; the second is illustrated by the moments of apocalyptic imagination among the complexities of the Alpine landscape when the power of consciousness strives to ascertain an existence in itself and achieve a pure poetic reality of the mind. For Pauline

⁵⁰ MAN, Paul de. Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image. In: MAN, Paul de. **The Rhetoric of Romanticism**. 1984, p. 1-17.

Ling-Hway Wu, nature is a symbol of “eternity or immortality that lies at both ends of life. [...] Therefore, the temporal self in time and space continuously seeks for eternity since the loss of the vision is the loss of the feeling of immortality, and thus also an entering into an awareness of death”⁵¹.

Ernest de Selincourt⁵² points out the mystical experience in Wordsworth’s contemplation of the natural forms and finds in *The Prelude* “the great paradox, that though it is simply by the proper exercise of eye and ear that man reaches his full moral and intellectual stature [...] yet revelation flashes upon him ‘when the light of sense goes out’; and ‘laid asleep in body’, he becomes deeply conscious of the presence of God within him”. The editor states that religion is for Wordsworth a matter of “deep experience” and considers that “His faith was a passionate intuition of God present in the Universe and in the mind of man; his philosophy no more than the struggle of his reason to account for it”. In this sense, resenting the limits of Christian orthodoxy, Wordsworth devoutly worshipped in the temple of Nature as it speaks to the human senses and so does read her messages.

When Wordsworth says that the child is the best philosopher, he equates philosopher with poet, in the sense that the child is naturally endowed with the essence of the poetic power (sensory, sentimental and spiritual perception) in its full strength. Inasmuch as the “mute dialogues” which Wordsworth the baby held by “intercourse of touch” with his “Mother’s heart” belong to

the first
Poetic spirit of our human life
By uniform control of after years
In most, abated or suppressed; in some
Through every change of growth and decay
Pre-eminent till death,
(Book II, ll. 260-264),

The gift of poetry itself is equivalent to the power to perceive physical subtleties and their emotional corollary in the outward affections, as well as to intuit transcendence and feel its passions in the sensory experience of the natural objects. For the child, transcendence is still inherent in the natural sensible forms. If the mature poet must rely so much on imagination in its abstract implication of independent activity of man’s consciousness, even to the point of opposing it to Nature, it is because he is aware of being losing the sensibility for the sensations and feelings affected by the natural objects

⁵¹ WU, Pauline Ling-Hway. “A Science of Mind” in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*. p. 4-5.

⁵² SELINCOURT, Ernest de. Introduction. In: William Wordsworth. **The Prelude**: 1805. SELINCOURT, Ernest de (Edited with an Introduction by). p. xxxiii-xxxiv.

and for the intuition of the transcendental essence in sensory experience. A great fear in Wordsworth's poetry refers to the gradual loss in the capacity to find the symbolical and imaginative significance in the natural objects through the language of senses. A symbol implies an object standing both for itself as well as for an intellectual image related to inner feelings, reflexive thoughts, moral, theological or philosophical ideas. According to Wordsworth's expression in *The Prelude*, natural phenomena

present to Fancy's choice
Apt illustrations of the moral world,
Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.
(Book XIV, ll. 317-320).

The symbolical aspects of the natural images can be captured or transformed by the faculty of imagination. Paraphrasing Kerry McSweeney's⁵³ argument in dealing with Coleridge's formulations in *Biographia Literaria*, the development of the symbolical perception can be processed through the interaction between the two faculties defined by Coleridge as primary imagination and secondary imagination. The first formulation corresponds to the perception in that reality is supposed to reside in the experienced interaction between the subject and the object. The secondary imagination corresponds to poetic creativity, and consists in a coexistence of the perceptive imagination with and in the conscious will. This faculty dissolves the object in order to recreate it, conferring to it the essential vitality of the human mind. Based on the imaginative activities, the mind can achieve "self-experience in the act of thinking"⁵⁴.

The central point in McSweeney's argument is that for poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth, "perception or the primary imagination is an essential aspect of the creative process". The Romantics developed a mode of symbolic perception in which they operate by seeing, as the scholar shows using Emerson's definition, the "correspondence" between the "visible things" and the "human thoughts", for, as he defines using Emerson's own terms, poetry is "the perception of the symbolic character of things". Emerson's formulation presented by McSweeney is representative of what we find in Wordsworth as the signals of an emotional and a transcendent reality: "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to a state of mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture ... man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects ... neither can man be understood without this objects, nor these objects without

⁵³ MCSWEENEY, Kerry. **The Language of the Senses**. 1998, p. 14-15.

⁵⁴ Idem. Ibidem, p. 14-15. COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **Biographia Literaria**. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

man”⁵⁵. McSweeney then complements the idea of the distinguishing feature of the Romantic poetry as found in the analogies between the facts of nature and the activities of mind with a quotation from Francis Jeffrey, for whom the “essence of poetry” “consists in the fine perception and vivid expression of that subtle and mysterious analogy which exists between the physical and the moral world – which makes outward things and qualities the natural types and emblems of inward gifts and emotions”⁵⁶.

The Prelude is intended to be an account of experiences not “Disowned by memory” (Book I, l. 615) whose recollection brings back the “Rememberable things” which, in Wordsworth’s verses “the earth / and Common face of Nature spake to me” (Book I, ll. 586-588), whose content both fosters, transforms and depends on the poet’s own mind:

yet not in vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
(Book I, ll. 591-596).

Thomas Weiskel highlights Wordsworth’s search for a cure for his crisis as a “side effect in his rehearsal of the past” where memory is to be the “language” of “mediation” between Wordsworth’s “Two consciousnesses”: an established relationship between the subject speaking in the present and the “other Being” represented as the agent of recollected experience, which Weiskel calls “a part of himself [...] alienated from the present”. Weiskel explains that “Wordsworth is to be found forming his significant other Being even as he searches for his signature in recollected hours”. In the scholar’s radical approach of the past subject represented in *The Prelude*, that “Other Being” is in part a remembered state of mind, a previous consciousness, and in part the inferred protagonist of visible scenes of whom he is now conscious for the first time. For the first time because that other being did not exist in the past, though he now exists there, he is a creation of the present⁵⁷.

For Paul de Man⁵⁸, it is “the experience of the temporal relation between the act and its interpretation that is one of the main themes of romantic poetry”.

⁵⁵ Idem. Ibidem, p. 15. EMERSON, Ralph Waldo. **Poetry**. p. 27; **Nature**. p. 20-21. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

⁵⁶ Idem. Ibidem, p. 16. JEFFREY, Francis. p. 494. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

⁵⁷ WEISKEL, Thomas. The Defile of the Word. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 94-96.

⁵⁸ MAN, Paul de. Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image. In: **The Rhetoric of Romanticism**. 1984, p. 50.

Accordingly, the Romantic subject prefigures the urge of the modern beings to be “defined and [...] interpreted in relation to a totality of experiences that slip into the past”. Since the content of experience has come to be “experienced in its passing away”, it contributes “in an unmediated way”, i.e. “in the form of an act” to constitute man’s “consciousness of temporality”. This unmediated action of experience in the constitution of consciousness, as we may infer from the scholar’s remarks, marks the poetic discourse itself, for, as Paul de Man highlights “the discourse [...] of all the poets in that which constitutes their irreducible personal character strives toward one and the same thing” e.g. toward the interpretation of the temporal gap between the past experienced event and its interpretive insight – and personal transformative act – in present act of recollection. For Weiskel what counts is the re-elaboration of the past by the present consciousness, whereas Paul de Man focuses on the way the past moment has been experienced and thus how it influences the mode of its interpretation in the present of recollection. Weiskel assumes a very perspicacious position yet the reader must be careful not to falsify his opinion into an open negation either of the true existence of the past moment or of the actual content of the past experience represented by the speaker. My study aims at analysing, in the perspective opened by the critics, the content of the past experience as it is described by the speaker in its function to create the personal-poetic character rendered in *The Prelude*. The transition just pointed out is operated during the several moments of playful or contemplative experience of Nature aiming to achieve those rewards of sensation, feeling, thought and vision that fill the subject’s memory, mould his sensibility and shape his consciousness: experiences of perception and illumination that mark the steps of his poetic formation.

3.4 The Play of Visual Images: Raw Matter and Imagination

The total dissatisfaction with the Augustan poetry is not only based on a critical view of its satirical and didactic modes, the very opposite to the Romantic praise of passion and emotion⁵⁹, but in the despise both of a poor “habit of observation of external nature” employed just as a “correlative” for “an abstraction or a generalization

⁵⁹ POTKAY, Adam. “A Satire on Myself”: Wordsworth and the Infant Prodigy. 1994, p. 149-166.

concerning the human nature”⁶⁰. Wordsworth’s opposition to Pope is justified by his reformative yearning to produce a kind of poetry that would fit into the ideal of a new sensibility:

It is remarkable that, excepting the nocturnal Reverie of Lady Winchelsea, and a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of Paradise Lost and The Seasons does not contain a single new image of external nature; and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination⁶¹.

Taking into account the cross function of two statements which Wordsworth employed to define his poetry, viz, that it “takes origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” and that the poet has “at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject”, Frederick Pottle attempted at demystifying the common interpretation that Wordsworth would have “composed poetry while looking earnestly and steadily at the natural objects that he introduces into his poems”⁶². The idea of “recollection” forming the essence of Wordsworth’s conception of poetry leads Pottle to draw as the probable meaning of the phrase “look steadily at my subject” the imaginative act of meditation on the natural objects which might have been given to a past moment of experience, i.e. the act of thinking on the object of earlier visual experience while creating its image in the mind. In this sense, Pottle argues that several of Wordsworth’s poems “either have no basis in personal experience at all, or show autobiography so manipulated that the ‘subject’ corresponds to nothing Wordsworth ever saw with the bodily eye”. This statement leads to the point that his “critical writings deride the matter-of-fact and speak over and over again of the power of the imagination to modify and create”⁶³.

Pottle asserts that most of the times Wordsworth finds the source of his poems – what the scholar calls the raw matter – not in the direct perception during specific events in life, but in already “prefabricated material”, like travel books or Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal, in which the raw matter of an emotional experience might have “already been grasped and shaped by a powerful imagination, and [...] verbalized”⁶⁴. The activity of imagination, as conceived by Wordsworth and Coleridge, involves two levels: the first is a mode of perception that consists in making sense of the

⁶⁰ POTTLE, Frederick A.. The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 17.

⁶¹ WORDSWORTH, William. Essay Supplementary to the Preface. p. 747.

⁶² POTTLE, Frederick A.. The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 9-10.

⁶³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

⁶⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 12.

undifferentiated amount of sensation by organizing them into objects; the second is a poetic creativity which serves to reshape the world of common perception in a unity more satisfactory and meaningful⁶⁵. Accordingly, Wordsworth uses the secondary imagination to unify the elements of the perceptive experience under one unifying idea, an idea that transcends the natural relationship of those elements in their place in Nature in the idealizing direction of a human or spiritual attribute.

The scholar defines what should be implied in Wordsworth's intention of "look steady at his subject": "So far as his subject is expressed in imagery drawn from nature [...] there is implied a lifelong habit of close, detailed and accurate observation of the objects composing external universe". He adds that for Wordsworth the object must come integrated in the whole Nature, so that he rejects the analytic vision of the naturalist" as "an apprehension" that "empties the object of life and meaning by detaching it from its ground". Pottle highlights that the mystical and religious quality of Wordsworth's experience of the natural object "wells on that mysterious presence of surrounding things, which imposes itself on any separate element"⁶⁶. Nevertheless, Pottle clarifies that Wordsworth's intended "subject" is not "any object in external nature" as viewed by the "physical eye" but a "mental image" viewed by the "mental eye". The scholar reveals the poet's method as consisting in recollection leading Nature to "transfiguration", in other words, endowing the mental image with emotion and feeling:

The mental image accompanies or is the source of the emotion recollected in tranquility; it recurs in memory, not once but many times; and on each occasion he looks steady on it to see what it means. Wordsworth [...] starts with the mental image of a concrete natural object. He feels this object to be very urgent, but at first he does not know why. As he looks steadily at it, he simplifies it, and as he simplifies it, he sees what it means. He usually continues to simplify and interpret until the object becomes the correlative of a single emotion⁶⁷.

The sensual perception leads to the habit of emotional response which normally conveys the meanings of a moral sense and religious experience. In this sense, Pottle affirms that imagination, for Wordsworth "gets at relationships that are true at the deepest level of experience" when the common perception or the "light of sense" with which man sees the clear limits of things retreat in favour of an indefinite glance in

⁶⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 12.

⁶⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 15.

⁶⁷ Idem. Ibidem. p. 16.

which the contours of things faint and melt into a gleaming fusion with the surroundings which brings what Pottle calls “the sense of infinity”⁶⁸.

In the perceptive process of beholding, Nature itself operates a pre-imaginative process on the quality of the object offered to vision, imparting the object with subjective feelings and leading from sensation towards the symbolic ideas. According to Kerry McSweeney⁶⁹, the sight follows striking rules as to the effect brought by closeness and distance: at proximate distance, the sight is able to perceive the object in particular details and clear-cut boundaries, thus “imposing a hierarchy of figure/ground distinctions”. That brings the perceptive activity too close to the analytical act, rejected by the Romantics. But the dynamics of distant sight brings the perception close to imagination by obscuring the limits of the objects and melting them into the surroundings, in a way, as McSweeney indicates, imparting the visual sense with feelings: overall sublime feelings, for the indefiniteness connected to distant sight, endow it with the idea of infinity⁷⁰.

3.5 The Observer and the Natural Landscape: Affections from Without and Passions from Within

Meyer Abrams remarks that in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth “wrote that ‘I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject’ and in the Supplementary Essay he complained that from Dryden through Pope there is scarcely an image from external Nature ‘from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet had been steadily fixed on his object’”⁷¹. Abrams then observes that such a statement “is often taken to be no more than a recommendation for objective accuracy and particularity” and warns us that “Wordsworth’s ‘subject’, however, is not merely the particularized object of sense”⁷². The observation of the outer objects of Nature, as the poet declares, serves to raise emotional, meditative, and intellectual activities: “while many of the great Romantic lyrics [...] begin with an aspect or change of aspect in the

⁶⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 17.

⁶⁹ MCSWEENEY, Kerry. **The Language of the Senses**. 1998, p. 11.

⁷⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 11.

⁷¹ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. The Romantic Period – 1785-1830. In: ABRAMS, Meyer H.; GREENBLAT, Stephen. **The Norton Anthology of English Literature**. 2000, p. 9. Vol. II.

⁷² ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **The Mirror and the Lamp**. 1953, p. 53.

natural scene, this serves only as stimulus to the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking⁷³. Wordsworth's restriction to the ability to observe and describe objects accurately is that observation and description for their own sakes presuppose the passivity of the mind:

The ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer [...] though indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time: as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects⁷⁴.

Tintern Abbey represents a crucial moment in the evolution of Wordsworth's poetic feeling toward Nature. According to Harold Bloom, the experience of *Tintern Abbey* also furnishes the poet with the gift of the state of aesthetic contemplation:

All contemplation of objects except the aesthetic is essentially practical, and so directed toward personal ends. The poet's genius frees contemplation from the drive of the will, and consequently the poet is able to see with a quiet eye. To see into the life of things is to see things for themselves and not their potential use. The poet attains to this state through memories of Nature's presence, which gives a quietness that is a blessed mood, one in which the objective world becomes near and familiar, and ceases to be a burden. [...] From this serenity the affections lead us on to the highest kind of naturalistic contemplation, when we cease to have our body, but are our body⁷⁵.

The force of the external facts over the observer as a present fountain of affections, a source of feeling and stimulus for thought is accepted even by a defender of the apocalyptic superiority of imagination like Bloom, who accepts that "meditation does not start in the mind, but is first felt as a presence that disturbs the mind with the joy of elevated thoughts"⁷⁶.

3.6 Nature and the Growth of the Mind: Perception, Feeling and Creativity in the Structure of Imagination

Much of the autobiographical account of how the poet's mind grows lays in the conjointly operation between the hero's experience of the natural objects, the

⁷³ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. The Romantic Period – 1785-1830, In: ABRAMS, Meyer H.; GREENBLAT, Stephen. **The Norton Anthology of English Literature**. 2000, p. 9. Vol. II.

⁷⁴ WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to the Poems (1815), In: **Wordsworth's Literary Criticism**, p. 150.

⁷⁵ BLOOM, Harold. **The Visionary Company**. 1971, p. 134.

⁷⁶ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 134.

experience of recollecting the past moment and the experience of analyzing his own consciousness as it works both in the moment of primary experience and in present recollection. Meyer Abrams highlights that for Wordsworth the main role of Nature is to raise thinking. The notion of thinking has no neutral meaning in Wordsworth, since it is an active activity of the mind. It can be traced back to Locke's definitions about the generation of ideas. One of Locke's primary propositions concerning the human understanding is that "Idea is the object of thinking", and *thinking* has its counterpoint in *perception*, the first idea of Reflection:

PERCEPTION, as it is the first faculty of the mind exercised about our ideas; so it is the first and simplest idea we have from reflection, and is by some called thinking in general. Though thinking, in the propriety of the English tongue, signifies that sort of operation in the mind about its ideas, wherein the mind is active; where it, with some degree of voluntary attention, considers anything. For in bare naked perception, the mind is, for the most part, only passive, and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving⁷⁷.

If Wordsworth exalts thinking as the most characteristic activity of the human mind for being an active operation, his statement echoes Locke's assertion that bare perception is passive. Following Locke's psychological system, if sensation conveys the ideas from the external objects, perception conveys the ideas of the internal process of the mind. Beside sensation, "the other fountain from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas is – the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got; which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without"⁷⁸. Perception is the proper activity of man's soul: "The soul begins to have ideas when it begins to perceive. – To ask, at what time a man has first any idea, is to ask, when he begins to perceive; – having ideas and perception, being the same thing". Locke considers the opinion "that the soul always thinks, and that it has the actual perception of ideas in itself constantly, as long as it exists; and that actual thinking is as inseparable from the soul as actual extension is from the body"⁷⁹, and denies it saying that men knows by experience that the soul thinks not always. Locke does not conceive the soul as being always to contemplate ideas, nor does he conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move. The conception of ideas is to the soul what motion is to the body, not its essence, but one of its operations. And therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the

⁷⁷ LOCKE, John. **Essay Concerning the Human Understanding**. 1974, p. 31.

⁷⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 10.

⁷⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 13.

proper action of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should be always thinking, always in action⁸⁰.

The testimony of Locke's psychology reveals the extents to which the eighteenth-century intellectuals are concerned with such matters as human consciousness, human nature and their relations toward the external world. Those discussions constitute the ground upon which the Romantics develop their criticism, mainly as those ideas are embodied in their poetry. One of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's chief concerns, if not the chief one, lays in "the way human mind works". Stephen Prickett⁸¹ demonstrates that "for Coleridge, as for Wordsworth, however much art may have reflected, at times, a transcendent vision, it was always the product of close conscious organization". The author detaches as the unique quality of their collaboration "the peculiar extent to which both partners were, in their own ways, continually trying to account for what they felt was actually going on in their minds when they wrote a poem". Thus their poetry's landmark is that "Poetic creation and self-analysis were, for them, two sides of the same process"⁸².

Prickett highlights that what Wordsworth and Coleridge had recorded in their critical and poetic work is "the structure of creativity". This model of creativity of the human mind consists in what Coleridge defined as Imagination. The notion of Imagination is the kernel of the Romantic revolution of consciousness, and as a model of creativity it was conceived as a "complex of symbols"⁸³. Prickett illustrates the problem of experience in the structure of autobiography based on the *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*. Thus, in his terms: "If we are to find continuity in life we shall find in the way we perceive the world. We exist as a network of relationships: how the child sees things will determine the kind of man he becomes".

Prickett calls our attention to the fact that at that time "poets like Akenside and Thomson found in Newton a liberation" in the sense that "science and beauty were revealed as coming together". Beauty came side by side with understanding. In Thomson's *Seasons*, for instance, the "joy in the colour of the rainbow were inseparable from the intellectual joy how it was formed". Like Thomson, Akenside "could see in Newton's rainbow a marriage of visual and scientific sublimity". Yet, as Prickett warns us, this attitude did not solve "the problem of what actually happened in *perception*".

⁸⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 13.

⁸¹ PRICKETT, Stephen. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*. 1970, p. 02.

⁸² Idem. Ibidem. p. 02.

⁸³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 02-03.

Therefore, the scholar highlights, it was needed “a change in the way of thinking about the problem”. That remits him to Wordsworth. While for poets of the further romantic generation, like Keats and Byron, Newton’s experiments “destroyed the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prism”, Wordsworth owes much of his vision on Nature and theory of imagination to Newton. On the other hand,

What distinguishes Wordsworth from the ‘optical’ poets of the eighteenth century, such as Akenside or Thomson, is not that he could propose a solution to the epistemological and psychological problems of vision, but that he could and did, stand their problem on its head. For him the job of the poet was not to record in verse the amazing technical developments of modern science, but to explore the new relationships that these suggested. His interest in how it happened led immediately [...] to what it implied about our experience⁸⁴.

What interests Wordsworth when he refers to carry “sensation into the midst of the object of science” is “the relationship between man and nature suggested by the act of perception”. Prickett highlights that the Lockean interpretation of Newton’s *Optiks* had failed to stress that the object only exists when there are the specific conditions in the world out there and also the eye of the observer. The scholar emphasizes the Romantic aspect of the object’s existence for the subject and in relation to the subject in the act of perception. Clearly it does not imply that a poet like Wordsworth preaches that the object depends on the subject for its actual existence in the real world, provided that Wordsworth relied enough on Nature to conceive that the outer world possesses existence and reality in itself, independently of any relationship with the perceiving subject. Conversely, man needs Nature to live in and to form his consciousness by means of the knowledge and meanings found in the responsive relationship with the outward Nature. Furthermore, one of Wordsworth’s major concerns consists in the way the natural phenomena are composed, how the elements are combined, what energy impels them so as to present themselves as things of beauty to the human contemplation, thus producing sentimental effects, overall joy. Prickett’s remarks imply not that the object but its mental image owes its existence to the subject. Therefore Wordsworth values the process of perception: according to Prickett, to behold was a sentient act, an emotional experience. Only in the co-operative interaction between the observer and the natural world the thing can come into existence⁸⁵. As Prickett calls our attention, the influence of Lockean modes of thinking led the eighteenth century to ignore that this kind of relationship between subject and object was already implied by Newton’s *Optiks*.

⁸⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 11.

⁸⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 11.

One of the problems that interests Wordsworth the most along his poetry is the relationship between Nature and man, between the outward and the inward realities, the way man apprehends the forms of the world into his mind, into his thought and feelings. Wordsworth's proper attitude consists in accepting the materiality of the external world. There is a conflictive position between the material and the mental. His fundamental attitude consists in recognizing the formal, sensible, emotional, moral and spiritual qualities inscribed in the materiality of the external world, while his fundamental conviction teaches that the perception of reality is mental. However, Prickett argues that as Wordsworth advances in years he gets more convinced that reality is produced by the creative processes of the mind. Prickett demonstrates that this is a view drawn from Berkeley's *Dialogues*, where he tries to prove that reality is mental. There the philosopher demonstrates that what man perceives are not the objects but their qualities, such as colours, sounds and forms, and that those qualities are relative to the perceiver⁸⁶. Berkeley provided Wordsworth and Coleridge with non-Lockean modes of assimilating the world.

Prickett highlights that Coleridge's expression "shadow of our own casting" is not only a visual process but also an intellectual one, for Coleridge saw rational thought and visual perception as parts of the same activity. After rejecting Hartley he identified Mechanism with limited and systematic thought, in opposition to the intuitive poetic insight and value judgment of personal development. This self-consciousness is what he understands as an organic growth. The scholar also considers that in his *Outlines of the History of Logic*, Coleridge was concerned with the properties of the statement of occasioning recapitulations in the mind as well as refreshing knowledge and the operations to acquire and retain it. Accordingly knowledge cannot be separated from the experience involved in it. Consequently, Coleridge goes beyond Hartley by believing that "every experience can be classified in an endless variety of ways according to how we have come to it. The process by which the mind acquires and retains knowledge is an integral part of the knowledge itself"⁸⁷. Coleridge's idea of creativity starts with mechanical psychology. His repudiation of Hartley after 1800 was due to an awareness of the idea of the organic growth in man. The distinction between the psycho-mechanical and the personal-existential way of seeing people became a constant concern to Coleridge. He came to repudiate the conception of man as a physical

⁸⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 12.

⁸⁷ Idem. Ibidem. p. 69.

machine since it could neither account for poetry nor for Imagination. In his exam of Coleridge's philosophical ideas on the organic growth Prickett provides a key to understand a central aspect of the autobiographical structure in *The Prelude*: the depiction of the process through which knowledge has been acquired as regards its temporal situation in the moment of experience. Experience is located in the meaningful time of the hero's life, allowing knowledge to be settled in the organic temporal frame of his consciousness. Thus, the descriptions of moments lived through in the outward world are parallels to inner processes in the subject's poetic mind. In Coleridge's *Anima Poetae* written in October 1803 as well as in the poem *Frost at Midnight*, of 1798, Prickett detaches the record of an experience in which the poet proves the quicker (unconscious) sensibility of the body in relation to the (conscious) action of the conceptions of the understanding in shaping living experience.

Even though contrasted with the adult poet's present joys the moments of childhood joined them to compose the chain of living memories based on an "intuitive [...] sense of their organic continuity"⁸⁸ in the hero's subjectivity. According to the scholar's interpretation, the poet is "examining [...] the working of his own mind at a particular moment in time". Different moments "are brought to bear on a single moment of consciousness", in which the mind searches for "ways of seeing itself". From the particular state of the surroundings, the poet turns to the inner mood and process of his own mind. Prickett suggests an ambiguity in the new ordering of Coleridge's awareness through the question: "Do [the associations of boyhood brought back] form a coherent pattern at a deeper level than that of the rationalizing intellect?". Prickett concludes that when observing that "the body feels quicker" Coleridge is "implying a similar contrast between rational thought and the more rapid unconscious associative organization of the body"⁸⁹. More than the rational and conscious processes of thought, the intuitive and unconscious processes of man's sensibility are emphasized. Coleridge's poetic experience of the workings of his mind can be explained according to Hartley's associative model. As Prickett emphasizes, Coleridge found in Hartley an explanation both to the phenomenon of creativity and to the consciousness of value. Hartley "saw the principle of mechanic association as a hypothesis to explain certain phenomena, and to demonstrate a felt truth about human development. [...] He was arguing [...] that things were so constituted that 'some degree of spirituality is the necessary consequence

⁸⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 49.

⁸⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 48.

of passing through this world”’. Even denying the physical basis of the personality implied by Hartley’s theory, Coleridge adopts his idea of the personal continuity in the history of any individual mind, and that allows him to formulate his conception of the growth of the mind.

Coleridge’s thought, as well as Wordsworth’s, is rooted in his own personal development. Both came to use the word ‘imagination’ when they wished to describe the joy they felt in seeing beauty in the world around them. The way they used the term, Prickett insists, distinguishes them from the other Romantic poets. Imagination for Coleridge is fundamentally a psychological process:

He could only account satisfactorily for his own psychological process by focusing simultaneously on two separate levels of his experience. The ‘mind’ was to him both organism and consciousness. [...] Imagination is, for Coleridge, the activity by which the mind achieves all outward contact – and is therefore [...] also the activity by which the mind sees itself. It is thus, by inference, the basis of all self-conscious reflection⁹⁰.

Imagination presents a double relation process: on one hand, it involves perception of outward and inward processes, on the other artistic creativity. At length the concept of imagination involves a play between those aspects. For Coleridge, explains Prickett, all the contact between the external world and the senses pre-supposes an imaginative leap by the mind, which remained at the same time always open to modification, and therefore, renewal from Nature. He applied the word “creative” to perception in this context to emphasize it as a process of active mental organization: neither simple projection, nor mere passive sense-reception. It is by means of this model that Coleridge and Wordsworth were able to feel their own perception as an organic and living cooperation between man and Nature⁹¹.

Wordsworth’s view evolves as time advances keeping a strong Hartleyan cast as the psychological ground of his work but changing his opinion towards a close Coleridgean view either on Nature or on Imagination. However, Wordsworth manifests also a third kind of imaginative activity, which tends to the mythical and archetypal problems of apocalyptic and visionary musings. This must be a result of Milton’s influence: Geoffrey Hartman’s remark that in 1798 Wordsworth’s theme is Nature whereas in 1804 he was concerned with Imagination provides us with a trustful sign to date his change of perspective. However the shadow of Milton can be already felt as early as 1798 as a cloud dissolving over the cantos of *The Prelude*. What I mean is that

⁹⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 71-72.

⁹¹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 74-75.

even though the bardic and prophetic pretensions which bring a Biblical tone to the *Prelude* is stronger and consciously elaborated after 1804, it can be felt already in 1798 in Milton's echoes influencing the primary design of *The Prelude*.

This third aspect in Wordsworth's imagination consists in what Maurice Bowra⁹² defines as Romantic Imagination, viz, the means by which the English Romantics perceived a private and visionary world which emerges from the connections with the poet's surrounding reality. Wordsworth's Miltonic pretensions lead irremediably to this result. Even though touching the symbolical, archetypal and mythical spheres the Romantic Imagination, according to Bowra, cannot be disconnected from the material surroundings, so that a blending of experience and reminiscence leads to the motions of imagination. To understand how the Romantics assure an essential connection with life it is crucial to accept the scholar's demonstration that in the way the Romantics dispose of imagination it works closely with perception, with an insight into the nature of things:

So far from thinking that the imagination deals with the non-existent, they insist that it reveals an important kind of truth. They believe that when it is at work it sees things to which the ordinary intelligence is blind and that it is intimately connected with a special insight or perception or intuition. Indeed imagination and insight are in fact inseparable and form for all practical purposes a single faculty. Insight both awakes the imagination to work and is in turn sharpened by it when it is at work. This is the assumption on which the Romantics wrote poetry. It means that when their creative gifts are engaged, they are inspired by their sense of the mystery of things to probe it with a peculiar insight and to shape their discoveries into imaginative forms⁹³.

For this generation of poets, imagination is fundamental as a condition for poetry, a belief linked to the trust in the individual self and to the consciousness of their own power, since the poets "were conscious of a wonderful capacity to create imaginary worlds", which were essentially endowed with elements "vitally necessary to their whole being". The Romantics "saw that the power of poetry is strongest when the creative impulse works untrammelled, and they knew that [...] this happened when they shaped fleeting visions into concrete forms and pursued wild thoughts until they captured and mastered them"⁹⁴.

Considering the second mode of imagination, in contemplation the poet is able to envisage the moral and spiritual essence of reality captured via symbol provided by the elements of Nature offered to man's perception. In fact, not only does Coleridge's

⁹² BOWRA, Maurice. *The Romantic Imagination*. 1976), p. 1-8.

⁹³ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 7.

⁹⁴ Idem. *Ibidem*.

secondary imagination account for the creativity of the mind, but it also allows the intuition of the numinous world that leaps beyond the phenomena given to the human perception, thus configuring a similar activity as Wordsworth's symbolical intuition of a moral, spiritual and eternal truth veiled beyond the sensible images of Nature. In this sense, it is worth reporting that Prickett detects an astonishing correspondence between Coleridge's attempt to define Imagination in *Biographia Literaria*, in terms of organic unity and creation, and his definition of symbol in the *Statesman's Manual*, "which involves bringing into simultaneous focus the material and temporal, and the spiritual and eternal"⁹⁵. Such a definition can be traced back to Hartley's concept of symbol and leads us back to our focus on the Romantic poet as a worshipper of Nature who sees and feels a spiritual world through the forms of the external Nature. Prickett demonstrates that the nexus of Coleridge's thought is his own creativity. Thus, we can claim that for Wordsworth and Coleridge the key to poetic creativity lays in the nexus between man and the living reality. Therefore, the growth of the poet's consciousness in Wordsworth's and even Coleridge's universe depends on man's living experience in close relationship with the elemental Nature.

With Wordsworth and Coleridge, as Prickett remarks, Nature is no longer an analogue to the mind but becomes a symbol to it: the external world provides a body of symbols to the inner activities of the mind: the images of the spring, the cloud-covered mountain and the deep mirroring lake, for instance. In this sense, as Prickett calls our attention, in their hands "Imagination ceases to be a revolutionary psychological theory and becomes [...] an aesthetic one". The psychological development is not only the theme of their poems, but an integral part of the aesthetic process. However we have to consider that psychological growth and aesthetic process are only possible as experience: the recollection of a past emotion recalls a paradigmatic state of mind associated to a specific worldview; such an emotion is only possible because the self lived a signifying moment in the middle of Nature and found in the forms of the external world an essential meaning to his inner self, thus raising inner intuitions.

Assuming the importance of the creative character of the mind for the Romantic poets, Prickett explains that thus the growth of the mind is central to the poetic theory. The idea of growth copes for the notion of organic development. For instance, the scholar considers the poem *Dejection* as an organic process of the mind,

⁹⁵ PRICKETT, Stephen. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*, 1970. p. 74-75.

which recapitulates and shows the poet's whole mode of poetic development⁹⁶. Accordingly, the dominant tendency of the Romantic criticism to shift attention from the work of art to the mind of the artist can be expected – as a general consensus – to indicate the primacy of the mind over the material world. However, the Romantics knew that the mind's faculties are extremely poor without the rapport with Nature. If Coleridge gets use of the metaphor of the plant to symbolize the organic growth, and the metaphor of the spring to symbolize the spontaneous overflow and the depth of the mind, it is because Nature itself offers such forms to man's perception. It is essential to notice that, as Pricket asserts, neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth uses the structures of Nature as symbols to the processes of the mind. The *a priori* mental schemata cannot furnish the images, sensations and impressions found in Nature: their function is to allow man to recognize such forms. The operations which the mind can furnish to Nature are indeed responsive processes: feelings and affections provoked by external stimuli, such as those of the beauty and sublime; remembrances of past events stored in the memory and evoked in the presence of the scenery where the event happened; intuitive insights or a contemplative mood aroused by the quiet or agitated presence of Nature; or even the motion of inspiration felt as an effect of the touch of the elements. Even the idea of creative mind is likely to be drawn from the awareness of the organic creation processed in the natural universe.

3.7 Nature and Self: Imagery and the Objective Correlative

Coleridge states in *On Poesy or Art*: “In every Work of art there is a reconcilment of the external with the internal; the conscious is so impressed in the unconscious as to appear in it. [...] He who combines the two is the man of genius [...] hence there is in genius itself an unconscious activity”⁹⁷. The Romantics see a correspondence between the structures of the world without and the patterns within the mind, a correlation between the forms of Nature and the operations of the mind. This principle is well explained in T.S. Eliot's comment on the ‘objective correlative’:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which

⁹⁶ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 86.

⁹⁷ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literária*. Vol. II, p. 258.

shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked⁹⁸.

Abrams remarks that Eliot's utterance can be paralleled to John Stuart Mill's proposition that poetry embodies "itself in symbols, which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind". In a review on Tennyson's early poems, Mill says that he "excels in scene-painting, in the highest sense of the term". By scene-painting, Mill does not refer to "the mere power of producing that rather vapid species of composition usually termed descriptive poetry", but to "the power of creating scenery, in keeping with some state of human feeling; so fitted to it as to be the embodied symbol of it, and to summon up the state of feeling itself, with a force not to be surpassed by anything but reality"⁹⁹.

Even though the Romantics have the highest accuracy in Nature description, Abrams remarks that from their point of view, "In so far as a literary work simply imitates objects, it is not poetry at all". In Mill's theory, as Abrams demonstrates, the external world is considered only "to the extent that sensible objects may serve as a stimulus or 'occasion for the generation of poetry'". Therefore, Mill conceives that 'poetry is not in the object itself', but in 'the state of mind' in which it is contemplated, so that when the poet describes a thing, poetry must be true not to that object but to the human emotion. Thus, up from Mill's considerations, Abrams illustrates the Romantic general conception of the poetic approach to the external universe that "severed from the external world, the objects signified by a poem tend to be regarded as no more than a projected equivalent – an extended and articulated symbol – for the poet's inner state of mind"¹⁰⁰. Abrams summarizes the central tendency of the expressive theory as follow:

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

The scholar situates the displacement of the mimetic and pragmatic view of art by an expressive view operated by the Romantic generation as being first stated in Wordsworth's Preface of 1800, in which Wordsworth wrote that poetry proceeds "from

⁹⁸ ELIOT, T. S.. 'Hamlet'. In: **Selected Essays**: 1917-32. 1932, p. 145.

⁹⁹ MILL, John Stuart. Review, Written in 1835, of Tennyson's *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* (1830), and *Poems* (1833). In: **Early Essays**. p. 242.

¹⁰⁰ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **The Mirror and the Lamp**. 1953, p. 24-25.

the soul of Man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world". Thus, the cause of poetry is "the impulse within the poet of feelings and desires seeking expression, or the compulsion of the 'creative' imagination which [...] has its internal source of motion". From this perspective, as Abrams emphasizes, the work ceases to be regarded as primarily a reflection of Nature, actual or improved; and the mirror held up to Nature becomes transparent and yields insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself¹⁰¹. The forms of Nature have the power to raise inner moods in the contemplative self and set in motion the self's own craft to create. Considering the nature of the Romantic imagination, it is possible to understand how the fascination aroused by those figures recalls meanings and atmospheres related to the craft of inspiration and creation.

3.8 The Poetic Mind Transforming the Materials of Sense

The shift from mimetic to expressive activity as the focus of poetry brings emotion to the centre of the artistic worldview among the Romantic poets. Meyer Abrams¹⁰² demonstrates that the "habitual reference to the emotions and processes of the poet's mind for the source of poetry altered drastically the established solutions to that basic problem of aesthetics, the discrepancy between the subject matter in poetry and the objects found in experience". According to the tradition hitherto, the poetry should imitate, represent or portrait a section of the universe, and consequently departed from factual reality because, Abrams instructs us, it reflects a nature which had been reassembled by the artist to make a composite beauty, or filtered to reveal a central form of a type, or ornamented for the greater delight of the audience. To the Romantics, what detaches the matter of poetry from fact is that "it incorporates objects of sense which have already been acted on and transformed by the feelings of the poet"¹⁰³.

As we can see, the Romantic sensibility and worldview, either in poetry or in criticism, exist as a reaction to the ruling tradition and a change of perspective, which innovates poetic taste and practice by bringing to the major position an issue up to then considered of minor dimension. Abrams properly situates this turning point by saying

¹⁰¹ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 22-23.

¹⁰² Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 54.

¹⁰³ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 54.

that: “In eighteenth-century theory, the minor topic of the way feelings may enter into and alter objects of sense had been discussed under the heading of ‘style’, as one of various justifying causes of certain figures of speech. In the nineteenth century, this problem moves into a position at the very center of poetic theory. Often the matter is left in terms of analogy”¹⁰⁴. It is revealing of the Romantic Age to the extent that that time was marked by the end of Rhetoric and the advance of Aesthetics as the ground of the intellectual and artistic life.

Tzvetan Todorov in *La crise romantique*¹⁰⁵ gives an account of the state of affairs, which between 1750 and 1800 created the transformation that prepared the soil for the growing of the Romantic ideas. It consists in a change in attitude towards the concept of imitation. The Romantic poets and artists manifested the disposition to replace the recourse of “imitation” for that of “inspiration”, which involves such things as representation of beauty, creation through imagination, expression of feelings and thoughts as aroused by the observation of images in Nature. Regarding these issues, Wordsworth claims that the observation of natural images causes him to start the most characteristic of human activities: that of thinking. The same circumstances that determined the change in attitude in theory, criticism and creation of art and poetry that configured the Romantic worldview is established by Meyer Abrams in terms of a shift from art as imitation to art as expression. In this sense, the analogy of the work as a mirror that reflects the images of the outer world tended to make place for the idea of the work as the spontaneous expression of a soul like the content of the radiating sun, an overflowing fountain or a singing bird.

For the English Romantic poets art and poetry are cases of experience, configured in the dialectic relation between the empirical-sensory impressions received from the contact with the world without and the inner feelings, emotions, images and ideas created as an activity of the inner faculties. In both cases what is at stake is the relationship between the poet-artist and Nature, between subject and object, between man and the world, in a way varying the problematic of the choice between the imitative or the expressive principles mediating between art and Nature, artist and art, and artist and Nature.

According to Todorov, the innovation in the principle of imitation that prefigured the Romantic attitude was realized by Karl Philip Moritz and refers to the

¹⁰⁴ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ TODOROV, Tzvetan. **Theories du symbole**. 1977.

change in the subject of imitation, so that it is no longer the work but the artist who imitates, so that imitation in art can only occur through the activity of the creator:

S'il y a imitation dans les arts, elle est dans l'activité du créateur : c'est ne pas l'œuvre qui copie la nature, c'est l'artiste, et il le fait en produisant les œuvres. Mais les sens du mot nature n'est pas le même dans le deux cas : l'œuvre n'est peut imiter que les produits de la nature, alors que l'artiste imite la nature en tant que celle-ci est un principe producteur¹⁰⁶.

The transference of the basic principle of art and poetry from the copy of external images to the productive activity of the artist-poet combines with Wordsworth's requirements that the mere description of a natural scene in a poem reveals the passivity of a poet's mind and her submission to the outer impressions, while the genuine poetic principle presupposes an active part on the poet's mind, so that a poem results from the expression of the emotional, sentimental and intellectual activity of man, even though they are to be started or inspired by the observation or contemplation of Nature.

The Romantic principle of art consists in exposing the character of *poiesis*, or production underlying poetry, which comes in association with Wordsworth's and Coleridge's conception of poetry as the exposition of the psychological process itself, as the faculty of thinking being exposed in her own activities while poetry comes into being. Todorov picks up Moritz's words to explain this kind of transference of the principle of art from the final product to the process of production, in that the German critic says: "La nature du beau consiste in ce qui son être interieur se trouve en dehors de limites de la faculté de penser, dans son surgissement, dans son proper devenir"¹⁰⁷. Todorov highlights two main aspects in Moritz's statement: a certain irrational aspect of the beautiful and the placement of the beautiful within the act of coming into being (*devenir*)¹⁰⁸.

The Romantics display a peculiar attitude towards Nature as an object of contemplation (no longer of imitation) in the artistic and poetic representation: the artistic/poetic work must be valuable since on the one hand it embodies not a partial image of Nature's forms but more than that the same internal structure and principle of organisation found in Nature; while, on the other hand, the artist shares with Nature her power of creation. In the Romantic doctrine, as Todorov exposes out of Moritz's doctrine, the aesthetic activity is based on the analogy where, like the world, the work of

¹⁰⁶Idem. Ibidem. p. 185.

¹⁰⁷MORITZ, Karl Phillip. *Goetterlehre*, p. 77-78. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 186.

¹⁰⁸Idem. Ibidem. p. 186.

art is a self-sufficient totality¹⁰⁹. Wordsworth emphasizes an aspect of resemblance or even connection between the man-poet and the world-Nature. The living experiences among natural scenes provide the elements for a formative process, the objective conditions for the *Bildung* of man's subjectivity. In this sense, Nature provides what Harold Bloom calls Wordsworth's "scene of instruction"¹¹⁰. The poet draws from the example of Nature moral, emotional, and intellectual teaching. That is because in contemplating her forms the poet draws the patterns of rational/intellectual organization, of benevolent providence and spiritual/intelligent animation, as Joseph Beach¹¹¹ has noticed.

For Wordsworth, in his essay of 1815, the objects "derive their influence not from what they are actually in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects". Similarly, for John Stuart Mill descriptive poetry consists in description of things as they appear, not as they are. The opposition of things as they are and things as they appear indicates the appearance of the objects to the poetic experience, the passage from the ordinary to the contemplative experience, in which the self looks steady at the object not for a practical sake but for the state of exaltation its aesthetical qualities causes in him.

According to this perspective feelings project a light over the objects of sense, so that things are, in Mill's words, "arranged in the colours and seen through the medium of the imagination set in action by the feelings"¹¹². For Coleridge, "while it recalls the sights and sounds that had accompanied the occasion of the original passions, poetry impregnates them [the objects of sense] with an interest not their own by means of the passion"¹¹³. In his essay *On Poetry in General*, William Hazlitt gives an example of what Abrams denominates "the way objects of sense are fused and remoulded in the crucible of emotion and the passionate imagination". For Hazlitt, the poetic imagination represents objects "as they are moulded by other thoughts and feelings, into an infinite variety of shapes and combinations of powers". Furthermore, Abrams shows that in Hazlitt's optic, sentiments like agitation, fear and love distort or magnify the object, so that things, which have the power of affecting the mind with an equal degree of terror,

¹⁰⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 187.

¹¹⁰ BLOOM, Harold. (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth – Modern Critical Views**. 1985.

¹¹¹ BEACH, Joseph W. **The Concept of Nature in the Nineteenth-Century English Poetry**. 1959.

¹¹² MILL, John Stuart. **Early Essays**. p. 207.

¹¹³ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **On Poesy or Art**. See also COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **Biographia Literaria**, II, p. 254.

admiration, delight or love, are equal to the imagination. In this sense, Hazlitt, as well as Wordsworth, is a heir of Burkean principles, what indicates that if the Romantics foster a projective creed, they are all aware that the mind just throws the human meanings and passions back on the objects after the objects of Nature had affected the poet's spirit. If the romantic "passionate interpretation", as Abrams defines it, makes the motion of the objects to accord with the speaker's own feelings, we cannot forget that in Nature poetry the speaker's feelings are awakened by the contact with the objects and his passions are originated in a past moment of experience in the presence of Nature.

In the course of this tendency, Abrams signalizes that among the contemporaries "Coleridge was the most concerned with the problem of how the poetic mind acts to modify or transform the materials of sense without violating the truth to nature". On this basis, he formulates his theory of imagination, and considers the role of emotion in such process of transformation:

Images, however beautiful, though faithful copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion [...] or lastly when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit¹¹⁴.

Coleridge's ultimate argument presents "the modifying action of passion, that of animating the inanimate", configured as the "transference of the life of the observer to the thing he observes". Even Coleridge's phrase that poetry "recall the sight and sounds that had accompanied the occasions of the original passions" cannot escape the fact that the feelings are preceded by the sensations and perceptions attached to the images of the world without at the original moment of experience, which inserts Nature in the historical course and organic growth of the individual's life, acquiring a formative meaning that stores the poet's memory. In addition, Hazlitt asserts that Poetry puts a spirit of life and motion into the universe. When Wordsworth answers that a poet is a man "who rejoices more than other in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them", the two first propositions do not preach any transference of passion from man to Nature; they read of the contemplation of vivid motions of life in man and in Nature; of the interpretive response to the symbolical meanings in the world without. Only the third proposition – and it is not central to the import and meaning of the general idea here

¹¹⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 254.

conveyed – tells of creating passion and volition where the poet finds they are absent. The haunting passages of night ramblings in *The Prelude* are considered what Abrams calls “occasions where the impressed characters of danger and desire”¹¹⁵, of which we can understand the earth becoming much more grand and terrible, according to Burke’s principle of Sublime. However, for Burke, earth itself, by its own qualities, produces the sublime, and through its affections awakens the grand passions in man. In this sense, I ask, “Does Wordsworth really think that earth needs man’s imagination to create those ‘passions and volitions’ – danger and desire – so as to project them on its face?”. I am inclined to think he does not. If we consider poetry from the technical point of view of conscious creation, we know that Wordsworth applied some aesthetical notions philosophically established, as the case of Burke’s principles and passions of the sublime, to the description of the haunting scenes of *The Prelude*, and thus it acquires the character of a fictitious creation in which the poet, stored with poetic resources, make the poetry project an effect consciously mastered over the images, scenes, actions and feelings represented.

But if poetry is instead, in its essence, a supreme moment of elevation and exaltation linked to a vivid experience, I have reason enough to believe that the moments portrayed on night ramblings, bird-nesting and boat-stealing have somehow really happened in the poet’s life and were important for the growth of his mind since they contained precious poetic meanings. Wordsworth finds in Burke’s principles the principles to ground and explain moments he had felt and known in life experience. Accepting their meaningfulness as life and poetic experience, we are allowed to consider them as “occasions of the original passions”. Those were moments that produced a real impression in Wordsworth’s childish self, in which Nature by her ministries really caused sublime passions, or at least the indefinite sense of fear, desire and guilt on him, thus allowing him to associate further meaning to it in his manhood. Such an occasion of the original passion is a moment of living experience – of playful interaction or contemplative communion with the surrounding Nature – in which the subject is arrested by the forms of the object that makes his feelings and thoughts enlarge.

The problem of the analogies for the mind is an ancient theme, which becomes central and suffers a radical transformation in the hands of the Romantics with the change from imitation to expression. Since Plato, the mirror is employed to represent

¹¹⁵ ABRAMS, Meyer. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. 1953, p. 55.

the nature of art and the mind as reflecting the world without. Moreover, Plato appeals to the analogy of the “stamping of impressions into a wax plate” to explain the way the impressions of the external things and facts are gotten into man’s memory. With Locke, the mind is considered as a *tabula rasa*, as “a passive receiver for images presented ready-formed from without”. Accordingly, sensations impress themselves like seals in the mind. Abrams indicates that in the passage from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century the schemes of mind and its place in relation to Nature are indicated by a change in metaphors paralleled to the contemporary discussions on the Nature of art. With the Romantic poets and critics, the change in metaphors corresponds to a change “in the concept of the role played by the mind in perception”.

Coleridge and Wordsworth use to picture the mind in perception as active rather than merely receptive, and contributing to the world in the process of perceiving it. As an example, Abrams demonstrates that in the thirteenth book of *The Prelude* Wordsworth thinks of a world ruled by laws:

Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from without and from within,
The excellence, pure function and best power
Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees.
(Book XIII, ll. 374-378).

Many a time Wordsworth speaks of the pair “bodily eye” and “mind’s eye”. It reflects Wordsworth’s constant care for the original plan of the poem suggested by Coleridge, in which the poet was to treat man as “subject of eye, ear, touch and taste, in contact with external nature, and informing the senses from the mind, and not compounding a mind out of the senses”¹¹⁶. Even though faithful to his discussions with his partner Coleridge, Wordsworth differed in principle and treated man as informing his mind from the senses.

Abrams assumes that in their “poetic exposition of the mind fashioning its own experience”, Wordsworth and Coleridge employ metaphors of mind which had largely fallen into disuse in the eighteenth-century tradition but had been current in the seventeenth-century philosophy outside the sensational tradition of Locke. Chiefly, those philosophers are the Cambridge Platonists; and the archetype for the Romantic metaphors was, according to Abrams, Plotinus’ “figure of creation as emanation”. Likewise were derived the analogies of an overflowing fountain, or a radiating sun, whose combination resulted in the concept of the mind as an overflowing fountain of light. Accordingly, Plotinus rejected the concept of sensations as imprints acted on a

¹¹⁶ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. *The Table Talk*. p. 188; 21 July 1832.

passive mind and preached for the view of the mind as a power which “gives a radiance out of its own store” to the objects of sense. Abrams explains that in the Cambridge Platonists, it was common “the figure of the spirit of man as a candle of the Lord, which envisioned the act of perception as a little candle throwing its light into the external world”. Wordsworth and Coleridge, as well as Hazlitt, derived their analogies of the mind both as reflector and projector, as mirror or lamp from the Platonists. Abrams situates Nathanael Culverwel’s *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature* as an inventory of the set of metaphors which the Romantics borrowed from the seventeenth-century writers. In the *Discourse*, it reads that the Creator, himself the fountain of light, furnished and beautified the lower world with intellectual lamps that should shine forth to praise and honour the Lord’s Name. Thus, setting a dispute between Platonic and Aristotelian worldviews, the more appropriate of which he was not able to decide, Culverwel comments that:

The Platonists look upon the spirit of man as the candle of the Lord for illuminating and irradiating of objects, and darting more light upon them, than it receives from them [...] And, truly, he might as well phansie such implanted Ideas, such seeds of Light in his external Eye, as such seminal Principles in the Eye of the Mind.

On the other side of this controversy, Culverwel explains that:

[Aristotle] plainly professed that his *Understanding* came naked into the world. He shews you [...] an *abrasa tabula* [...] This makes him set open the *windows* of *sense*, to welcome and entertain the first *dawnings*, the early glimmerings of morning light. [...] As he could perceive no connate Colours, no Pictures or Portraictures in his external Eye: so neither could he find any *signatures* in his mind, till some outward objects had made some impression upon [...] his *soft* and *pliable* Understanding, impartially prepared for every Seal¹¹⁷.

A pure idealistic view in the metaphor of the spirit of man as an overflowing fountain is presented by the Platonist Puritan Peter Sterry:

Thus is the Soul or Spirit of every man all the world to Him. The world with all Variety of things in it, his owne body, with all its parts & changes are himselfe, his owne Soul, or Spirit springing up from it’s owne ffountaine within itselfe into all those fformes, & images of things, which it seeth, heareth, smelleth, tastes, feeleth, imagineth, or understandeth. [...] The Soul often looking upon this, like Narcissus upon his own efface in the ffountaine, the shadow, & the ffountaine, so it falls into a fond Love of itselfe in it’s owne shadowy figure of itselfe¹¹⁸.

The image of the lamp projecting light as an analogy for the perceiving mind recalls in Wordsworth the thought of his “creative sensibility”, just like in the 1805 version of *The*

¹¹⁷ CULVERWEL, Nathanael. *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*. Apud. ABRAMS, Meyer H.. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. 1953, p. 59.

¹¹⁸ STERRY, Peter. *Of the Nature of a Spiri*. Apud. ABRAMS, Meyer H.. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. 1953, p. 60.

Prelude he considers the image of the naked moon shedding its light glory over the Mount Snowdon “The perfect image of a mighty mind” (Book XIII, l. 69). In this sense, Abrams points out, recalling his boyish communings with Nature in *The Prelude*, the speaker states that:

An auxiliary light
Came from my mind which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor.
(Book II, ll. 387-389).

On hearing *The Prelude* read aloud, Coleridge adopted his fellow’s image of radiance to refer to the theme of the poem:

Of moments awful
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
When power streamed from thee and the soul recalls
The light reflected, as a light bestowed.
(*To a Gentleman*, ll. 12-16).

At this point, Abrams concludes that for the Romantics the Neoplatonic figure of the soul as a fountain was adapted to imply a double relationship of giving and receiving between the mind and the external object.

Chapter IV

4 The Experience of Sound and Metaphors of Music in Nature Influencing and Connoting the Growth of the Poet's Mind

4.1 The Experience of Sound Suggesting Loss in the Objective World and Changes in the Subject's Sensibility

The experience of sound in Wordsworth's autobiographical poem comes often in association with the idea of loss in the objective world and with moments signaling inner transformation in the subject which marks the changes in his mode of perception according to the development of the hero's consciousness, hence marking the way in which the growth of the poet's mind must accord with modes of recovering and balancing the losses in the world without by means of gains within, fostering the power of imagination, so as to preserve man and Nature in the poetic sphere. Wordsworth suggests a struggle of the self to keep his sensibility always refined like that of the child against the hardening and blotting tendency which gradually comes to involve man as he advances in adult life. However, Wordsworth also reshapes the matter depicted in autobiography with analogical suggestions to literary modes, symbols and tropes. In this sense, it is indicated through the patterns of sound experienced in Nature a formative course which leads from pastoral, romance and fairy delights in childhood – a species of mythical-physical pleasure – to prophetic vision which guarantees the transcendental insight to speak, among “things that pass away”, of “objects that endure” (Book XIII, ll. 31-32).

As to the effects of sounds, Kerry McSweeney distinguishes between those heard near and those heard from distance: the first produces an effect of “intrusion” upon the sensibility, while the second causes “an inducement to reflection and rapture”¹¹⁹. According to John Hollander's distinctions, an important aspect which characterizes the Romantic mode of treating images both visual and aural consists in the influence of distance, which made a scene more “sweet”, implying in Romantic

¹¹⁹ MCSWEENEY, Kerry. *The Language of the Senses*. 1998, p. 11.

reference, as the scholar shows, the meaning of “dear”¹²⁰. Through the effect of distance, the pattern of the Romantic image is transferred to sound, viz. that of adding a special charm to the sensual objects by dissolving their limits into those of the surroundings. The effect of distance creates an association between sense and feeling, elevating the sensory experience upwards to the realm of symbol, transforming the perception of the natural object into poetic image through a natural process by which Nature itself proceeds imaginatively, preceding and stimulating the work of imagination in the poet’s consciousness.

4.2 The Power of Sound: The Stream of Experience and the Murmur of Recollection

The first and second books of *The Prelude* are organized within the temporal aspects related to the autobiographical phases of infancy, childhood and boyhood, where the latter stages correspond to his period of school time. From the data of his biographical history we infer a division in which his infancy may be situated in the period from 1770 up to 1778: the period which he spent at Cockermouth, his birthplace, living among his whole family at his father’s house; and his boyhood might be considered as starting in 1778, when his mother died and he was sent with his brothers to the Grammar School at Hawkshead, where he lived up to 1787 when he was admitted to attend college at Cambridge. Wordsworth suggests this division in a metaphor associating the ages of human life with the living cycle of plants, as the speaker asserts apropos of the metaphor of “fair seed-time” referring to his early infancy, and the suggestion of the act of transplantation referring to the fact of the hero being removed with his brothers to the Vale of Hawkshead. Wordsworth recalls the signification of an organic development of the subject living a free, healthy and virtuous life in contact with and as an integral part of Nature. The first external image of infancy recollected and fully described in *The Prelude* is an exhortation of the Derwent River, the river that flows behind the house of Wordsworth’s family at Cockermouth, as if it were a fairy creature in the passage comprised in Book I, ll. 269-281.

¹²⁰ HOLLANDER, John. Wordsworth and the Music of Sound. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 60.

In the first two books, Wordsworth creates a mythology of Nature's entities, which constitutes the imaginative association of subtle meanings to the physical response to Nature's beautiful and sublime forms. The speaker personifies the natural elements; and here attributes life and intention to the river. In the aural perceptions of the river's activities, the natural sound associates with human music. The course of the river "winding among grassy holmes" suggests the analogy with a tangible musical instrument that produces chords as it is touched. Through the process of personification, the noise of the river is transformed, in the speaker's imaginative impressions, into the sounds emitted by an animated being: first "murmurs" which represent the calming and delighting topos of pastoral tradition, then "a voice" which introduces a magical and mysterious element of romance in the charms of outer objects. This voice associates with the stream the mythical belief in the presence like that of a strange fairy calling the baby, whose message flowed along his dreams, filling his soul, through which perception is reshaped into imagination and may be assimilated into the subject's inner universe.

The aspects of fluidity and liquidity are transferred from the quality of water to the quality of the sound. Those aspects confer a symbolical quality that allows the sound to enter the infant's consciousness, composing his thoughts. In this process, the sensory quality of the sound is converted into intellectual and emotional impulses, so that the natural facts become facts of consciousness which go beyond the body affections, yet keeping their impression, since the stream's music composed his thoughts "To more than infant softness" (Book I, l. 278). The stream conveys into the humanized places and into the human access via bodily perception that source of archaic potencies and metaphysical animation of Nature, hidden from man among the secluded natural places. The speaker enhances the inviting power of Nature to those who are attached to her by love and passion. The baby received just "a foretaste" of the calm that Nature breathes among hills and groves in order to invite him with a fairy's music to discover her; thus, attracted to her, he is later to search for Nature in the remotest places. The world out there attracts him to enter into it in order to get in touch with its elements, perceiving them as directly as possible. Through romance enchantment, this movement will imply a dislocation from the pastoral *locus amoenus*, safe in the presence of the nurse and soothed by her song, towards the *locus terribilis* where he will appear alone with the natural potencies.

The phase designated by the phrase “fair-seed time” marks the infant’s power to commune with Nature’s “one dear Presence”. The first stage of life is considered the period in which man possesses the greatest sensibility to perceive Nature’s forms and intuit her spiritual essence; hence it implies the possession of the poetic faculty in its fullest strength. When Wordsworth says that the child is the best philosopher, he equates philosopher with poet, in the sense that the child is naturally endowed with the essence of the poetic power. Inasmuch as the “mute dialogues” which Wordsworth the baby held by “intercourse of touch” with his “Mother’s heart” belong to

the first
Poetic spirit of our human life
By uniform control of after years
In most, abated or suppressed; in some
Through every change of growth and decay
Pre-eminent till death,
(Book II, ll. 260-264),

The gift of poetry itself is equivalent to the power both to perceive the sensual impressions and sentimental affections in the physical qualities of the outer world transforming them into inner moods, and to intuit transcendence and feel its passions in the sensory experience of the natural objects drawing human, moral meanings from them. For the child, transcendence is still inherent in the natural sensible forms. If Wordsworth as a mature poet must rely so much on imagination, even to the point of opposing it to Nature, it is because he is aware of being losing the sensibility for the intuition of the transcendental essence in sensory experience. However, the weakening in sensibility falls not only on the poet’s capacity for transcendental feelings but also on the intensity of the perceptive experience before the sensory affections – either images or sounds – of the natural object.

Yu Liu¹²¹ reads the passage on the influence of the sound of the Derwent River on the passions of Wordsworth as a young baby through the key of “the ambiguity of sound and silence”, in which he examines the fact of “the provocative contrast between the eloquent outpouring of sound on the one hand and the earnest expression of the poet’s desire for silence on the other”. Liu highlights Wordsworth’s ironic “use of sound to privilege silence”, since in his opinion that is “a situation where poetry is said to be made possible precisely because the infant Wordsworth/future poet is silent or has been silenced”. Accordingly, the scholar argues that the experience of the baby listening to the murmurs of the Derwent River consists in “the mythologizing of the poet’s own

¹²¹ LIU, Yu. *The Ambiguity of Sound and Silence: ‘The Prelude’*. 1994, p. 1.

poetic origin” and represents “the strange experience of gaining poetic power through self-annihilation” by means of the “strange transformative interaction” with the river:

As the personified river flows into contact with the two human characters, it swells the song of the nurse into its own murmurs and floods the dreams and thoughts of the baby with its own currents. As the metaphorization of the literal obliterates the nurse’s voice and as the literalization of the metaphorical transforms the mental capacity of the infant into a river bed, all human sound falls silent inside the narrative and both human characters simultaneously shed their distinctive humanness. [...] The infant Wordsworth changes from a human baby into a child of Nature, as he is figuratively brainwashed both in his sleep and in his waking moments. As annihilating experience as all this seems to be, it is nevertheless mythologized implicitly as the glorious beginning of the poet’s genius. Deprived of human voice, the newborn Wordsworth is paradoxically enabled to receive a poetical gift from Nature”¹²².

Similarly to the scene before the river, in which the sound of Nature merges with the human voice in the nurse’s lullaby, Wordsworth reflects on his fortune as a baby in those moments when he was nursed in his mother’s arms and felt in his soul, through the intercourse with her breast and eyes, the “dear Presence” of Nature, as represented in the passage contained in Book II, ll. 233-243 quoted a few pages above, in which the speaker praises the newborn hero for his lofty virtues and gifts: “Blest the infant Babe” for whom “there exists / A virtue which irradiates and exalts / Objects through widest intercourse of sense”.

Yu Liu remarks that in this scene Wordsworth still does not present “the differentiating debility of the human language”, so that “without that hindrance, he is able to fuse effortlessly into or with his mother”¹²³. In this account of the baby as being “both literally and metaphorically part of the mother” the scholar goes on saying that: “Even though he may not exist in his own consciousness as an entity independent of his mother, he is enabled paradoxically by this figurative self-annihilation to perceive ‘one dear Presence’ in the mother’s eye”. Liu shows that this “dear Presence” consists in something that “incarnates in a unified entity of being which includes and blends the baby himself, the mother and the whole world”¹²⁴. Accordingly, this fusion of the infant poet with his mother is the sign of his overcoming of the “objective reality” in which the things are separated, in order to live a “subjective reality” in which he merges with the whole Nature. Liu’s actual interest in those passages of the baby’s contact with the river and with his mother consists in the idea of poetry rising from moments of a deliberate silence on the part of the subject in which “the voice of the poet outside the

¹²² Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 1.

¹²³ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 1.

¹²⁴ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 1.

narrative again is in conspicuous contrast to the silence of the poet's younger self inside the narrative"¹²⁵.

In my opinion, these moments of the infant's deliberate silence or of being silenced before the sounds of Nature also constitute the prototype of the poet's later moments of silent contemplation of Nature, implying the conception of contemplative activity as consisting in the very silent root of poetry in which an inner sentient mood urges verbal expression. In the figure of the baby holding mute dialogues of touch with his mother's heart, Wordsworth idealizes the poetic sensibility as consisting in a faculty in which the senses are qualified by the unmediated character of the tactile experience, as the speaker suggests in the passage contained in Book II, ll. 265-272 quoted above. Wordsworth's very point of departure is "the language of the sense[s]", uttered in *Tintern Abbey*, l. 108, which is concentrated on the power of perception and observation of a child, who is gifted with the capacity to perceive the "novelty" of things and keep their impressions longer in his memory, as the speaker utters in the short lyric poem *My heart leaps up when I behold*. Recollecting the feelings aroused by the observation of the rainbow, the speaker affirms the desire of keeping the strong faculty of the child: appended as epigraph to the *Ode Intimations of Immortality*: "So was it when my life began; / So is it now I am a man" (*My heart leaps up when I behold*, ll. 3-4). The freshness of sensory experience in the beginning of life makes of the child the formative prototype of the adult man, since the child carries the poetic origin of human sensibility, which consists in binding the meaningful events of life into a myth of genial growth "by natural piety" (*My heart leaps up when I behold*, l. 7; l. 9). By "natural piety" it should be understood a symbolical type of feeling. The infant baby is conceived to have the most powerful poetic sensibility because touch, of all the senses, is to be the closest to feeling. In this sense, the infant baby is endowed with the much-dignified gift, which forms the original ground of a poetic mind: that which Kerry McSweeney defines as the organic sensibility.

Kerry McSweeney studies the dynamics of sense perception in Wordsworth's universe as a play of eye and ear in which the sensual experience of the natural object is converted into poetic images of vision and sound; and sees the Romantic poetry in a process, which leads from the organic sensibility to the symbolic perception. McSweeney remarks the Romantic habitual association of "poetic gifts with sensory acuity". More precisely, the scholar argues, "Perception and apperception are equally

¹²⁵ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 1.

necessary for the poet. Without them a natural object could never become a figure or make a personal appeal”¹²⁶. The direct implication of McSweeney’s statement is that the subject’s poetic consciousness of himself derives from the perceptive consciousness of the external object. This fact defines the core of the poet’s contact with Nature. Considering Coleridge’s reflections in *Philosophical Lectures*, the scholar highlights the function of the “organic sensibility” as that power which makes of the poet that person who has retained into adult life “the sensory-perceptual acuity of childhood”. He emphasizes the connection established by Coleridge “between the childhood sensorium and the poetic genius”; and realizes that this first stage of the human sensibility is the beginning of a process of poetic education, an idea that the author draws from Coleridge’s postulation that:

The first education which we receive, that from our mothers, is given to us by touch; the whole of its process is nothing more than [...] an extended touch by promise. The sense itself, the sense of vision itself, is only acquired by a continual recollection of touch¹²⁷.

McSweeney detects in the periods of infancy and childhood, since those phases are strongly endowed with the process of sensory-perceptual development, the “author’s pre-history as a Romantic poet” in the first two books of *The Prelude*. Infancy and childhood, McSweeney remarks, correspond to the periods in which Coleridge notices that “the first knowledges are acquainted promiscuously”; bringing forth Coleridge’s description of such process as “the happy delirium, the healthful fever of the physical, moral and intellectual being – nature’s kind and providential gift to childhood”¹²⁸.

Coleridge’s ideas about the place of each sense also provide an important distinction to understand Wordsworth’s own position towards the “despotic function of the eye”. Summarizing McSweeney’s exposition of the subject, Coleridge opposes the traditional division of the senses into a hierarchy of higher senses (sight and hearing) and lower senses (smell, taste and touch); the “valorization of the sight as the supreme sense” which followed from the influence of Newton’s *Opticks*; and the aesthetic thought that “regarded the eye as the essential sensory organ upon which imagination is based”, for Coleridge believed that the privilege of sight and hearing could lead to a separation between subject and object, since those senses present the objects to the mind differently, or distant, from the human direct perception of them, whereas the so-called lower senses, in Coleridge’s terms, “combine with the perception of the outward Object

¹²⁶ MCSWEENEY, Kerry. *The Language of the Senses*. 1998, p. 3.

¹²⁷ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. *Philosophical Lectures*. p. 115. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 4.

¹²⁸ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. *Philosophical Lectures*. p. 115. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 4-5.

a distinct sense of our own Life”¹²⁹. Unlike in touch, for instance, in sight and hearing, due to the distance mediating between the perceiving man and the object perceived, the subject cannot reach the sense of himself in sensing the object, since the sensation of the object do not imply the simultaneous sensation of the subject’s own body, which is the ground of self awareness. Based on those preliminaries, McSweeney concludes that tangible sensation is the chief element in the constitution of the real Self¹³⁰.

The transition from the pure sensation to the symbolic realm should be supported on the feeling. Concerning this point, McSweeney brings forth Coleridge’s conception that “Feeling organized by the absorption of the other senses is that Mysterious Sense of Vital Warmth”¹³¹. McSweeney demonstrates how, in opposition to the Newtonian hierarchy of senses, Coleridge appeals to a medieval scheme in which all senses (hearing, sight, smell and taste) occupy equidistant points in a circumference whose centre is occupied by feeling and touch, drawing the conclusion that, because tactile sensation and feeling “occupied the same place in the sensorium, they were bound to dissolve into each other”¹³². In this sense, as McSweeney teaches us, all other senses would derive from the recollection of touch (the correlative of feeling), which is the primary sense developed in childhood. In addition to this, visual perception cannot be directly accompanied by feeling or touch due to the distance interposed between the eye and the object. By the same rule, McSweeney remarks, “in contrast to sight, hearing is more proximate, pervasive and penetrating”. The author draws this idea from a passage in Coleridge’s writings which recollects a storm of wind which broke up during one night when he was in Germany, in which the sublime effects of the sound, far surpassing those of sight, worked so as to absorb “the mind’s self-consciousness in its total attention to the object working upon it”¹³³.

This effect of sound absorbing the human consciousness into the object working upon it associated to the function of feeling imparted to the activity of the senses forms the condition through which Wordsworth can rehearse the mythical origin of his genial growth as a power received from Nature in a phase when his senses depended on the intercourse of touch with his mother, creating a mode of access to Nature through her own experience. As the narrative advances, Wordsworth will

¹²⁹ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **Lectures**. Section I, p. 36. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 9.

¹³⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 9.

¹³¹ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **Letters**, IV, p. 774. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

¹³² Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

¹³³ COLERIDGE, Samuel Taylor. **Friend**, I, 367. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 10-11.

suggest that his independence from the mother's mediation will soon bring the apprehension that without the spontaneous intercourse of touch the integrity of experience cannot be sustained. Hence, Wordsworth's "other Being" – be it that depicted in the child bathing in the streamlet, in the boy roaming alone among the heights, or in the boy playing with his fellows on the icy lakes, hills or fields – will be confronted many a time by Nature's melancholic warnings of the inevitable loss continually worked upon both object and subjective being. This aspect will be reflected in the hints of the disintegration of the mythical structure of the time correspondent to the beginning of life, embodied in the cyclical organization indicated by the succession of days and seasons which always come back intact and restore the world to its original integrity, at least as regards the child's perception for whom despite the passage of time the world always comes to be the same. The stage of boyhood brings the signs of a broken order, which leads to the linear temporal organization proper of the adult life, marked by such irreversible progress towards decline, and death, in which the memory tends to lose the power of recovering the freshness of sensation which actualizes the ideal presence-image of the object for the poet's consciousness.

4.3 Beauty and Fear in the Charming and Haunting Sounds of Secluded Nature

The narrative of the boy's lonely adventures in secluded places suggests the transformation in the sounds he hears from the material quality produced by the natural elements into the mythic and imaginary affections which charm and haunt the younger self's consciousness. In the phrase "Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (Book I, l. 302) Wordsworth indicates the core in which the natural objects were to affect his mind in the first stages of his life: he receives the influence of the beautiful and the terrible aspects of Nature. Besides, the speaker establishes the playful form through which he gets to experience the external affections: through the varied range of games and sports, he applies the proper activities of his own character to constitute the pattern through which his relations with Nature are given. Along his sports, he ventures to explore the surroundings, but there he is confronted with beauty and fear, for the natural elements manifest themselves mysteriously alive, conforming to a general pattern of Wordsworth's treatment of natural sounds and visions in which the images contain a

mysterious life and consist in uncanny spirits or fairy beings. Thomas Weiskel¹³⁴, considering Wordsworth's quest for the efficacious spirit or genial mood, states that the poet "naturalizes the archaic, daemonic and divine sources of power" in Nature. Weiskel focuses on what he calls "the discovery of a mode of conversation" in *The Prelude*, whose "aim is not the transmission of knowledge or a message, but the springing loose of an efficacious spirit which haunts the passage of all self-knowledge"¹³⁵.

The mythical-imaginary quality of sound in the natural environment is closely associated with the perceptive notions employed to define them in their concreteness. The murmur of the river corresponds to the very material motion of the water before acquiring its anthropomorphic sense. Moreover, this sense of mystery associated to the material quality of the natural noises is intensified in Wordsworth's account of his adventures in the region to which he was "transplanted" to attend school in boyhood. Wordsworth remembers himself as a boy ranging the open heights to snare birds during the early winter nights. In the famous passage comprised in Book I, ll. 317-325, the earthly quietness corresponds to the peace among the moon and stars shining above in the sky. The speaker represents a break of silence with silent sound of low motion. Attuning his ears, he gets the feeling of hearing a deaf sound of steps, which might in fact correspond to the smooth wavering of the turf.

On the other hand, there is a rhetorical allusion to traditional passages in the western literature. In the expression "when the deed was done", it is possible to hear an echo of St. Augustine's confessing to his boyish mischievous act of stealing a load of pears just for the pleasure of feeling shame in the second Book of the *Confessions*. The sound is a moral echo of guilt hammering within Wordsworth's memory, as well as the steps silent as the turf they trod might be the effect of fear intensifying and turning indefinite the creaky noise echoing the boy's own escaping pace. Yet, of what might Wordsworth have felt guilty? Of having felt low desires, impure passions and blameful impulses. In a sense, the boy hears the echo of his own steps; the subject hears his own passions and apprehensions resounding in the environment. The subject is moved by the natural sublime. Hearing low breathings coming after him, the boy is started by a natural reaction toward what Edmund Burke¹³⁶ calls the "perception of danger". Having

¹³⁴ WEISKEL, Thomas. Wordsworth and the Defile of the Word. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 95.

¹³⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 95.

¹³⁶ BURKE, Edmund. **Philosophical Inquiry on the Forms of Beautiful and Sublime**. p 73-74.

run through the causes of the sublime with references to the senses Burke observes that it is an idea belonging to self-preservation, whose strongest emotion is thus one of “distress”¹³⁷.

We learn from Edmund Burke, with whose aesthetic reflections Wordsworth had been acquainted, that terror is the ruling principle of the sublime; and astonishment, its greater passion: “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning than fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain”¹³⁸. As the boy is represented roving at night in *The Prelude*, one realizes the intensification of his passions as an effect of the obscurity naturally following from darkness. Concerning this matter, Burke would add that “Obscurity is a necessary condition of terror. When a man knows the full extent of any danger or accustoms his eyes to it, the great deal of apprehension vanishes. That is the principle by which night and darkness so much affect man’s passions. The things and creatures lose the clear definition and distinction of shape”¹³⁹.

In the same mode, the mythical mystery of materiality derives from the quality of the wind and the rocks in the scene of bird nesting on the crags, as narrated in Book I, ll. 330-339. The solemn terror haunting the memory of that hour becomes evident in the tone and strength of the wind blow: loud and dry the wind seems to rush in fury, as though impelled by a raging intention. The “strange utterance” of the wind starts the boy with the feeling of being in the verge of entering another order of beings. By the motion of the clouds, the subject is aware of experiencing the passage to a denaturalized order, probably ruled by daemonic potencies. The strangeness with which the speaker recognizes that the sky did not seem to be in compass with earth connotes that what from the human-natural perspective appears to be a cosmic disorder might be the perceptible manifestation of the archaic spiritual powers acting their part in the natural order. In addition, the perception of this archaic order was awakened in Wordsworth’s consciousness by a perspective among the natural landscapes whose sensory contact revealed the sublime power of greatness in Nature, to consider Burke’s teachings “the cloudy sky is more grand than the blue”¹⁴⁰.

Wordsworth’s encounters with daemonic powers are often associated with the mysterious power of sound. When the hero as a boy chanced to find the “little boat” at

¹³⁷ Idem. Ibidem. p 76.

¹³⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p 51.

¹³⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p 51.

¹⁴⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p 72.

night and took it to row on the lake until getting scared by the rising of a huge peak in the horizon, the boat had been tied to a willow tree within a rocky cave. Again, Wordsworth blends the representation of human experience with literary tropes. Consisting of a hollow place, the cave works as a symbol of two associated connotations in the passage in question: on the one hand it resembles the female sexual organ and womb¹⁴¹; on the other, it alludes to musical instruments that bare a hollow part working as a resounding box, thus bringing forth the analogy with the shell, referred to as a stringed instrument in the pastoral tradition up to Neoclassicism, yet attributed to the natural object among the Romantics. One characteristic Romantic attitude toward the images of sound refers to what John Hollander¹⁴² calls the “transition from the stock emblem or epithet into the more modulated images”, a fact exemplified by the alteration of the neoclassical term “shell”, representing “stringed instrument”, to the “Romantic singing seashell”. For instance, in the dream of the Arab episode narrated in Book V of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth employs the figure of the seashell to represent the whole provinces of arts and poetry.

Hollander remarks, “the auditory realm is ever secondary to the kingdom of sight”. In this sense, the scholar claims that sound needs the external support of metaphor, above all visual metaphors¹⁴³. The cave in the episode of the stolen boat is part of the *locus terribilis*. Hence, it suggests both the circumstances of a sinful and transgressive act on the part of the boy; and the power of sound as associated to an unknown, mysterious world of daemonic beings in Nature:

It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
(Book I, ll. 361-363).

The personification of mountain echoes might be read as a non-codified warning message from a fairy universe where the boy is up to intrude. The voice comes in advance for an unexpected presence from the imaginary world potentiated by the powerful effects of night on the human affections. First, the boat carrying the boy across

¹⁴¹ See Neil Hertz’s discussion on lurid images, in which he associates the female image in Courbet’s painting *L’Origine du Monde* and the cave in the series representing the source of the Loue, viz, *La Source de la Loue* (1864) and *La Grotte de la Loue* (1864), in his chapter *Medusa’s Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure*, in: HERTZ, Neil. **The End of the Line**. 2009, p. 199-250.

¹⁴² HOLLANDER, John. *Wordsworth and the Music of Sound*. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 66.

¹⁴³ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 58.

the lake becomes, in his imagination, an “elfin pinnacle”, delighting him with its smooth motion. Then:

from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me.

(Book I, ll. 377-385).

One may ask why the haunting peak presented to the boy is still while before that the mountain sounds could be heard as voluntarily sent. One hypothesis of explanation for its apparently intentional silence might be drawn from Burke's premises about the sublime effects of darkness, greatness, suddenness and danger:

Among colours, such as are soft and cheerful [...] are unfit to produce grand images. An immense mountain, covered with a shining green turf is nothing, in this respect, to one dark and gloomy; [...] and night more sublime and solemn than day¹⁴⁴.

A sudden beginning or sudden cessation of sound of any considerable force has the same power. The attention is roused by this; and the faculties driven forward, as it were, on their guard. Whatever, either in sight or sounds, makes the transition from one extreme to the other easy, causes no terror; and consequently can be no cause of greatness. In everything sudden and unexpected, we are apt to start; that is, we have a perception of danger, and our nature rouses us to guard against it¹⁴⁵.

In fact, what happens is not a sudden cessation of sound, but a sudden appearance of vision which attracted all previous activities, before concentrated in the mountain echoes, to the mountain image; hence causing a sudden dislocation of the subject's attention from aural to visual power. Inasmuch as the feeling aroused is terror, it comes associated with a deep-rooted, archaic imaginary, mythological background. Wordsworth operates a poetic process which Hollander¹⁴⁶ would like to call metaphorization of the natural sources, and corresponding naturalization of the metaphorical forms.

Hollander defines to Wordsworth's sound imagery the possibility of moving “from mythological acoustics into the wider realm of acoustic mythology”¹⁴⁷. In this sense, the scholar warns us against the temptation of interpreting Wordsworth's images

¹⁴⁴ BURKE, Edmund. *Philosophical Inquiry on the Forms of Beautiful and Sublime*. p 72.

¹⁴⁵ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 73.

¹⁴⁶ John Hollander, *Wordsworth and the Music of Sound*. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). *William Wordsworth*. 1985, p. 67.

¹⁴⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 67.

in which vision comes in the aid of hearing through the means of synesthesia, for it is neither the case of blending of conventional tropes nor of interpenetration of sensorial images. The critic shows how the unity of poetic experience may be partitioned into a simultaneous and complementary division of empirical-sensorial and metaphoric-imaginative experience; and demonstrates how Wordsworth elaborates a divided experience in which part of the aural senses hears the natural noise, part hears the fairy sound, part approaches the literal object, part evokes the figurative qualities present in it. The scholar remarks that figures like the breeze animating the poet and the wind stringing the Aeolian harp are in fact, more than sensorial elements, a “mythological” “presence”¹⁴⁸. Hollander considers a different ontological status for the breeze “which conventionally merely broadcasts, here becomes a fully realized form of the genius of listening, of the activity of the ear”¹⁴⁹. Therefore, do the mountain echoes evoke the mythological presence of daemonic Nature?

Wordsworth states that “the immortal spirit grows like harmony in music” (Book I, ll. 340-341). Like music arranges the elements of sound, Wordsworth verifies in Nature’s organizing power:

a dark inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society.

(Book I, ll. 341-345).

Hollander demonstrated that in this passage Wordsworth is adapting Dryden’s formulation in the *Song for St. Cecilia’s Day* “From harmony, from heavenly harmony, / This universal frame began” (ll. 1-2). This inscrutable workmanship works like the coalescing power of Eros, that divine pagan force through which all life is moved together. Both Nature and Music affect the boy’s mind by contradictory modes, since Derwent’s voice and music heard as a baby flowed along the hero’s dreams and composed his thought with calm and softness; whereas the mountain echoes and scaring impression of being pursued by the silent huge peak on the lake as an almost ten-years old boy caused to move slowly through his mind huge and mighty forms that “do not live like living men”, thus creating “troubles” to his dreams.

4.4 The Boys’ Living Revelry and Nature’s Melancholy Echoes of Mortality

¹⁴⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 68.

¹⁴⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 67.

Inasmuch as *The Prelude* represents the hints of conversion autobiography, Wordsworth represents the conditions of growth of his poetic mind because of the affinity and interaction with the natural things. In the account of the poet's life among rural scenarios, the speaker reveals many moments of self-transformation in the core of a sequence of iterated experiences with the outer world. It is possible to recognize the construction of a temporal pattern in the organization of experience, by which I mean two things: I – the hints of a cyclical temporal perspective organizing the sequence of events and experiences of childhood and boyhood in the first two Books; II – the shift of the cyclical pattern into a linear time flow coinciding with the hero's passage through youth to adulthood, a turning point in poetic worldview represented in his journey to Cambridge. This movement is embodied in a marked alteration in the subject's modes of perception and feelings for the outward world. The moment of break from the cyclical temporal relations with the world towards a linear progress is gradually signaled in punctual moments of self-conscious experience that stop the flow of habitual actions and iterated experiences in order to mark a section in time in which the autobiographical figure appears in opposition to Nature.

Those are moments of an irretrievable awareness in which both the hero's own subjective integrity and the permanence of natural things are subjected to the action of mutability. This aspect is rehearsed as a pattern in the sounds produced along the narrated sports of boyhood, in which the uproar and revelry of the group at play received from the surrounding Nature melancholy echoes in response. Here Wordsworth hints at the ineluctable fact that among the iterated joy of boyish exploration of natural beauties creeps the envious spirit of mutability. We will see in the due place that those moments in which Wordsworth's younger self appears in opposition – or rather dissonance – to Nature are to be redeemed by the following moments in which the self escapes from the society of his noisy crew into contemplative solitude with Nature.

Pauline Ling-Hway Wu¹⁵⁰ interprets the spots of time in *The Prelude* as “patterns of humanity” regarding the confessional autobiographer's experimentation with two aspects of the human nature: that of body and that of soul – the author applies the expression “spots of time” in a rather loose and generalizing sense for a broader

¹⁵⁰ WU, Pauline Ling-Hway. “A Science of Mind” in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. p. 1-3.

number of moments than Wordsworth actually refers as such in his own reflections on the imaginative power dwelling in the recollections from childhood. She sees the spots of time as occasions in which “the poet examines and justifies his self in time, and is eventually awakened to transcend the self”. Therefore, those moments “function to endow some prophetic truths, as well as to help with the growth of the poet’s mind”. In this sense, for the scholar, the spots of time consist in states of mind, which “reveal emotionalism aroused by the outer objects”. Focusing on “the influence of nature on human senses”, the scholar suggests a division of “the communion between man and nature” into the period of the child Wordsworth and the experienced Wordsworth: the period of childhood, when Nature influences the senses with visionary gleam; and the period of the adult poet, when he suffers the disappointing revelation of the bare material and de-idealized reality of the object: “the visionary gleam which refers to a moment in life when the self and the universe perfectly unify, gradually declines to be exchanged for a vision on the recognition and acceptance of reality”¹⁵¹. In this dissertation, I dare to assert that the redemption and renovation of the poet’s sensibility is only possible since there are moments when the subject found the pure enchantment and lofty communion with the sensory forms of Nature, discovering the most ideal beauty in the bare objects of reality.

In the sonnet *Mutability*, Wordsworth expresses a bemoaning concern for the mortality of things, for those past objects which can no longer give a token of their existency to man’s delight since they did not resist “the unimaginable touch of Time”:

From low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low, along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail;
A musical but melancholy chime
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over anxious care.
Truths fail not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest day do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more.

(*Mutability*, ll. 1-10).

Ling-Hway Wu considers that “for the mortal being, nature seems to play a crucial role as a shelter for escape from the self in the time and space”. That is because, as she shows, “Wordsworth’s sense of time lies in his awareness of his changing state of mind”. Moreover, the critic goes on to demonstrate that the “spots of time”, in childhood, mean, “a gaining of transcendental vision”, whereas in a “mature vision”

¹⁵¹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 3.

they represent “gaining the secular socially-structured time but losing the transcendental one”¹⁵². In this sense, the autobiographical ground of Wordsworth’s poetic growth runs upon a subjective fissure in which the growth of the mind is challenged by the threatening of decline in the perceptive capacity represented by the ideal intensity of response proper of the child. This threatening of mortality over man’s sensory and emotional capacity of response appears in Wordsworth’s tragic statement: “The things which I have seen I now / Can see no more” (*Ode Intimations of Immortality*, ll. 8-9). The threatening of mortality becomes evident in the contrast between the somehow continuous uproar of the boy’s sportive revelry and the sound of melancholy sent back in the mountain echoes.

4.5 The Boisterous Crew and the Fainting Melancholy

Wordsworth describes his group of fellow boys sporting together during his school time through nostalgic phrases like “We were a noisy crew” (Book I, l. 479) or “We ran a boisterous course” (Book II, l. 47). Most of their activities could be defined by the poet’s own word “revelry” (Book II, l. 14). By this term, one infers the common scene of childhood and boyhood in which a group join in merry-making, the meetings often resulting in boisterous adventures. All the games described in *The Prelude* suggest the association of delight and noise. However, there is a peculiar motion through which the games normally end up in dispersion, faintness, weariness, resting and silence. The continuity of the ongoing revelry and the iteration of those moments present a sense of resistance against the pressure of the linear time, which leads everything towards perishing. The revelry and uproar liberated by the boy’s sports become a motion of memory. Heather McHugh refers to moments of “remotion” in Wordsworth’s poetry, by which he means, “motion removed from its perishing ways and looped into recursive domains of memory and emotion”¹⁵³. Every event of collective joy ends up in melancholy:

for still
From week to week, from month to month we lived
A round of tumult. Duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed.

¹⁵² Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 4.

¹⁵³ MCHUGH, Heather. **Presence and Passage**: The Poet Wordsworth. 2002, p. 175.

(Book II, ll. 7-10).

Either delighting or terrifying, Wordsworth believes that the ministries of the universal Spirit were employed with the purpose of intertwining for the speaker “the passions that build up our human soul” (Book I, l. 407). Despite being traumatizing and scaring, the episode of the boat did not draw the boy back from Nature, but, following the speaker’s account, rather served to purify “The elements of feeling and of thought” (Book I, l. 411). Thus, the boy was always more attracted by the wantonness stimulated by Nature. Wordsworth keeps the memory of the winter evenings at that phase as “a time of rapture”. He remembers his group of fellow boys, or his happy crew, adventurous in the vale of Grasmere. During the winter, the group used to ice-skate on the frozen lakes:

All shod with steel,
 We hissed along the polished ice in games
 Confederate, imitative of the chase
 And woodland pleasures, – the resounding horn,
 The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
 And not a voice was idle; with the din
 Smitten the precipices rang aloud;
 The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron. While far distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
 Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
 The orange sky of evening died away.
 Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
 To cut across the reflex of a star
 That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
 Upon the glassy plain.

(Book I, ll.431-452).

The cold of winter made the earthly forms rigid, and all the sounds produced gained a metallic tone, like a bell tolling. Besides, the frozen water gave to the whole region the consistency of glass and crystal. The words employed to describe the scene transpose to the landscape the metallic quality of a struck bell reverberating, blended with the glassy quality of a crystal glass resounding as struck. The whole region worked comparably to a great imaginary musical instrument; as the steel in the boy’s skating motion hissed the polished ice, the precipices ranged aloud like an immense resounding box. The poet is experimenting with the variation of the sound through distance: while the near elements – trees and crags – sounded clearly, the distant elements sent a muffled sound.

According to Hollander, hearing is closer to feeling than seeing is, implying that hearing produces a stronger effect on the human passions than sight, overall since it

escapes man's deliberate control over its activity. Hollander argues that "crucial to the economy of the senses is the fact that we cannot close our ears as we do our eyes, and that vision is far more directional than hearing, which is [...] through all parts diffused"¹⁵⁴. In Wordsworth's procedures along his approach to natural objects Hollander identifies a division of perceptive phenomena in which the senses apply at the same time to the direct experience of the object and to the canal mediating between the subject and the object. Furthermore, the critic's emphasis on the medium and the sensorial process itself elaborated in the poems raises the question of "meta-language" which in his terms "employs an image more complex than that of its object, for it is the listening, rather than the sound, which is being embraced"¹⁵⁵.

Attentive to the relation between shine and reflex, sound and echo, the poet rehearses the aesthetic difference between the direct received impulse and the dispersing nature of the indirectly received affection due to sensory mediation. The speaker suggests a contrast both in aural as in visual scenes in which a deadening impression counteracts and tends to suppress vivid phenomena. The stars, which were sparkling clearly in the eastern sky, did not appear in the West, blurred and replaced by the sole appearance of the crepuscular sky. Correspondingly, the clear tinkling, and the loud ringing could be perceived in gradual diminishing, making place for an inexorable alien sound of melancholy. Those sounds of retreat in Nature, in which strength melancholically surrenders to the final weakness, suggest the final retreat, which will bring the boys under weariness into the silent realm of dream.

The melancholy echoes sent by the natural environment in response to the crew's uproar convey the sense of nostalgic bemoaning for the lost moment. In those passages, the echoes of children-made noises are associated to the anguish derived from the moral sense of ontological finitude. Like echoes constitute the remaining sound dispersing and weakening through space, so remembrance represents the sole remaining moments of eager merriment. The "alien sound of melancholy" sent by the hills as a background note against the boys' revelry; and the contrast between the stars sparkling clearly on one extremity and the fainting light in the sky on the other; endow the memory of the whole scene with a subtle concern with the existential situation of the self in time. Hills, rocks, crags and stars are symbols of eternity, endurance and

¹⁵⁴ HOLLANDER, John. Wordsworth and the Music of Sound. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 59.

¹⁵⁵ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 67.

immortality in the universe, whereas the living beings which come to exist among the rude materiality of the earth are destined to die, even though their natural mode of procreation, based on the principle which Paul de Man called “ontological identity”¹⁵⁶, allows them to create new identical beings. As to the role of elements such as the stars, the stone and the flower, Geoffrey Durrant highlights the relationship between the cosmic order set above and the material order surrounding the poet. In the image of a flower blossoming among the stones, the scholar realizes the blissful yet tragic mystery of life springing out of the physical conditions, both overcoming the concrete and deadening harshness of the brute matter, but finally subjecting to the law of the physical system.¹⁵⁷

Wordsworth’s concern with the limits of the subject under the temporal conditions remits to the problems of “presence” and “passage” in his poetry, as remarked by Heather McHugh¹⁵⁸. For McHugh the construction of the present has always been attended by the dilemma of “two contradictory models” of time: “That of the perishing and that of the perpetual”. Furthermore, McHugh understands that “the present can figure as a tiny spot at the intersection of the past and future”. According to this perspective, at the same time that the present is “hard to announce as to occupy”, thus “always under the sway of momentariness”; it is also “hard to escape” since man is “always in it”, a construction that makes of the present moment not momentary, but “momentous”¹⁵⁹. This double character of the present moment led McHugh to consider the problem of “presence”, which he defines based on the implication of a passage “manifestly intended to secure, in time, a staying power”¹⁶⁰. The quality of presence appears between the “momentary” and the “momentous” texture of the present, so that, in McHugh’s terms, the notion of presence can be inscribed in Wordsworth’s landscape (McHugh refers to rock and rill) based on the distinction that: “heavenly authority is the presence that lasts, whereas the flowing, running, ticking is a figure of the present constantly being lost”¹⁶¹. Considering the “threats of the two experiences”, the “oppression of the momentous and the “evaporation of the momentary”, McHugh distinguishes a state in which “Wordsworth finds himself driven towards another sense

¹⁵⁶ MAN, Paul de. *Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image*. In: **The Rhetoric of Romanticism**. 1984, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ DURRANT, Geoffrey. **Wordsworth and the Great System**. 1970, p. 32-60.

¹⁵⁸ MCHUGH, Heather. **Presence and Passage: The Poet Wordsworth**. 2002. p. 169.

¹⁵⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 169.

¹⁶⁰ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 169.

¹⁶¹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 170.

of presence, where ‘all took place as in a moment’”. McHugh defines that moment by the term “turn” from the momentous to the momentary, a moment which involves the play between “turning” and “staying”, in which the motion of time can be represented by the still, almost suspended motion of the stream: “The phrase ‘flowing still’ gives us the type of this moment’s linguistic construction; it is a gesture we witness throughout the poems whenever a fast or fierce physical motion comes to a sudden holding or beholding”¹⁶².

The course of the boyish sport in which the young Wordsworth appears engaged was now interrupted, both in the level of narrative as of the narration, by the contemplative isolation into “the silent bay” or by the glancing side away after the reflex of the star. This suspended flowing of time can also be perceived in the play between the fixity of stars and rocks, which are always there, testifying for the immutable and eternal; and the slow spinning of earth whose changing position signalizes the passing hour, finally submitting the boy’s will to the flow of time. The sounds with which the trees, hills and precipices responded to the noises produced by the ice-skating boys convey opposition between the boys and the surrounding Nature: the opposition between the lasting and the passing. The “alien sound of melancholy” sent by the rocky hills, even being “not unnoticed”, did not disturb the boys in the mirth of sports. However, the “alien sound” remained with the sense of a heavy apprehension to remind Wordsworth of the presence of finitude in the human fate. The separation between the sparkling stars in the East and the orange sky in the West reveals an awareness of the rotation of the earth as implying the perception of an inexorable passage of the time imposing itself slowly over the destiny of the boys with a sense of loss.

A similar sense of melancholy due to the temporal vacancy between the instants of “eagerness of infantine desire” and the speaker’s “tranquilizing spirit” appears in the argument of the *Ode Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparell’d in celestial light
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore; –
Turn wheresoe’er I may,
By night or day,

¹⁶² Idem. Ibidem. p. 172.

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
 (*Ode Intimations of Immortality*, ll. 1-9).

If Wordsworth's great ode emphasizes the loss of strength of the subject's own sensory faculty, the recollection of the passed by sports in *The Prelude* focuses on the loss of the past moment in life and the loss of the proper object of experience¹⁶³. The loss of the past experience is symbolized by the poet's nostalgia for the "old grey stone" which had long been laid in the middle of the village market square where the boys used to play, the place of which was, in the speaker's words, "usurped" by a "smart Assembly-room" (Book II, ll. 38-39). The gaps that Wordsworth assigned to a split consciousness, a kind of emotional discontinuity, as if some passions have been removed, have an objective correlate in the ruptured world without where the speaker used to play with the school fellows:

A rude mass
 Of native rock, left midway in the square
 Of our small market village, was the goal
 Or centre of these sports; and when, returned
 After long absence, thither I repaired,
 Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
 A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
 That had been ours.

(Book II, ll. 33-40).

The grey rock in the middle of the square was replaced by the assembly room. When the poet repaired that the niche of his boy amusements was no longer there he felt its loss with the same pain of having left behind the joyous life with his fellow crew. Just like the sports of childhood one day loose place for the adult concerns, the speaker realized with grief that he was living in a time when the natural elements had their durable and eternal statute disregarded and usurped by the artificialities of man's constructs and, thus, they have been subdued to the contingencies of fate imposed by the building of the modern society. That is the alleged reason for the withdrawal of the stone in order to edify an urban building. Then the poet evoked the nostalgic sympathy of his boyhood mates, now men like him, for that time when happiness seemed to join them and hover in the air keeping guard over them like that power keeping the stars shining above them in the sky:

I know
 That more than one of you will think with me
 Of those soft starry nights,

¹⁶³ This sense of loss of the sensory capacity, of poetic sensibility as well as of the factual object in virtue of the usurping action of time suggests the counterpoint of the loss of the ideal image of the object usurped by the show of the naked material object before the poet's eyes in the Mount Blanc scene. This will be taken into consideration in the due place.

(Book II, ll. 41-43).

The distance signified by the usurpation by the action of time and covered by remembrance corresponds to a sense of separation in inner consciousness between Wordsworth's past and present Beings. The sense of loss aggrandizes the object and intensifies the meaning of the past experience made present by recollection. Lost in factual existence, the object starts to exist for poetry. Through the melancholy of the gap in the poet's consciousness between past and present in such cases, there must be operated a process of bridging between the track of sensory experience and a tendency to a type of transcendence – not spiritual, but memorable in kind – which transforms the past object and the past moment of experience into a pure entity of remembrance which flashes and resounds in the poet's memory, yet keeping in itself the possibility of recapturing part of the sensation once experienced.

Neil Hertz¹⁶⁴ interprets the temporal and conscious vacancy between Wordsworth's speaker and his "other Being" through the critical metaphor of a "chain of relations" involving speaker, past self and Nature in a scheme establishing the relation from "Nature to child and from child to poet". Hertz demonstrates how necessary it was for Wordsworth "to experience this doubling of consciousness" which the scholar conceives as "a state of mind that would come more or less naturally when he was musing on the almost forgotten past". The scholar explains that the "result is to split the consciousness into a poet existing in the present and 'some other being' who acts as a mediating figure. [...] But this mediator is also involved in another powerfully resonant relation, usually with a natural object [...] and it is precisely this relational moment that Wordsworth seeks to bring into connection with his present poetic activity". Hertz's argument points to the central idea that the "intention" of Wordsworth's poetry "is never essentially the recreation of the past", hence when "his imagination turns backward toward the original experience, it is in search of that other being". The concern with the loss of the object in virtue of the destructive action of the linear-progressive time makes of the past and the materially irrecoverable the poet's proper matter, by a special sympathy with those things whose memory deserves preservation.

The speaker is moved by the passionate concern with the fortune of the memory of those objects fated to be lost for the old tavern set in the middle of

¹⁶⁴ HERTZ, Neil. **The End of the Line**. 2009, p. 22-26.

Winander's eastern shore, an old place whose original characteristic has been fated to decay, hence raising the sympathy of the poet:

In ancient times, or ere the Hall was built
 On the large island, had this dwelling been
 More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,
 Proud of its one bright fire and sycamore shade.
 (Book II, 138-148).

Above the garden contiguous to the tavern there was a green plain where the boys used to play. The scene described contains an association of revelry and mountain echoes:

The garden lay
 Upon a slope surmounted by a plain
 Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
 A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
 And over the tree-tops; nor did we want
 Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream.
 There, while through half an afternoon we played
 On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
 Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
 Made all the mountains ring. But, ere the nightfall,
 When in our pinnace we returned at leisure,
 Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
 Of some small island steered our course with one,
 The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,
 And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute,
 Alone upon the rock – oh, then the calm
 And dead still water lay upon my mind
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
 Never before so beautiful, sank down
 Into my heart, and held me like a dream!
 (Book II, 155-174).

Concentrated on their sports, the boys seemed not to care for the decayed state of the old tavern; and combining with the green earth, the mountain, echoing the boys' "bursts of glee", cannot but reflect their present joy, as if vanquished by their careless happiness. The melancholy sounds sent by the snowy mountains in the deadening cold of the winter are absent here.

The scene with the boys playing on the grassy plain above the slope and close to the hills recalls, rhetorically, the *locus amoenus* image of pastoral innocence in which children play safely in the fields in the evening. Despite the absence of the threatening of mortality and mutability, moved away by the presence of the promising presence of the green and the restoring effect of a vernal day, time tended now to bring the definitive moment of rupture with the liberty, security and integrity of childhood. Now, the harmonious life at his native region is no guarantee of continuity to the integrity of childhood. The age of seventeenth is coming, and his moving to Cambridge close at hand. As a result, Wordsworth will be reminded of a strong sense of limitation in his

self, which was brought with the subjection to the social-structured notion of time. Then, when the youth comes back to Hawkshead to visit the place for the first summer vacation, one of the most striking impressions made on him refers to the baffled sound of the brook as it entered a paved channel. The channeled brook reminded Wordsworth of his own state of shrunk and enthrallment due to the conventionalism of the adult life, the awareness of which the period in Cambridge seems to have awakened in Wordsworth. Such a limitation becomes manifest in the irony with which Wordsworth addresses the brook:

Nor that unruly child of the mountain birth,
The forward brook, who, soon as he was boxed
Within our garden, found himself at once,
As if by trick insidious and unkind,
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down
(Without an effort and without a will)
A channel paved by man's officious care.
I looked at him and smiled again,
And in the pressing of twenty thousand thoughts,
'Ha', quoted I, 'pretty prisoner are you there!'
Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered,
'An emblem here behold of thy own life;
In its late course of even days with all
Their smooth enthrallment'; but the heart was full,
Too full for that reproach.

(Book IV, ll. 50-64).

The image of the brook paved into a channel establishes a relation of man's dominion over the elements of Nature by means of technique and workmanship, a relation in which the achievements of civilization suffocate and block Nature's free course. Wordsworth formally signalizes this shrunk by the parentheses involving a whole line "(without an effort and without a will)", indicating the passive yet oppressive surrender of the brook to the "trick insidious and unkind" of the channel pavement. The parentheses verse is preceded by the reference to the "trick" and followed by the expression "officious care", what reveals Wordsworth's consciousness that the human labor contains a set of artifices, which endow it with the character of lure and bait, through which man swindles the natural resistance in favor of the construction of civilization.

The artificial work operated on the brook alters its nature, and Wordsworth notices that it "stripped" it of its murmur in a parallel with the imprisonment of the poet's own expressive faculties. In an affective and metaphoric way, here Wordsworth refers to the sound of the flowing water as its "voice": so he humanizes the brook and transfers its character of out-spring, free motion and spontaneous sound to his own

imaginative and expressive anxiety. Here the dynamics of the overflow inherent in the poet suffers deprivation in a potential crisis generated by the want of liberty which he felt on the ground of the formal education imposed on him, as well as of the youthful, mundane pleasures that deviate him from his natural piety, two kinds of hindrance to his dedication for the thought of deeper human passions.

The youth's irony against the "child of the mountain birth" turns over himself as self-irony. Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down into the channel, the brook is a conquered daemon, a silenced fairy, a vanquished natural power, which can offer to the poet no poetic gift, like the Derwent River gave to the innocent baby the foretaste and the dim earnest of the calm that Nature breathes among the hills and groves. Yu Liu¹⁶⁵ has argued that in the scene of the baby's contact with the river and his mother Wordsworth still does not present "the differentiating debility of the human language", so that in his fusion with his mother he is paradoxically enabled by self-annihilation to perceive what Wordsworth calls the "one dear Presence" of Nature. If the critic is correct in attributing for the baby's experience the absence of the discursive hindrance, considered as self-annihilation, as the advantage that enables the younger self to commune with the dear presence in Nature and receive her fairy gifts, we might infer that in the scene of the youth addressing the brook mockingly the hindrance to commune with Nature does not dwell in the possession of language but in the equivocal being possessed by irony that strikes both Nature and self.

4.6 Experience and Tropological Association Showing the Sense of Perishability and Recovery in the Subject and the Objective World

In *A Satire on Myself*, Adam Potkay demonstrates that the verbal form "dimple down" employed in reference to the water running into the brook in Book IV suggests in turn Wordsworth's own deserve of satirization. The self-irony becomes grief for the achievements of humankind as a whole in the narrative of the Arab's Dream in Book V:

When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
Through earth and sky, spreads widely and sends deep
Into the soul its tranquilizing power,

¹⁶⁵ LIU, Yu. *The Ambiguity of Sound and Silence: 'The Prelude'*. 1994, p. 1.

Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, o Man,
Earth's paramount creature!

(Book V, ll. 1-5).

The poet utters his sadness for

those palms achieved
Through length of time, by patient exercise
Of study and hard thought;

(Book V, ll. 1-5).

Now the primal concern is no longer with the endurable things related to the intercourse of man with the sovereign Intellect whose teachings can be captured by looking “Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven” (Book V, l. 13), but with the creations of human craft:

Thou also, man! Hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with herself,
Things that aspire to unconquerable life;
And yet we feel – we cannot choose but feel –
That they must perish.

(Book V, ll. 18-22).

The speaker associates this concern with the immediate following narration of an apocalyptic insight about a possible catastrophe consuming earth and all valuable works of man:

Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old ocean, in its bed left singed and bare,

(Book V, ll. 30-33).

It is an image of a return into chaos, of which Nature can be reorganized. Nevertheless, the speaker trembles before the idea that the human works cannot be recovered due to the frailty of the modes into which their expression has been embodied and preserved:

But all the meditations of mankind,
Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth
By reason built, or passion, which itself
Is highest reason in a soul sublime;
The consecrated works of bard and sage,
Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
Twin labourers and heirs of the same hope;
Where would they be?

(Book V, ll. 38-45).

The fear accompanying his thoughts about the fragility of the cultural productions inspired the speaker into the prophetic dream:

I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear,
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared

Upon a dromedary, mounted high,
 He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes:
 A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
 A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
 Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight
 Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
 Was present, one who with unerring skill
 Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
 I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
 Which the new comer carried through the waste
 Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
 (To give it in the language of the dream)
 Was 'Euclid's Elements'; and 'This', said he,
 'Is something of more worth'; and at the word
 Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,
 In colour so resplendent, with command,
 That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
 And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
 Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
 A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
 An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
 Destruction to the children of the earth
 By deluge now at hand.

(Book V, ll. 71-98).

The episode of the Arab's dream is not only an account of vision, for it is no less an account of sound and voice. The shell, which now appears as a natural object symbolically referred to poetry, derives from an emblem employed to signify music, represented by a stringed instrument. However, the form that the shell assumed before the speaker's eyes in the dream is that of a natural object whose hollow part is endowed with the power to produce a roaring sound, which resembles the roar of the sea. In this sense, as the sound is foretelling destruction, the roar of the shell advances the roar of the deluge to come in the poet's vision.

Nevertheless, it is important not to forget that, according to John Hollander¹⁶⁶, the shell only came to be approached in its meaning of natural object in the Romantic Age. Therefore, the term still carries the neoclassical shades of its pastoral meaning of stringed musical instrument or the hollow part of it responsible for the resounding of the sound. For Hollander, the natural noises, which were supposed to belong to musical realm, were "assimilated through mythologizing"¹⁶⁷. In this instance, the scholar defines the status of echoes as "the spirits inhabiting large natural concavities" which "were assimilated within the caves or shells of musical instruments"¹⁶⁸. The association

¹⁶⁶ HOLLANDER, John. *Wordsworth and the Music of Sound*. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 59.

¹⁶⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 59.

between the shell and the cave is suggested by the setting where Wordsworth was supposed to have passed into the dream:

once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
While I was seated in a rocky cave
By the sea-side.

(Book V, ll. 57-59).

The speaker's position in the cave creates an atmosphere for him to pass into a mythic universe of romance, which will come upon him with the dream. If the caves and shells had been believed to be inhabited by spirits, as Hollander argues, the "articulate sounds" heard "in an unknown tongue" when the speaker held the shell to his ear, which he calls a "loud prophetic blast of harmony", consist in a message sent by the fairy potencies of Nature as well as they connote the craft and inspiring source of poetry. The sound was musical as it was natural, since "blast of harmony" combines the blow of the wind and the roar of the sea with the harmony of music, which belongs to the heavenly music of the universe that indicates a transcendental but also aesthetical order.

The sounds sent from inside the shell were more than noises: they were "articulate sounds" which configured a codified yet enigmatic message. More than that, they were harmony, configuring music; and furthermore, they formed an ode, consisting in poetry itself: inasmuch as this ode "foretell[s]", it fulfills a more than aesthetic function, inscribing itself into the prophetic-religious realm in which the word imparts a magical efficacy. Wordsworth operates an aesthetic transformation of the religious meanings towards a new aesthetics of natural and passionate enchantment, following the model of what Northrop Frye calls the magical efficacy of language in an Age of Metaphor¹⁶⁹. As to the Arab's voice, when uttered, it brought not simply an answer, but annunciation, commandment and declaration. In announcing the meaning of the elements he carried with him, he stated a judgment that spoke for the superiority of poetry as compared to the sciences. While declaring his action to preserve those objects from destruction the Arab defines the core of each book:

The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.

(Book V, ll. 103-109).

¹⁶⁹ FRYE, Northrop. **The Great Code: The Bible and Literature.**

The first book embodies the knowledge about the rational order of the Universe, whereas the second contains the emotional treasure of mankind: the cave of poetry stores the wisdom of imagination, which is expressed in embalming voices and sounds. The tale predicts the destruction of the products of science and poetry. However, the speaker offers a hidden solution for preservation. He offers it like a key for an enigma that must be sought patiently in order to be solved. In telling his disquietudes, he claims that the things of human craft are lodged in too frail shrines for resisting any serious catastrophe:

Oh! Why hath not the Mind
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?
(Book V, ll. 45-49).

The speaker complains for the fact that the human things, which derive from the Mind, thus being originated as spiritual facts of consciousness, cannot be expressed as pure facts of consciousness, needing instead the material support to exist in this world, thus being perishable. How, then, could Wordsworth save poetry and the sciences from destruction? By transforming them into symbols represented by natural objects, the speaker suggests a resolution that might prevent books from perishing. As Wordsworth spoke, earlier, Nature would recover from the cataclysm:

Yet would the living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue,
And kindling like the morning – presage sure
Of day returning and of life revived.
(Book V, ll. 34-37).

Therefore, by symbolizing the sciences by a stone and referring it to the stars, which convey the visible order and structure of the universe on one hand; and symbolizing poetry by the shell, referring it to the voices of poets as voices of deities – like the fairies of shells and caves – more powerful than the sounds of the winds addressed to the heart of man, on the other hand; Wordsworth endowed – based on tropological associations taken from philosophical and poetic conceptions – the human facts with the same power to return and revive as that found in Nature, that had infused into the things of her creation a “deathless spirit”. Michael Ragussis’ arguments come to confirm my statement in a way:

From Ovid we know that the stone and shell not only do not perish, but are the instruments of the world’s and man’s revival. There is a direct connection between Nature and books, then, which eludes Wordsworth’s reason: although he can perceive a ‘living Presence’ which revives nature

after the deluge, he does not see books as having such a presence, let alone as being its sacred vessel. And it is the dream's apparent confusion which suggests this connection¹⁷⁰.

Adam Potkay undertook to show, through the examination of the literary and ethical background under the moral seriousness with which Wordsworth builds *The Prelude*, how, in the core of his arguments on books and education in Book V, the poet demonstrates that the perusal of romances and folktales represent both an escape and an effort to overcome a too controlled and directed type of education received from too enthralled, “exaggerated and objectified” a school standard and a too unnatural, witty and rhetorically trained standard inherited from Augustan literary sources; as well as in the critical attitude towards the figure of the Prodigy, the poet reflects “a crisis of literary history, an illustration of the divide that separates the language of satire from the words that [...] ‘carry into the heart’”¹⁷¹.

Book V of *The Prelude* seems to have fueled many controversies for criticism. Raymond Dexter Havens¹⁷² states the disapproving judgment that this book is “not unified or homogeneous”. Havens’ judgment seems to have been paradigmatic because, as Michael Ragussis¹⁷³ comments, while his “remarks stimulated several critics to come to the defense of the book, each attacked the problem anew from a different angle”. Joel Morkan¹⁷⁴ defends Wordsworth’s success in following a well-organized plan through which the book gained unity of structure and examines the argument as regards the allusions to and the speaker’s position toward the educational models during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Morkan divided this book into a sequence of five episodes. Michael Ragussis argues that however helpful in identifying the main strands of the argument in the book, studies like that by Morkan still have a certain inadequacy as to the harmonization of some of the major episodes.

Ragussis approaches the problem of unity in Book V by accepting the difficulty in understanding “the individual parts” due to the remarkable “dissociation between subject and incident”¹⁷⁵. Commenting on the episode of the Arab’s dream, Ragussis states that the dream form “is unusual for Wordsworth”, and hence it eludes

¹⁷⁰ RAGUSSIS, Michael. Language and Metamorphosis in Wordsworth’s Arab Dream. p. 155.

¹⁷¹ POTKAY, Adam. “A Satire on Myself”: Wordsworth and the Infant Prodigy. 1994, p. 149-166. Potkay quotes *The Prelude*, Book V, l. 408.

¹⁷² HAVENS, Raymond Dexter. **The Mind of a Poet: A Study of Wordsworth’s Thought with Particular Reference to ‘The Prelude’**, 1941, p. 376.

¹⁷³ RAGUSSIS, Michael Language and Metamorphosis in Wordsworth’s Arab Dream. p. 148.

¹⁷⁴ MORKAN, Joel. Structure and Meaning in *The Prelude*, Book V, 1972, p. 246-253.

¹⁷⁵ RAGUSSIS, Michael. Language and Metamorphosis in Wordsworth’s Arab Dream. p. 148.

the reader. Instead of finding the key for the significance of the dream in references outside the book, like Jane Smyser¹⁷⁶ does in identifying the model for Wordsworth's Arab's dream in one of Descartes' dream on November 10, 1619, in which the philosopher saw two volumes containing poetry and sciences, Ragussis points the clue to the comprehension of this book in "the transposition of some of the details of a well-known episode of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into the Arab's Dream"¹⁷⁷. The critic highlights that the "arbitrariness" felt in the introductions of the symbols of the episode – the stone for the book of the sciences, and the shell for that of poetry, as rehearsed by Hellen Darbishire in her statement of Wordsworth's use of poetic license in altering the content of Descartes' dream – results from "our failure in recognizing that these symbols play a significant part in the deluge described by Ovid in the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha"¹⁷⁸. Ragussis demonstrates that, in this story:

We have, then, a deluge like the one that Wordsworth describes, and a stone and shell which are the instruments of the restoration of order to the earth and to mankind. It is also significant that Parnassus, the mountain holy to Apollo and poetry, is the salvation for Deucalion and Pyrrha, and that it contains (like Wordsworth's shell) the power of prophecy. With these details before us, the meaning of the Arab dream becomes significantly clearer¹⁷⁹.

An important fact involving the experience of sound and music in *The Prelude* is reported in the passage about the Boy of Winander:

There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander! – many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him; and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din; and when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,

¹⁷⁶ SMYSER, Jane. *Wordsworth's Dream of Poetry and Science: The Prelude*, V. 1956, p. 269-275.

¹⁷⁷ RAGUSSIS, Michael. *Language and Metamorphosis in Wordsworth's Arab Dream*. p. 149.

¹⁷⁸ *Idem*. *Ibidem*. p. 149.

¹⁷⁹ *Idem*. *Ibidem*. p. 150.

Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.
 (Book V, ll. 364-388).

Thus far, the knots in the main episodes respecting the motifs of noise, sound and voice have pointed to Nature's warnings against the temporal threatening of finitude affecting both the object of experience as the human capacity of experiencing the object. The tale about the Boy of Winander constitutes a case in which the exchange of sound between the boy and Nature reveals a point where the relations between the subjective and the objective spheres must be altered in order for the subject-poet to survive the pressure of time. As the speaker reports, the Boy "died / In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old" (Book V, ll. 389-390). An *alter ego* for Wordsworth himself in his poetic gifts; or at least an inspiring mate seen as endowed with a special gift which Wordsworth admired and coveted at, perhaps precisely on the ground of lacking it; the premature death cut short the Boy's music of "hootings to the silent owls". The mature Wordsworth shows a deep awareness that in order to become a poet he must have overcome that phase in which the Boy of Winander had his life interrupted; even though the inevitable result has been to leave innocence behind to enter definitely into the world of experience.

Wordsworth had to embrace the need to leave the mythic stage of childhood where the time moves through reiterated cycles, which renovate the world every season – the time of Nature; in order to enter the social, linear time ruling the activities of adult life, which leads ultimately to mortality and finitude. The Boy's premature death evinces ultimately the subject's refusal to enter the world of mutability and finitude; the paradoxical desire to escape mortality. The Boy's musical instrument is no artifact at all, but an improvisation out of the jointure of his hands – no objective thing but an extension of his own body, hence an extension of subjectivity. Discarding the use of artifacts, the Boy remains entirely in the natural order, and his music belongs totally to Nature. However, without experiencing the universe of human production – with its reflex of finitude – his genius could not grow towards its full development.

One aspect of the sound in the passage involving the exchanges between the boy and the owls is the remarkable experimentation with the quality of the sound as it is conveyed across the water, resulting, as John Hollander has shown¹⁸⁰, in amplification. However, in the response of the owls shouting across the watery vale, the sound as a

¹⁸⁰ HOLLANDER, John. Wordsworth and the Music of Sound. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 65.

traveling element must be remarked. As the sound is amplified traveling across the water, so Wordsworth's young self must have crossed the threshold of the linear-progressive time in order for his mind to grow towards poetic maturity. That passage from the natural-cyclic temporality to the progressive-human-social order of time – biographically represented by his removal to Cambridge in youth – was a necessary step in the poet's formative course. Wordsworth employs the *Bildungsroman* commonplace idea of crossing a given space on earth signifying spiritual progress:

Relinquishing this lofty eminence
For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract
Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross
In progress from their native continent
To earth and human life,

(Book V, ll. 534-538).

This passage transformed the young Wordsworth's subjectivity toward the understanding of a human pattern dictated by a highly civilized standard of rules and doctrines to counterbalance all the patterns of freedom received by intercourse with Nature. In Cambridge, the chief manifestation of sound refers to the time annunciation by the personified clock:

Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
Who never let the quarters, night or day,
Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
Twice over with a male and female voice.

(Book III, ll. 53-56).

And by the rigorously disciplining and haunting bell:

Albeit long after the importunate bell
Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice
No longer haunting the dark winter night.

(Book III, ll. 306-308).

Wordsworth's final period at Cambridge was congratulated with his walking tour across the Alps. That journey constituted a passage in which Wordsworth's imagination and worldview on his chief matter, Nature, underwent a shift from the pastoral mild, simple and soothing but at the same time romance, fairy and haunting imagery toward the visionary, transcendent and apocalyptic approach in which the natural elements show signs of the hope for the millennial renovation of humanity.

Wordsworth and his fellow traveler landed at Calais when the French people were celebrating the first anniversary of the Revolution. The sounds in Nature spread the vibrating atmosphere of the festival:

On the public roads,
And, once, three days successively, through paths
By which our toilsome journey was abridged,

To this utterance the youth Wordsworth made a reply-paying honour to the values and rights of the Revolution yet doubting of the intelligence and common sense of its leaders:

‘Honour to the patriot’s zeal!
 Glory and hope to the new-born Liberty!
 Hail to the mighty projects of the time!
 Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou
 Go forth and prosper; and ye, purging fires,
 Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,
 Fanned by the breath of angry Providence [...]’.
 (Book VI, ll. 441-447).

It is necessary to remark that Wordsworth made his tour through the Alps at the phase of youth, when, the speaker reminds us, he was already possessed with the “Poet’s soul”. More than the “Sweet meditations” and the “still overflow / Of present happiness” (Book VI, ll. 42-43) at that time Wordsworth’s mind was half-way in the course of visionary growth. Thus, the poet represents his ability to read and interpret the book of Nature, and portrays a conversation in which, having heard her “voice”, the poet transposes the power of vision to the auditory sense, so that he captures a codified message of articulate sounds in Nature. Through the power of imagination, Wordsworth becomes the spokesman of the queen Nature sate on her “Alpine throne” speaking in a tone of warning and commandment. The poet’s own speech is humbler and contains both faithful exhortation and distrustful requirement. In this sense, he expresses the hope in the ideals of Liberty and Justice, yet hints at the fear that the State was attacking the wrong target. Nature, from the height of her sovereign wisdom, sends an utterance of disapproval for the revolutionary leaders, which foresees the failure of the Revolution from its very foundations. Attacking the religious symbols and monuments, the State threatens to deprive mankind of its spiritual ground, paying back its hope of Liberty with the embryo of tyranny. The poet’s voice contains an apocalyptic message, which, resounding in defense of the temple, rises against the destruction of meditation and imagination by the tyranny of the outward senses. Wordsworth, then, establishes a homology between the sensory and the political tyranny. According to Paul de Man, “what the insurgents threaten to destroy in their enthusiasm is the temporal nature of our existence. [...] [T]hey mean to possess something that endures which they fashion according to the intoxication of the act, and yet this thing that endures exists only in a

nature that endures precisely because it negates the instant, just as reflection must negate the act that nonetheless constitutes its origin”¹⁸¹.

Geoffrey Hartman¹⁸² speaks of a Negative Way in *The Prelude*, in which Nature loses its immediacy to the poet’s contact. From the physical experience of childhood to the visionary and archetypal operations of maturity, this process is advanced by the boy’s sublime ramblings in which the scene “moves from images of immediate life to an absolute calm which foreshadows a deeper and more hidden life. The negative way is a gradual one, and the child is weaned by a premonitory game of hide-and-seek in which nature changes its shape from familiar to unfamiliar”. Hartman considers that for Wordsworth “Nature [...] is not an object but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit; not something to be worshiped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself”. For Hartman, Nature consists in a guidance that starts in earliest childhood, since as the author explains, through beauty “nature often makes the boy feel at home”, whereas through fear “nature reminds the boy from where he came, and prepares him, having lost heaven, also to lose nature”. Such an alienation from the world constitutes that which Hartman calls Wordsworth’s apocalyptic imagination: “the mind muted yet strengthened by the external world’s opacities”; and Hartman makes the point that Wordsworth starts the poem not with Nature but with imagination: “If the child is led by nature to a more deeply mediated understanding of nature, the mature singer who composes *The Prelude* begins with that understanding or even beyond it – with the spontaneously creative spirit”.

The core of this chapter is meant to emphasize the function and meaning of the sensory and sentimental experience of the aural effects produced by Nature for the development of Wordsworth’s mind. However as the images of sound and music often appear associated both to the growth of the hero’s subjectivity and to the changes suffered by the external world in virtue of time, this subdivision focused much more on the rhetorical elaboration imposed upon the sensory experiences since in Chapter V of *The Prelude* the symbolical and philosophical allusions are the aspects that came into the foreground. Thus in order to keep the structural and thematic cohesion I ought to advance an argument that would belong more specifically to the third part of my inquiry on Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem.

¹⁸¹ MAN, Paul de. **The Rhetoric of Romanticism**. 1984, p. 56.

¹⁸² HARTMAN, Geoffrey. The Romance of Nature and the Negative Way. In: BLOOM, Harold. **William Wordsworth**. (Edited with an Introduction by). 1985, p. 40.

4.7 Deprivation and Depravity in the City Sounds of London

Wordsworth's native country provided him with a pattern of pastoral calm and romance emotion in childhood by means of sensory experiences. From the travel along the Alps in youth ensues a type of apocalyptic vision, and the speaker starts affirming the power of meditation and imagination. The narrative of his residence in London shows how the shocking experience of an excessive reality breaks the enchanted patterns of romance projected on the ideal image which Wordsworth the boy had made of the city in order to represent it through the hell pattern of Milton's epic as well as the biblical models of enslaving lands like Egypt and Babylon. Geoffrey Durrant¹⁸³ remarks about the "poetic representation of confusion" in Book VII that "Wordsworth succeeds in transforming the raw chaos of the town into a myth of damnation". The author highlights that "The city is presented not only as disorderly, lacking in real connection between man and man, and superficial, but also as cruel or indifferent"¹⁸⁴.

The patterns of sound heard in London contrast vehemently with the sound effect received by the child, and hence the city presented to the adult poet is a universe that not only eluded the child's idealized image of it, but also disappoints him in the ground of that fairy expectation. When Wordsworth was a boy, one of his classmates at Hawkshead's Grammar School had the chance to visit London, leaving in Wordsworth an impression of enchanted curiosity and fanciful admiration about the infinite possibilities of marvels and delights that might have been found in the huge city. However, his expectations were soon broken into disappointment by a shade of confusion, disturbance and escapism in the colleague's voice when reporting his experience there:

When the Boy returned
 After short absence, curiously I scanned
 His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth,
 From disappointment, not to find some change
 In look and air, from that new region brought
 As if from Fairy-Land. Much I questioned him:
 And every word he uttered, on my ears
 Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note,
 That answers unexpectedly awry,
 And mocks the prompter's listening.

¹⁸³ DURRANT, Geoffrey. **William Wordsworth**. 1969, p. 139.

¹⁸⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 136.

(Book VII, ll. 93-102).

The hypothetical comparison with the “Fairy-Land” is ironical in reference to London, and hints at the unfulfillment of the desired thing, at the ideality of the wonderful world melting into disillusionment. The fairy murmurs that composed the baby’s thoughts before the Derwent River were the magic sounds of romance. This world was broken by the screams of human deprivation and depravity in London:

Four rapid years had scarcely then been told
 Since, traveling southward from our pastoral hills
 I heard, and for the first time heard in my life
 The voice of woman utter blasphemy –
 Saw woman, as she is, to open shame,
 Abandoned, and the pride of public vice
 Shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once
 Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
 Humanity, splitting the race of man
 In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.

(Book VII, 382-391).

The voice of women appears associated to feebleness and strangeness:

The feeble salutation from the voice
 Of some unhappy woman, now and then
 Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to.

(Book VII, 665-668).

The most astonishing noise in London comes from St. Bartholomew’s Fair, where one can see:

A work completed to our hands, that lays,
 If any spectacle on earth can do,
 The whole creative powers of man asleep! –
 For once, the Muse’s help will we implore,
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
 Above the press and danger of the crowd,
 Upon some showman’s platform. What a shock
 For eyes and ears! What anarchy and din,
 Barbarian and infernal, – a phantasma,
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight and sound!

(Book VII, 679-688).

For Durrant, in the description of the fair “the suggestion of a hell on earth is more strongly advanced”¹⁸⁵. The reference to the crowd and the din remits us back to the episode with the boys ice-skating in the frosty season, when “with the din / Smitten, the precipices rang aloud” (Book I, ll. 439-440). It is a lesson of natural providence, in which all that disturbed Nature’s ears in the boys’ tumult of mirth was experienced as a vengeful disturbance returning upon the poet in the tumult of trivialities in the city. The fair is a symbol of Wordsworth’s conception of London as a whole:

¹⁸⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 137.

Oh, blank confusion! True epitome
 Of what the mighty city is herself
 To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
 Living amid the same perpetual whirl
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity, by differences
 That have no law, no meaning and no end –
 Oppression, under which even highest minds
 Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
 (Book VII, 722-730).

The sense of dehumanization in the Fair of St. Bartholomew is soon to be counterbalanced by the sense of humanization of the annual fair of the Vale of Helvellyn, as narrated in the immediately following book, whose matter is described as “Love of Nature leading to the love of man”:

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
 Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
 Ascending, as if distance had the power
 To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
 Covers, or sprinkled o'er, yon village green?
 (Book VIII, ll. 1-5).

The sense of alienation found in the great city was redeemed by the pastoral happiness of rural life embracing the families of shepherds around Helvellyn. Moreover, the crowd here is endeared by virtues, in contrast to St. Bartholomew's crowd, degraded by the urban vices. The sprinkling of the people among the green imparted the crowd with that sweet idea to evoke the feeling of a happy life. In addition, the female figure appears redeemed by the grace of loveliness, selling fruits in the fair:

But one there is, the loveliest of them all,
 Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
 For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
 (Book VIII, ll. 37-39).

The contrast between the rural life observed in the Vale of Helvellyn and the urban life in London marks the feeling dividing the orderly universe of Nature from the disorderly turbulation of the city. Even where order can be found in the city, it results from handicraft and hence is weaker than the beautiful and sublime forms of Nature, which result from the action of universal Mind. In this sense, most of the elements in the city can foster little more than effects of fancy, whereas the images of Nature activate the faculty of imagination. The love of Nature is bound to the forms of rural life in Wordsworth native land: “But lovelier far than this, the paradise / Where I was reared” (Book VIII, ll. 98-99); and with the type of human figure represented by the shepherd: “Shepherds were the men who pleased me first” (Book VIII. ll. 128). The activity of the shepherd, as the lyrical speaker observed it, belongs to a composite figure

formed out of elements from the direct empirical observation of his peculiar activities in the scenes of rural life, linked with Wordsworth's professed praise of humble life and out of the imaginary elements drawn from bucolic pictures as sung in pastoral poems. Again, Wordsworth's technique consists in composing a human figure out of the blending of realistic observation of man's activities among the surrounding landscapes and the impressions drawn from stock images of the literary tradition. Soon after describing his appraisal of shepherds, Wordsworth affirms the distinctiveness of the shepherds of his native country, as human beings seen in actual life, in relation to the literary figures tempered with art and law and portrayed in the stories of the Golden Age or in Arcadian scenes portrayed in a Grecian song, in the episode of Shakespeare's band entering the wood of Arden, or in Spenser's fables. However, immediately after, Wordsworth made of Spenser's matter of experience the same experience and matter of his song:

True it is
That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen)
Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
Their May-bush, and along the street in flocks
Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,
Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;
Had also heard, from those who yet remembered,
Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked
Porch, door-way, and kirk-pillar; and of youths,
Each with his maid, before the sun was up,
By annual custom, issuing forth in troops,
To drink the waters of some sainted well,
And hang it round with garlands.

(Book VIII, ll. 144-156).

Wordsworth echoes here Spenser's verses in *The Shepheardes Calender*, Aegloga Quinta, where the two old shepherds, Piers and Palinodie, observing the pleasurable beauties of the month of May, muse upon the merriments of youth:

Youghtes folke now flocken in euery where,
To gather may buskets and smelling brere
And home they hasten the postes to dight,
And all the Kirke pillours eare day light,
With Hawthorne buds, and sweet Eglantine,
And girlonds of roses and Sopps in wine,
Such merrimake holy Saints doth queme,
But we heare sytten as drownd in a dreme.

(Aegloga Quinta, ll. 9-16).

Then Palinodie tells of merriments he witnessed among young shepherds, singing and dancing with their maids in that morning:

Sicker this morrowe, ne lenger agoe,
I saw a shole of shepheards outgoe,
With singing, and shouting, and iolly chere:

Before them yode a lusty Tabrere,
 That to the many a Horne pype playd,
 Whereto they dauncen eche one with his mayd.
 To see those folks make such iouysaunce,
 Made my heart after the pype to daunce.
 To the greene Wood they speeden hem all,
 To fetch home May with their musicall:
 And home they bringen in a royal throne,
 Crowned as king: and his Queene attone
 Was Lady Flora, on whom did attend
 A fare flock of Faeries, and a fresh bend
 Of louely Nymphs. (O that I were there,
 To helpen the Ladyes their Maybush beare).
 (Aegloga Quinta, ll. 19-34).

Spenser's aeglogas provided Wordsworth with the pastoral model not only as regards the imagery transposed to the experience and idea of his native country but also concerning the mythic background about the ideal of pleasant life:

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid winters on the banks
 Of delicate Galesus; and no less
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores.
 (Book VIII, ll. 173-176).

As well as the presences of natural deities peopling the bucolic sceneries:

the goat-herd lived
 As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 The fold protecting.
 (Book VIII, ll. 180-185).

Wordsworth's pastoral mode recalls the ancestry of Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Aeclogues*. Lore Metzger¹⁸⁶ demonstrates that Wordsworth followed a critical debate over pastoral landscapes, characters and themes extended from Pope to Southey, whose chief point concerns whether it was more appropriate "to present golden age shepherds dwelling in classical Arcadia enjoying eternal spring and eternal delight, or whether the pastoral poet was justified in using the English countryside as the setting for earthy, provincial rustics, toiling as well as singing"¹⁸⁷. Wordsworth "poses the crucial question of how to make pastoral a meaningful model for his age". Based on the comparison between *Michael* and *The Prelude* the author states that in the first poem Wordsworth attempted to create "an art, speaking with the voice of life to tell of the real sweetness and real terror of Westmoreland shepherd's lot", excluding the "classical allusions and most traditional motifs"; whereas in the latter "he draws on pastoral

¹⁸⁶ METZGER, Lore. *Wordsworth's Pastoral Covenant*. 1976. p. 307-323.

¹⁸⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 307-308.

tradition from Theocritus to Milton”¹⁸⁸. However, even in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth assimilates the pastoral tradition within a realistic distance. Hence, a number of opinions that Metzger poses apropos of *Michael*, e.g. that in place of classical tradition Wordsworth invokes the authority of oral local tradition in stories transmitted from one generation to the other as an alternative to the eighteenth century lifeless use of classical mythology; the fact that he transposes some traditional pastoral motifs into “realistic topicality”, viz. “the pastoral pleasance in a mountain valley, the moral superiority of country over city, the bond between shepherds who cherish their freedom and independence”¹⁸⁹; is also valid for *The Prelude*.

In *The Prelude* the tone of pastoral is flavored with the influence of the ode form, employed to confer to its subject matter nobility and loftiness of expression; as well as to endow the outer figures of man and landscape with the high spiritual quality which excites the poet’s passionate attitude of worshipping and contemplating Nature in intellectual and sentimental terms. Therefore, Wordsworth always surpasses the elements of pastoral tradition, assimilating them into the sublime meditative and emotional pathos, which the ode form allows to throw over Nature. Even the almost imitative allusion to Spenser serves to reflective purposes on subjects of realistic experience, for Wordsworth closes the same stanza evoking both the felt beauties of the “rural ways / And manners which my childhood looked upon” (Book VIII, ll. 159-160), and the mysterious language through which elemental Nature speaks mythic truths and stories of:

Man suffering among awful powers and Forms;
Of this I heard, and saw enough to make
Imagination restless; nor was free
Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales
Wanting, – the tragedies of former times,
Hazard and strange escapes, of which the rocks
Immutable, and overflowing streams,
Where’er I roamed, were speaking monuments.
(Book VIII, ll. 165-172).

The references to sound and pastoral emblems of music indicate the model for the description of Nature and man in holy and spiritualized manners yet out of a realistic mode of experience closely connected with Wordsworth’s native region. An awe-inspiring figure, Wordsworth’s shepherd appears now as an ordinary man in a local, familiar land, a plain of level pastures where he built his hut:

Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides

¹⁸⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 308.

¹⁸⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 309.

All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
 His flageolet to liquid notes of love
 Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far.
 (Book VIII, ll. 198-201);

Now romanticized as a spiritual or magical entity:

A rambling schoolboy, thus
 I felt his presence in his own domain,
 As of a lord and master, or a power,
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,
 Presiding;
 (Book VIII, ll. 256-260).

Yet this sublime, supernatural facet is marked not by the symbols of sound, but by visual associations of aspects of light and mist. This issue must be spared for the discussion on sight and vision.

The deadening crisis of London was crucial for the rediscovery of Nature in her full essence, as she appeared to Wordsworth in his most natural and original state of sensibility – as a child in his native region:

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel,
 In that enormous City's turbulent world
 Of men and things, what benefit I owed
 To thee, and those domains of rural peace,
 Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was opened;
 (Book VIII, ll. 70-75).

It must be added that this discovery of living Nature and ennobled man after a critical experience of witnessing deadening deprivation oppressing humanity in the vast city was prepared by an apocalyptic moment of recognition of death: recognizing death was part of the poet's intellectual growth that enables the poet to save Nature in her symbolical modes of life into the metaphorical region of memory. Wordsworth's recognition of death is marked by the gesture of looking backwards to motherland in his travel abroad and to native country in a glimpse of recollection in an instant contemplation to the moment of death. Preceding his landing at Calais for his travel along the Alps, Wordsworth pays a farewell glance to England, a gesture with which he separated inevitably from his country, leaving it behind:

but a few brief looks
 Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
 From the receding vessel's deck,
 (Book VI, ll. 342-344).

Elsewhere, describing a grove whose boughs cover the margin of Thurstone-mere with a dense shade, Wordsworth calls to mind one moment when gliding along the

shaded water he caught the crepuscular glimpse of sunrays reposing on the ridge of an eastern hill, thus making his thoughts flow in “a stream of words”:

Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close
By mortal course, there will I think on you;
Dying, will cast on you a backward look;
(Book VIII, ll. 468-470).

The thick shade of boughs over the marginal water hints at the gloom of death and forgetfulness. Wordsworth represents the musing on the ultimate retrospective thought about his birthplace through the analogy of the setting sun throwing the last beams on the mountaintop, which, from the perspective of the speaker in his native region, received the sun's first appearance in the morning. The consciousness of mortality enables the poet to keep Nature alive in the light of memory, freeing her from the Lethe-like darkness.

4.8 Nature Restoring Impaired Imagination

After the moral crisis represented by the French period, in which his faculties had been enslaved by outer sense and analytical reason, Wordsworth regains imaginative strength by returning to his old modes of contact with the natural world, thus asserting reliance in the inner sensibility. The motifs of sound in Nature indicate a new start by pointing back to those symbols that appear both in the introduction of the poem – which correspond precisely to this moment of renovation in his autobiography – and to the elements with which the poet used to maintain a close intercourse since early childhood: I mean the sound produced by the natural motion of breezes and winds, streams and brooks, trees and groves, whose effect is not only pleasing music but the intuition of living animation. Those elements are examples and teachers for a poet in search of learning his talent and vocation:

Oh! That I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me.
(Book XII, ll. 29-31).

At this point, the poet recognizes a symbolic moment of renovation through the recognition of the return of the Spring, rejoicing in the signals of love found in the sounds and sights she brings, for instance in the birds “Piping on boughs, or sporting on

fresh fields” (Book XII, l. 35). The self-affirming presence of Nature for the poet gave a new strength to his feelings, which allowed him to overcome a subtle cause of alienation that, says Wordsworth, “almost seems inherent in the creature” (Book XII, l. 125): “A twofold frame of body and mind” (Book XII, l. 126). Wordsworth, then, exposes the means that Nature employed to free his mind from what he calls the domination of “the bodily eye”. Nature exerted such a healing influence on him against the force of habit and degrading rationality, in that she:

summons all the senses each
To counteract the other, and themselves,
And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
(Book XII, ll. 135-139).

Through the stimuli of calm and emotion, Nature awakened Wordsworth’s inner faculties for genial activities. The experiences in the great city had shown how custom can degrade sensibility so that “the little overweighs the great”, since they represent for Wordsworth a detachment from his native sensibilities:

aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes
Inaudible.
(Book XII, ll. 198-201).

The spots of time represent passages in which Nature exerts a renovating virtue upon Wordsworth’s sensibility, since they awakened his imagination to perceive in the natural motions a haunting presence of daemonic powers:

All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer’s thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
(Book XII, ll. 324-332).

In Nature, Wordsworth recovers the sense of delight and imagination in the objects; and acknowledges the creative outburst in which “words find easy way, inspired / By gratitude, and confidence in truth” (Book XIII, ll. 14-15). At this point, the main core of Nature gravitates around the patterns established by the images of “the familiar circuit of my home” (Book XIII, l. 223), which leads Wordsworth’s reflections back to the original sensory and emotional delights of his native region. Besides, the imaginative

power associated with the presence of native region recalls the value of pastoral scenes. Moreover, the pastoral region opens the space for the vision of a romance magic world of past in which Wordsworth receives the prophetic instruction from the mysterious wisdom of the ancient Druids. He recalls the memory of a travel “among the wilds / Of Sarum’s Plains” (Book XIII, ll. 313-314):

There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs
Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
Time with its retinue of ages fled
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw
Our deem ancestral Past in vision clear;

(Book XIII, ll. 315-320).

The experience of sound in Nature will foster in Wordsworth the visionary and prophetic power to recreate the vision of imaginary worlds, and leads from sensory experience into insights of a transcendental reality. The sweet music implicit in the pastoral fields transported Wordsworth into a province of tutelary dreams in which he drinks the magic, prophetic and mysterious knowledge which dwells amid the play among the cosmic music intimated from the stars and the celebrating and evoking music sent from the human region in the Druid’s songs:

gently was I charmed
Into a waking dream, a reverie
That, with believing eyes, where’er I turned,
Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
Alternately, and plain below, while breath
Of music swayed their motions, and the waste
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

(Book XIII, ll. 342-349).

Considering what has been said, above all the discussions based on Hollander’s and McSweeney’s arguments, it is possible to consider that Wordsworth builds his ideas of the influence of Nature on the development of the poet’s mind out of blending living experience with traditional figures, symbols and metaphors as well as philosophical discussions. Wordsworth probes that literary and philosophical rhetoric through the living and meditative contemplation of Nature; enriching those traditional conceptions by conveying meanings drawn from the sensory, sentimental and thinking commerce with the natural world in actual and recollected moments of life. In addition, complementarily, the poet learns to comprehend Nature through the mediation of figural suggestion and conceptual knowledge.

Chapter V

5 Physical and Transcendental Experience of Nature in *The Prelude*: Feelings Related to Body and Soul Conditioning the Poet's Imaginative and Spiritual Growth

5.1 The Connections between the Sensory and the Transcendental Experiences: The Human Power to Perceive Those Signs in Nature

The Romantic poets explored the connections between the sensory and the transcendental experiences, whose mediation is achieved through the inner motion of feelings and sentiments. A fundamental mode of experience among the Romantic poets consists in the intuitive feelings through which they claimed the power to “see into the life of things”, as Wordsworth expresses in *The Prelude*. This is a symbolical mode of vision in which through patient contemplation of the objects and scenes in the natural world they believed it possible to overcome the limits of sensory experience by means of elevating and attuning their sensibility to enter into an altered state of consciousness in which their activity becomes pure sentiment whose transport produces and conveys their feelings onto delicate waves between the body and the soul in a delicate experience, allowing a subtler and more refined commerce between the essences of matter and spirit that run between man and the world, thus linking the subjective and the objective realities in an harmonious fusion. The type of experience expressed in Wordsworth's poems is explained in philosophical reflection by his collaborator Coleridge. According to Maurice Bowra¹⁹⁰, “Coleridge's conception of a universe of spirit came from intense sense of an inner life and from his belief that the imagination, working with intuition, is more likely than the analytical reason to make discoveries on matters which really concern us”. In this sense, the Romantics “obeyed an inner call to explore more fully the world of spirit”. Each of them “believed in an order of things which is not that which we see and know”. They wished “to penetrate to an abiding reality, to explore its mysteries, and by this to understand more clearly what life means

¹⁹⁰ BOWRA, Maurice. **The Romantic Imagination**. 1976, p. 9.

and what it is worth". They believed that "though visible things are the instruments by which we find this reality, they are not everything and have indeed little significance unless they are related to some embracing and sustaining power"¹⁹¹.

Wordsworth locates the origin of the human sensibility and the standpoint of its development in the phase of recently born infancy. The baby in arms represents the genial being in touch with the human origin and the Universe's transcendental essence through the first sensory contacts with the outward world. Wordsworth dismisses the aim of analyzing his mind according to criteria of reason. The speaker doubts the possibility "to range the faculties / In scale and order" (Book II, ll. 223-334) according to "that false secondary power / By which we multiply distinctions" (Book II, ll. 216-217), for he judges improbable that, based on such mechanical conceptions, one could determine precisely the individual hour in which man's habits and thoughts were first established.

Instead, by recollecting the history of his subjective life, trying to understand the meaning and value of each individual experience, as well as its relationships to the whole range of his experiences, how they had influenced his thoughts and feelings; as well as by observing the behaviour of human subjects on each stage of life, the poet comprehends that the earthly progress of the human "Being" has its beginning at the first contact with the outer world, even through the intermediation of the mother's breast:

Blest the infant Babe,
 (For with my best conjecture I would trace
 Our being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,
 Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep,
 Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
 Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
 For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond
 Of Nature that connect him with the world.
 Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
 Too weak to gather it, already love
 Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
 Hath beautified that flower; already shades
 Of pity cast from inward tenderness
 Do fall around him upon aught that bears
 Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
 Emphatically such a Being lives,
 Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,

¹⁹¹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 9.

An inmate of this active universe:
 For feeling has for him imparted power
 That through the growing faculties of sense
 Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
 Create, creator and receiver both,
 Working but in alliance with the works
 Which it beholds. – Such, verily, is the first
 Poetic spirit of our human life,

(Book II, ll. 233-261).

This passage contains the key to understand what is meant when Wordsworth utters the too disputable statement that the poet gives life to the objective world: his utterance contains a reference to the spiritual capacity of man's consciousness to share of the universal principles of animation, the cosmic intelligence and the divine given force implied either by the Christian conception of God or by the Pantheistic notion of Spirit of Nature. Wordsworth conceives that the poet half creates the images he sees. This statement implies that analogous to the universal emanation, the poet appears as endowed with such enthusiasm as to bestow a new energy onto the beautiful and splendid images as he perceives them, as well as to alter the outward atmosphere in the intercourse with his inner mood – in terms of transforming the objective landscapes into images for the human spirit, into sceneries for contemplation and imagination. That is the actual role of Wordsworth's projective perception. In this sense, poetic power is conceived as being a gift attributed to children and concentrated in the beginning of life.

According to Wordsworth's belief, the first contacts of infant children with the world are made by concrete touch and their thoughts are based on concrete existence, in the possibility of taking things in their hands. Children's life is organized according to the material limits set by Nature in time and space. The presence and intermediation of his mother represents the bond between the babe and the earth, the filial bond that links him with the earthly womb and the birth-water of Nature. Yet, as an infant, the human being is intuitive at its highest level, feeling spontaneously the intimations of the transcendent dimensions. As a child to Nature, the babe has the power to impart direct access to the higher spiritual intelligence, or God, which animates the universe with the energy transmitted to every particular being. The alleged filial bond legitimates the power to find and understand the sentiments and meanings that are hidden under the sensible appearances of the world. Wordsworth locates the highest power of spiritual intuition in the beginning of human life, as manifested in the baby's perception, because the infant's phase belongs to the closest stage to a state of origin, which in a theological-religious analogy between birth and Creation, corresponds to the mythical-symbolical

idea that in his birth the creature is closer to the Creator and therefore imparts His Divine Power.

The world of sense, as the human abiding place, as an extension of man's body, is the matter of dreams. As the world loses some concrete elements, which are destructed or removed along the passage of time, the speaker knows that in his being some physical faculties, mental conditions and dispositions are removed and replaced or even lost along the transition from infant to adult life. Since Wordsworth conceives poetry as emotion recollected in tranquility, the field of memory is the sole region where the poet can re-establish those vital links and revisit those moments of childhood that are impossible of bringing back in the temporality of real life.

The dream is the imaginary channel between life and poetry. In its imaginary essence, like remembrance, the dream allows the self to live again a past moment. In addition, the dream belongs to the world of sleep in which the subjective and objective worlds blend into each other in unconscious suspension. Sleeping, the subject forgets his physical boundaries, which are accommodated so agreeably in the concrete texture of the world to fuse in balance and intimate comfort. Thus, the subject and the objective world, which surrounds him, become one unity, and solve their antagonisms in imaginary and originary communion: the dreams bring the self like a boy to the comfort of the maternal bosom and to the still shelter of home.

Thus, those sentiments and meanings, filtered by the babe's promptness to sleep and by his taste for sweetness, are the gates to the savour of the protagonist's dreams. At the same time, they confer the interest, the distinctive quality of his derams. This endows the hero with the visionary power of ascending to the condition of seeing and knowing the universal Truth. The disposition of the children to sleep and have dreams is the same power to start their creative imagination: their potential power to see, like the prophets, the reality beyond the visible things and rise in vision to a mystical communion with the Creator. Wordsworth's speech implies that the poetic power, the divine faculty given to a true poet, is that participation in the divine power, which activates the Universe, and that access to the manifestations of the world soul, which imparted Nature with the intelligence of the divine Being.

Many of the metaphors referring to Nature's interfusion of heightened feelings and meanings which are the potential energy of a poet's education derive from the material contact with the surrounding things of Nature through the movements of penetration or absorption: by these means the human being either enters in the natural

world to mingle with and to be involved by it, or sucks and aspires the elements in order to contain them inside himself. The infant babe sucks from the mother's breast to get fed and, sucking her milk, he also absorbs from her body the spiritual energy which she gathers in the living and divine relation with the world – thus taking part of the divine emanation.

The verbs drinking and breathing whose physiological function warrants the body to be bred and alive in *The Prelude* are also motions of communion with the divine energy of the external world: that is why the speaker often says: “breathing life” or “drinking light”. The second movement is carried out by the verbs “sinking” and “bathing” through which the infant penetrates and surrenders to the embrace of the elements. Wordsworth suggests the Neoplatonic metaphors of divine emanation in the concrete representation of issues related to sensory experience of man's physical and elemental existence. Taken as an analogy to the universal emanation the mother's breast is the bodily canal which captures, filters and brings to the babe the bliss caught from the visible things, because the visible world appears to the mother bathed in the shine of divine happiness: “Blest the infant babe [...] who with his soul / Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!” (Book II, ll. 233-236). Wordsworth confirms my expectations about the influence of experience upon the growth of the human mind as he gives an account of how his poetic and intellectual sensibility developed through the affective intercourse of his senses with the outer forms:

From early days
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birthright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained.

(Book II, ll. 265-272).

As the hero grew up, he was soon left alone with the world to find the divine blessing in Nature and capture her charms through his own affections:

For now a trouble came into my mind
From unknown causes. I was left alone
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
The props of my affections were removed,
And yet the building stood, as if sustained
By its own spirit. All that I beheld
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes
The mind lay open, to a more exact
And close communion. Many are our joys
In youth, but oh! What a happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access

Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight
And sorrow is not there!

(Book II, ll. 276-288).

The babe is supposed to have the direct access to the divine order, provided that, in Wordsworth's view, in the course of the human life the recently born child is very close in bodily constitution and character to Nature's qualities. His entire complex of experience depends on the senses and his sensations, as they are conveyed inward, are transformed into feelings, which now attune the self with his own body, now elevate his soul toward the spiritual realm. Following a Blakean-Miltonian paradisiacal view, Wordsworth's child is all innocence and virtue, and perversion finds no part in his natural being. Echoing Plotinian terms the word "knowledge" refers to the intimate philosophical communion with the Being, the vision of the eternal through the genial power. Recently given to the light of this world, the child keeps intact the memory of the essential Universe whence his soul has come.

The mute dialogues with his mother's heart were soon to give place for the silent contemplation of Nature itself. That moment refers to the time when, at the stage of learning to walk, the babe was left on the ground to walk on his own legs, without his mother's support. He also lost the affective link that connected him with that world, which he had in his mother's mediation. His direct intercourse with the world of senses raised its own spiritual basis: that was the basis of love, the same filial feeling that links man to Nature and the same fraternal affinity, which links him with the other beings, but above all that feeling which, endearing the external world designates him for the holy service of knowledge. For the babe born to be a poet "all knowledge is delight" because the "palpable access" to the things provided the concrete meanings and the concrete language, which embodies the transcendent-intellectual-spiritual essence, which connects every individual existence. This language is the purer expression of the origin of things. Thinking of "higher minds", Wordsworth conceives that:

In a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.

(Book XIV, ll. 105-111).

5.2 Spiritual Experience in Nature: Towards an Aesthetics of Poetic Illumination

In the poems of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth chose “incidents and situations from common life, [...] to relate and describe them, throughout, [...] in a selection of language really used by men”¹⁹². Wordsworth’s interest falls on what he considers “the better soil” for the development of the human “essential passions of the heart” since “in that condition of our life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity”¹⁹³. His matter already points to his great concern of re-educating the human sensibility through the contact with Nature, and expresses it in the extent of its aesthetic agreement with a simple language. In *The Prelude*, the poet seeks to represent the greatness of his subject matter by combining the realistic observation of rural life and countryside landscapes in England’s Northern regions with the sublime and prophetic language inspired in the Bible and Metaphysics. *The Prelude* reflects the flavouring of the poet’s interest on “the simple passions of the human heart” with the concern for what is holy and lofty, eternal and infinite, for the essential source of the universe. In the natural objects offered to his experience the poet recognizes the patterns of a mysterious, sentient and religious presence, forming what Frederick Pottle acknowledges as “a symbol [...] of sympathy, theopathy, or moral sense” based on the “method of transfiguration”¹⁹⁴; so that Nature is endowed with moral and spiritual qualities, configuring what Abrams calls “theodicy of landscape”¹⁹⁵. I would also say metaphysics of Nature.

The poetic device through which Wordsworth approaches Nature to find her essentials consists in his concept of Imagination, the mental faculty that allows man to perceive beyond the bodily senses, to contemplate with the senses of the soul. Comparing it with the processes of Fancy, Wordsworth describes the power and realm of the Imagination in the *Essay Supplementary to The Preface* as follow: “the Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion; – the Soul may fall away from it, not being able to sustain its grandeur; but, if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of

¹⁹² WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In: WORDSWORTH, William. **The Poetical Works of Wordsworth**. HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). 1959, p. 734.

¹⁹³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 734-735.

¹⁹⁴ POTTLE, Frederick A.. The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth. In: BLOOM, Harold. (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 9-10.

¹⁹⁵ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature**. 1973, p. 97-117.

any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired or diminished. – Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal”¹⁹⁶. He defines the importance of imaginative poetry in touching an inaccessible region in a letter to Walter Savage Landor: “even in poetry it is the imaginative only, viz, that which is conversant [with], or turns upon infinite that powerfully affects me, – I mean to say that, unless in those passages where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspiration are raised, I read with something too much like indifference”¹⁹⁷.

The problem of imagination, that in Wordsworth’s poetry allows the elaboration of the spiritual and transcendent meanings in the experience of Nature, is based on the dimension of image as it coincides and yet extrapolates the sensuous form of the natural objects. Paul de Man¹⁹⁸ demonstrates that the poetics of Romanticism works between the material and the metaphorical textures of poetic language, in a structure of tension between the themes of Nature and imagination. In his project of reforming poetry, Wordsworth sought to establish a new poetic language based on what Paul de Man calls “the imaginative use of figural diction”, a particular manifestation that takes place in the movement of the Romantic “change in the texture of poetic diction” which “often takes the form of a return to a greater concreteness, a proliferation of natural objects that restores to the language the material substantiality which had been partially lost. At the same time, in accordance with a dialectics that is more paradoxical than may appear at first sight the structure of the language becomes increasingly metaphorical and the image [...] comes to be considered as the most prominent dimension of the style”¹⁹⁹.

Paul de Man remarks the opposition between the nature of the image and that of the natural objects as belonging to the division of material substantiality and metaphorical dimension. Image constitutes the kernel of metaphor, hence belongs to its very experiential essence, which Paul de Man defines as “not a combination of two entities or experiences more or less deliberately linked together, but one single and

¹⁹⁶ WORDSWORTH, William. Essay Supplementary to the Preface. In: WORDSWORTH, William. **The Poetical Works of Wordsworth**. HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). p. 743-751.

¹⁹⁷ WORDSWORTH, William. Letter to W. S. Landor, 21 January 1824. Apud: GILL, Stephen (Edited by). **The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth**. Introduction. 2008, p. xvii.

¹⁹⁸ MAN, Paul de. The Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image. In: **The Rhetoric of Romanticism**. 1984, p. 1-17.

¹⁹⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*, p. 2.

particular experience: that of origination”²⁰⁰. Precisely the notion of origination is what made the distinction between the natural object and the metaphor. In order to clarify the ontological nature of the natural object that distinguishes it from words as the ground of poetic image, it is worth quoting Paul de Man’s observation about the mode of origination of flowers: “by calling them natural objects we mean that their origin is determined by nothing but their own being. Their becoming coincides at all times with the mode of their origination: it is as flowers that their history is what it is, totally defined by their identity. There is no wavering in the status of their existence: existence and essence coincide at all times”²⁰¹.

In this sense, the scholar calls the attention for an ontological difference between entities of Nature and entities of consciousness. Poetic language, like all “entities engendered by consciousness” happens under the opposite process. For Paul de Man “origin” can be understood “in terms of difference”; thus in the process of origination of an entity “a beginning implies a negation of permanence, the discontinuity of a death in which an entity relinquishes its specificity and leaves it behind”²⁰². The poetic language and the facts of consciousness have a sense of transience betrayed by their “discontinuity”²⁰³. Natural objects “originate as incarnation of the transcendental principle”²⁰⁴. Hence, to originate like a natural object “is to become present as a natural emanation of a transcendental principle, as an epiphany”²⁰⁵. The critic explains that:

The obviously desirable sensory aspects of the flower express an ambivalent aspiration towards a forgotten presence that gave rise to the image for it is in experiencing the material flower that the desire arises to be reborn in the manner of a natural creation. The image is inspired by a nostalgia for the natural object, expanding to become nostalgia for the origin of this object. [...] The existence of the poetic image is itself a sign of divine absence, and the conscious use of poetic imagery an admission of this absence²⁰⁶.

Paul de Man’s observations about the relation of the poetic image with the natural object leads us to believe that imagination is not simply a power of the mind independently of any external relation but is instead dependent on the transcendent appeal to the Idea implicit in the ontological materiality of the natural forms. Imagination is spurred by the nostalgia of transcendence inspired by the sensory

²⁰⁰ Idem. Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁰¹ Idem. Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁰² Idem. Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁰³ Idem. Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁰⁴ Idem. Ibidem, p. 5.

²⁰⁵ Idem. Ibidem, p. 5.

²⁰⁶ Idem. Ibidem, p. 6.

presence of the natural object. Paul de Man states a striking definition for the “natural image” as “the word that designates a desire for an epiphany but necessarily fails to be an epiphany, because it is pure origination. For it is in the essence of language to be capable of origination, but of never achieving the absolute identity with itself that exists in the natural object”²⁰⁷.

5.3 The Intuition of Theological Meanings in Nature and the Correspondence of Biblical Plot and Individual Life

Abrams’ figure “theodicy of the landscape” represents an emotional perspective which fostered among the Romantics the poetic habit of “translating theological and moral concepts into an aesthetics of landscape”: the fact that behind the natural polarity of “beauteous” and “grand” forms of Nature there lay the problem of the presence and test of the “goodness and omnipotence of the creator”, so that “by the reasoning from the phenomena of nature” it could be intuited the “existence and attributes of God”²⁰⁸. Abrams demonstrates that the Romantics found a model for their conception of theological meanings in Nature in Thomas Burnet’s *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*. According to Abrams’ interpretation, the smoothness and regularness of fields used to suggest the idea that God created a perfect and beautiful world in which “mankind dwelt in perfect innocence and ease”; and were a sign of God’s “benevolence” toward human kind, recalling both the image of the “paradise described in Genesis” as in the “pagan myths of Elysian Fields and Fortunate Islands”; whereas mountains and the sea constituted signs of “the destruction of this perfect world” due to “God’s wrathful judgment” against men’s wickedness and degeneracy, thus recalling the images of a great ruin and a great abyss which should last until the final moment of redemption and restoration of the world. For the scholar, Burnet’s theory “exhibits the complex attitude” which advances the “new aesthetics” that we find among the Romantics: that of discovering “positive values” in the vast and terrifying elements of the landscape in which “the speaking face of nature declares the infinity, the power and

²⁰⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*, p. 6.

²⁰⁸ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **Natural Supernaturalism**: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature. 1973, p. 97-99.

the wrath of a just deity”²⁰⁹. For Wordsworth, this distinction of natural aspects evokes “a paradoxical union of delight and terror, pleasure and awe” which reflects “a long tradition of finding moral and theological meaning in the aesthetic qualities of nature”. Abrams demonstrates it to be “from such hints” that Wordsworth “constructed his account of an individual mind in its developing capacity to respond to and interpret” the forms of the outer world. Thus, Abrams outlines what he considers to form “the controlling idea” of *The Prelude* as the biographical course of the poet’s mind “from early childhood through a spiritual crisis [...] to the time in which he discovered his role in life”²¹⁰.

In the structure of the subjective trajectory of the lyrical speaker from (what should be) the innocent and harmonious life in infancy through the spiritual crisis which should allow to awaken him for personal and vocational discovery, Thomas Weiskel²¹¹, referring the scenes of the “spots of time”, assumes that “Wordsworth will later seem to be educated by the visible scenes of childhood, as if their remembrance indeed constituted a kind of knowledge”. However, Weiskel implies that “the visible scenes” bring instruction neither in the form of knowledge immediately communicated by the visual aspects of Nature nor in any direct understanding of the meanings present (or hidden) in the landscape. The “spots of time” are scenes, which should bring renewal or cure in recollection. In this sense, the instruction must come as a later insight to solve the tricks of a shocking and haunting experience.

Weiskel emphasizes the poet’s search for a cure for his crisis as a “side effect in his rehearsal of the past” which appears as a “genial state of mind which cannot be sought directly”. The genial mood does not depend upon “self-understanding” or upon the “communication of his history in terms of knowledge”²¹². According to this conception, there is an efficacious spirit, which comes “in response to the poet’s insight of the knowledge acquired by the mind as a result of the lurking events”. Weiskel defines the spot of time scenes in terms of passage, signifying “events that involve a passing from one state to another and also to the passing back and through of retrospection”²¹³. The question which Weiskel leaves unsolved about the efficacious spirit, as if the lurking and hidden meanings in Nature were tokens, later to be

²⁰⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 100-101.

²¹⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 102-103.

²¹¹ WEISKEL, Thomas. *The Defile of the Word*. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985, p. 94.

²¹² Idem. Ibidem. p. 94.

²¹³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 95.

discovered, of mysterious meanings of the poet's own hidden consciousness, is: Does it actually belong to – and come from – Nature or the speaker's own consciousness?. Maybe what could define the origin of the lurking spirit, to be in agreement with Weiskel, is to place it between the subject in the objective world, in the unrepeatabe, inaccessible moment of experience and in that mysterious and meaningful emotion that prompts it to spontaneous, unexpected flashes of recollection.

5.4 Nature and the Poet's Educational Journey in *The Prelude*

The themes of journey and travel configure a key formative motif among the Romantic poets. It is possible to identify the structure of the cyclical journey in the Romantic autobiographical epic as a pattern guiding the steps of the hero-poet. Meyer Abrams calls our attention for the "circuitous journey" as a narrative plot that may be paralleled with the biblical plot of the history of humanity. Lucy Newlin²¹⁴ observes the keen affiliation of *The Prelude* to the narrative of spiritual conversion modeled in the stories of individual pilgrimages like John Bunian's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding*. Newlin recognizes in the course of the two-book *Prelude* of 1799 the structure of the "spiritual autobiography". In the speaker's "commitment to progress, freedom and benevolence", she notes, Wordsworth "structures the narrative as an account of how nature's 'ministry' led to his own calling as one of nature's prophets"²¹⁵. This pattern of biographical growth is paralleled by the patterns of mankind's spiritual trajectory. In this sense, Newlin acknowledges that *The Prelude* came to occupy the place of *The Recluse* "as the focus of Wordsworth's abiding conviction that humankind was capable of progress", a faith that "had its foundation in the republican and communitarian politics of the 1790s"²¹⁶.

In this sense, it is possible to trace a parallel between *The Prelude*, which is conceived as the poem on the growth of the poet's mind, and Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, which was a novel composed to represent "Die Auflösung der Disonanzen in einem

²¹⁴ NEWLIN, Lucy. "The Noble Living and the Noble Dead": Community in *The Prelude*. In: **The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth**. GILL, Stephen (Edited by), 2008, p. 55-56.

²¹⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 58.

²¹⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 59.

gewissen Charakter”²¹⁷. The education of the self during the course of life is the central theme common to the speaker of Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem and to the narrator-protagonist of Hölderlin’s *Bildungsroman*. Getting hold of Hölderlin’s Preface to his novel, Abrams notices “his figure for the circuitous journey of life is that of an eccentric path”²¹⁸: “We all pass through an excentric path, and there is no other way possible from childhood to consummation”²¹⁹. Hölderlin’s idea proposes that the individual and human trajectory must lead to the balance between loss and (re)gain: “The blessed unity, Being (in the only sense of that word) is lost to us, and we had to lose it if we were to gain it again by striving and struggle. [...] We have fallen out with nature, and what was once one, as we can believe, is now in conflict with itself, and each side alternates between mastery and servitude”²²⁰. Abrams also remarks that Hölderlin’s formulation is close to “Schiller’s formulation to the educational course both of the individual and of mankind, for it describes the way as a movement out from the simple unity of nature up and around to the complex unity of culture”²²¹.

Both stories have formative and developmental purposes in the foreground. The referred dissonances in *Hyperion* are reflected by happiness and sorrow, which the narrator felt receiving from the soil of his fatherland: two opposite passions coming from the ground of the material level of Nature. On the other hand, the fatherland implies not only the earthly soil, but also the love of a region whose affinities connote identity, origin and pertainment. Both the growth of mind and the solution of the dissonances in the character represent and imply, in this context of recovering the origin in time, ground and principle, the return to Nature – in which the figure of the pilgrim’s return to home in the introduction of *The Prelude* represents in the individual sphere the symbolic and mythical ascendance of the human race towards humanity and freedom: the natural state of harmonious life and human integration in the world. In order to understand the Romantic concern for the urgency of human return to his proper sphere, or finding divinity in his actual order, we may have recourse to Northrop Frye’s²²²

²¹⁷ HÖLDERLIN, Friedrich. **Hyperion Oder der Eremit in Griecheland**. Vorrede. In Friedrich Hölderlin, Werke, Briefe, Dokumente. BEISSNER, Fridrich (Edited by). 1969, p. 221.

²¹⁸ ABRAMS, Meyer H.. **Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature**. 1973, p. 237.

²¹⁹ HÖLDERLIN, Friedrich. **Hyperion Oder der Eremit in Griecheland**. “Vorrede” to the “Vorletzte Fassung”. In: HÖLDERLIN, Friedrich. **Sämmtliche Werke**. BEISSNER, Fridrich (Edited by), (Stuttgart) III (1957) 236. Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 237.

²²⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 237.

²²¹ Notes. Idem. Ibidem. p. 510.

²²² FRYE, Northrop. *The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism*. In: FRYE, Northrop (Edited by). **Romanticism Reconsidered**. 1966, p. 4.

exposition of a framework reflecting the medieval and Renaissance imagery, which, “closely related in practice to belief [...] is in itself [...] a way of arranging images and providing for metaphors”:

The most remarkable and obvious feature of this framework is the division of being into four levels. The highest level is heaven, the place of the presence of God. Next come the two levels of the order of nature, the human level and the physical level. The order of human nature, or man’s proper home is represented by the story of the Garden of Eden in the Bible and the myth of Golden Age in Boethius and elsewhere. Man is no longer in it, but the end of all his religious, moral or social cultivations is to raise him into something resembling it. Physical Nature, the world of animals and plants, is the world man is now in, but unlike the animals and plants, he is not adjusted to it. He is confronted from birth with a moral dialectic, and must either rise above it to his proper human home or sink below it into the fourth level of sin, death and hell. This last level is not part of the order of nature, but its existence is what at present corrupts nature²²³.

Frye²²⁴ recognizes a parallel in terms of “metaphorical identification” between the Bible and poetry, since in both expressive universes “metaphor is a controlling mode of thought”. Wordsworth and the other Romantic poets interpreted the Bible as a pattern for their metaphorical ideas of Nature, and this pattern can be understood according to Frye’s following statement: “What the Bible has to reveal is, among other things, an ideal mode of living”²²⁵. Addressing his song to Coleridge, Wordsworth tries to let his friend know: “With better knowledge how the heart was framed / Of him thou lovest” (Book I, ll. 628-629). Elsewhere, the poet evokes Coleridge’s sympathetic presence to enhance the difference in the mode both of them grew up as to the direct experience with the forms of Nature yet gained equality of goal as “ministers” serving in her “temple”:

Thou, my friend! wert reared
In the great city, ’mid far other scenes;
But we, by different roads, at length have gained
The self-same bourne. [...] For thou has sought
The truth in solitude, and, since the days
That gave thee liberty, full long desired,
To serve in Nature’s temple, thou hast been
The most assiduous of her ministers;

(Book II, ll, 4452-464).

Wordsworth is responding to Coleridge’s claims for the blessing of his new life in Nature in *Frost at Midnight*, where, having just moved to the countryside, or rather found liberty from the city – the idea behind the symbolical pilgrim “escaped from the vast city” in *The Prelude* – he has finally found the ideal place to live and rear his child:

²²³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 4.

²²⁴ FRYE, Northrop. **Biblical and Classical Myths**. The Mythological Frame of Western Culture. 2004, p. 31.

²²⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 31.

For I was reared
 In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
 And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
 But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
 By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
 Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
 Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
 And mountain crags:

(*Frost at Midnight*, ll. 51-58).

In response, Wordsworth affirms that the places in which he had been reared possess the gifts of Nature, which has fed his “lofty speculations” and in which he found: “A never-failing principle of joy / And purest passion” (Book II, 450-451), which configures in the natural world the revelation and realization of what Frye calls in biblical terms “an ideal mode of living”²²⁶.

Hölderlin has developed the philosophical grounds of unity between man and the world or the idea of living in an organic whole, which constitutes the conception of freedom, in his reflection about the playful process of constitution and disintegration of the being. In his essay *Judgement and Being*, Hölderlin proposes that:

Judgement, in the highest and strictest sense, is the original separation of object and subject which are most deeply united in intellectual intuition, that separation through which alone object and subject become possible, the arche-separation. In the concept of separation there lies already the concept of the reciprocity of object and subject and the necessary presupposition of a whole of which object and subject form the parts²²⁷.

The element of liberty implies each individual to bring in himself the ontological idea of the whole. The relationship of man with Nature requires an emotional responsivity to the forms of the outside world, basing the intimate impulse for contemplation on the idealistic assumption that Beauty has a redemptive power, which saves and renovates man, for the beautiful contains the Truth, which implies the idea of the whole involving the reciprocity between subject and object. For both Wordsworth and Hölderlin man must try to recover the ground of freedom, e.g., to overcome the conflicts hindering the realization of human perfection, unity and happiness in the world by the moral sense of the imaginative faculty. In his essay, *On the Law of Freedom* the German poet asserts that:

There is a natural state of the imagination which has in common the lawlessness with that anarchy of representation organized by the intellect [...] yet which with respect to the law by which it is to be organized, needs to be distinguished from the intellect. [...] By this natural state of imagination, by this lawlessness, I mean a moral one; by this law [...] the law of freedom. There, the imagination is considered in and of itself, here in

²²⁶ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 31.

²²⁷ HÖLDERLIN, Friedrich. *Essays and Letters on Theory*. PFAU, Thomas (Edited by). 2000, p. 95.

conjunction with the faculty of desire [...] there is an aspect of the empirical faculty of desire, the analogue of what is called nature, which is most prominent where necessity and freedom, the restricted and the unrestricted, the sensuous and the sacred seem to unite; a natural innocence or [...] a morality of the instinct; and the fantasy in tune with it is heavenly. [...] however this natural state as such is also dependent on natural causes²²⁸.

According to those philosophical and religious reflections, Nature is supposed to be the place where the humankind is meant to fulfill its organic unity and spiritual elevation, where there can be no antagonism among natural, human and spiritual states, since the quality of human would contain the other ones in itself. For the individual the idea of journey implies self-knowledge and the possibility of overcoming the human conflicts with the world he lives in by finding inner balance and his proper place on earth.

In the fourth book, Wordsworth narrates the pleasurable and formative adventures lived when he was back to the vale and cottage where he had been reared during his school time at Hawkshead. The starting lines of this canto set the seventeenth-year old youth walking at noon towards the cottage of his “Old Dame”, an old woman who has been identified with Anne Tyson, who is supposed to have lodged and bred the poet after his father’s death:

Bright was the summer’s noon when quickening steps
 Followed each other till a dreary moor
 Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top,
 Standing alone, as from a rampart’s edge,
 I overlooked the bed of Windermere,
 Like a vast river, stretching in the sun,
 With exultation, at my feet I saw
 Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,
 A universe of Nature’s fairest forms
 Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst,
 Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.
 I bounded down the hill shouting amain
 For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks
 Replied, and when the Charon of the flood
 Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier
 I did not step into the well-known boat
 Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed
 Up the familiar hill I took my way
 Towards that sweet Valley where I had been reared.
 ’Twas but a short hour’s walk, ere veering round,
 I saw the snow-white church upon her hill
 Sit like a thronèd Lady, sending out
 A gracious look all over her domain.
 Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town;
 With eager footsteps I advance and reach
 The cottage threshold where my journey closed.

(Book IV, ll. 1-26).

²²⁸ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 33.

There is a structural element in the steps of the narrative, which seems to link all moments of return in the sequence of a symbolical unity. As the hero comes from Cambridge, it is already noon when he enters into stage and, when his journey is close to the end, describes Nature's bright revelation of fairy forms. Even though the noon was bright under the high hanging sun, the tone of the song indicates that the course stepped before being arrested by the glorious image of the bed of Windermere was shaded with implicit gloom. We may infer a moral battle played inside the subject, in which the heart weakness, the inner evil and the mundane vices were finally defeated by the radiant presence of Nature. The night of feast represents the worldly temptations, which link the subject down to the lower order of the body, tying him with the attractions of the matter – to employ the Plotinian terms – and, with the pleasures of the flesh – to introduce the Christian confessional problem. In *The Prelude*, the confessional tone indicates an Augustinian concern with religious conversion, guiding the self in the path of aesthetic conversion, since for Wordsworth poetry is a sacred office, an aesthetic-religious matter. In pilgrimage, the subject must be submitted to vile things, to temptation, to suffering, and to vices in order that the virtues might prevail, heightening the soul to the ideal realm, in the presence of the Divine Being, where True Beauty abides and divine happiness can be attained.

The crossing of the “dreary moor” and the climbing of the “bare ridge” remit to the Biblical images of crossing the desert and climbing the mountains, as well as to the image of the Valley of Tears or the Valley of Shadows. Remitting to the heroic epic, the long travel refers to the hard works, which used to put the hero into test, alluding to the obstacles and events, which show how good, and strong his character and ability are, making of him an exemplar of the victory of superior virtues. The moor and the ridge seemed to mark the boundary between the strange lands and Wordsworth's native country, contrasting the one's depressing waste with the exciting liveliness in the other. Now, the places between Cambridge and Hawkshead are not mentioned; and the silence about them indicate that the regions passed through during the journey meant something diverse both from Cambridge, whose bare fields allow the boy's soul to attain vision and contemplation in thought, as from Hawkshead, where vision and contemplation are reached through sight. The adjectives “dreary” and “bare” indicated harsh and deadening aspects that make the self feel sad, in such a dullness, dejection and dismay which mortify his creative power. Those aspects are suddenly contrasted with the showing up of the shiny scene vivifying the poet's heart.

However, the scene of brightness was rather fleeting than definitive. Between the gleaming universe revealed from the top of the hill and Anne Tyson's house there is a descent, which urges the protagonist to hurry on in order to keep on journeying, preventing him from detaining the pace to stand in patient contemplation. The descent has an ambivalent meaning, connecting the earth with the Inferno; and Windermere, "Like a vast river, stretching in the sun", from an image reflecting the brightness of Heaven became a metaphorical Stinx mastered by the figure of Charon. The youth must pass through the reign of death. Connecting the bank with the lake, the "jutting pier" suggests the extension between the living and the death orders, the threshold of a process of passage to the underworld where Odysseus went after enlightenment about a subject hidden to his world. Nevertheless, the boat trip also connotes a ritual of purification, preparing Wordsworth to develop his mind to a stage of higher contact with Wisdom.

From the trip in Charon's boat, Wordsworth landed at the foot of a new ascent towards a sacred and homely world. Like Odisseus came back from Hades, Wordsworth passed from the dreadful shade of a pagan region – unconsciously lurking the youth's heart, who implicitly recognized in the friendly and familiar face of the old Ferryman the terrible figure of Charon, which reveals the uncanny character abiding in the "well-known" place – to the protected cosmos of the Christian world: thence, the *loci* have a different character – the hill is "familiar" and the valley is "sweet" of a holy taste, spread by the purifying aura of the local church guarding the town with her blessing reach. Comparing the church with a Lady sitting on her throne and looking to her reign, Wordsworth establishes the level of nobility and holiness of her majestic domain, as if the church represented the queen of the place, in which personification she symbolizes the power of Our Lady, whose "gracious look" overspreads divine protection of supernal maternal love.

Wordsworth is hinting at the idea that every effort seeking to overcome adversity will be rewarded by Nature, especially when man, pure of heart, searches for great wonders in the world. Only after a long and tiresome wandering, after having left behind the distant land and being near home, his soul was gratified. After having crossed a "dreary moor" and climbed a "bare ridge", the majestic scene was revealed before his eyes. From the vantage point on the top of the hill, he got a panoramic sight of "the bed of Windermere". The whole scenery appeared bathed in brightness by the sun light at noon. The lake reflected the empyrean light like a mirror and filled the eyes

with scintillation. The majestic appearance of the scene exhilarated emotions which the speaker attributed to the landscape, while the natural objects “magnificent”, “beautiful”, and “gay” reflected the youth’s own ecstatic mood as he saw them. He felt moved by affections of the sublime in a state correspondent to the landscape’s sublime state: the lake impressed him with the vastness of a river, making his soul experiment the feeling of spiritual vastness.

Describing the beautiful image as a “universe of Nature’s fairest forms”, the poet indicates how the sensible forms, as the fundamental aspect of the material forms of Nature, combining with the fluid and ethereal forms of the heavenly province, reveal the blessing energy and vivid bliss of the archetypal Beauty, endowed with spiritual animation and ideal radiance. For Wordsworth, his native country was full with the magic of Nature, a place where the protagonist was to find most of the greatest instructions and revelations of his life. However, the youth could not detain his eyes in the contemplation of the scene; he had to glance at it in an “instantaneous burst” and then hurry on in order not to miss the ferryboat to cross the lake. By travelling, the hero is to find spiritual renovation, unity and peace after overcoming self-alienation.

5.5 The Beautiful Forms and the Soul of Nature

In Wordsworth’s account of his attitudes and reflections after telling his adventurous tales among Nature the sports and the solitude with natural recesses are the essential conditions for her to reveal her mysteries to man. Through a strong intuition, the poet is aware of the fact that she hides her spiritual essence behind the sensible forms. The beautiful appearances constitute such veil that covers the Soul of Nature. Nature only reveals her secrets under the condition of a mutual love: the poet manifesting the love of a son for his mother, and Nature treating him like a mother does to a dear son. Thence, from the mutual benevolence and respect, results a mutual relation of reciprocal trust in which Nature rewards the poet’s worshipful devotion with doses of revelation. Thus, solitude is a necessity justified by that truth which the poets are soon to discover: that Nature only reveals her spiritual dimensions to those who deserve her trust, a reward for devotional merit. As a devoted prophet, Wordsworth

searches unrelentingly and insatiably for the meaning within her forms, in order to serve her. Hence the felt consecration of the poet: the Universe communicates its glory only to his chosen sons, who then have the mission of transmitting those wonders in song.

5.6 The Ministries of Beauty and Fear Affecting the Mind: Signs of the Universal in the Visible Forms of Nature

In the fourteenth stanza of Book I the speaker establishes the manners through which, while Nature composes and affects the mind with external forms, so that the beautiful and sublime forms are believed to foster man's thoughts, the outer images bring the memory of the archetypal Beauty. Such a belief connects the fourteenth to the eleventh stanza: In the reflection on the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe" the poet glorifies the "Soul" of the world, which is "the Eternity of thought", e.g. which animates everything with motion and intelligence, endowing all beings with physical and intellectual attributes, by infusing the meanings and feelings which constitute the "human soul". The contact of man and Nature allows the relation of the human with the universal, of the temporal with the eternal. Wordsworth indicates that "from my first dawn / Of childhood" Nature exposes the human mind to the things of lofty value and durable existence: "Not with the mean and vulgar works of man, / But with high objects, with enduring things" (Book I, ll. 408-409).

These ideas are brought back and meditated upon in a passage where the poet suggests that Nature stores the mind by means of outer power with fair and sublime affections, disposing the human heart to love those forms. Besides, he reflects on the pleasure and joy of simplicity, which informs the human nature to be integrated by bonds of love with the durable essence and elevated values of Nature:

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm; that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,

And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.
(Book I, ll. 544-558).

The “other pleasures” and “joys of subtler origin”, added and contrasted to the “extrinsic passions” through which Nature stored the poet’s mind with sublime and beautiful forms; the “motions of the sense” endowed with “intellectual charm” represent archetypical ideas through which, inscribed in the Neoplatonic tradition of Plotinus, Wordsworth states the poetical faith that besides “the beauties of the realm of senses” there are “loftier beauties”²²⁹ belonging to the eternal Being, of the same nature as the essential Intellection, which the human senses are not granted to have access to, which the soul only is able to know. Plotinus’ conception of the act of perceiving the things of the soul implies a different order from that of dealing with the natural objects:

The knowing of the things belonging to the Intellectual is not in any such degree attended by impact or impression: they come forward, on the contrary, as from within, unlike the sense-objects known as from without: they have more emphatically the character of acts; they are acts in the stricter sense, for their origin is in the soul, and every concept of this Intellectual order is the soul about its Act²³⁰.

Plotinus’ postulates constitute the ground for Wordsworth’s frequent appeal to the inward mind, now by pleading for abandoning the senses in their lower place, thus mounting to the vision of those higher forms of Beauty through a pure motion of the soul; now deepening his perceptive power, fusing sense and sentiment in a sublime and visionary communion with the external images. Beside claiming for the activity of the mind in the perception of external objects, Wordsworth claims for the soul knowing itself and the universal in the same act, for one essential characteristic of Wordsworth’s poetry is to unite what comes from without and what comes from within in one single whole of mutual relations, since both are originated in the great Soul of Nature.

The changing forms and transitory aspects of the elemental scenery without along the year are tokens of the eternal qualities of Nature, manifestations of the eternal essence of the Universe. The poet feels those transformations internalizing into his own transformation of mood and character, so that the intuitive attunement with the external motions harmonizes him with the ontological and intellectual principles of the universal Soul:

The seasons came,
And every season wheresoever I moved
Unfolded transitory qualities,

²²⁹ PLOTINUS, *The Six Enneads*. 1952, p. 23.

²³⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 190.

Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
 Had been neglected; left a register
 Of permanent relations, else unknown.
 (Book II, ll. 288-293).

The proper nature of Soul belongs to what Plotinus identified as divine and eternal, as opposed to the body, which is of the order of sense and matter. The Neoplatonic tradition attributes the noble to the soul, whereas the vile belongs to the dominion of the body. The unreasoned desires and impulses derive from the commerce with bodily life, whereas the soul is concerned with the Supernals, and attached to wisdom and authentic virtue. By elevating the physical order of body and sense, Wordsworth attempts to harmonize both spheres. Wordsworth speaks of a mode of purifying the self by looking towards the noble and lofty. However, his purpose does not consist in denying the body with its qualities, emotions and experiences, but – except from some stubborn emphasis on the higher value of the mind above Nature – to enrich the sensible realm through the vision and participation in the divine and eternal qualities recognizable in the self. He seeks to confirm the possession of wisdom and authentic virtue, those qualities capable of elevating his life above meanness and mortality, believing with Plotinus that “what possesses these must be divine by its very capacity of the divine, the token of kinship and of identical substance”²³¹. By this process of purification and elevation, Wordsworth realizes an evolution attributed to the Sage.

The reflections about the natural elements imprinting playful shades and startling images upon the material face of earth and ethereal countenance of the sky tell how Wordsworth reacted to those scenes and natural spectacles which in childhood constitute a “calm delight” which binds the self to Nature, which “constitute the bond of union between life and joy” (Book I, l. 558). The poet reports how the seasons, changing the countenance of the world during the course of the year, made such impressions and stored the boy’s mind with a set of images: the mist extending its gauze of curling fumes over the landscape; the clouds reflected on the water changing its colour. The working of the elements produces new visual effects, which the boy beholds with exultation:

I remember when the changeful earth,
 And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
 The faces of the moving year, even then
 I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
 Old as creation, drinking in a pure

²³¹ Idem, *Ibidem*, 198-199.

Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
 Of curling mist, or from the level plain
 Of waters coloured by impending clouds.
 (Book I, ll. 559-565).

This is the exultation of having his being arrested by the beautiful forms of Nature and by the spontaneous insight that he is before something of higher and Universal value captured through the scene: Beauty itself. The boy's spirit is elevated by his "intercourse with beauty / Old as creation", for he recognizes that the forms of Nature contain the ideal and prototypical character of the original and eternal forms of the cosmos. They are manifestations of Nature's organic and spontaneous motions, self-producing and self-impelling, which feed the boy's soul with feelings through the senses. The passions are moved in a synesthesis, thus inebriating way. The boy drinks the pure organic pleasure and so gets the ecstatic mood of one absorbing from a powerful Consciousness, altering the proper meaning of drinks, from liquids like water and wine to feelings and affections.

However, he drinks in the wreath of mist: the mist is a vaporous element, so it is to be inhaled, even smelled. On the other part, the mist is sensed by the eyes as colour and form – silver, curling; and can be sensed palpably in its humid refreshing touch. In the sequence the verb "drink" refers to the level plain of waters and therefore is employed in a way approaching the proper object of the verb, yet altering the meaning of the verb in terms of channel, provided that instead of the mouth it were the eyes which are drinking: here Wordsworth employs the lexical possibilities of "drinking" in the metaphorical meaning of communication with the original beauty through intercourse with the surroundings. The boy drinks the "pure organic pleasure" because according to the Neoplatonic conception of emanation that is the form of communication between the beings in general and the Universal Being: whereas the Soul of Nature pours forth her animating energy as a great fountain, the living beings suck from her as though from a source of juice. The baby drinking from the mother's breast, the bee culling nectar from the flowers, the tree whose roots suck nutrition from earth and the animals drinking from a spring embody the prototypical relationship of Nature's creatures with the Universal Soul.

However, the object of drinking is not specified in the stanza; the verb appears as intransitive; and the speaker drinks "in the pleasure"; drinks "from the wreaths of mists" and "from the plain waters". This indicates that the speaker enters at this moment in the realm of metaphor; and a bit more of attention allows us to say that he is drinking

“beauty”, meaning that he is capturing it by his senses and absorbing it into his being in the form of feelings. When the speaker reaches the realm of metaphor, the world becomes poetic and the poet reaches the richest device of his intercourse with Nature: the notion of imagination. The realm of metaphor establishes the transition or the complementary relation between the concrete, perceptive side of imagination and its ideal and creative facet.

This metaphorical approach of the vernal earth exhaling rolls of mist in the air as a “silver wreath” suggests in religious hints the hallow character of Nature’s creative power and the divinity of her elements whose intercourse heightens man’s soul. The “plain of waters” bears an analogy with the mirror, which reflects but also absorbs the outer image; and in this mirroring power, the water realizes the union of element and image and, in the same way, it unites the elements in the image. By mirroring, the plain of water unites heaven and earth in a single whole, in which the water acquires the same shades of the clouds. Metaphorically, or through the poetical-mythical intercourse, the speaker unites himself in organic integration of human, natural and divine being, with earth and heaven in the act of beholding the reflection of the cloudy sky on the still water, feeling the innermost enchantment of this contemplation, for he is drinking: “From the level plain / Of waters coloured by impending clouds”. The speaker “held intercourse with the beauty / Old as creation” and the plain of waters is still and placid to remit the speaker back to a paradisaal scene in the original time of things. When Nature was pure, not touched by the profane hands of man, a time when man feels at home within Nature, recognizes himself in her and breathes peace from her stillness.

5.7 Sublime Images: Sense Perception, Blissful Remembrances and Poetic Speech

Talking about the remembrance of how earth’s changing appearances and the course of the seasons had stamped in his mind the faces of the moving year, along which he had had unconscious intercourse with the forms of durable beauty, Wordsworth is dealing with a subtle conception on the modes of perception – which implies the necessary association with a specific conception of memory – remitting to a problem discussed by Plotinus. Wordsworth’s special subtlety refers to his playful

liberty to tone down Plotinus' idealistic conception, adapting it to a naturalistic view based on elemental intercourse with organic forms.

Defining "Perception and Memory", Plotinus rejects categorically the theories which state that perceptions consist of "imprints" and can be "thought of as seal-impressions on the soul or mind". Consequently, the philosopher argues that memory cannot be "explained as the retaining of information in virtue of the lingering of an impression"²³². Rejecting the notions of impression and retention, Plotinus attempts to explain perception and memory without "the notions that the sensible object striking upon the soul or mind makes a mark upon it, and that the retention of this mark is memory"²³³. Plotinus teaches that the mind "takes no inner imprint and does not see in virtue of some mark made upon it". He states that "In any perception we attain by sight, the object is grasped there where it lies in the direct line of vision; [...] there, then the perception is formed; the mind looks outward". Plotinus argues against the idea of an imprint object stamped in the mind based on the truth that any object put into direct contact with the eyes blocks vision, and therefore cannot be grasped as an object of vision. Conclusively, the philosopher demonstrates that it is so because "vision demands a duality, of the seen and the seeing: the seeing agent must be distinct and act upon an impression outside it, not upon one occupying the same point with it: sight can deal only with an object not inset but outlying"²³⁴.

Since, for Plotinus, perception does not go by any impression contained within the mind, he defines its process as the mind acting upon the outer objects. As he conceives the mind as "a power", its characteristic is "not to accept impression but, within its allotted sphere, to act"²³⁵. The philosopher argues that:

the very condition of the mind being able to exercise discrimination upon what it is to see and hear is not, of course, that these objects be equally impressions made upon it; on the contrary, there must be no impressions, nothing to which the mind is passive; there can be only acts of that in which the object become known²³⁶.

In a way, Plotinus does not deny the existence of impressions as components of perception, which condition the object to be grasped by the sense-faculties. Yet, for him, the impressions caused by the objects are taken not by the senses onto themselves but by a species of channel without, belonging to the environment itself. In this subject-

²³² Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, 1952, p. 189.

²³³ *Idem*, *Ibidem*, p. 189.

²³⁴ *Idem*, *Ibidem*, p. 189.

²³⁵ *Idem*, *Ibidem*, p. 189-190.

²³⁶ *Idem*, *Ibidem*, p. 190.

object relation, the mind plays another part: “it belongs to the faculty, and the soul-essence, to read the imprints thus appearing before it, as they reach the point at which they become matter of its knowledge”²³⁷. There is a Plotinian hint in Wordsworth conviction that the mind is active in the perception of outward objects, overall as it raises the act of thinking.

In a serious and responsible way, Wordsworth plays with Plotinus’ teaching and suggests not that the objects leave a direct imprint on his eyes or in his mind, but that his senses grasp the image of the object and stamp it in his mind in its pure immaterial quality of image. However, the image dimension is not a void impression, nor a mere shadow of the object. For Wordsworth, the image allows such a communication with the object that the self can get an intuition of the striking qualities of the object, in which the senses find beauty in the idea of its sensible-material magnitude and living form, capable of integrating it in aesthetical unity in the whole of Nature’s landscapes. The observation of the external world gives Wordsworth the pleasure of grasping the objects out there with the power of his sensible faculties. Thus, when the speaker thinks of the changing appearances of earth stamping the face of the year in his mind, he is thinking about the external image as granted with more than sensible qualities, as endowed with ideal, poetic qualities: the sensible image of Nature is itself an ideal archetype of Universal Beauty.

As Wordsworth reflects upon the beautiful scenes stamped upon his mind, in a way echoing Plotinus’ lesson on the nature of Perception, his further reflection on scenes, which produced “rememberable things”, will raise the problem of Memory, which, according to Plotinus, stands together with the first one. In the sixteenth stanza of *The Prelude*’s first book, as a concluding note, the poet reflects upon those scenes in which the boy had observed the effects of the seasons upon the changing earth, as unleashing a subtle happiness in the self. Concerning the brightness of those blissful sights of childhood Wordsworth comments that:

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child’s pursuits
Are prompt attendants, ’mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten; even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield; – the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, ’tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed

²³⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 190.

Of evil-minded fairies), yet not in vain
 Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
 Collateral objects and appearances,
 Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
 Until maturer seasons called them forth
 To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
 – And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
 Wearied itself out of the memory
 The scenes which were a witness of this joy
 Remained in their substantial lineaments
 Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
 Were visible, a daily sight; and thus,
 By the impressive discipline of fear,
 By pleasure and repeated happiness,
 So frequently repeated, and by force
 Of obscure feelings representative
 Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
 So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
 Though yet the day was distant, did become
 Habitually dear, and all their forms
 And changeful colours by invisible links,
 Were fastened to the affections.

(Book I, ll. 581-612).

When Wordsworth calls those delights “fits of vulgar joy”, the main argument explicates his concern with the basic processes in which the body interacts with the objective world, perceiving it in a preconscious mode, which precedes thought. In this sense, the poet needs even to seek the terms, which could fit to express the peculiar meaning of many an experience, which, in the physical dominion, was to link up with or shift into inspired spiritual arguments. In an article entitled *Wordsworth’s Hidden Argument* Dan Jacobson²³⁸ scrutinizes how the poet’s inspired moments contain the world surrounding him:

At his best he was a peculiarly physiological poet – by which I mean that he managed to articulate the anonymous, humble, non-volitional bodily processes that precede all thought, and without which thinking cannot take place. In addition to all the other modes in which he wrote, he was in effect a poet of the autonomic nervous system, the spinal cord, the digestive tract, the circulation of the blood; he was also preoccupied to an exceptional degree with the capacity of people to notice things without being conscious of having done so, and to retain an unrecognized memory of them until some later circumstance should stir it into life²³⁹.

Many of those unconscious noticed things only were to be understood when, as Wordsworth utters, “maturer seasons called forth / To impregnate and to elevate the mind” (Book I, 595-596). Jacobson attests in Wordsworth’s poem an incessant effort to find the words to convey the signification of his experiences beyond the common range

²³⁸ JACOBSON, Dan. Wordsworth’s Hidden Arguments – From Egotism to Epic: How the Poet’s Inspired ‘Breathings’ Contain the World that Surrounds Him. In: **The Times Literary Supplement**, October 31, 2007.

²³⁹ Idem, *Ibidem*.

of which the English language disposes. Accordingly, this “implies that in his writing he has to do much more than find an approximate verbal mode of representing his experience”. Jacobson’s point confirms my suppositions that Wordsworth’s arguments lead from the physical intercourse with the external world to the symbolical magnitude of the sublime, visionary and even heroic narrative, which would endow Wordsworth with the sacred metaphysical power to know and reveal the higher transcendent Truth that lies in the deeper elemental recesses of Humanity.

Jacobson demonstrates that, asking what the lakes and mountains, the trees and monuments of the human past have with him, and he with them; that asking why he is so drawn to them, why their presence or the mere thought of them affect him so greatly, Wordsworth draws the conviction that “surely I am not deceiving myself at those dizzying moments when I feel I can take them into myself and transform them, make them me”. Wordsworth’s emphatic appeal to “maturer seasons called forth / To impregnate and to elevate the mind” can be clarified by Prickett’s account that Romantic poetry works by the means of symbol “because it is concerned to change the way the reader experiences life”. Thus, Coleridge and Wordsworth see the growth of the mind as “a growth in *quality* of perception”. For the Romantics the poem “was felt to reveal in its organization the way in which the poet’s own mind has developed”. For Wordsworth “recollection has the power of converting aimless drifting into moments of insight and joy as he remembers his own change of mood under this revelation”²⁴⁰.

Wordsworth refers to the communication between the natural objects and man, in which images carry on messages which, by virtue of emotion, are worthy of being stored in his poetic remembrance. The image of the “flashing of a shield” associates a heroic meaning to the bright scenes in which a poetic mind beholds the sensuous prophecy of the natural phenomena. As an instrument of heroic battles, the shield reminds the combats of ancient times which were worthy of a bardic song. The ancient bards were responsible for registering and keeping the glorious memories of a folk. Wordsworth associates the gleaming sights beheld in childhood with “something of value” in the tradition of human deeds. In this sense, “flashing” is itself a phenomenon associated with remembrance; “light”, a power related to wisdom; and “bright”, related to value. Thus, the brilliance of beautiful scenes in Nature corresponds to the poetical illumination it awakes in the human mind. Similarly, gleaming refers to moments of inspiration in which the soul, as if animated by a divine influence, is activated and put

²⁴⁰ PRICKETT, Stephen. **Coleridge and Wordsworth**: The Poetry of growth. 1970, p. 15-16.

into the fruitful disposition for the poetic creation. Remembrance brings the soul into the proper mood for feeling and expressing the poetic experience and the contents of poetical value.

This mood is one in which paradoxical elements are reconciled and enter in mutual action to produce the complex of image, melody and meaning of the poem. That is why both in the thirteenth and the sixteenth stanzas of the first book, in which Wordsworth meditates upon the scenes of adventurous and rapturous communion with the external world, he unites the senses of the stillness and agitation which prompt the mind for the poetic intuition, the insight of higher values beyond the visible things yet deriving from them. As an introductory comment, Wordsworth refers in the thirteenth stanza to pleasures and joys of subtler origin felt in a “tempestuous time” which were “motions of the sense” endowed with an “intellectual charm”, e.g. which connect sense experience with the corresponding spiritual, metaphysical patternings of the mind. Conversely, he refers to that “calm delight” related to those affinities which bind man to the existence of the universe without. The forms of the outer world contain the spiritual patternings with which the mind communes. Thus, the affinities established via sense relationship between man and the world reflect the ontological relations between the Created and the Uncreated. The tempest moves the human being up to the visceral sensibility, since, for Wordsworth, it represents the terrible spontaneity and power of the natural forces moving the universe. Yet, those forces are not conceived as devoid of order: even in their apparently disorder that touches man’s unconscious layers of perception they are believed to be ruled by the Universal Reason, which commands Nature. After the tempest, comes a profound calm, which reflects in the human mood.

Wordsworth recognizes the sacred statute of the poetic speech, through which the bard is that man endowed with the privileged power resulting from the combination of the talent to sing, the inspired mood and the divinatory art. Therefore, the “motions of the sense” are qualified as “hallowed and pure” (Book I, l. 551). In saying that the sensible joys are like a tempest, which works along the blood and then is forgotten, Wordsworth indicates how the motions of the world without produce a correspondent agitation inside the self. The calm after the tempest always bears the tokens of the past revolving energy. Correspondingly, the inner calm of the self is the unconscious storage of meaning later to be uttered forth.

The acknowledgement of the Universal power manifesting in the motions of the seasons fetches the same idea and actualizes the same feelings of the reflection upon the

“fits of vulgar joy”, awakened through the “intercourse of beauty” which the seasons bring, changing the appearance of the world along the year. Then, the speaker asserts his intuition that “mid that giddy bliss / Which like a tempest, works along the blood / And is forgotten” (Book I, ll. 583-585) the earth and common face of Nature communicated to him “rememberable things” and impressed the soul with things and forms prompt, at the right time, to impregnate and elevate the mind. The blows seen in the world around agitate the passions within, and are felt in the blood – by which the speaker indicates his concern with what affects the self in the corporeal, physiological system, in the vital matter, as a biological impulse moving the subject from the very entrails. Furthermore, the external storms both alter the subject’s mood through simple driftings and raise the emotion contained in the insight of a secret message being communicated, which, by means of a sort of divining power, would awake the bard at the right time to decipher it.

The moments of “vulgar joy” convey the meaning of an initiatory rite, which will constitute the first steps in the ascent, which leads a poet to the vision of Truth. In this sense, Wordsworth grounds and warrants his affiliation to the tradition of the ancient bards. Like Milton and Blake, Thomson and Hölderlin – like Hesiod, Homer and Pindar, before them – Wordsworth is a “master of truth”, whose task is to keep the memory of worthy men, valuable things and glorious events – which he found in the action of humble people amid scenes of humble life –, averting them of falling into forgetfulness. As though designed by the divine providence, in Wordsworth’s belief, Nature acts not without purpose, but with the intention of giving him the due formation of a poet. Thus, if the earth and the face of Nature spoke to the child “rememberable things”, even though sometimes “By chance collisions and quaint accidents”, they were “not in vain / Nor profitless”.

The reference to the seasons in this stanza introduces a double sense, which links the external motions and appearances in the external Nature to the internal development of the human being. In the following excerpt from the beginning of the stanza: “oft amid those fits of vulgar joy / Which through all seasons, on a child’s pursuits / Are prompt attendants” (Book I, ll. 581-583), the term “seasons” denote the cycles of the natural temporality in which after each end a new beginning brings the same world again, renewing the elderly elements. In the second reference: “Until maturer seasons call them forth” (Book I, l. 595), the term connotes the human temporality, and, therefore, the passage of the time in a kind of accumulation of years as the person grows

up and gets old. The human ages bring man's development and thus the "seasons" mean human maturity.

Wordsworth suggests man's integration in Nature by inter-crossing the external return of the seasons with the linear time of man, which walks towards death. As fruits and flowers ripen until the state in which they reach the gathering rare, the human being grows physically and spiritually until his faculties reach the proper conditions to make the due sense and achieve the due comprehension of any early experience employ it at the right moment. The images and forms, and the varieties of shades and colours produced by the changing seasons along the years and observed during the childhood acquire their full poetic sense when Wordsworth is "worthy of himself", e.g. when his mind is mature enough to start his designed task and accomplish the higher vocation of a poet.

Thinking about the scenes which gave him those "vulgar joys", which through the happiness they usually bring are kept in the memory by a regime of love, Wordsworth gives an account that in the case of the joy being forgotten it will not be lost, because the scenes were still vivid in the mind and were still there, durable in their form of places in external Nature, prompt to be contemplated again. Wordsworth is meditating about how pleasurable scenes in Nature are offered to the human self through the senses and then are converted into feelings in the heart and ideas in the mind. As the images always rouse agreeable and blissful sentiments, these joy and endearment prepare them to be recollected. Furthermore, the poet is musing about what makes of the natural beauties and the beholding experience a matter of poetry. He leads us to conclude that, besides the effects of "impressive discipline of fear", "pleasure" and "happiness" the beautiful scenes given to remembrance are endeared, linked with the affections by the force of the "obscure feeling" peculiar of "forgotten things". The sensible experience becomes poetic image in the play of vividness and obscurity with which the memory might keep it in remembrance. On the other side, Wordsworth is hinting at the play of picturesque and atmosphere in a sensible image, which corresponds to the imaginative play between senses and feelings either in perception or in recollection. If the clear-cut details of an image might be forgotten with the flowing of time, the atmosphere around it and the mood it had provoked in the self are powerful enough to be kept in the mind, prompt to be activated by the slightest stimulus of the sense as capable of awakening the remembrance of that image or the emotion of the actual moment of experience in which it was presented to the self.

From the sensible and sentimental motions felt in the body in the actual moment of perception, Wordsworth derives an ideal state of mind, which remains as “remembrance”, explainable in terms of Plotinus conception of Memory. Accordingly, Memory is a gift belonging to the Soul. Besides having an intuition of the Intellectual sphere, the Soul has access to the things of the sense-order. In this sense, Plotinus argues that, directing its power towards the sensible things, the human soul keeps the power “in travail towards them, so that, whenever it puts out its strength in the direction of what has once been present in it, it sees that object as present still; and the more intense its effort, the more durable is the presence”²⁴¹. According to Plotinus’ definition, which implies poetic presentification in remembrance, Memory is a case of the thing once presented before the subject remaining in sight in virtue of the power of attention. It demands from the subject the patient exercise of his sensible faculties and mental activities upon the object from without. For Plotinus, the process producing memory brings the “strengthening of the mind” to act upon objects not contained in it. Therefore, he conceives memory not as a matter of retention of an imprint of the object upon the organ – what implies passivity and weakness, subjection to the objective world – but as “an evocation of that faculty of the soul, or mind, in which remembrance is vested”²⁴².

Thus, by asserting that “if the vulgar joy by its own weight / Wearied itself out of the memory / The scenes which were a witness of this joy / Remained in their substantial lineaments / Depicted on the brain, and to the eye / Were visible, a daily sight”, Wordsworth implies not only the material durability of the landscapes, accessible to repeatability of sensible experience, but the Ideal, Intellectual durability of the image depicted in Memory. Plotinus’ lesson helps Wordsworth to set the goal for the development of his own poetic soul. Contemplating the natural beauties, he always has in mind the philosophical conclusion that “the basis of memory is the soul-power brought to full strength”²⁴³. For Wordsworth, to be a poet is, in Plotinian terms, to be “the master” of one’s own mental and sensible “acts and states”. Yet, of course, this power implies the ability to recognize beauty in its essence where it exists. Therefore, Wordsworth receives the guiding teachings of Plotinus not in a passive, but in a playful, i.e. in a reflective way. He is fascinated by the noble and elevating idea that “memory is a power of the Soul”²⁴⁴. However, Wordsworth knows and welcomes the idea that the

²⁴¹ PLOTINUS, *The Six Enneads*. 1952, p. 190.

²⁴² Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 191.

²⁴³ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 191.

²⁴⁴ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 191.

human being has his integrity in the fact of being a unity of soul and body, thus living integrated with Nature. That is why Wordsworth, as a poet concerned with his formative course, understood that the poetic speech involves a symbolical language in which the intuition of the higher objects of the Intellectual sphere are only to be accessed through the emotional intercourse with the sensible objects of Nature.

5.8 Happiness Flowing along the Blood: From the Realm of Sense toward the Intellectual Realm

In the first and second books of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth tells a series of sporty adventures involving him and the group of fellow boys. He closes this series of playful meetings of the “boisterous crew” in the fourth stanza of the second book by relating the tale about once when, after having spent half an afternoon at play in the smooth plain by the garden of the old tavern within a bay midway on Winander’s eastern shore, during their return home sailing across the lake before nightfall, they left the “Minstrel of the Troop” on the beach of a small island and rowed off while, standing upon a rock, “he blew his flute” (Book II, l. 169). At this point – repeating the procedure employed in the first book, when, after telling and describing many of their playful adventures, closed with the description of the games inside the cottage while, without, the weather was not favourable for outdoor sports, the poet starts a meditative and worshipful sequence of verses – Wordsworth reaches a moment of section in the second book of *The Prelude*, and his speech and technique become less narrative and more reflective. It reveals a maturing point in which the many previous moments characterized by leaving the society with the group of boys and escaping into a place where he could find solitude with Nature are brought to a synthesis.

At the end of the second book’s fourth stanza Wordsworth starts a reflection, which summarizes his ideas about the charms drawn from Nature along the adventures thus far told. He tells how, as a moment of change in his mind, his sympathies for the landscape were enlarged and how the “common range of visible things” became endeared and plenty of adoration for him. He explained the reason to change the nature of his love for the sun and moon. As a boy, he started to love the sun no longer:

as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light

Which we behold and feel we are alive;
 Nor for his bounty to so many worlds –
 But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
 His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
 The western mountain touch his setting orb,
 In many a thoughtless hour, when from excess
 Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow,
 For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
 And, from like feelings, humble though intense,
 To patriotic and domestic love
 Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
 For I could dream away my purposes,
 Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
 Midway between the hills, as if she knew
 No other region, but belonged to thee,
 Yeah, appertained by a peculiar right
 To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale.
 (Book II, ll. 179-197).

This alleged shifting in attitude towards the natural objects, changing the focus from the beneficial gifts of Nature to the love of Nature herself can be considered as a search no longer for the accidental but for the essential, captured by the means of emotional perception of Beauty which sets the subject attuned with the sensible attractions of the familiar landscapes:

Those incidental charms which first attached
 My heart to rural objects, day by day
 Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
 How Nature, intervenient till this time
 And secondary, now at length was sought
 For her own sake.
 (Book II, ll. 198-203).

His utterance that Nature had been “intervenient” until that time implies an intimate change of thought, surmounting a personal view on the biological functions of Nature toward the living creatures and systems with the wish to see the “unity of all” (Book II, l. 221) revealed in the organic forms. However, the opinion “secondary” implies a deeper criticism in which the poet puts into question the scientific approach of Nature common to the previous generation and still under work at his time. He remits to the rationalistic science, based on analytical methods and logical deduction, which would turn man into an “officious slave” “of that false secondary power / By which we multiply distinctions (Book II, ll. 216-217). Accordingly, the “formal arts” impair the understanding of the essential connections, which make the “unity of all”. In affirming that the incidental charms which attached his heart to the rural objects grew weaker, so that Nature’s interventions – the pledge and surety of human earthly life – left space for an intimate search for her intrinsic character, Wordsworth means a change in which he was supposed to have overcome the mere attachment of necessity, the mere attractions

of the body which connect him with the material order of Nature in order to emancipate the powers of his soul to seek the Essence of Nature, ascending towards the spiritualized vision of the Intellectual Realm. With all his elemental love for natural things, yet in his desire for the noble, Wordsworth cannot help echoing a lesson by Plotinus: that the Soul “has dealings with both orders [the Intellectual Realm and the realm of sense] – benefited and quickened by the one, but by the other beguiled, falling before resemblances, and so led downwards as under spell”²⁴⁵. Thus, as the sphere of Intellectual Beings is conceived as one of radiance, yet by his nature the human being is attached to the world of senses, not having direct access, i.e. vision, to the Intellectual Being, the sun and the moon are the closest objects to the Universal Essence, accessible to man in this world. Therefore, Wordsworth seeks in the brightness of sun and moon the means for his soul to ascend towards a state of kinship with the Reason-Principle of the Universe.

Only an emotional approach might provide the access to the meanings of the Universal Reason, a communion confirmed in feeling. Now, after adventurous agitations, the sun awakens the desire of quiet and contemplative joy. The moon awakens the love and comfort of homely land, appeasing the spirit for deep sleeping bliss. The poet loves the sun and moon due to the power of visible things to generate powerful feelings, which unite the self and the world in contemplation. The speaker loves the world around him as an extension of himself, which he realizes acutely at those moments when he is caught by the celestial orbs gleaming close to earth, as if, like himself, also they were a pertaining part of the region where he lives. Beholding the shining orbs too close to the mountains, lakes and vales the speaker intuits the mysterious presence of the divine into the earthly, for the celestial region seemed to have come closer to earth in harmonic union: that union involves and penetrates the subject’s heart giving life to his feelings and thus vivifying his spirit.

The segment above gives sequence to similar ideas as those regarding the “fits of vulgar joy” in which a very basic sensible impulse is described as a “tempest” working “along the blood”: yet this impulse inside the body consists of “joy”, “bliss”, or “happiness”, i.e. more than bodily sensation it presents the consistency of feelings, thus belonging to the spiritual realm. By endowing the “motions of the sense” with “intellectual charm”, the poet attributes to them an Ideal, Rational, Spiritual status. Wordsworth, here, is equating feeling, sense and visceral impulses. The tempest denotes

²⁴⁵ PLOTINUS, *The Six Enneads*. 1952, p. 190.

the motion of the elements in the world without, but it connotes the physiological agitation within, carrying matter and impulses throughout the body. Now, the speaker describes an experience of self exam in which the boy forgets the material impulses ordered by a biological necessity of life and feels his organs work fuelled by the pure immaterial impulse, by the pure exultation of the soul. If, for Wordsworth, Nature generally serves to raise the activity of thinking, that moment constituted a pure absorption into the charms of Nature, a “thoughtless hour” in which the conscious activities vanish in the same quietness as the body is at rest. As the images of the sun and moon between the hills constitute static scenes, containing an almost imperceptible, slow and delicate motion, so does the self enter into a static ecstasy, feeling happiness as a bath of gleam invading his self, while, in that fusion with the contemplated image, his only sensation remains the blood in inner, almost ethereal flow.

5.9 The Sublime Radiance and the Flight of the Soul

The following scene presents other paradisaal scenery in which the speaker recollects moments of quietness and peace among the combining meanings of simplicity and beauty. The scenery presented consists in the shores of Cumbria and Westmoreland; and the sea in the transition from dusk to night leaving the grey tones of twilight to start reflecting the moonlight, giving the sign of her light right to observers set on the hills. Then the reflected light spreads on the still surface of the sea making the whole surface shine like a glass against a reflector. Through the sea, the moonlight reaches the speaker. Through shine and sight, in the contemplative experience, a union is established among the celestial and earthly elements, which are given to the humanizing impressions of the boy. All the forms are diffused to be absorbed into the boy’s innermost passions. During the dusk, all natural forms are still recognizable. When night falls and moon rises, all shades melt and are absorbed into the gleaming dark of the night. Even the lunar orb is dissolved into light and absorbed by the sea, which becomes a sea of light offered to the enchanted eyes of the beholding boy. From his remembrances, the hero tells:

How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense

Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,
 Even while mine eye hath moved over many a league
 Of shining water, gathering as it seemed,
 Through every hair-breadth in that field of light,
 New pleasures like a bee among the flowers.

(Book I, ll. 572-580).

The “shining water” became a “field of light”, blending water and land verbally as if the sea were made of earth and light, whereas land herself were made of liquid and shine, mingling solidity and fluidity in a visual metaphor. The scenery bathed the boy’s eyes in brightness. The analogy of his “eye” with “a bee among the flowers” suggests that in the joy of that contemplative moment the boy partakes spontaneously of the emanation manifested in the elements and phenomena of Nature. Like the bee gathers the nectar from the flowers, the speaker’s eyes fly over every small measure of brightness gathering pleasure. The visual analogy implies also an eating-drinking connotation, which signifies an elevating pleasure taken from the relation emanation-feeding: like the bee feeds drinking the nectar from the flowers; like Thomson observes the roots of plants sucking the strength from the ground; Wordsworth represents the boy absorbing the feeding light emanating from the Eternal Soul, linking the poet’s soul through the senses with the Ideal realm.

The suggestion of the bath in water and light in the middle of a place plenty of flowers is the link, which establishes the poetic meaning of an ideal life in which man is brought back to the divine pleasure of sweetness, perfume and freshness in the bosom of Nature. When the hero bathed in the Derwent water in the summer day (Book I, ll. 288-300) the banks of the river extended in “sandy fields” surrounded by flowery groves of ragwort. The yellow colour of the flowers combines with the radiance of the sun to create a paradisaal scene of golden brightness. On the shore of Westmoreland, the silver brightness of the moon creates a paradise before the boy. In both tales, the boy “stood” before a scene of radiance, beholding on a sandy shore, limited by rocky heights, having an extension of water before him. In the first case, the heights are bronzed with the sunrays; in the second, the sea reflects the moon gleam. In both cases, the boy, in the same position, standing before a phenomenon of light, in his communion with the elements, has an experience of receiving in his mind the signals of the divine illumination.

This aspect is also characteristic of Hölderlin. Hyperion’s feelings are started by the effects of matter. His body must mount on the Greek heights in order to produce that emotional ascent, which makes his soul fly:

Ich bin jetzt alle Morgen auf den Höhn des Korinthischen Istmus, und, wie die Biene unter Blume, fliegt meine Seele oft hin und her zwischen den Meeren, die zur Rechten und zur Linken meinen glühenden Bergen die Füßen kühlen.

(*Hyperion*, Letter I, p. 223).

The novel starts when the character is in a certain mood of feelings provoked by the vastness of the natural scenario before his eyes. The first striking impression one infers from the narrative tone is the apprehension of the greatness associated to the solidity of matter. As he, impelled by an inner longing, mounts up to the heights, his soul is apt to fly to reach the spiritual recesses of the region. The metaphoric language used to express the self's abstraction from himself and absorption into the surroundings suggests that Hölderlin touches the provinces of the sublime. From the concrete bounds of the ground, the soul gets free to ascend into transcendence. The comparison between the soul and the bee flying among the flowers to gather the nectar appears in *The Prelude*, as we have seen in the quotation above, indicating the soul culling sensible and spiritual delights among the sublimities of the landscape. Of course, Wordsworth's direct reference is to the motion of the "eye" in the field of light, but in a dormant state in which he feels in spirit. The soul flies in vision among the hills bathed in the morning sunlight, but more than that, the matter is incandescent, burning like glue, as animated by the spirit, or by God himself. We shall remember Schiller's first celebratory stanza in the hymn *An die Freude*:

Freude, schöne Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elisium,
Wir betreten Feuerertrunken
Himmlische dein Heiligtum.
(*An die Freude*, ll. 1-4).

Celebrating and worshipping the self exults, almost burns in emotion, in correspondence to the intuitive vision of Nature burning in spirituality. The soul has been elevated to heaven as soon as the heights are seen brightened, in a mystical communion, until the instant when the self is reminded that he still remains attached to the natural world, including the material aspect, since in the basis of the hills the seas refresh the glowing slopes. Hyperion accepts and embraces that fact with the bliss of knowing that in the human body, due to the physical corporeity, he might travel around the dear land to experiment the wonders and secrets embodied in the sensible appearances of Nature.

Hölderlin, exposing Hyperion's double side emotion in contemplation, manifests the poetic function of the aesthetic idea, a Kantian term proposed as a device which creates metaphors out of the interplay of discordant ideas: the spiritual ascent of

the soul through vision oriented towards transcendence whereas the character's feet are kept on the ground like hills themselves – the consciousness of the immaterial side of his being, of a fire-like and light-like constitution, similar to angels; counterbalanced by the body consciousness, comparable to the stone structure of the hills, which turn glue-like but never disintegrate in immateriality due to the balancing action of water on the basis: so does the self returns to the ground of enduring Nature, embracing now the elemental constitution of the landscapes before his eyes. Now the two poles realized in this contemplative mood, the elevation of the soul and the adherence of the body are synthesized into the aesthetic idea. Hölderlin affirms the spontaneous affection of Nature, the spontaneous revelation of its intrinsic meanings through the intimate experience of its beautiful forms, a conception that brings him near to Wordsworth's position.

There is an archetypal meaning behind the vivid image contemplated by Hyperion, a superior power unleashing inner exultation rising in immediate association with the visual effect of a natural image; a mysterious manifestation capable of making the deep sensible impressions of Nature to elevate the soul in sublime transport and solemn thoughts. The same enigmatic archetype appears in one of the most striking moments in *The Prelude* – that in which a magnificent image of morning landscape provoked such exultation in the youth's heart, arresting both sense and spirit, to arouse his innermost and spontaneous vows to serve Nature as a devoted poet. Returning from a night of feast, the dawn surprised the protagonist with the sight of incandescent hills under the rising sun merged by the seas:

Ere we retired,
 The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky
 Was kindling, nor unseen, from humble copse
 And open field, through which the pathway wound,
 And homeward led my steps. Magnificent
 The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
 Glorious as e'er I had beheld – in front
 The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
 The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
 And in the meadows and the lower grounds
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn –
 Dews, vapours and the melody of birds,
 And labourers going forth to till the fields.
 Ah! Need I say, dear Friend! That to the brim
 My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
 Were made for me; bond unknown to me
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
 A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
 In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

(Book IV, ll. 319-338).

The eastern sky kindling with the rising sun is seen from the coppice and field through which the pathway winds. The speaker mentions the destination to which the way leads – towards home. However, the aimed at cottage stands beyond his sight reach, and he cannot see it at the distance in the end of the way streaming before him. It is covered by the distance, behind the horizon. The youth can see home only as an image in his mind, a perspective based on the knowledge that it is there and that he is following the right direction. What he actually sees is copse, field and sky in a large prospect. While the pathway conducts the youth through a sinuous course of curves on earth, his senses seem thus to leave the ground in order to conduct Wordsworth at length into the sky – a realm of ethereal brightness. Bathed in morning light, the mean and humble (material) elements close to the youth's concrete touch, which sustained his bodily motion, became magnificent and glorious, sharing the pomp of the All. The field is open, thus endowing the prospect with vastness, which makes the sight overflow with sublime grandeur.

The gleaming image in Nature awakening the poet for his vocation, which comes as a revelation in the middle of a journey back to home, presents a structure which puts this scene in parallel with the image depicted in the opening verses of the fourth book, when Wordsworth gives an account of his journey home for the first Cambridge Summer vacation, in which after the hardships of a metaphorical pilgrimage the youth has been granted with the lofty gift of a marvelous vision. Still more striking is the fact that the “thankful blessedness, which yet survives” must be traced back to the symbolical pilgrimage in the beginning of *The Prelude*, in which, escaping from the “vast city” of symbolical servitude, the poet is blessed with inspiration and artistry in his return to home-Nature.

The soul flying in vision among the seas up to the kindling peaks constitutes a mode in Hölderlin and Wordsworth's treatment of the sublime in the dynamics of the individual's sentimental relation with Nature. In both cases, the narrator's speech resembles the famous passage by Longinus in his *Treatise on the Sublime*, in the chapter 7, 2 “It is natural to us to feel our souls lifted up by the true Sublime, and conceiving a sort of generous exultation to be filled with joy and pride, as though we had ourselves originated the ideas which we read”²⁴⁶.

²⁴⁶ LONGINUS, **Dionisus, On The Sublime**. Chapter 7, 2.

Thomas Weiskel asserts that the sublime must be referred to Nature (*physis*), whereas, on the other side, it is a spiritual principle²⁴⁷. Referring to Longinus 7, 2, Weiskel explains that in the sublime moment, *hypsous*, or elevation, is the metaphor ruling the illusions in which the soul flies in exaltation as if man has created what he has just heard²⁴⁸. We may infer that the world was always there and he received its impressions through the senses. As to the effect of the illusion of creation proper of contemplative experience before an image of greatness, Weiskel explains, “the emotional exaggeration of the sublime moment sustains the illusion of the metaphoric union with the Creator”. Weiskel observes that the elevation (*hypsous*) of the sublime produces power and irresistible force; that it aims to produce the transport (*ekstasis*), which is always disguised in metaphors of aggression; and that a vigorous imagistic is recommended to convey enchantment (*ekplasis*), through which the hearer or reader is beaten, penetrated, and over flooded by the sublime²⁴⁹.

In *The Prelude*, the boy suggests his integration in elemental Nature by means of comparing his senses to a small animal working in the wild to take its feed and produce the elements of subsistence: his eye moved gathering from the field of light: “New pleasure like a bee among the flowers” (Book I, l. 580). The scenes described above constitute what Wordsworth calls in the thirteenth stanza the delights of the affinities which fit the existence of man with the ever existing, or durable things, which in the “dawn of being” (Book I, ll. 557) reiterates the idea of his “first dawn of childhood” (Book I, ll. 405-406). That recurrence indicates that meaning dear to the poet, which will be deepened in his meditation about the potentiality of intellectual and sentimental faculties in the baby whose touch with the mother’s breasts furnishes him with the visionary power to communicate with the higher order. Whatever its force in Wordsworth’s pen, the idea of feeding his mind with sense impressions by means of observing the images of beauty created by the natural processes in the dawn of life was probably borrowed from Thomson’s description of his own childhood adventures during the winter, in *The Seasons*:

with frequent foot,
Pleased have I, in my cheerful morn of life,
When nursed by careless solitude I liv’d,
And sung of Nature with unceasing joy,
Pleas’d have I wander’d through your rough domain.
Trode the pure virgin-snows, myself as pure;

²⁴⁷ WEISKEL, Thomas. *The Romantic Sublime*. p. 10.

²⁴⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 11.

²⁴⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 11.

Heard the winds roar, and the big torrent burst;
 Or seen the deep fermenting tempest brew'd
 In the grim evening-sky.

(Winter, ll. 6-14).

5.10 The Eyes of the Soul and the Power of Vision

Love is the proper feeling, which sustains knowledge. As knowledge is that access to Truth – the Holy Communion with the eternal Being – that access is attained through the genial vision, which opens the human eyes (Wordsworth's eyes convey directly into the soul) for the spiritual world beyond the visible things. The images of Nature captured by the senses awake the affections of the poet's heart, i. e. they dispose the soul to commune with the universal spirit, and his mind to partake of the higher meanings of the divine Mind:

for I would walk alone,
 Under the quiet stars, and at that time
 Have felt whatever there is of power in sound
 To breath an elevated mood, by form
 Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
 If the night blackened with a coming storm
 Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.

(Book II, ll. 302-310).

The sublime quietude of the vast starry night and the terrible power of the storm speak to the boy with elemental language. The remote language of the elements elevates his soul up to a state in which the strange motions acquire the familiar sound of the symbolic mysteries whose interpretation is the prophet's task. For the elemental contains the ethereal. The child achieved the visionary power in the moment that his exposure to the natural virtues makes him feel inside the huge agitation of the world. Then the sound becomes music and language, the motion becomes revelation, the animating virtue becomes meaning, and the mystery becomes wisdom.

Wordsworth drinks the visionary power in the contemplation of the power of Nature, which puts him into the moods of shadowy exultation. Therefore, symbolic thought must have a relative vagueness, an obscurity in its content, which cannot be fully apprehended by the human language. That is the reason why:

the soul
 Remembering how she felt, but what she felt

Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
 Of possible sublimity.
 (Book II, ll. 315-318).

The boy's poetical exultation before the Universal motions revealed in the storm has been caused by the chance to partake of the symbolical language of Nature, by whose means he got access the universal power. The essence of poetry is a power of divination through the intercourse with the sensible phenomena. The beautiful forms are the keys to the fundamental meanings of the Universe. The truth of life and Nature is revealed in moments of inspiration: when the beautiful forms give access to the source and origin of everything. That "first poetic spirit" Wordsworth called the "infant sensibility" which is the "great birthright" of the human being.

In the concrete grounds of knowledge warranted to the infant by the palpable means of touch the child gains access through the gates of imagination to mythical and archetypal truth, which lays in the origin of the human relations with Nature and God. The communion with Nature gives access to abstract thinking, as Stephen Prickett explains, which unfolds into symbolical thinking. The logical thinking, with its dualistic principles, breaks the unity between the man and the whole. It throws his spirit apart from the spirit of the Creator. The human consciousness could be conceived as man's spiritual – intellectual – principle. The symbolic power of the poetic speech is the means to regain that broken bond with the cosmic energy:

And not alone
 'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
 And tranquil scenes, that universal power
 And fitness in the latent qualities
 And essence of things, by which the mind
 Is moved by feelings of delight, to me
 Came strengthened with a superadded soul,
 A virtue of its own.

(Book II, ll. 323-329).

Motion and calmness are the strains which make the voice of Nature, and those notes are to awake a like power inside the speaker. Motion and calmness are the manifestation of the language of the universal soul, but when they touch the boy, they spur on an overflowing activity in his soul. For Wordsworth the poetic creativity makes man's faculties akin to God's plastic virtue, for if the divine Being had created the Universe man in such a visionary mood is able to translate the mystery of creation into a language accessible to all men: the language of poetry. In universal sleep, the world reveals its quiet face, the secret activities which are concealed from the common man. Thus, Wordsworth reports his delight in walking in the dawn hour:

My morning walks
 Were early; – oft before the hours of school
 I travelled round our little lake, five miles
 Of pleasant wandering. [...]
 Nor seldom did I leave our cottage latch
 Far earlier, ere one smoke wreath had risen
 From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
 Was audible; and sate among the woods
 Alone upon some jutting eminence,
 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
 Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
 (Book II, ll. 329-345).

Wake is the state of the body; sleep is the state of the soul. The Vale in solitude; the boy in solitude! In the intimate communion of solitude, the earth reveals her secrets to the chosen boy in wishful search of them. Yet those secrets come as enigma, as a marvel of vague feelings through which the boy's corporeal features appease and his soul gets free to manifest and touch a spiritual world. Wordsworth describes a dream scene in which the bodily senses become fluid and change into imagination and the external world is absorbed as a misty world of imagination:

Oft in these moments such a holy calm
 Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream
 A prospect in the mind.
 (Book II, 348-352).

The forms of the natural world impress the self and become images and ideas which reach the mind and are attached to the soul through the feelings they raise. Through those feelings, the gentle images stored in the poet's mind convert the external world into a world of dreams inside him. The dream is a region where a marvelous and miraculous world surrounds the self, where each adventure is seized with bliss. The dreams come when the body surrenders to sleep, thus all the conscious faculties faint, giving place for the subconscious to commune with the world: sometimes through the subconscious activity the soul beholds the direct impressions of the world; sometimes it gets hold of that world already modified by the blissful atmosphere of dream, when the actual sounds and scenes of the world seem to disappear and give place to the sweet dream world inside the self. The morning walks are blended with his dreams to the point where there is no distinction between sleep and wake. When the world becomes dream, the child-poet is perfectly able to understand it. Here the boy affirms his filial bonds to Nature, as the intimate communion brings mutual comprehension between mother and child.

Part III

Chapter VI

6 The Representation of Living Experience of Nature and the Suggestion of Traditional Tropes in *The Prelude*

6.1 The Realistic Depiction of Experience and its Re-elaboration Based on Traditional Images

Considering the argument that the experience of Nature fosters the poet's spiritual growth in this chapter I intend to analyse Wordsworth's autobiographical poem focusing on the body of tropes, metaphors, symbols and allusions implicit in the naïve depiction of sensory and emotional approach to the images of the outward world. My chief goal is to relate the extent to which the representation of the contact with Nature is determined by the ideas contained in the traditional poetic rhetorics and the measure to which the myths, metaphors and symbols of the literary tradition receive the influence of the representation of the living experience of the natural events. These two modes of representation appear interwoven in an aesthetic process where in the recollection of meaningful events and passionate moments of contemplation the poetic structure recalls literary, philosophical and social ideas derived from the western culture. The chief rhetorics manifested in *The Prelude* may be related in the following list: the poetic rhetorics of childhood nostalgia and wanderlust; the foundation of a poetic language based on the speech of humble people as representing the proper view and expression of rural life – considered as the closest to Nature mode of speaking – in opposition to the refined diction of the sophisticated men of the Neoclassical culture; the poetic rhetoric of loco description, which organizes the depiction of landscapes as if they corresponded to man's most spontaneous and natural mode of seeing the world; the embodiment of biblical metaphors in natural images and in the auto-image of the poet, as well as the transference of the pathos of the preacher to the lyrical speech of symbolical worship of

Nature as if endowed with sacred meaning; the philosophical and scientific rhetorics which became a commonplace at Wordsworth's time: the Rousseauistic view of a beautiful and benevolent Nature; the Neoplatonic Metaphysics that seeks in Nature the spiritual and intellectual principle that animates and organizes the material world by emanation; the premises of Newtonian science that provided principles to understand the rational order of Nature as a system, and optical conceptions that grounded the Romantic view of the active function of the eye in the composition of the outer images in the act of beholding; the discussions on the constitution and status of the mind in relation to the body and to Nature – as external to mind and body yet influencing them – derived from the Romantic revision of Locke's, Hume's and Hartley's empiricist-oriented psychological writings, which is best rehearsed in Coleridge's philosophical writings on the nature and development of human sensibility in the *Table Talks* and the *Statesman Manuals*; the social rhetoric that represents the mentality of the ascending bourgeois middle-class on one side, and the aversion of the effects of the industrialization and commerce relations on the other; and the political, ideological claims of liberty and humanity aroused by the euphoria of the French Revolution.

The hero is represented in a formative course in which he becomes conscious of having been bred by means of the intercourse with Nature as the result of an interplay between the inner disposition that opens the subject's mind and heart to experience, and the significant function of experience itself as it is encrypted in the external images and forms of the natural objects and scenes, among which the subject is immerse; since they exert the powerful effects of "calmness" and "emotion" (Book XIII, ll. 1-2) which affect the subject's sensibility and arrest his soul in contemplation, now independent from his will, now subjected to his own moods and inner dispositions. Thus, I take the issues related to the representation of living experience as the very standpoint upon which Nature is supposed to sustain and reflect the poet's formation, in order to verify how the bodies of rhetoric in vogue influenced and were used to reshape the frame of experience. Reflecting about his position as a mature poet when revising his own faculties the speaker considers his image as that of a priest or prophet serving in the temple of Nature. This auto-image requires suggestively the interplay of vocation – the inner pathos that disposes his will to achieve that aim – and formation – the process of learning and cultivation that enables the self to attain his design. It is an ideal professional image inspired by the deeds of great Biblical figures and by a religious sense of duty. Metaphorically Nature represents the temple, the ideal type of sanctuary

whose objects are there to be contemplated; and the school, where the subject learns his profession, which provides in symbolical terms the didactic material and the tutelary orientation. This idea complements a more fundamental conception of the poet as “a man speaking to men” which sets the paradigm of the poet as that man possessed of the authority to transmit knowledge to his community since by genius and exercise he acquired a deeper understanding of the human values. Wordsworth defines the poet as that man:

endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them²⁵⁰.

As a result, the poet ought not to be exposed to different sources or types of experience than ordinary man, since they share the same world and the same values, but the poet is able to seize a richer and more creative quality as well as more meaningful values out of experience than the average men. I aim at doing the confrontation of the two complementing images of the poet as a man – both as religious and layman, but both integrated in a community of workers, one serving in a sacred order, the other labouring in the group of rural people – with the corresponding tropes. This contrast will help to understand how Wordsworth himself managed to build the sort of poetics and aesthetics that constituted the proper rhetoric of the sacred role of the poet and of ennobling a natural and simple life which configures the conceptions of man, Nature and education that shape the typical Romantic experience of the self growing spiritually in intimate communion with the world in *The Prelude*.

Even though since very early in life the hero shows the strong disposition to feel intensely that suggests his vocational tendency to become a poet it seems to me that the formative course characteristic of autobiography implies the necessity to place the starting point that unleashes the *Bildung* process in a primary experience capable of confirming and enacting that personal disposition, carrying it into realization, what leads me to believe that this process was based on an original moment or event of subjective interplay with Nature whose experience was so fundamental as to start the subject's consciousness by means of pleasure and knowledge, thus making it require the aesthetic desire of further experiences that would add new meanings which would come

²⁵⁰ WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In: **The Poetical Works of Wordsworth**. HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). 1959, p. 736.

to be integrated into an enchanted and inalienable chain of knowledge extracted from the set of living events. The formative commerce with Nature is depicted in complementation to formal education. In the account of books, in the fifth chapter, the speaker establishes the difference between those kinds of books which combine with Nature and those which diverge from her in producing the natural conditions for what might be a sound moral, aesthetic and poetic education. The example of the Wanderer shows that Nature and the school enhance each other to produce the poetical experience.

The double side of my hypothesis leads to ask if it is the Nature-lover who becomes a poet; if the poet must by principle necessarily love Nature; or even if it is Nature herself that produces her lover-worshiper, and by consequence, the poet. Wordsworth loves Nature like he loves Poetry. As it is his faith that Nature is the principle of all, that everything belongs to Nature warranting the “unity of all” (Book II, l. 221), he finds in Nature the deepest meaning and the ultimate essence of poetry as well as the finest foundation of a poet’s mind and the most powerful nourishment of his heart, the ground of his sensibility and wisdom. In *The Prelude* the speaker gives an account of the ways that led him to find the nourishment of his passions in the love of natural objects (Book II, ll. 1-7), of Nature herself, e.g. as an essential intellectual principle (Book II, ll. 200-203), and of books “May books and Nature be their early joy!” (Book V, l. 423), whereas in *The Excursion* the narrator praises “the Poets that are sown / By Nature; man endowed with highest gifts, / The vision and the faculty divine” (The Wanderer, ll. 77-79). Nevertheless, the highest capacities are not enough for the poetic formation if the subject be “denied to acquire” “the accomplishment of verse” “through lack of culture and the inspiring aid of books” (The Wanderer, ll. 80-83). In this sense, the disposition to become a poet might probably be innate and intrinsic. However, in order for the high gifted man to become a poet he needs to be provided with certain special matter: cultural content found in books and natural content found in the world of senses. In both cases, in order for the intrinsic poetic potentiality not to fade away, remaining undeveloped, the protagonist needs the content of experience to feed his growth. Even the direction of this growth is determined by the type of experience to which the subject had been submitted. Such an argument can be witnessed in the opposition between the “model of child” represented by the character of the infant “trained to worship seemliness” (Book V, l. 298) who learnt through mechanical pedagogical plans which imposed limits to his faculties and left little space for spontaneity and love; and the kind of education claimed with gratitude for himself,

thanks to his mother's nurturing liberality, for she did not "by habit of her thoughts mistrust / Our nature" (Book V, ll. 270-271), thus leaving the boys free from constriction to develop their own consciousness in playful and unrestrained activities among Nature, where the Creative Principle's acts: "for our nobler part provide, / Under His great correction and control, / As innocent instincts, and as innocent food" (Book V, ll. 273-275). In one striking passage of Book IV, telling one of the incidents of college's summer vacation, the speaker reports how in a moment of epiphany manifested in the illuminated appearance of the rural prospect the starting, exalting emotion with which Nature arrested the hero in contemplative shock revealed that he wanted to become a poet who would devote his verse to the worship of Nature. Therefore, Wordsworth makes the reader believe that the love of Nature made him become a poet, since he was to devote himself to Nature. But it was Nature herself that produced and awakened such a love through the impressiveness aroused by her images. Thus, love of Nature and poetic gift are represented as two faces of the same entity.

However, Wordsworth's lesson goes deeper than that: the Poet must not necessarily be the lover of Nature, but he must necessarily be a lover and love his theme. And this type of intellectual and passionate love can only be acquired as a lesson of Nature – as happened in that moment of illumination before that surprising natural prospect: only the benefits of Nature (nourishment, pleasure, relief), the examples drawn from the relations of her elements and beings (order, benevolence, moral lessons on motherly/filial affections, on will and necessity), and the moods aroused in her presence (joy, enthusiasm, pain, fear, dread) can account for the education of a man to approach his object with love, thus discovering the inner "life of things" (*Tintern Abbey*, l. 48). Without the access to culture, found in books and symbolized by them, the free contact with Nature may be empty and not enough to account for a sound education, but it is through the sensations, feelings and thoughts aroused by the experience of Nature that the individual's character and sensibility become prepared for receiving the influence of love as a principle to deal with the world. Wordsworth rehearses the idea that Nature has the prototype of that feeling (also found in poetry and romance books) that disposed the human being to develop his artistic aptitudes and poetic character. Lacking the experience of this prototypical feeling, a man cannot become a poet, provided that his relation with the world will not be guided by the devotional, vocational and interpretive feeling of love, but by other principles which are not poetic in kind. Confronting the pictorial composition of the scene of illumination that made the

hero conscious of his vocation with a similar image depicted in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, as I demonstrated earlier, it is possible to understand the tropological structure of the poetic experience of Nature in her formative function as associated to the idea that the bright landscape, illumined under the rising sun exalted the hero's soul to fly in spiritual ecstasy and mystical transport, which makes him commune with the scene contemplated in the pure pleasure conveyed in the vision where the material and the spiritual blend perfectly.

6.2 Images and Conceptions Implied in Wordsworth's Arguments: The Development of the Poet's Consciousness from Childhood to Youth

In Book I the speaker reports how the sensual affections of external Nature provided the material (impressions) and the mood (emotional state of mind) to create the subject's consciousness, and to convert the alien material aspects of Nature out there into an imaginary, metaphorical and symbolical world within the self's rising poetic consciousness through sensual and affective feelings – pleasure and love; how the growth of his poetic personality was influenced by the passions of beauty and fear received in the sensory contact with the material forms and surrounding landscapes during infancy and childhood while rambling among remote and lonely places; how he felt the intimations of the universal spirit building the passions of his soul in attunement with the activities through which it infuses the terrestrial beings with animation and intelligence. Therefore, the speaker invokes the “Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe” (Book I, l. 401); the presences, visions and souls of Nature, appealing for a conscious, intelligent and benevolent intention in the meanings and feelings that haunted the subject's mind during his playful activities, pursuing, delighting yet thrilling his consciousness. The speaker examined these themes through the diversity of plays and sports during his early life, especially as those exercises had been influenced by and combined with the mood caused by the varying atmospheres brought by change in outward features of Nature in her seasonal course. Furthermore, the speaker claims the visionary authority to recognize in the motions of his senses the enchantment of ideal, “intellectual” essence, thus recognizing the signs of the origin and eternity of the world in the transitory yet cyclical aspects of Nature, so that the human memory is endowed

with archetypal, essential recognition. Those kinds of formative and visionary experiences remount to the Rousseauistic rhetoric of the liberal education of children, especially in its aspect of learning by Nature; to Blake's treatment of the developing self-consciousness connected to the Biblical symbolism and archetypal roots of human knowledge derived from the metaphor of Fall in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*; to Thomson's description of Nature as an incomparable artist who composes the forms of the external world and paints with colours and shades ever new so as to produce new charms through the elemental motions and changing atmospheres along the seasons; and to the idea of the Bard as the wise man modeled in the Philosopher and the Prophet, so that he got access to the metaphysical and religious vision of the rational and spiritual principle of the Universe, a plausible reference to *Genesis* and *Isaiah*, to the Neoplatonic conception of the Soul of the World, early formulated by Plotinus; and to the Pantheistic idea of God as an entity revealed in the phenomena of Nature, as derived from Spinoza's and Leibnitz's formulations, and of Shaftesbury's idea in his *Characteristics* that the universal Wisdom of Nature made her accord to man's private interests and serve the good of everyone and work towards the general good.

If the first book of *The Prelude* tells the events that prepared the subject's sensibility for the spontaneous love of environmental Nature, overall external things which might be observed and places out there where he might ramble or play, such as "rivers, fields and groves" (Book II, l. 5), Book II relates the events, habits and modes through which beside dizzy sports Wordsworth's band of school boys also used to enjoy calmer sports and resting moods in harmony with periods of milder weather and atmospheres during the vernal seasons. Thus, the boyish instincts linked with their physical strength and emulation make place for the domestication and tempering of those visceral impulses into virtuous, reflexive dispositions that elevate their passions: "thus was gradually produced / A quiet independence of the heart" (Book II. ll. 72). The picturesque model is found in Thomson's *The Seasons* and Blake's depiction of playful, happy children in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Wordsworth added the ideal of moral improvement that refers to games and conjointly actions in which there is no loser, but everyone wins through delight and joy. It accords with Rousseau's lessons on the subject's development of self-consciousness and moral improvement derived from his experience with his own force:

Un autre progrès rend aux enfants la plainte moins nécessaire: c'est celui de leurs force. Pouvant plus par eux-mêmes ils ont besoin moins fréquent de recourir à autrui. Avec leur force se développe la connaissance que les met en état de la diriger. C'est à ce second degré que commence proprement la vie de l'individu ; c'est alors qu'il prend la conscience de lui-même. La mémoire étend le sentiment de l'identité sur tous les moments de son existence ; il devient véritablement un, le même, et par conséquent déjà capable de bonheur ou de misère. Il importe donc de commencer à le considérer ici comme un être moral²⁵¹.

Adventures such as those performed in the ruined abbey in the Vale of Nightshade and in the garden of the ancient tavern that stood in the middle of Winander's eastern shore served to awaken the inner sense of the quietness of sacred places where Nature offers silence and shelter for meditation, and the reverberation of glee as shared between the innocent noise of the playful boys and Nature ringing around them, thus opening a space through blissful, calming, and delighting agitations for the living events to enter the subject's imaginary universe: "bursts of glee / Made all the mountains ring" (Book II, ll. 163-164). Besides, moments like those served to enlarge the subject's "sympathies" and create endearment for the body of "visible things" (Book II, ll. 175-177). Wordsworth's treatment of the perception of external forms and their influence in the composition of his mind includes an allusive and suggestive reflection upon the psychological teaching of Locke, Hume, Hartley and Burke about the aesthetic effect of outward forms and relationships upon the human faculties.

Up to this point, the speaker relates the function of the "incidental charms which first attached / My heart o rural objects" (Book II, ll. 198-199). From now on, he tells how Nature started to affect and be "sought / For her own sake" (Book II, ll. 202-203). If until this time sensory Nature affected the boy incidentally, spontaneously, now the speaker reflects on the mode how the hero became conscious of Nature as the high ideal, spiritual and intellectual essence of the world. The consciousness of this sense will reach a state of maturity at the age of seventeenth, as a spiritual strength that indicates he is prepared to be sent to new experiences in the College, at Cambridge. However, the protagonist felt the intimations of it started at the phase of a recently born baby when the first communication with the world occurred through the mediation of the mother's breast. The idea of the "intercourse of touch" reflects the philosophical inquiries on the function of each bodily sense in the framework of human sensibility: denying the Mechanistic system which poses the visual and aural as the dominant senses, Coleridge proposes a system where all senses bear a degree of relation with

²⁵¹ ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Emile ou de L'Education*. 1961. p. 61.

touch as the most fundamental sense, since it is akin to feeling. Already a school boy, the young Wordsworth is supposed to have tried his visionary power and elevated mood which allowed the interpretation of the original language of the universe observing the tumult of the elements under a storm or the calm of the region at dawn. In communion with those sensible motions, the hero felt the “overflowing Soul” (Book II, l. 397) of the World infusing, composing and exalting his own soul. Yet he claims still to retain his “first creative sensibility” so that an “auxiliary light” coming from his own “mind” “bestow a new splendour” (Book II, l. 358-376) upon the scenery beheld, i.e. the presence of the poet and the poetic meanings and feelings aroused in contemplation influence the external aspects of Nature with new power and significance emanating from his own soul and sensibility. The firm belief that “A plastic power / Abode with me” (Book II, ll. 362-363), defined as “A local spirit of his own, at war / With general tendency, but for the most, / Subservient strictly to external things / With which it communed” (Book II, ll. 365-368), resembles the power to control and transform Nature attributed to Hölderlin’s *Empedokles* of whom it is said that “die Pflanzen merkten auf / Ihn, wo er wander, und die Wasser unter die Erde / Strebten heauf da, wo sein Stab den Boden berühre!” since “ein furchtbar allverwandelnd Wesen ist in ihm” (*Empedokles*, Erster Akt, Erster Auftritt. 1969, p. 383). This argument is representative of the Romantic rhetoric which copes for the unlimited power of the self. The speaker also claims that, as his seventeenth year comes, the hero becomes able to transfer his own feelings to external things by means of sympathy or to find truth revealed in “things that really are” (Book II, l. 394); The youth sought the commerce between the feelings of body and soul in converse with the intercourse of matter and spirit in the visible phenomena. Thus he believed that when the power of the external senses sleeps in thoughtless contemplation, converting active thought and lucid sensation into tranquil feeling, the still soul can feel the “presence of Being”, invisibly spread over earth and sky. Finally, the speaker expresses his trust in Nature as the source of the moral principles that dispose his heart for the foundation and cultivation of noble sentiments like purity, virtue and piety, and for the blessing faith in human nature, even renovating his mind with joy and sweetness to support the eventual hardships that might come to menace the integrity of humanity. Such ideas accord with Shaftesbury’s doctrine of virtue, benevolence and moral goodness in Nature which affect man, disposing him to develop integrity of mind in *Characteristics*; and Rousseau’s doctrine of natural goodness conformable to the human nature, of ethical principles written by Nature in

the human heart, and of natural sense of right and wrong dictated by the human conscience in *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Éloïse*.

6.3 Images and Conceptions Implied in Wordsworth's Arguments: Genial Sensibility, Educational Crisis and Restoration through Return to Native Sceneries

In Book III, Wordsworth relates the main activities, the meaningful events and the general mood that determined the core of his first year as a student at Cambridge. The narrative is divided into two parts and so accounts for two different periods according to the type of disposition of the youth's faculties, either for an active imaginative experience of Nature or for the unimaginative application to study or labour. Thus, up to line 193 the speaker has "retraced my life / Up to an eminence, and told a tale / Of matters which not falsely may be called / The glory of my youth" (Book III, ll. 167-170); whereas from line 194 onwards, the speaker and his absent interlocutor, Coleridge, must descend "into a populous plain" (Book III, ll. 194-195) in the narrative. The "change / In climate" provoked a change in subjective nature in which "the quiet and exalted thoughts / In loneliness gave way to empty noise / And superficial pastimes" (Book III, ll. 207-209). In the first moment the hero sought Nature in solitude, achieving communion through visionary imagination. The vision of Nature caught in Cambridge's "level fields" suggests the structure of philosophical ideas derived from the myths of Golden Age, from Plotinus' conception of Universe and from Burke's arguments that the external forms affect the subject's passions in the inquiry concerning the *Beauty* and *Sublime* in Nature. In the second moment, the hero lived in social idleness, experiencing, through fancy, the society with friends, the exalting atmosphere created by the memory of great scientists and poets who lived there like Newton, Chaucer, Spenser and Milton. Besides, the speaker relates the hero's misdemeanours as an idle student, unadapted to the College's Scholastic rigour in discipline and short-mindedness in methods. Wordsworth utters a sort of mockery against the old-fashioned institution, a rebellious criticism against the authoritative practice of the ministers, and against a tendency that made Science loose its natural character and appeal, thus losing the respect for its authority (Book III, ll. 398-422). With humorous tints Wordsworth criticizes the too strict institutionalization, artificiality

and rule based practices of the academic affairs, an idea inherited from Rousseau's criticism of society. Then, asserting that at Cambridge "I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries / Was a spoiled child" (Book III, ll. 351-352), a feeling that accords with the notion that he has made a "change in climate" (Book III, l. 205), implies a rhetoric of objection against Godwin's proposition that Climate and Luxury consist in "physical causes which have commonly been supposed to oppose an immovable barrier to the political improvement of our species"²⁵². Cambridge is regarded as a microcosm of the whole society, thus a miniature of the general problems and troubles seen in the world, a sense expressed in the analogy of the self as playing the "loiterer", of the place as a "pageant", and of the academic life and affairs as a "spectacle" (Book III, ll. 579-591). Much of the meaning attached to the experience of Nature at this period is related to the fact that Wordsworth counted seventeen years of age, thus associating the relationship between the experience of Nature and the young hero's spiritual growth to the symbolism of the number 17. This number represents the action of the evolution on the cosmos, and, as it connotes the junction between the material and the spiritual world, symbolizes man participating to both terrestrial and celestial worlds. It is the number of form, the balance governing power of everything in the universe. But further than that, turning seventeen represents a ritual time of initiation: it is the image of the initiate who succeeds his interior conformation, since seventeen restores the harmony after existential conflicts. The visions of Nature are rhetorically conditioned by this symbolism. Wordsworth probably wanted to make believe that at the age of seventeen the protagonist reached the highest point in the development of his sensibility when he possessed the most powerful degree of sensibility in life. It is a moment of maturing his sensory faculties and visionary imagination, based on the balance between the highest emotional and sentimental powers coming from childhood impulses and the sensible and intellectual tempering of the coming adulthood.

Book IV presents the narrative of Wordsworth's return to the vale of Hawkshead to spend his summer vacation, where the contact with the Nature of his native region revived his imaginative powers after the weariness of too much institutional practices and formal study at the College. In Cambridge the speaker distinguished such a want of interest in the disciplines that "Even Science, too at hand / In daily sight of this irreverence, / Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint" (Book III, ll. 418-420). Back to Hawkshead, the subject felt the solaces of liberty and leisure

²⁵² GODWIN, William. **Enquiry Concerning Political Justice**. p. 37.

again, so that he hoped to find a period when “It is shaken off / The burden of my own unnatural self” (Book I, ll. 20-21). The term “unnatural”, associated with disturbance of human moral integrity, remounts to Shaftesbury’s doctrine of “unnatural affections” as being vicious passions in disaccord with the order of Nature, in the fourth treatise of his *Characteristics*, entitled *Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit*²⁵³. The journey back confronted the subject with a metaphorical death and rebirth represented by the ferryboat travel on Windermere whose old ferryman was called “the Charon of the flood” (Book IV, l. 14), conferring to the scene the mythical sense of the Greek Hades and to the travel a sense of crossing the reign of death. The speaker manifests a satirical tone in recognizing the brook canalized into a paved channel as an emblem of the enthralled state of his own life then. Yet, the youth’s mind was revived by the remembrance of his early walks in a mood analogous to the freshness and revitalization of the “returning Spring” (Book IV, l. 137), renovating his heart with “joy”, “gratitude”, and confirming, in one of its last leapings, the mythical temporality which inserts the self back into the cyclical time proper of childhood and boyhood before the linear, progressive time of adulthood could have invaded his life and definitely ruled his sensibility and limited his worldview – since for Wordsworth adult life seems to imply a gradual hardening of sensibility; and when the protagonist walked around the lake again “consummate happiness” (Book IV, l. 131-141) resulted from his contemplative mood.

The ruling ideas that confer meaning, structure and relevance to the experience of Nature in both chapters III and IV refer to the limits of sensibility in relation to the boundary between youth and adulthood. Adulthood, as the proper stage of human sociability, makes man fit for social life, yet the utilitarian and specialized social structure of Wordsworth’s time spared almost no place for things as passion, sentiment, emotion, fancy and imagination, which became attributes of young people or old men. Taste became an issue between innate disposition and social training. The depiction of moments of observation, contemplation and meditation before outward images, and the reference to the state of the subject’s faculties during the referred period are informed by a type of rhetoric rehearsed by Locke, Hume and Burke in their philosophical inquiries about the influence of taste, habit and custom, as social tools, upon the human sensibility: against those factors’ weakening effect Wordsworth proposes the counter-poison of novelty and sympathy which instill new life into experience, conferring to the observer’s sensibility the peculiar capacity and intensity of

²⁵³ SHAFTESBURY, *Characteristics*. Book II, Part I, Section III.

a child or an old man. Besides, adult life is hinted at as the proper place for vice or deviation from virtue, when man is most susceptible to the deformities of lower desire and immoral impulses, in which sense Wordsworth's language recalls the influence of Shaftesbury. Wordsworth even manifests a faltering confidence in the possibility of renovating the human sensibility after the social and moral turmoil of adulthood. One night, on the ascending road near Winander, Wordsworth met a strange military leaning against a mile-stone. Such doubt is expressed in the subject's feeling about the old soldier's "uncouth shape", who is depicted on the one hand as a "ghostly figure" (Book IV, l. 434), therefore endowed with spiritual power, yet on the other hand as defeated by incredulity and want of sympathy, thus finding no longer the living sense in his beliefs: "in all he said / There was a strange half-absence, as of one / knowing too well the importance of his theme, / But feeling it no longer" (Book IV, ll. 442-445). Lived experience contributed with the self's formation insofar as the hero felt "a freshness" in "Human life", perceived as a "subtler sense" about the "daily life" (Book IV, ll. 191-230) of the neighbourhood; and human love for natural objects, distinguishing in them awe and enthusiasm (Book IV, ll. 231-155). In the ambivalence of substance and reflex in the natural images the speaker discovered an analogy for the embricament of past and present events in his subjective life (Book IV, ll. 256-276). Yet, it was after a night of feast that the young hero was surprised by that bright vision in Nature whose state of mind came to confirm his vocation for poetry (Book IV, ll. 276-338). The devotion to Nature implies here the argument that the poet must be virtuous, and thus refers rhetorically to Shaftesbury's conception that as a law of Nature virtue leads to happiness²⁵⁴.

6.4 Images and Conceptions Implied in Wordsworth's Arguments: Books Fitted to Nature's Guidance, Geometric Truths and Nature Contemplated in Travel

In *The Prelude* Book V establishes a type of formal education which is fitted to Nature's formative guidance, as well as the mode how the influence of Nature – in the specific manifestation of climate – disposes the human mind for a determined interest for Arts and Science. Wordsworth's confidence in the exposure to Nature in

²⁵⁴ Idem. Ibidem.

childhood by means of physical contact with the external world accords with Rousseau's²⁵⁵ claim in *Emile* for the knowledge acquired through the senses along children's animal play, i.e. in the love and imagination discovered in the pleasure and joy aroused by childish sports, so frequently narrated in *The Prelude*. Besides, Wordsworth's depiction of pleasurable and joyful sports among natural sceneries implies Hartley's²⁵⁶ associative conception that the beauty of the universe produces sensory pleasures which lead through the propagation of sympathy to moral virtue. A sound formal education for Wordsworth presupposes the access to poetry and romance. Wordsworth opens Book V with a meditation, in Stoic mood, on the perishability of the products of human intellect, e.g. the Sciences and the Arts, as they are embodied in the material forms of books and thus lack a durable form of preservation which would correspond to the eternal temporality of the spirit. Then the speaker relates a dream in which the protagonist, fallen asleep during the reading of Don Quixote, saw the "uncouth shape" (Book V, l. 75) of an Arab riding in the desert bearing two objects – a stone and a shell – representing the Sciences and the Arts, who rode away to bury those objects in order to save them from destruction by the deluge close at hand. The phrase "uncouth shape", employed to qualify both the Arab and the old soldier in the previous book seems to be associated with the shape of Cervantes' "errant knight" (Book V, l. 60), associating one of Wordsworth's dear idea of human figure as impressing Nature with an "appropriate human centre" (Book IV, l. 360) with the universe of romance. The Arab is the guardian of cultural lore; but also, as the squalid figure of Don Quixote suggests, the guardian of an educational, aesthetic and poetic ideal which should beware in order not to be taken by tired, senile, expired, invalid and foolish, for it is indeed so considered under the eyes of a sophisticated society ruled by rationalistic logic and utilitarian aims. The speaker boasts of a sort of education free from too much tutoring pedagogical systems, in liberty to commune with natural objects and landscapes. He rejoices of having been "reared / Safe from an evil which these days have laid / Upon the children of the land, a pest / That might have dried me up, body and soul" (Book V, ll. 226-229), and dedicates his verse "to Nature's self, / And things that teach as Nature teaches" (Book V, ll. 230-231). Wordsworth refers to poetry books from Homer and the Bible, through Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton, down to the *Thousand and One Nights*, to chivalric romances, adventurous and national legends like Robin Hood, folk

²⁵⁵ ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Emile, Ou de L'Éducation*. 1961.

²⁵⁶ HARTLEY, David. *Observations on Man*.

tales, ballads and songs, whose authors are spoken of “as Powers / For ever to be hallowed” (Book V, ll. 218-219). Wordsworth’s idea of a type of *Romantic* Poetry which fits to Nature resembles rhetorically Herder’s conception of *Volksliteratur*, which consisted in the natural and spontaneous expression of the genius of the folk, which includes almost the same sequence of poetic manifestations as those mentioned in *The Prelude*. Combining the idea of folk poetry as the most spontaneous expression of the natural passions and sentiments of man’s heart with Nature as manifested in rural climate, Wordsworth opposes the eighteenth-century aesthetics based on satire and Neoclassical diction. The focus on the mother hen feeding and taking care of her brood provides an example of the same love, benevolence and providence with which Nature fills the protagonist’s mother’s heart. The belief in the harmony and purposiveness of Nature led his mother to let him free to ramble among natural objects, culling in the direct source of knowledge – sensory impressions – and moral examples in the relationship between the living beings, since she believed that Nature herself and through her the Universal God provided the elements to constitute the boy’s conscience to distinguish from right and wrong and guide his steps towards building up wisdom and moral law. Considering his mother, in her total trust in Nature’s pedagogical action to guide the subject towards virtue, as “pure / From anxious fear of error or mishap” (Book V, l. 280) and “not puffed up by false unnatural hopes” (Book V, l. 282) the speaker’s language echoes Rousseau’ and Shaftesbury’s teachings about the human nature informed by the sympathy with Nature’s creatures and elements. The infants must be let free to learn by themselves, with their own motions throughout Nature’s recesses, an opinion that accords with Rousseau’s precept that “Souffrir est la premier chose [qui l’enfant] doit apprendre, et celle qu’il aura plus grand besoin de savoir”²⁵⁷. About *Émile*’s education by suffering exposure to the external world Rousseau states that: “au lieu de le laisser croupier dans l’air usé d’une chambre, qu’on le mène journellement au milieu d’un pré. Là, qu’il coure, qu’il s’ébatte, qu’il tombe cent fois le jour, tant mieux : il en apprendra plus tôt à se relever. Le bien-être de la liberté rachète beaucoup de blessures”²⁵⁸. The speaker records one of his first experiences at Hawkshead – the grave sight of a drowned man in the water of Esthwaite’s Lake – which fuses the living world of Nature with the imaginary atmosphere of romance, accustoming the subject with the numinous, terrible and mysterious dimensions of the

²⁵⁷ ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Emile ou de L’Éducation*. 1961. p. 60.

²⁵⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 61.

Universe: “no soul-debasing fear, / Young as I was, a child not nine years old, / Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen / Such sights before, among the shining streams / Of fairy land, the forest of romance” (Book V, ll. 451-455): in such a motion, Poetry becomes natural, and Nature becomes poetic, while the subject transits between and partakes of both realms.

Book VI relates the main events during Wordsworth’s two last years at university, lines 1-321; and the travel through the Alps that took place during the third summer vacation, lines 322-778. Back to Cambridge, the “bonds of indolent society” (Book VI, l. 20) loosened their hold over the protagonist’s affections. So, even though “detached / Internally from academic cares” (Book VI, l. 25-26) he could employ his will to studious introspection and spared less time to the contemplation of Nature’s outer images. And considering the independence and love of “freedom” that made him rebellious towards academic – institutional or methodological – regulations and restraints in study, the speaker has to undertake to answer “What love of Nature, what original strength / Of contemplation, what intuitive truths” might have been “gained” or “preserved”? (Book VI, ll. 36-39). Feeling himself endowed with poetic powers: “The Poet’s Soul was with me at that time” (Book VI, l. 42), and moved by the wish and trust in his powers to create a poetic monument that might have included his name among those of the great inspiring poets who had lived at Cambridge – Chaucer, Spenser and Milton – Wordsworth had the progress of his mind fostered by the conception of Nature as a lawful system taken from treatises on Geometry. The speaker combines the knowledge obtained by keen observation with that acquired through scientific reading. On the one side, he claims that his “inner judgment” was informed by “having scanned, / Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms / Of Nature” so that “in that knowledge I possessed / A standard, often usefully applied, / Even unconsciously, to things removed / From familiar sympathy” (Book VI, ll. 96-105). On the other side, in the “rudiments of geometric sciences” the young hero found “elevation and composed delight” when meditating “On the relation those abstractions bear / To Nature’s laws” (Book VI, ll. 123-124); and drew “A pleasure quiet and profound, / A sense of permanent and universal sway / And paramount belief” (Book VI, ll. 130-132) and “there recognized / A type, for finite creatures, of the one / Supreme Existence” (Book VI, ll. 132-134) which the speaker identified as “God” (Book VI, l. 139). Thence came Wordsworth’s pantheistic belief with which he transforms metaphorically the Christian dogma with the the metaphysical scheme close to the conceptions of the Natural

Theology to represent the order, structure and animating principle of universal Nature, a synthesis that organizes both external images and human intelligence. The individual's attunement with the harmony of the cosmic motion procures for the production of the feelings, bodily, moral and spiritual, as well as the intellectual ideas that embrace sensory perception of outward images of the world. Wordsworth might well have derived his notion of God as the universal intelligence and structure from treatises by Ptolomeu, Clarke, Leibniz, Spinoza and Tolland. The winter periods have been spent in confinement, and the frosty season has been associated to an atmosphere of magic and romance inspired by Spenser's fictional universe. Frequenting the college groves and walks alone during the nights, the speaker found peace and composure in the image of the shady elm; and a huge ash whose boughs resound stirred by the moving air and illumined under the moon light by frost diffused. Thus, his imagination was kindled by magic and supernatural visions inspired by the fairy forms of external Nature. The visionary experience here is shaped by the romance rhetoric of magic imagination inspired by Spenser.

The travel through the Alps reflects the rhetoric of wanderlust which appears both in the travel books with which Wordsworth had been acquainted – as indicated by the allusions to Abyssinia (Book VI, l. 615; l. 662), the region where the source of the Nile is situated – and in the theme of transformative journey typical of the German *Bildungsroman* narratives such as Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and Hölderlin's *Hyperion oder der Eremit in Griechenland*. As Schenk has noticed, "The main motive behind [the Romantic *Wanderlust*] was no doubt the poet's desire to imprint on his soul a variety of vivid and lasting impressions"²⁵⁹. The tour into a far distant land brings knowledge from other countries or fills the heart cravings with beautiful impressions from external sceneries. Whereas Geoffrey Hartman²⁶⁰ associates Wordsworth's excursive desire to the metaphor of the mystical journey, and the travel through the Alps specifically to the alternation of Nature's presence and an apocalyptic (self-revealing) imagination, Alan Liu²⁶¹ attributes Wordsworth's sense of Nature to History in the morphology of the tour, as opposed to the logic of the exploratory travel. Anyone has reasons enough to be faithful that Wordsworth's love of travels and the motivation in the appreciation of natural images throughout his travels were real, not a mere rhetorical

²⁵⁹ SCHENK, H. G.. *The Mind of European Romantics*. 1979, p. 164.

²⁶⁰ HARTMAN, Geoffrey. *Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814*.

²⁶¹ LIU, Alan. *Wordsworth, the Sense of History*. 1989.

construction. However, those travels and the self-transformative experience of Nature brought along those journeys are imbued in symbolical and metaphorical meanings which can only be interpreted under the light of certain rhetoric superposition of ideas at the disposal of the Romantic poets.

The narrative of Wordsworth's tour can be divided into four parts: I) from the tourists' landing at Calais and joining a group of confederate people who had been returning from the celebrations of the anniversary of the Revolution, sailing with them along the streams of Saone and Rhone up to their arriving by walk to the spot where the convent of the great Chartreuse stood, and there saw a military troop, menacing the integrity of that religious institution with the despotism of the State (Book VI, ll. 342-488); II) proceeding their journey the travelers have observed a sequence of natural scenes, moving their hearts throughout many days of marsh in which the "Earth did change her images and forms / Before us" (Book VI, ll. 492-493) and pleased with the tasks of rural men, seeing in the same day the unveiled image of Mont Blanc, whose disappointment has finally been reconciled by the static-flowing landscapes of the Vale of Chamouny, constituting such affections that the speaker called "soft luxuries" (Book VI, ll. 489-556); III) the speaker suggests the apprehension before the awareness of the disharmony between the ideal longings of his soul and the failure of the external world in corresponding to that ideal image referred to as "something of stern mood, an underthirst / Of vigour seldom utterly allayed" (Book VI, ll. 558-559): after crossing the Vallais the travelers climbed the Simplon Pass and endured the frustration of realizing that the ascending pathway they had been following led instead into a region beyond the planned itinerary, making the speaker meditate on the opposing complementation between Nature and Imagination, then crossing the gloomy strait of Simplon, where the speaker identified "The types and symbols of Eternity" (Book VI, l. 639); IV) after that, the companions walked along Locarno's Lake, whose sunny, open image involved by the light of memory is fasted to the poetic feelings; and Como's Lakes, whose deep source links to the origin of imagination; then, leaving the town of Gravedona by night to watch the quiet scenario before dawn the companions got lost and bewildered by Nature, confounded as if under a cosmic spell.

The first part connects with the rhetoric of historical and political events in which the poet's speech links the general happiness spread on the celebrations of the Revolution with the design of Nature. Wordsworth discursive background are

Rousseau's²⁶² ideas concerning the origin and foundation of the inequality among men, where the author inquires if it is authorized by natural law; Thomas Paine's²⁶³ *The Rights of Man*, where the love of liberty as a generalized sentiment is considered as implanted and disseminated in the hearts of all citizens; and Godwin's²⁶⁴ *Political Justice*, whose philosophical opinions aroused many of Wordsworth's reflections on the evils of political society such as violence, slavery, despotism and oppression; conceptions whence Wordsworth might have derived the ground to question the legitimacy of tyrannical government. Witnessing the military men besieging the chartreuse, the speaker laments that the religious institutions are threatened to perish under the State's unreasonable rage. The political despotism is suggested through allusion to empiricist Psychology's assumption that the senses rule over inner ideas, since in important passages Wordsworth mentions the tyranny of the senses, specially that of the eye. Thus, tracing the identification of sense with political domination, the speaker recognizes in the insecurity of the chartreuse both the fragility of the "meditative reason" and "heaven imparted truth" as well as equality among men, among "Monarch and peasant", representing the frailty of natural law before unnatural forces. In the second part one might acknowledge tropes of pastoral representation and the Platonic rhetoric of the dialectics between the ideal and the material so that deprived of its vapour veal Mont Blanc appears devoid of the mystery involving life and beauty, which is claimed to form the constitutive obscurity of the Romantic image. The idea of the vapour or veal involving the object and obscuring the sensuous limits of its material form as associated with the ideal mystery emanating from the things represents moments when Nature herself reveals her numinous essence. Yet, in the third part the image of the vapour rising from the abyss refers to the poet's imagination, so that the power to penetrate into the life of things and decipher Nature's mystery, endows the poet with the divinatory power of the ancient oracles. Thus the objective vapour of the ideal form emanating from the natural objects mingles with the subjective vapour rising from the depth of human mind, establishing the passionately interpretive relationship between man and world from the visible to the transcendental orders. Here, the key to the interpretation is posed not so much on Nature's capacity to appear and reveal her

²⁶² ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. **What is the Origin of Inequality among Men, and Is it Authorized by Natural Law?**, A Discourse (1754). COLE, G.D.H. (Translated by). Public Domain. Rendered into HTML and text by Jon Roland of the Constitution Society.

²⁶³ PAIN, Thomas. **The Rights of Man**. In: BURKE, Edmund. **Reflections on the Revolution in France**; PAIN, Thomas. **The Rights of Men**. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1961. Dolphin Books.

²⁶⁴ GODWIN, William. **Enquiry Concerning Political Justice**. 1793.

hidden aspects, but in man's own imaginative capacity to penetrate the meaning behind her forms. Placing the source of imagination's vapour in the depth of the mind allows the metaphorical association with the clouds of Abyssinia, where the source of the Nile is found, whose rains provide the river its fertilizing flood. Therefore, the idea of imagination serving the young wanderer across the Alps remits Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature to the model of the exploratory travels. It is easy to consider the extent to which the theme of travel became a Romantic trope if one take to his mind Hölderlin's poems *Heimkunft*, *Am Quell der Donau* or *Die Wanderung*. And, finally, the fourth part closes the travel with the insertion of a magic and cursed atmosphere of romance, as if Nature had put on a face of grave mood. Such atmosphere seems to be created in response to Coleridge's *Dejection: An Ode*, which besides reenacting the ballad motto of Sir Patrick Spence, stages the dark, dreary, grievous, heartless and reliefless mood of one who lost his way or hope in the woods; as well as the scene by the "New Moon, winter-bright, / And overspread by phantom light" (*Dejection*, ll. 9-10), and further the speaker laments: "wherefore did I let it haunt my mind / This dark distressful dream?" (*Dejection*, ll. 88-89).

6.5 Images and Conceptions Implied in Wordsworth's Arguments: The Rhetorics of Society Epitomized in the Urban Life of London as a Counterpoint to the Love of Nature and Men Regarded in the Workers in Rural Regions

Book VII relates the protagonist's adventures during one year or so of life at London. He moved to the great city soon after returning from his journey across the Alps, with the intention of seizing an interregnum of leisure after finishing graduation to see the bonds which cement the structure of society. There, the hero played the role of "an idler" "fixed amid that concourse of mankind / Where pleasure whirls about incessantly, / And life and labour seem but one" (Book VII, ll. 69-72). If for Wordsworth Nature appears associated to the cultural and educational realities through the mediation of romance, the social reality witnessed at London confronted the protagonist's expectations with the impossibility of acquiring the configuration of romance, and therefore of conciliation with Nature: "nor was free, in sooth, / From disappointment, not to find some change / In look and air, from that new region

brought, / As if from Fairy-land” (Book VII, ll. 95-98) was Wordsworth’s feeling as a boy when interviewing a classmate who had returned from London. The images of bridges, galleries, statues and monuments found at London are caught by means of “Fancy” (Book VII, l. 88; l. 126), thus affecting the subject’s senses only in superficial impressions, not enough to stir his imagination, so that the self’s faculties could not penetrate them to the point of discovering any fundamental relationship with Nature, thus motivating the want of connection with the images of romance.

London illustrates the logics of labour and propaganda, proper of industrialization and commerce: “the string of dazzling wares / Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names / And all the tradesman’s houses overhead” (Book VII, ll. 156-159), incrusting urban reality with the symbolical weight that turned its logic inescapable; and leaving almost no place for the people to develop their spiritual faculties. The compulsory – and illusory – necessity of producing material goods out of labour and under an oppressive working regime results ultimately in what Rousseau considers the inversion of the human search for happiness into its misery: “Tous les animaux ont exactement les facultés nécessaires pour se conserver. L’homme seul en a de superflues. N’est il pas bien étrange que ce superflu soit l’instrument de sa misère ?”²⁶⁵. In this sense, the experiences at London revealed what in social life and in the ideology of labour and production makes man unnatural, i.e. in trying to elevate his spiritual nature creates disconformity with his spiritual nature, that makes Wordsworth see “a barrier” “that from humanity divorced / Humanity” (Book VII, ll. 388-390). In the streets the crowd comes and goes in noisy disorder and striking strangeness, so that the tangle of alleys and streets produces the impression of bewilderment and confusion, thus urging the speaker to invoke the city’s image as the “monstrous ant-hill on the plain / Of a too busy world” (Book VII, 149-150). The too many spectacles seen in the streets – raree-shows and animal presentations – are dazzling, empty shows that bring impatience, and no elevation to the soul; and still more alluring to the mind are those exhibitions watched at the circus, where the hero saw “giants and dwarfs, / Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins, / Amid the uproar of the rabblement, / Perform their feat” (Book VII, ll. 271-274). The speaker brought to mind the recollection of the first time he had been to London years earlier, when he “heard, and for the first time in my life, / The voice of woman uttered blasphemy” and “Saw woman as she is, to open shame / Abandoned” (Book VII, ll. 384-387), which brought grief for the human nature,

²⁶⁵ ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. *Emile ou de L’ÉDUCATION*. 1961. p. 65.

subjected to sorrow and evil. Wordsworth's lament echoes Blake's harlot in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

Wordsworth's critical view of London is based on the old oppositions that divided the taste and opinion of eighteenth-century men between the country and the city, and by consequence between what is natural and what is artificial, which separates the creation of Nature from the products of man's workmanship, of which derives an opposition between the simple and the sophisticated. Book VII follows Rousseau's maxim that "La société a fait l'homme plus faible, non seulement en lui ôtant le droit qu'il avait sur ses propre forces, mais surtot en les lui rendant insufisantes"²⁶⁶. In this sense, London represents the place where men have their taste created by custom and habit; and where they are subjected to evil, vice and moral corruption. Then the speaker gives an account of his impressions about St. Bartholomew's Fair, whose spectacle lays "The whole creative powers of man asleep!" (Book VII, l. 681). Qualified by "anarchy and din, / Barbarian and infernal" (Book VII, ll. 686-687) and serving as an emblem extended to the character of the whole city like the pageant has served to represent Cambridge, the metaphor of the fair alludes to the infernal scenes of Dante and Milton, as Geoffrey Durant has demonstrated. Yet Wordsworth finishes this chapter by drawing the lesson that even from such a "blank confusion" (Book VII, l. 722) as that found in the disorder of the great city an active mind can establish the due connections. The intellectual habit of looking "In steadily" (Book VII, l. 734) and the ability to see "parts / As parts, but wit a feeling of the whole" (Book VII, ll. 735-736) derive from a special "education" (Book VII, l. 739) through which the speaker claims to have "passed" attributed to early communion with Nature so that "Attention springs, / And comprehensiveness and memory flow, / From early converse with the works of God / Among all regions" (Book VII, ll. 740-743). There are indications that Wordsworth shaped this view based on the association of Nature with the universe of romance; on Shaftesbury's idea of the supreme Wisdom in the laws of Nature as well as his ideas that virtue results from the perfection of Nature, which Wordsworth sees inscribed in the durable forms of the world "Like virtue have the forms / Perennial of the hills" (Book VII, ll. 756-757); on Hartley's ideas of the universal integrity of all things in Nature, in which all is in all, but also – as the hero applies an active mode of observation to the external world which might procure for the subject's thoughts "to move / With order and relation" (Book VII, l. 760-761) – on Newton's thesis that

²⁶⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 69.

Nature constitutes an ordered system. To endorse the thesis of the rhetorical tropes and traditional images and symbols with which Wordsworth structures the depiction of authentic experience of Nature it is useful to remember Geoffrey Durrant's²⁶⁷ argument that "Once he had freed himself from the influence of Thomson, Wordsworth tends to ignore the ostensible subject of a poem, and attends instead to the relationships of patterns which emerge from, or are imposed on, the phenomenal world".

In Book VIII, Wordsworth attempts to trace how the love of Nature leads to the love of Man. The narrative opens with the speaker observing from the top of Mount Helvellyn a rural festival that takes place annually in the surrounding vales. Glad with the endeared scenes beheld through distance and with the cheerfulness that prevailed among all people the speaker exults in suggesting that in their meanness and simplicity those people are gifted with greatness: "For all things serve them" (book VIII, l. 63). Wordsworth takes this notion of a benevolent Nature serving men or conspiring for their good, well-being, happiness and development from Shaftesbury's doctrine of benevolence in Nature, following which through universal Wisdom Nature is made "to be according to the private interest and good of every one, to work towards the general good"²⁶⁸. The bewildering experience at London serves as a counterpoint to understand what gains, in terms of calm and beauty, the hero received from Nature in her rural regions. The speaker praises "the paradise / Where I was reared" (Book VIII, ll. 99) for the charms of its forms, but more than that for the men abiding and working in the lands. As opposed to the urban man, who has been subjected to a working regime owed by industry trade, and ruled by capital and market, the rural man is considered "free, working for himself" (Book VIII, ll. 104) as a claim against what Adam Smith had considered as the division of labour, productive power, laws of market, wages and the relationship between master (the landlord or factory proprietor) and labourer.

In this book the narrator delineates an idyllic model of man based on the observation and intimate knowledge of rural workers watched since childhood in his native region. And it is worth emphasizing that Wordsworth's figure of man is qualified with both physically, morally and spiritually superior faculties. The speaker appeals for the force of living experience as providing the content to activate the human consciousness and feed the faculties with the impressions from the world, thus

²⁶⁷ DURRANT, Geoffrey. **Wordsworth and the Great System: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetic Universe.** 1970. p. 44.

²⁶⁸ SHAFTESBURY. Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit. In: SHAFTESBURY. **Characteristics.** Book II, Part I, Section III.

furnishing the conditions for the spiritual, emotional education grounded on a culture of presence. Living experience as the basis of the hero's intellectual and sentimental formation presupposes the interplay with present objects and scenes whose affections and impressions have the power of being converted, in moments of physical absence, into inner images of consciousness, dear to the self, as the speaker illustrates in many passages the metaphor of the visible image invading his mind like a flood or plunging into his heart. The human figure found its place in the affections of the protagonist's heart due to the ecstasies caused by the charms of its image when it had been beheld among the rural sceneries during his childhood roams. In this process the feeling for the particular man connected to the hero's kindred and friends has been extended to the human being in general, specially as it appears connected with the workers in their daily activities among rural Nature. Both the Nature and the men of Wordsworth's native region have been compared with those presented in mythic and pastoral stories, and considered superior to them. Wordsworth transforms the traditional figures in order to enable and re-signify them through the value of living experience. And the speaker suggests that experience is connected to modes of living, to modes of being in the world, so that the subject matters chanted in Spenser's pastoral stories may well have corresponded to what the poet could have witnessed in his time, contents that Wordsworth might have read and confirmed them as past modes of existence since he also received them by oral transmission: "True it is, / That I have heard (what he perhaps had seen)". Taking Dilthey's²⁶⁹ conception of *Erlebnis*, it is possible to understand that by contrasting the modes of reception in which Wordsworth had heard that which Spenser might have seen the Romantic poet indicates the historicity of experience, so that the degree of reception included into a scale of a past presence that can be transmitted and a present presence that can be observed establishes the boundary between the living experience – situated in the historical present – and the remote experience – belonging to past modes of existence which by their turn should have formed the living presence in the life of previous generations. If Spenser could have seen the modes of existence present at his time and transfigured them into fable, Wordsworth's intent has been to represent, even though conserving ancient spiritual, moral and symbolical values, the life as observable at his own age: "the rural ways / And manners which my childhood looked upon / Were the unluxuriant produce of a life, / Intent on little but substantial needs, / Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt" (Book

²⁶⁹ DILTHEY, Wilhelm. **Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung**: Goethe, Lessing, Novalis und Hölderlin. 1907.

VIII, ll. 159-163). In this sense, the value of living, observable experience – chiefly the subjective contact with present Nature – constitutes the undeniable ground to Wordsworth's autobiography as regards the theme of his spiritual education.

Relating the type of shepherd life depicted in myth and pastoral, which corresponded to the pattern of *locus amoenus*, the speaker affirmed to have had a similar experience during manhood in the visible sceneries of pastured plains of Goslar in Germany. In comparison, the “moors, mountains, headlands and hollow vales” (Book VIII, l. 216) of his native region acquired a character more sublime, approachable to the model of *locus terribilis*, so that the hardships endured confer an aspect of greatness to the scenario, thus transferring nobleness to the worker. As the protagonist had seen the shepherd's huge figure surrounded by fog among the hills or “glorified” (Book VIII, l. 269) by the light of setting sun walking beyond the hill shadows, he started to reverence the “human nature” (Book VIII, l. 279) in his image as if it belonged to a higher spiritual and genial entity. Wordsworth claimed that he was “led to knowledge” since childhood because men had been “presented” to his “inexperienced eyes” purified by “distance” (Book VIII, ll. 301-308), by the shepherd's position among the elements and by the perceptive occasions under the climatic conditions and configurations of visibility that produced him to the hero's view as a sacred, spiritual phenomenon amid Nature; and also the fortune of having first “looked / At man through objects that were great or fair” (Book VIII, ll. 315-316).

However, on the other hand, this human ideal is involved in a symbolical appeal, since it has been drawn from traditional depictions in poetry such as the pastoral, specially Theocritus' *Idylls*, Virgil's *Eclogues*, Milton's *Lycidas* and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*; Thomson's praise of shepherds and ploughmen in *The Seasons*; the medieval story of *Piers the Ploughman*, which accounts for the notion of the good and kind worker. Yet, further than that Wordsworth's man is a spiritually elevated, wise and inspired figure, an ideal derived from the prophets in the Bible, who frequently were shepherds or fishermen who received their wisdom and eloquence as an inspiration from the Holy Ghost; and from the praise of Hesiod, the author of *Theogony* and *The Works and the Days*. Hesiod represents the inspired poet, who has been a shepherd at work when he felt the inspiration of the Muses to chant his theme, so that the inspiration for poetry is received as a sacred endowment. Finally, it should be remarked that Wordsworth transforms the pastoral locus into sublime image by transposing to the English scenario a specific experience that he might have taken in Germany or heard

from Coleridge, which configures that which Stephen Prickett²⁷⁰ calls the symbol of the Brocken-spectre. Coleridge described the vision in his *Notebooks* and chanted it in the poem *Constancy to an Ideal Object*. At the mountains of Hartz, which Coleridge visited in May 1799, the level rays of the sun cast the shadow of a man against a wall of mists producing a giant figure with a halo around the head. Associating the childhood vision of the English shepherd with the symbol of the glorified spectre Wordsworth endows the human figure with ideal value. This kind of exalting and ennobling experience early received has been thanked by the speaker as it reminds him that he was guarded against evil of “too early intercourse / With the deformities of crowded life” (Book VIII, ll. 331-332) which he was to witness at London in later years. At this point, the personal historicity of *Erlebnis* is reintroduced. The building of his love for humankind has been finished off by the exposure to the evil, disorder and corruption in the city, an issue which must have come in early manhood, the due phase when his spirit has already been prepared by Nature, Books and schooling Education to assimilate that shock and convert it into love, faith and reverence: “Thus from a very early age, my Friend! / My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn / To human-kind, and to the good and ill / Of human life: Nature had led me on” (Book VIII, ll. 676-679). This reasoning leads to the conclusion that had his contact with urban life been in early childhood instead of his being bred among natural environments, the shock would have produced a diverse, “unnatural” result upon his sensibility and character – probably disposing him to vice, feebleness, revolt, and distrust in humanity.

6.6 Images and Conceptions Implied in Wordsworth’s Arguments: The Rhetorics of Political Thought Underlying the Enthusiasm and Spiritual Crisis Resulted from the Goings On of the Revolution in France

The retrospect drawn in Book VIII is inserted between the narrative of Wordsworth’s residence at London and the following three books which accounted for the period lived in France, viz. Books IX, X and XI. In this sense Book VIII can be read either as a divide or as a link between Wordsworth’s strongest experience of society and that of politics in his spiritual life. Nature has been the prop both of social and political

²⁷⁰ PRICKETT, Stephen. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth*. 1970. p. 22-29.

senses, as of personal growth and historical dialectics. In this sense, later in the narrative Wordsworth is going to confirm Rousseau's dictum that Nature can never deceive men, but men deceive themselves throughout social chains. As the speaker emphasizes both moments are shocking, and both his subjective character and his faith in human nature escaped collapsing due to the influence of Nature in his spirit. Revising the modes and ministries through which the love of Nature led to the love of Humankind is the necessary conclusion of the protagonist's experience of the social dimension of the human affairs and the necessary point of departure for the experience of men's political nature that is then to take place in the country of the admirable Revolution.

In biographical terms, these books would refer to the following actions: Wordsworth visited Paris in November, 1791; thence he moved to Blois, Orleans, where he met Michel Beaupuy and fell in love with Annette Vallon, living there until October, 1792 (Book IX); in October he was urged to Paris by a burst of revolutionary enthusiasm which drove him to the point of offering to become the leader of the Girondins; Terror started; but in December he was recalled to England, in time to escape from execution (Book X); in England, Wordsworth meditated in despair on his separation from his beloved and his recently born daughter, on the atrocities and degradation of the Revolution into tyranny, on the fall of Robespierre, and on Britain's declaration of war to France (Book XI). In Book IX, Wordsworth gives an account of his sojourn at Paris for a few weeks and then at Blois, where he remained for about ten months. Paris lived a time of moral and social bewilderment, and the city impressed with fear and inquietness. There the protagonist visited the palaces where national institutions had their seats and was eye-witness to how the "Revolutionary Power" (Book IX, l. 50) presented a latent tendency to outburst and escape control; and finally he visited the spot where the Bastille had stood. At Blois, he first frequented the chambers where noble men discussed issues concerning the French society. Unsatisfied with the hypocritical way those men avoided the fundamental problems the hero left them and looked for associating with the people. He joined a military band which despite being noble of birth identified themselves with the cause of people. They had been headed by an old officer named Michel Beaupuy, and have been preparing to fight the eventual assault of tyranny close at hand. On hearing about the dangerous agitations announced at Paris, Wordsworth complained of that course of events: "What a mockery this of history" (Book IX, ll. 168-169), and had the vision of the extent to which men had been deceived by their own kind. Yet the example of great men was taken to a sign

of hope in the justice and necessity of defending the revolutionary cause. As a harbinger of the cause of humanity Beaupeuy was described in metaphorical and symbolical terms which made of him a saint, a martyr, a prophet and a philosopher, e.g. humility, kindness, justice, respect for human race, a supernatural radiating grace, pleasantness, and seemingly divinely inspired vocation, a duty revered with devotion, wisdom; in their conversations, the relationship established between Beaupeuy and Wordsworth suggested the symbolical didactic sympathy between master and pupil, a relation modeled in Plato's philosophical *Dialogues*.

The experience of Nature and formal education created the conditions for the protagonist's revolutionary attitudes concerning political opinions. His despise of monarchy combined with nobility and sympathy for humble men are connected to the kind of life Wordsworth has been used to observe in the countryside where he was born, and with the republican ideas of freedom and equality he has been put into contact with at Cambridge, so that he learned to reverence by inner felt conviction the values through which the Romantic sensibility was to revert the worldview of the established system: "Distinction open lay to all that came, / And wealth and titles were in less esteem / Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry" (Book IX, 230-232). Wordsworth defends not only a reversal of men's position in social relations and political decisions, but also claims for social mobility and political rights based no longer on the *status quo* but on the individual possibilities of each man. The wild landscapes of the Lake District, the Christian based schooling received at Hawkshead, and the reading of appropriate books, specially poetry, fairy tales and romance opened his mind for a natural-religious piety and for the spontaneous development of feelings like kindness and love, and values such as virtue and integrity. The unchained license to ramble amid the wild landscapes in physical commerce with the elements, synthesized in the phrase "mountain liberty" (Book IX, l. 238) allows the connection between Wordsworth's avowedly childhood freedom in Nature with the revolutionary claim for liberty in social and political levels as an essential requisite of humanity. Both ideals, even though felt deeply as personal experiences deduced from the sensory contact with the natural world and observation of the human behaviour, reflect the inspiration in illumining arguments of philosophers such as Rousseau and Pain, which Wordsworth synthesized imagistically suggesting the correspondence between a breeding and pedagogical freedom for the individual to learn by his own experiences, moving by his own will and discovering the limits of his own faculties in relation to the limits of reality; and the institutional liberty which will be

ultimately embodied in a State priming for the liberty of all citizens: “But that one tutored thus should look with awe / Upon the faculties of man, receive / Gladly the highest promises, and hail, / As best, the government of equal rights / And individual worth” (Book IX, ll. 239-243). Considering the outbreak of Revolution as a necessary and inevitable stage in the development of society, politics, and mankind, Wordsworth professed the faith that “the events / Seemed nothing out of nature’s certain course” (Book IX, ll. 246-247). Regarding this creed one might notice that Wordsworth’s concept of Nature accounts for the spirit that moves and orders the course of historical events and the evolution of mankind, thus resembling Hegel’s concept of *Geist*. Together, Wordsworth and Beaupuy conceived of seeing a world where all human necessities would be satisfied, where “All institutes for ever blotted out / That legalized exclusion” (Book IX, ll. 525-526), and where they could “see the people having a strong hand / In framing their own laws; whence better days / To all mankind” (Book IX, ll. 530-532).

Book X gives an account of how, instigated by the hope that in assuming the character of Republic the State would reveal the good essence to which it should have been idealized in its origin, in which case the crimes and massacres of September 1790, which had been committed in the name of the Revolution, would be just passing deformities, the hero went to Paris to confer the politic scenario. At that same night in his room he got a vision whence he derived the understanding about the actual circumstances and troubles of the historical context under which France was set: “The fear gone by / Pressed on me almost like a fear to come” (Book X, ll. 71-72). Remembering how he had escaped from the massacres, Wordsworth felt the weight of experience on the verge of crushing him in his physical integrity: the fear of the violent acts under which many people perished, of which he could have been a victim himself, led him to realize how far the historic destiny of every person in France was submitted to Power’s material violence; how confused and crude had been the bonds which attached the moral, social and political principles to the individual body, for the violence against the body was able to disorganize and eliminate any balance and cohesion in collective spheres. In this sense, Wordsworth indicates the truth that the body is and sets the primary limit of all experience, owing this conclusion to the basic principle that it is the body integrity that warrants one’s life, thus allowing the individual destiny to go on influencing the construction of social structure, politic plots and historical destiny. At this point the reader may acknowledge the effect of *Erlebnis*

transforming the hero's consciousness and worldview. Comparing the imminence of public assault with the power of devastation brought by the natural forces such as the tide, the hurricane or the earthquake in their second turn, the speaker claims to have heard a voice warning the danger roaming in the whole city: in his thoughts the hero might have heard the voice of the natural order starting his consciousness. In this mood he went the next morning into the Palace of Orleans where he witnessed Louvet's vain denunciation of Robespierre's crimes. Relating his agitations as violence and arbitrariness spread throughout the land, the speaker meditated on France's situation of oppression and domination of many people by few persons: "I revolved / How much the destiny of Man had still / Hung upon single persons; that there was, / Transcendent to all local patrimony, / One Nature, as there was one sun in heaven" (Book X, ll. 154-158). Moreover, he uttered a firm belief: "That 'mid the loud distractions of the world / A sovereign voice subsists within the soul, / Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong / Of life and death" (Book X, ll. 182-185). This reminds Rousseau's argument that man, as he is innately good, possesses the sense of right or wrong in his own conscience. For Wordsworth "tyrannical power is weak" (Book X, l. 200) whereas "nothing has a natural right to last / But equity and reason" (Book X, ll. 205-206). The arguments for the principles of natural order and natural law may echo Shaftesbury, Hartley and Clarke. Those characteristics must be assembled in the character of the social and political leader, who should have a mighty and virtuous mind, who must be just and benevolent, so as to control impious power and create a "just government" (Book X, ll. 209-221). The ideas of justice and virtue of the government seem to derive from Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

Then Wordsworth was recalled to England in time to escape from the claws of Terror. There he saw Britain entering the war against France. His patriotism was bewildered by grief and subversion, by the dilemma between keeping faithful to his motherland or that land which embodied his ideals of liberty and justice. Yet, this confounding sorrow ended to open his eyes for the disappointing results of the Revolution, whose ideal design had failed under man's tyranny. Rousseau's dictum that Nature can never deceive men, but men deceive themselves is behind Wordsworth's conclusion: "If new strength be not given nor old restored, / The blame is ours, not Nature's" (Book X, l. 469-470). The ideal design of the Revolution belonged to Nature. However, it was carried on by men and succumbed to vice, evil and corruption, injustice and domination. Wordsworth saw this Truth in the fashion of a Prophet: "So, did a

portion of that spirit fall / On me uplifted from the vantage-ground / of pity and sorrow to a state of being / That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw / Glimpses of retribution, terrible, / And on the order of sublime behest" (Book X, ll. 448-453). The visionary power came from the ground of living experience, from the scenario which the subject had been inserted in, from the circumstances witnessed, from the dangers faced, from the feelings, emotions and thoughts aroused: happiness, hope, piety, pity, pain, sorrow, grief, bewilderment. The reverberations of experience elevated the protagonist's states of mind to perceive Truth beyond the visible facts. In order to fashion his self-image of poet endowed with prophetic wisdom and capable of achieving an inalienable knowledge on the natural and human – cultural, social and political – realities, Wordsworth combines a philosophical and a religious model. First, he recurs to the Neoplatonic image of Nature as an ideal fountain reaching the whole Universe by emanation: "O, Power Supreme, / Without Whose care this world would cease to breath, / Who from the Fountain of Thy grace dost fill / The veins that branch through every frame of life, / Making man what he is, creature divine, / In single or in social eminence, / Above the rest raised infinite ascents / When reason that enables him to be / Is not sequestered" (Book X, ll. 420-428). Wordsworth identifies Nature and the Deity, in a way combining the Christian and the Deistic or Pantheistic conceptions of God. Nature endowed man with reason, yet there are unnatural forces in man – guilt and ignorance overall – that blot this faculty and divert him from the good designs of Nature. Second, the visionary power that enables the subject to intuit that intellectual structure and providential order of the world – and consequential distortion in the activities of human society – is symbolically and figuratively modeled on the Biblical prophets, who "denounced, / On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss / Of their offences, punishment to come" (Book X, ll. 441-443). The Biblical rhetoric allowed Wordsworth to call that ravaging outbreak of violence a "deluge", which helps to link the imagery of the Revolution with apocalyptic ideas of the end of the world; with the prophetic warning of punishment of the crimes of the sinful men. Finally it is crucial to notice that Wordsworth realizes "mockery" in those times of happiness and triumph for the new born liberty celebrated with the Revolution, since they were later reversed into vengeance and violence under Robespierre's rule. At this point Wordsworth invokes the mad attitude of King Lear when he "reproached the winds" (Book X, l. 507) to illustrate the foolishness of those, including himself, who believed piously in that calm image of mirth and triumph without suspecting that it was soon to revert into a tempest of

treachery. The idea of mockery pervades all moments when the subject is confronted with men's institutions: The educational, social and political institutions whose functions are manifested in Cambridge, London and France. In the last instance, Wordsworth admits the mockery underlying humankind's destiny, which dissolved the happiest hope into the saddest and the most ironic disillusionment. Ironically at the head of the delegate band met in the beginning of Wordsworth's journey across the Alps was Robespierre, marching in the name of "Humanity and right" (Book X, l. 500), who represented for the protagonist hope and happiness but soon "Wielded the scepter of the Atheist crew" (Book X, ll. 502); a supposed democratic leader who soon thereafter took the Power and persecuted the French people, eliminating all possibilities of liberty together with all supposed enemy of the Revolution. Yet Wordsworth finally exulted with the idea of a new morning for Humanity wrapped in everlasting Justice brought with the news of the fall of Robespierre.

Book XI develops a reflection on the circumstances in France after the cessation of Terror. The historical shock had hindered the hope in the possibility of what Wordsworth called "rational Experience" (Book XI, l. 5), e.g. people's possibility of sensing, feeling, conceiving or acting according to the sane activities of human faculties and sound principles. Yet Wordsworth counteracts the distrust in the Government and State with the trust in the virtuous nature of the People and in the potentialities of the Republic. The speaker saw the defeat of Terror as the retreat of man's insanity acting through the institutions before Nature's rational principles: "To Nature, then, / Power had reverted: habit, custom, law, / Had left an interregnum's open space / For her to move about in, uncontrolled" (Book XI, ll. 31-34). Wordsworth seems to assume that the very cause, or rather the very conditioning ground for the political barbarity lays on the social instruments which impede the vivid and living working of the human faculties and affections in everyday relations. The experience of the French Revolution provided the subject with "a general insight into evil" (Book XI, l. 93) which based his meditations "on the rule and management of nations" (Book XI, ll. 99-100). Yet, if the living contact with the agitations of post revolutionary France created the basis for a sharper mode of perception, his intuitive sensibility and self-transformative knowledge had already been prepared by early experience of Nature and school to recognize the best qualities in "human nature" (Book XI, l. 80): "As books and common intercourse of life / Must needs have given" (Book XI, ll. 95-96).

Wordsworth's tribute to "books" may be connected to his reading of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, Rousseau's *Social Contract* and Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

Nevertheless the reference to books suggests also the mode how the Revolution stirred people's emotions and created an imaginative and fanciful atmosphere which resembled the world of romance and childhood innocence. Since everyone expected a time of universal renovation of humanity, that period opened people's dreams with an ideal land in a harmonious age, and stimulated men's longing for the possibilities to build a paradise on earth. The keen observation of natural objects and the reading of romance in childhood grounded the hope that an ideal and harmonious life – a present Golden Age – could be finally achieved "But in the very world, which is the world / Of all of us, – the place where, in the end, / We find our happiness, or not at all!" (Book XI, ll. 142-144). However, this state of feeling and type of affection which were congenially born and spontaneously bred, since the protagonist's spiritual dispositions and experiences corresponded to that of "a child of Nature" (Book XI, l. 178), lasted until he received his moral shock from Britain's declaration of war against France, an act which "corrupted" his "sentiments" to such a degree of mortification that "a way was opened for mistakes / And false conclusions" (Book XI, ll. 181-182). Then in that mood of distrust in the events and want of faith in his own feelings the speaker gives an account of having started to rely on abstract and speculative schemes. It might be a critical reference to Godwin's notions that reason might explain the essence of Man. In seeking valid explanation and general truth in what the speaker considered an unsound "abstract science" that operated by "reasoning" and in which the imperfections of time and space had been disconsidered. Wordsworth refers to this evil effect of that habit through the phrase "mockery of a Being" (Book XI, l. 311), thus suggesting the very scorn for a general, historic state of affairs that was closely associated with the conceptions of eighteenth-century Rationalism: the idea of *mockery* constituted a Romantic trope in which the poets referred critically and scornfully to the sardonic indifference, hypocritical and cynical contempt implicit in the dominant structure, the immoral rulers and corrupt institutions of their age, of which subjective depression and bewilderment are the strongest symptoms verified in the individual's life. Thus, this narrative depicted how the hero's spirit evolved informed and confronted by "The perturbations of a youthful mind / Under a long-lived storm of great events" (Book XI, ll. 373-374).

6.7 Images and Conceptions Implied in Wordsworth's Arguments: The Rhetorics of Spiritual Cure and Restoration Found in the Return to Nature and the Gratification of Vision in a Natural Prospect Confirming the Bonds between the Soul of Nature and the Mind of Man

Books XII and XIII are devoted to the story of how the poet's taste and imagination, impaired by the moral crisis brought by the disappointment with the promises of the Revolution and by a general state of mockery found in society, politics and history, causing a nihilistic pain and a sense of cosmic abandonment in the individual's soul, has been restored by a return to Nature, specially as it is represented by the protagonist's return to his native region. The spectacles seen in France illustrated the generalized situation of ignorance and guilt that degraded the humankind's collective life and drove people into paranoia. This depressed the hero's faculties, confounded his judgments and hardened his feelings. But he found in Nature the antidote for despondency: "In Nature still / Glorifying, I found a counterpoise in her, which, when the spirit of evil reached its height / Maintained for me a secret happiness" (Book XII, ll. 40-43). The cure found in the living contact with natural landscapes is suggested by the effects of the natural objects and elements upon the subject's senses and feelings, as their motions produced well-being, delight, joy and calmness. Evoking the "motions of delight that haunt the sides / Of the green hills" (Book XII, ll. 9-10) Wordsworth refers both to the benefits of the most elemental aesthetic effects of natural objects as they affect the subject through sensory qualities, and to the spirituality that confers the natural forms with the sublime status of living entities. All this presupposes the suggestion that a chain of living experiences had fulfilled the maternal and pedagogical function of molding the protagonist's character, creating feelings, grounding thoughts and producing insights, thus fostering self-development and preparing his nature for a calm, happy and sensitive existence amid simple things. This can be confirmed since the speaker avows that his narrative "hath chiefly told / Of intellectual power, fostering love, / Dispensing truth" (Book XII, ll. 44-46) that created the conditions for the hero's "natural graciousness of mind" (Book XII, l. 50). After the moral shock brought by the "disastrous issues" (Book XII, l. 52) of the historical events, the ideas of cure and renewal have been reiterated by the analogy with the return of the

Spring, in the vital force that confers a new face upon earth's countenance. Wordsworth's attention to the change in environment due to climatic influence reminds us of Thomson's invocation in *The Seasons*: "Come, gentle Spring, ethereal mildness, come" (Spring, l. 1). The transformation of Thomson's tropes and descriptions into more realistic techniques implies that Wordsworth is not only creating an aesthetics of poetic – personal and professional – development purely based on the interaction with the environment, but presupposed acculturation by means of formal learning, reading and study, producing acquaintance with a long tradition of western thought and poetry.

The disillusionment with the Revolution led Wordsworth to seek hope for humanity in logical sciences and rationalistic theories. However this only augmented the protagonist's sorrow since he found a correlate to political tyranny in the tyranny of the observational methods and logical deduction that remained on the superficial features of the objects or relied on the measurement, division and classification of parts or even establishing the material proprieties of the bodies, thereby denying any spiritual possibility. Subdued to that disenchanting mode of thinking, "A bigot to a new idolatry" (Book XII, l. 77), the protagonist complains of having "scanned" (Book XII, l. 92) both visible and moral world in this fashion. Focusing on this claim, it is possible to understand what Wordsworth has actually meant by the phrase "tyranny of the eye" so often shunned along the narrative. Wordsworth is by no means denying the authority of the senses or the positive power of sensory affections for human life and poetic growth, but rejecting the mechanistic observation and rationalistic deduction as a basis for approaching any form of life as well as epistemological and aesthetic spheres, since such habits of rationalization mortified his imaginative sensibility. Those habits conducted the hero to rely on the Cartesian methods which resulted in the conception of "a twofold frame of body and mind" (Book XII, l. 125), which the speaker criticizes as a negative issue about himself. Wordsworth speaks in despise of a time when "the bodily eye", "the most despotic of our senses" held his mind "in absolute dominion" (Book XII, ll. 127-131). The speaker claims that Nature herself employed given means to overcome such "a tyranny", stirring all the senses to interact in equal degree of activity as well as directing their activities and the influence of the objects approached "To the great ends of Liberty and Power" (book XII, l. 139). This reminds the reader of Rousseau's claim that any infant should be let free to interact with the objects and environments surrounding him, thus learning by his own experiences. Wordsworth appropriated this premise and suggested that childhood liberties to roam and play amid

Nature presuppose the development of equilibrium – equality and liberty – in the activity of the senses, without submission of one to another, whose counterpart ought to be the elevation of liberty as the chief principle of social and political relations among men. However, in his naturalistic and realistic impulses, Wordsworth would never deny the value of sensory experience, since for him and his friend Coleridge, perception constitutes the basis of what they conceived as primary imagination. What Wordsworth condemns is the soulless use of sense observation that denies the living, sensitive, ideal and spiritual dimensions in the objective world. Before his crisis, the protagonist “felt, observed, pondered; did not judge” (Book XII, l. 188), what presupposes reliance in imaginative sensory experience and in the activity of the subjective sensibility, whereas it shuns “judgment” as an abstract tool to rationalized and measured knowledge of the objects – in which sense Wordsworth made an explicit allusion to what Locke, Hume and Burke had defined for that term. Wordsworth could recover from this kind of perverted sensibility by a new surrender to the powers of natural landscapes and to the affections by the “Soul of Nature” (Book XII, l. 90) as he had had early in life “Visitings of imaginative power” (Book XII, l. 203) that imbued him with such a tendency for “humility and love” (Book XII, l. 187) during childhood and youth amid his native hills. Thus, returning to Nature, the protagonist could get rid of habit and custom: “again / In Nature’s presence stood, as now I stand, / A sensitive being, a *creative* soul” (Book XII, ll. 205-207). Recollections of striking moments haunted by Nature during childhood as those referred to as the “spots of time” helped the protagonist in this self-transformative and self-reflexive process of formation and renovation of his mind.

Book XIII makes it clear that if Wordsworth relied on the development of his poetic education through experience of Nature it is because he found in the natural universe a metaphoric source of images and symbols, as well as the ideal, essential source of poetic language, inspiration and truth – which constitute the inalienable code, power and knowledge of the ancient bards – as the phrase “sister horns” has suggested. The essence of poetry is attributed to the moods of “calmness” and “emotion” derived from the affections of the landscapes. Since the speaker professed the creed that the Genius’ creative activity operates through the “interchange / Of peace and excitation” (Book XIII, ll. 5-6) it is in the interplay of affection and mood that the relationship between the subject and the objective world is established. Considering himself a “humbler intellect”, on this side of the ideal parameter of geniality, the speaker

undertakes to give an account of his own development, describing what he has received from Nature in terms of feeling and knowledge. Overcoming the moral, social and politic despondency resulting from the disappointment with the course of events in France, the hero felt a breath of renovation arising like a new dawn – a new cycle, a new beginning – thus confirming that he “had been taught to reverence a Power / That is the visible quality and shape / And image of right reason” (Book XIII, ll. 20-22). Among the transitory quality of many objects, the speaker claims to have learnt to discover endurance – in the temporal an intimation of the eternal. The idea of right reason, as Joseph Beach²⁷¹ emphasizes, derives from Clarke and Leibnitz, and refers to Universal Reason, the intelligent principle that animates and organizes the world. The universal reason can be considered as the intellectual and spiritual faculty connected to the Soul of the World. So, as Wordsworth suggests, human beings derived their own reason and intellect from that source through intercourse with Nature. By this rational power of man – correlate to the rational power of the Universe – the subject is conducted to virtue and to knowledge, to distinguish between falsely and really valuable objects, since that high intellectual power “Holds up before the mind intoxicate / With present objects, and the busy dance / Of things that pass away, a temperate show / Of objects that endure” (Book XIII, ll. 29-32). At this point Wordsworth opposes to the rationalistic and mechanistic conceptions of the time a religiously and metaphysically based imaginative and symbolical conception that sees the spiritual power behind the phenomena of Nature. The objects that endure remit to the notion of “Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe”, where Wordsworth found the “Eternity of Thought”, which Joseph Beach attributes to Plato’s idealism expressed in the *Timaeus*, in which the Greek philosopher distinguishes between the “eternity of thought”, e.g. “that which is always in the same state” and the “temporal character of phenomena” i.e. “that which is merely in the process of becoming”²⁷². Besides, the speaker claims that his “watchful thoughts” (Book XIII, l. 40) have been re-established. Thereby the adult poet is restored the “watchful power of love” (Book II, l. 291), an intellectual feeling with which the poet perceives the most subtle affinities among the things, and in their “transitory qualities” (Book II, l. 290) recognizes “a register of permanent relations” (Book II, l. 292-293); and consequently attributes moral values to every creature and object in Nature,

²⁷¹ BEACH, Joseph W.. **The Concept of Nature in the Nineteenth Century English Poetry**. 1956. p. 164-165.

²⁷² Idem. Ibidem. 87-94.

establishing a fraternal relation of kinship with all other beings, what constitutes a typical Romantic attitude. The image of man and the knowledge of human life regained their imaginative status, and his knowledge about the “worth and dignity of individual man” (Book XIII, ll. 80-81) has also been reaffirmed, not an abstract idea but a view of man as observed in his daily activities. Again the notion of experience determines the quality and progress of the protagonist’s construction of knowledge. Wordsworth held the thesis that humble men living a simple life and linked to the outward world in rural occupations in the countryside by their toiling activities are virtuous, good, sensible, sensitive and intelligent beings. Yet the poet claims that excess of labour equates with oppression and destroys creativity and the possibilities of spiritual progress or cultural elevation of man, an opinion which might be confirmed in Hölderlin’s essays such as *Judgment and Being* or *On the Law of Freedom*: Wordsworth inquires, thus: “If man’s estate, by doom of Nature yoked / With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance” (Book XIII, ll. 175-176). Such a liberty and chance of man to realize the full potentialities of individual talent and be elevated above the conditions that on the one side his own animal nature put before him, and on the other side the constraints that his social conditions impose on him, are hindered by a virtual reality of the modern capitalist life that requires men’s conjointly force of labour in order to enrich this inescapable state of affairs: Wordsworth refers to the domination of man’s social autonomy by the economical abstract entity called “The Wealth of Nations”, treated by Adams Smith.

Wordsworth also recollected the passions caused by the lonely roads among hills whose endless lines were an invitation into the transcendent realms of infinitude and eternity, thus endowing the figure and role of the wanderer with sublime worth: in daily conversation with unknown men on the public roads the wanderer Wordsworth acquired knowledge about the human nature. Wandering, Wordsworth came to observe and meditate on the short extent to which syllabuses of formal Education “have to do with real feeling and just sense” (Book XIII, l. 171), thus formulating the aesthetic argument that praises man’s innate gifts above formal training. Wordsworth came to the conclusion that simple men are capable of pure and elevated love, since this pure passion does not depend on refinements of art nor training in elaborate, sophisticated manners; that social oppression might mortify the endowments of Nature in men, since where “poverty and labour in excess / From day to day pre-occupy the ground / Of the affections, and to Nature’s self / Oppose a deeper nature” (Book XIII, ll. 198-201) they might hinder any possibility of love. Here Wordsworth’s aesthetic idea of a naïve

course of education fostered by the experience of Nature as made possible by Nature's own design, so that man could partake of Nature's intellectual and moral powers in the haunting ministries of their forms, remit to the conceptions of natural and unnatural affections in Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtues*, in *Characteristics*. However not only the natural gifts, but also the access to "the grace / Of culture" (Book XIII, ll. 196-197) is necessary to procure for the happiness and full realization of humankind. Wordsworth does not deny the importance of formal education, but criticizes the narrow-mindedness of those educators, the "wealthy Few" (Book XIII, l. 209) who attempted to impose their own precepts and judgments as parameters to measure the truth, failing to grasp a much larger and more complex and essential truth expressed in books which could be rather accessed by any student if reading carefully yet free from restraint. Finally, paying his "reverence / To Nature and the power of human minds" (Book XIII, ll. 224-225), the speaker stated his conviction that Nature does not want power "To consecrate, if we have eyes to see, / The outside of her creatures, and to breathe / Grandeur upon the very humblest face / Of human life" (Book XIII, ll. 284-287). For Wordsworth, simple men are worthy of dignity and admiration. But more than that, the presence of Nature, chiefly in rural life, elevated the passions of the human heart. This is the basic assumption in Wordsworth's praise of life amid natural objects in the rural environment of his native county: Wordsworth's love of rural Nature has to do with the idea of the beneficial effects of the natural beauties as associated to the design of the Universal Soul; to the belief that the physical laws of Nature have a correlate in the moral laws so that Nature works as a code of examples and norms for the human conduct; and finally to the faith that the workings of her elements converge to create the ground of virtue and good for all mankind.

The final book of Wordsworth's autobiography reveals how far the experience of Nature has been sought and found out by the poet's craving soul. The theme of wanderlust fits the incessant search which is finally rewarded during one of his excursions through the northern regions of Cambria. Climbing Mount Snowdon together with his friend Robert Jones, Wordsworth is consecrated with a majestic vision capable of satisfying his soul and calming down his spirit in mystical and meditative contemplation of what he felt to be the perfect, universal, all involving image of Truth. An innate wanderer, Wordsworth pursued the telling image that would inform and confirm the always craving feeling for a latent revelation, an unconscious yet faithful desire that urged his steps towards the ultimate source and meaning of all things. Since

his journey through the Alps, Wordsworth has sought the source of his imagination. However, since earlier times he had been seeking the source of artistic and poetic consecration of his soul; still earlier the source of ideal, spiritual and intellectual essence of the world; but previous to all this he had met – nay, he was rather encountered by it – the source of experience, whence he derived emotion, feeling, thought, knowledge and self-knowledge, the basic elements that provide the primary content to activate and inform his consciousness. The source of all this is Nature. And the truth found out is the correspondence between the individual mind and the macrocosmic mind that organizes and moves the whole of universal Nature. In the panoramic vision caught from the mountain top Wordsworth beheld “the type / Of a majestic intellect” (Book XIV, ll. 66-67) and “the emblem of a mind / That feeds upon infinity, that broods / Over the dark abyss” (Book XIV, ll. 70-72). For Wordsworth the living experience of Nature fostered the growth of his poetic sensibility, providing knowledge, emotions and thoughts that ground self-transformation. However the majority of the experiences depicted are symbolically representative or shaped according to a number of tropes, images, metaphors, and ideas which link sensory, sentimental, moral and spiritual experiences with a general rhetoric and conception of the world whose references denote acquaintance via learning and study.

The Romantic writers expressed a strong resentment against the Age of Enlightenment which believed that reason, intellect and science could solve all problems. So the poets emphasized the virtues of passion and instinct over reason, and imagination and intuition over logic. Thus they emphasized the value of human experience. A second reaction is directed toward the advent of the scientific and Industrial Revolution, whose technological innovations were transforming society, so that the steam machine, the factories and private capital were changing the English landscape, the job market as well as the family relations and domestic life. Blake criticized the transformations of the modern society by calling industrial factories “satanic mills”. The poets suggested a metaphorical and symbolical declaration of the intention to reform society. The return to Nature was a response to the dark and disenchanting conditions that sciences and industrialization have created, so that the devotion to Nature and the beauty of the world was a reaction to the dark sense of melancholy spread on all spheres of human life. The return to Nature comes associated to the nostalgia for more innocent times, configured in the ideal of childhood, origin and a remote past, resulting from the rejection of the dehumanizing changes brought by the

industrial age. It reflects the dissatisfaction with the real world, and the plunging of man's desires into the imaginary world of myth, pastoral and romance on the one side, and on the other side the religious-philosophical quest for the original principle of everything. The themes of childhood and ancient past configure the theme of Golden Age, represented as a land of peace and perfection that corresponds to the beginning of civilization. The eighteenth century saw the industrialization struggling for replacing the ideal of liberty with progress, thus tending to draw the cyclical, iterative time of myth out of people's life and tossing them entirely into the linear temporality of history. The models for the ideal world of Golden Age were long past: the Garden of Eden in the Bible, the classical world of Greece and Rome, the medieval world of chivalry and romance, the popular world of folklore and legend. But the most perfect model for this ideal which reflects perfect innocence and clarity is a world deep in everyone, viz. the universe of childhood. The dream of Golden Age corresponds to a longing for things that lie on the other side of the boundaries of everyday life, especially in a period of upheaval like the Romantic Age. The ideal of return to childhood allows man to retrieve back the unity within himself, which implies the possibility of intimate feelings. A dear theme that contributed for the Romantic quest for subjective formation and self-understanding consists of the journey. For the Romantics the journey through the real or imaginary world was essentially a voyage towards the true self, towards self knowledge. The sights and signs of Nature encountered on the way are paths into the inner, spiritual life. The contemplation of the external objects leads to meditation on the mystery of life.

However the key to all Romantic achievements or the centre to which all other elements converge is Nature, whose only equals in status are the Mind, on the one hand, and Art, on the other hand. The theme of Nature is most commonly associated to the urge to escape the excesses of sciences, which shook man's firm beliefs in religion and in God as the greater entity who had created the world, and the rapid transformations caused by the Industrial Revolution and Scientificism. The rationalism argued for the inexistence of God, and thus shook the basic principles that used to confer order to human life, even to the social structure. As the whole Europe based her social structure in the existence of God, and in the divine order of anybody's place in society, the idea that God does not exist threw doubt upon men's thought and their relationships, putting into question the legitimacy of the concepts of authority and hierarchy. Thus the poets started to focus on the beauty and goodness of Nature and on the human instincts.

Nevertheless, the main event that released all sorts of human emotions grounded on the hope of realization of all individual possibilities conducting to collective values through liberty and justice consists in the French Revolution. The ostentatious and expensive habits of the upper classes as compared to the poverty of the lower ones served as argument for the necessity of social and political changes to revert the power owned by alliances of monarchs, nobility and wealthy merchants that lasted for centuries in Europe. Inspired by the ideals of individual freedom and equality, maintained by philosophers such as Rousseau, Diderot and Thomas Paine the French revolutionary leaguers wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Men* in 1789 thus setting the ideological basis of the French Revolution. Monarchy yielded to the republican power of people based on the enthusiasm of liberty. Rousseau inspired the Romantic writers with his statements that an infant is born free, that man lives imprisoned by the social institutions and also that the individual will, feeling and emotion can provide the ground for freedom.

The reign of Terror aimed to destroy all focuses of resistance to the Revolution, massacring thousands of people and starting an age of chaos and civil war. But after the end of the Revolution, the power went to the hands of the army, not to the people. If by the time of the Revolution France was a welcoming place for Englishmen as the forerunners of the French ideal of liberty inspired by the English Revolution, in the middle of the Terror the French soil became a dangerous place for an Englishman like Wordsworth. Therefore Wordsworth has to escape from France in order not to perish either for his nationality or his ideals. That has shaken his faith in the Revolution. Yet not in its ideal. Tormented by the forced separation from Annette Vallon and bewildered by the fear of the danger she has run in consequences of the tyranny in France, Wordsworth became a wanderer, and saw in wandering without destination among unknown landscapes a chance to pursue his vision that constituted his own personal, inner revolution. The contemplation of natural landscapes propitiated for him the encounter with himself at his natural level. The return to his native land allowed him to feel at home, so that he could find restoration, set the balance of his affections, and reach peace in the world again.

Chapter VII

7 The Interplay of Sensory and Sentimental Experiences with the Elaboration of Traditional Tropes and Symbols

7.1 Sensory and Sentimental Experiences and the Suggestion of Traditional Ideas

In order to illustrate what has been said before in this section I intend to discuss more detailedly the body of rhetorics which are suggested in the deeper layers of some of the main events that compose the plot in *The Prelude*.

7.2 The Human Integration in Nature: Elemental Experience and the Ground of Spiritual Formation in Infancy

The link of the adult poet up to start his designed work with childhood is the element which brings the creative energy that impels the poet to sink into the deep recesses of autobiography and bring out the most sincere poetic experience. The first contact of the poet Wordsworth with Nature, as referred to in *The Prelude*, remits to the infant baby hearing the murmur of Derwent – the river that runs behind his father's house – in his mother's arms, an agreeable sound received with a soothing effect.

The river, as a streaming and flowing element represents both the fluid motion of the external affections being internalized by the self and the creation of a metaphorical language which represents both human related issues and the dynamics of natural existence, thus expressing in amalgamating symbols the human integration in Nature. This language indicates the human being as he is bred in the contact with the natural environment, deriving all bodily and spiritual attributes from the properties of Nature. The physiological functions of breathing, eating, drinking as well as the sensible functions of hearing, seeing, smelling and touching, through which the human life is physically linked with the world without, became the means by which the self establishes a spontaneous commerce with the surroundings, unconsciously absorbing

both physically and spiritually the strength of living Nature. This process of communion with the external world starts already with the infant, first drinking from his mother's breast, a pleasure mixed with the audible sensation sent from the river, then, in a second moment in the concrete presence of the streamlet, bathing into the elemental Nature. The musical murmur of the river signalizes that for the baby Nature acquires the character of a mother and nurse, and her acts to the infant Wordsworth are care, breeding, nurture, nursery-rhyming, lulling into rest.

Besides, Wordsworth is addressing the river as if it were a divinity. At least the poet is treating it as if he were before a fairy creature. The infantine imagination allows him to establish a sympathetic relationship with the natural elements identifying in them the power and intention of a deity, a being endowed with benevolent sentiments, sensitive and communicative possibilities. As a divine being, the river is active, acting by the command of a living consciousness directed toward a design, namely, that pedagogical storage of the infant's sensibility in order to conduct the fulfilment of his poetic education. Striking experiences have a functional meaning to the poet's spiritual growth in that he presupposes the sense of active and intentional purposiveness behind Nature's ministries.

The river is the first element of Nature whose commerce in childhood the poet took notice of. Through the perceptions of the river he has his first communion with the powers through which Nature moves man's spiritual passions. In the presence of the river the baby first feels the natural sensations becoming spiritual feelings and he first experiences the manifestation of the love-generating power of Nature. The murmur of the river becomes music to the baby's ears. The sound and motion of the water are felt inner like the mother's voice in the lulling song. The environment starts to convey the motherly affections and the baby captures them through the senses.

The river seems to send a message to the baby from his deep recesses as if it were a revelation of fairy creatures or a magical land. It is a record of the first moment in which the hero's innocence keeps contact with experience, in which the human being has a glance of the mysteries of a world in which man and Nature are integrated. The "voice that flowed along my dreams" is a calling of Nature. The dream is the region in which the beauties and affections of Nature are absorbed in the poet's soul. If the pleasing sound emanating from Derwent affected the infant so as to pervade his dreams, the dream is on one side the imaginary link between the forms of the external universe and those of the intimate universe of his soul; and on the other side, the bridge among

the motions of the world and those of the soul. The poetic value of the outer motions of the objects belongs to the aesthetic effects they rouse: agreeable to the senses they are pleasurable and dear to feelings: “Ye motions of delight”.

7.3 The Rhetorics of Sound in *The Prelude*

There are two images in the introduction of *The Prelude* signaling one important level in the treatment of sound: the touch of the breeze and the murmur of the stream. Both of them refer to the touch of natural elements in the level of sensation so as to excite the speaker into an especial mood between the poles of “calm and emotion”. The “gentle breeze” is not properly heard by the subject but is felt fanning his cheek. Yet the tactile effect of the breeze against the hero’s face leaves a mild and silent vestige of murmur close to the ear – the agreeable counterpart of the terrible notion of the wind wuthering and howling against the crags and penetrating his ears with so “strange” an “utterance” that carries him into a mythic-fairy Nature later in the narrative. As regards this aspect, it is worth bringing into account John Hollander’s distinction of two traditions behind the Romantic treatment of sound: the musical picture of the *locus amoenus* linked to the pastoral tradition; and the sounds that evoke the “authenticity” of the *locus terribilis*, associated with the vogue of the sublime. Outdoor sounds like the “birdsong”, “the noise of moving water”, and “the rustling of foliage in the milder winds”, explains Hollander, enter “into the conventional underscoring for the picture of the *locus amoenus*”²⁷³; whereas the sublime incorporates that set of noises previously associated with the idea of “chaos” “into the rural orchestra”, hence, the sounds of torrents, landslides, cataracts, thunder and storms compose the picture of the *locus terribilis*.²⁷⁴

The exhortation of the blessing in the breeze forms the preamble to *The Prelude* by combining the idea of *locus amoenus* with the symbolic effects of the Aeolian harp in Nature. In book VII, remembering a period of creative vacancy after the visitation of the “quickenning breeze”, Wordsworth gives an account of how his mind was revived by a choir of birds:

²⁷³ HOLLANDER, John. Wordsworth and the Music of Sound. In: BLOOM, Harold (Edited with an Introduction by). **William Wordsworth**. 1985. p. 59.

²⁷⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 60.

But I heard,
 After the hour of sunset yester-even,
 Sitting within doors between light and dark,
 A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
 My threshold, – minstrels from distant woods
 Sent in Winter's service, to announce,
 With preparation artful and benign
 That the rough lord had left the surly North
 On his accustomed journey.

(Book VII, ll. 18-26).

Later, in the same occasion the poet was moved by the deep silence accompanying the apparition of the glow-worms:

Thereafter, as the shades
 Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied
 A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume
 Or canopy of yet unwithered fern,
 Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen
 Through a thick forest.

(Book VII, ll. 31-36).

The experience of sound and silence here announces “tenderness and love”. As the poet tells, the experience of that night brought a genial mood which lasted until the next morning and was extended to a conjointly outburst of outward and inward motions:

my favorite grove,
 Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft,
 As if to make the strong wind visible,
 Wakes in me agitations like its own,
 A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,

(Book VII, ll. 44-48).

On the other hand, the breeze corresponds to the metaphoric transposition to the natural elements of the musical functions contained in the image of the Aeolian harp, the eighteenth-century toy that produces melodic chords out of the struck of the wind, varying its melody according to the intensity of the struck. Likewise, both poet and the natural beings, especially trees, woods and mountains, are gifted with the power to create sound excited by the external affections, for instance, the whistling of trees due to the wind blow. From now on, the natural created sounds began to be treated no longer as mere formless noises, but rather understood as endowed with an aesthetic, musical and poetic quality. Such idea was expressed in Coleridge's claim:

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

(*The Aeolian Harp*, ll. 44-48).

Like the whistling trees, struck by the wind, the poet's soul starts to "overflow" with "powerful feelings" so that poetic numbers demand expression as though water pouring out of a spring. The function of sound imagery in the influence of Nature upon Wordsworth's poetic mind is indicated from the beginning of the autobiographical poem in the responsiveness to Coleridge's metaphor Aeolian harp, the famous instrument which catches the motion of the wind transforming it into musical chords. The Aeolian harp was taken to symbolize the poet's own spontaneous response to the external affections of Nature. Wordsworth alludes to Coleridge's metaphor in the initial image of the touch of the "gentle breeze" that brings "joy". On one hand, as Meyer Abrams demonstrates, the breeze represents a natural equivalent for the old Muse invoked for poetic inspiration, hence the harp and its melody symbolize the poet himself and his song "Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains" (Book I, l. 48); on the other, the idea of the harp was applied to the trees and boughs, groves and woods that work as instruments of the wind with which Nature plays her music. In John Hollander's account, the Aeolian harp "becomes the basis of a profound and widespread trope for imaginative utterance, and a kind of mythological center for images of combining tone and noise, music and sound"²⁷⁵.

Calm and emotion are the two modes through which natural stimuli affect the human feelings. One of Wordsworth's first questions in *The Prelude*, "and what clear stream / Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?" (Book I, ll. 12-13), accords with one of the cardinal points established as effects of Nature upon the lyrical speaker: that of "calm". John Hollander demonstrates that Wordsworth is echoing Pope's *Essay on Criticism*: "If crystal streams with pleasing murmurs creep / The reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with sleep" (ll. 352-353). Referring to Pope as one of the traditional pillars behind Wordsworth's poetics of sound, Hollander remarks that "the poetic treatment of the sounds of wind and water had achieved, by 1711, the full status of cliché; the great lullaby of eighteenth-century poetry is one of decorative words so emptied of their meaning that they have become musical sounds"²⁷⁶.

Wordsworth starts *The Prelude* with the lyrical speaker reaching the peace of *locus amoenus* where he could have the vision of home and of his creative work:

a day
With silver clouds and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and sheltering grove

²⁷⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 65.

²⁷⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 57.

A perfect stillness.

(Book I, ll. 67-70).

And then the speaker notices the endearing effect of distance upon visual images:

From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralized;

(Book I, ll. 86-90).

Later on in his course, Wordsworth pursued his way “beneath the mellowing sun” (Book I, l. 102), a movement in which, as Hollander emphasized, Wordsworth echoes William Collins’ notions on the poetic effect of distance upon the sound scene in his ode *The Passions*:

With Eyes uprais’d, as one inspir’d,
Pale *Melancholy* sated retir’d,
And from her wild sequestered seat,
In notes by distance made more sweet,
Pour’d through the mellow *Horn* her pensive Soul.

(*The Passions. An ode for Music*, ll. 57-61).

The important here is the concern with the subjective effects of vision and sound. In the middle of his symbolical pilgrimage in the introduction of the poem, the speaker asks the rhetorical question: “what clear stream / Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?” (Book I, ll. 12-13). If I were allowed to rehearse an answer, I dared say that Wordsworth alludes to the stream of experience and the murmur of recollection. In his attempt to define his subject, Wordsworth declares that:

Then a wish
My last and favorite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man’s heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean Lyre.

(Book I, ll. 227-233).

Wordsworth left the statement of his philosophic song for the autobiographical tale. However, the notion of the “Orphean Lyre” remained in his horizon as a mythical ground for his ideal of poet’s creativity in response to Nature’s stimulus like the Aeolian harp stirred with the wind.

In the poetic treatment of sound John Hollander brings up the acoustical science distinction between “the natures of noises and musical tones”²⁷⁷, a twofold road in which “From classical times through the Renaissance, the imaginative distinction

²⁷⁷ Idem. Ibidem. p. 59.

between tone and noise had a moral content”²⁷⁸. In this perspective, in terms of literary history Hollander demonstrates that the Romantic poetry treated sound out of the pastoral tradition, associated to music; and the strand of sublime, related to the non-organized sounds in Nature; in that the scholar distinguishes a series of characteristic motives like human speech, echoes, birdsong as opposed to thundering and sea-sound. He explains that “Music, as represented by Orphean myths and those of *musica mundana*, was the sound of Creation, of what had been organized”, whereas “noise [...] was the sound of chaos in its eternal effort to creep further back into nature”²⁷⁹. Music was an attribute of “*nature* in its fullest sense”, while noise was taken to belong to the material, “merely biological” province. The natural noises which were supposed to belong to musical realm were, according to Hollander, “assimilated through mythologizing”²⁸⁰.

Like visual images, so the auditory images convey the key to open the soul for moments of revelation which accord with the transcendental and visionary possibilities in contemplation of natural scenes. Wordsworth, in his ideal of self-representation as a poet, depicts the imaginative growth from the pastoral image of the shepherd to the biblical prophet, a passage from the most sympathetic sensory contact with the natural objects to the highest power of spiritual wisdom and illumination. The treatment of natural sounds in *The Prelude* combines two poetic traditions: that of the pastoral and that of the ode, resulting in a combined use of topos and emblems inherited from the classical and Renaissance inventory of rural images with the will for praising a number of intellectual values, passions and feelings. It is worth considering that in importing and actualizing elements from the pastoral and the ode traditions, Wordsworth creates a mode of deriving the aesthetic effects out of a play of simple and lofty forms of Nature as they affect the subject with the experience of calm and emotion. On the account that Wordsworth’s tone in *The Prelude* recalls the combined elements of these two literary modes – the rural landscape themes with the stock figures of the pastoral and the intellectual praising and pathetic worshipping attitude of the ode – it is important to consider how, according to Hollander, in the aspects of genre, structure, rhetoric, doctrine and mythology, the Wordsworthian ode “completed the metamorphosis of a neoclassical form”²⁸¹ in which the “musical ode form” suffered an “adaptation” toward

²⁷⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 58-59.

²⁷⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 59.

²⁸⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 59.

²⁸¹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 72.

literary modulation²⁸²; the power of music was taken no longer to elicit feelings but to express them²⁸³; and accomplishes a “stage in the untuning of the musical ode, in its transformation into a poem about language and feeling, and hence, about poetic tradition”²⁸⁴. Along with shifting from concert music to outdoor sound Wordsworth shifted the focus of representation from the object to the emotions, feelings and passions raised by the contemplation of the object as associated with the sensorial experience of the object.

7.4 Transgression, Terror, Confession and the Showing up of Nature’s Daemonic Side

The immediate experience of Nature occurs with the passage from a baby to an infant, a phase in which the hero no longer stays in his mother’s arms but releases himself from the bonds of motherly hold and runs to sport among the rural and wild places attracted by childish curiosity and innocence. It is in the river water that the child deepens his relationship to Nature: a baby in arms, he just listens to the river’s lullaby, attracted by its calling; as a five-year old child he surrenders to the calling of Nature and bathes in the water. The relation of the self with the world passes from a mediate contact through sound and sight to an immediate sinking into the bosom of the elements:

Oh, many a time have I, a five years’ child,
 In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
 Made one long bathing of a summers day,
 Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
 Alternate, all a summer’s day, or scoured
 The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
 Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw’s lofty height,
 Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
 On Indian plains, and from my mother’s hut
 Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
 A naked savage, in the thunder shower.

(Book I, ll. 288-300).

²⁸² Idem. Ibidem. p. 74.

²⁸³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 73.

²⁸⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 73.

This passage is one example of a symbolic, mythical and archetypical character of Wordsworth's imagination. It has been interpreted by Geoffrey Durrant as an allusion to the Golden Age innocence and paradisaal life. The scholar's interpretation indicates that:

The child [...] is shown as undergoing the baptism of sun and water in a nature in which he feels utterly secure, a nature bathed in radiance and golden light, where [...] the child is naked and unafraid in the thundershower. How this state of innocent joy is lost, and how it may with the help of the imagination be largely restored is the theme of *The Prelude*²⁸⁵.

We should not forget, however, that the myth of Golden Age, as Joseph Beach taught us, is a way through which the Romantic poets approached Nature in her state of origin, as risen from God's hands and unmodified by the labor of men. If the mythical reference is a mode for the poet to get independence from Nature through the power of Imagination, it also leads back from the symbolic paradise of Imagination to the remembrance of the pleasing commerce with the world of senses. If the scene of the child bathing in the shore calls up symbolic associations that make sense for his poetic life, it is because the joy of a real moment in life forces revisitation in the poet's memory: if he transfigures Nature poetically, it is due to the fact that the delight with which Nature gratifies the human senses raises the feeling of its value.

The paradisaal idea of a moment of innocent communion with the world derives from Wordsworth's imaginative conception and meditative concern about Nature. Yet we all know that Wordsworth's mature concept and use of Imagination consists in the full development of his early disposal of Hartley's notion of "association of ideas" worked out upon naturalistic experiences among elemental scenarios and natural objects. Therefore the mythical sense of baptismal ritual and innocent life are symbolic meanings which the poet recognizes associated with the record of an experience connected to the scenery of the natural English landscapes, as one can infer from the reference to the "distant Skiddaw's lofty height". The reference to the "yellow ragwort" and to the "deepest radiance" bronzing rocks and hill, woods and heights consists in an allusion to a descriptive passage in Thomson's Seasons:

The rapid radiance instantaneous strikes
The illumin'd mountain; through the forest's streams;
Shakes on the floods; and in a yellow mist,
Far smoking o'er the interminable plain,
In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.
(Spring, ll. 192-196).

²⁸⁵ DURRANT, Geoffrey. **William Wordsworth**. MAYHEAD, Robin (Edited by). 1969, p. 118.

The providential intentions of Nature are already testified when Wordsworth sings the beneficial effects of Derwent's sound to form the passion and imagination of the baby, mingling its murmurs with the nurse's song and sending a voice that has been transformed into the infant's dreams. The central metaphors which link up the boy's feelings for Nature have to do with home-protection and out-of-doors vulnerability which menaces the boy with danger and fear. Such insecurity results from the boyish stubborn action of neglecting the callings of the house and going far from home at evening hour, when every children are supposed to come indoors and prepare to go to bed. On the other side, there is established an analogy between the meaning of "house" and "Nature" which makes the boy, and later the poet, feel at home in Nature.

By principle, Wordsworth's poetry of Nature presents the animical inclination of the self who searches for inspiration in the contact with the world that surrounds him, seeking the affection of the landscape in a visual scene and the direct tactile impression of the objects and beings of Nature, be it in hearing the song of birds, in the smell of a flower, in sensing the wind blowing or in touching a rock, in the configuring sense of a poetics of space. The growth of a poetic mind starts with the intimate storage of sensible experience and expands towards a symbolical and mythical meaning.

The question of experience presents a double character which points into two directions as to what is essential in Wordsworth's autobiographical poem. This essence comes from the ambiguity of the term experience, which means, on one hand, desire to experiment, to satisfy oneself, to enjoy all kinds of possible feelings and sensations, inward and outward, to apply to the most diverse and intense pleasures, pains or sufferings which the world and life can provide. On the other hand, it means the knowledge gathered along the years through the experiences of the individual, referring to the human condition, and at the same time, the knowledge gained refers to the memory of a given community, to the stories of its development and of its men, to the traditions of this community, including customs and practices which they maintain, giving the man experienced in life the character of a depositary of such a wisdom.

The metaphor "fair seed-time" in *The Prelude* refers to the period in Wordsworth's poetic life in which his mind was stored with sublime images among the wild Nature. Wordsworth's images of infancy and childhood were referred to through the analogy with seeds and plants at the sowing or transplanting time:

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less

In that beloved Vale to which erelong
 We were transplanted – there were we let loose
 For sports of wider range.

(Book I, 301-306).

The speaker portrays a happy and adventurous life taking place among all sorts of possibilities that wild places might provide for the imaginative and playful disposition of children. However, the tone of the narrative presents not just a naïve celebratory tale of infantine peripaties. More than that it presents a confessional mood which attaches to the young being in the beginning of life the inner signs of transgression, the external paths conducting to its trappings, and the traces of guilt which must be expiated, or at least relieved through confession. A five-year old child, Wordsworth's autobiographical hero had already been showing the tokens of drives corresponding to a wanton and wicked character which was to mark the acts of his boyhood. Agreeing with Durrant's interpretation of the scene as alluding to the symbolical gesture of baptism, but going beyond his point of view, we may state that by bathing alone in the mill-race severed from Derwent Water during the summer day the child also undergoes a sort of initiation in the worldly things, since if Nature is in herself sacred, she remains ambivalent, keeping her profane side. The bath not only carries the sacramental sense of purifying the infant, liberating him from the burden of sin; it has also the mundane sense of marking him, through contact, with the stain and calluses of earthly intercourse. The state of being of the child can be thought of as indexed by the state of the mill-race which appears *severed* from the stream. At this point, the boy had also been severed from his mother's breast, and soon later, with the age of eight, he is to be divided from her forever by her death.

This passage from infancy to childhood advances the meaning of moral transgression further to be accomplished by the older boy in the period of school time, which marks the rule of experience over innocence, expressed in acts that must be warned, if not punished by Nature as the accomplishment of a pedagogic design. By escaping his mother's sight he escapes the realm of her vigilant care and his stubborn steps bring him to regions where he is to be exposed to the mysteries and risks of Nature. Nevertheless, in his summer bath in the mill-race the child is still near home and only imagines himself running out far from home, comparing himself to savages in a paradisaal land. The infant is represented creating images out of his playful imagination, thus still safe from the risks of experience. Biographically speaking, at this phase Wordsworth's mother is still alive and even at distance the young hero feels secure with

the unconscious certainty of her careful presence. It will be after her death that he will be “transplanted” from his birthplace to another region where, among the mountain slopes and open heights, on the crags and ridges, or even in the lakes surrounded by the mountains, the boy is actually to play his sports in places remote from home and from the adults’ careful sight. His sportive adventures always keep the sense of transgression and vulnerability, for due to his boyish wicked nature he stubbornly stays out when the night falling warns every being to retire.

Whatever Wordsworth has to tell about his wanton and wicked acts of childhood, he does it in a confessional manner. The independence of the mother’s direct support which implies the child’s standing on the centre of his own individuality brings in the corollary his distancing from motherly body. It is the moment of severing from her breast, of cutting the biological bond with her. In a drive of rising self-consciousness, in order to affirm, even though in a still unconscious way, his subjectivity, the infant walks alone in an innocent adventure among Nature. Nonetheless, this movement configures a signal of disobedience. There is no fear in his acts, since he is protected by innocence, which the speaker expresses by the state comprehended in that interregnum called “fair seed-time”.

While still a seed, severeness has no consequence. His relationship with the world will be complicated by ontological, existential, spiritual and even theological conflicts at a moment which, from the realm of real life, symbolizes the definite and irreversible blow of self-consciousness: his mother’s death when he was an eight-year old boy. From now on, fear and revolt started to haunt his thoughts and attitudes. From biography we know that after this tragic event he and his brothers were sent to the Vale of Hawkshead, where Wordsworth attended the Grammar School and was lodged at Anne Tyson’s cottage, staying under her care. The poet speaks of that period as being spent in a beloved place to which he and his brothers “were transplanted”. The joyousness of his life there does not nullify the sense of severeness implied by the meaning of transplantation, the deep rooted meaning of being unsurmountably pulled out from the familiar unity of his birthplace.

Now a boy at the age of eight to ten years old, the protagonist rambles in the valleys, mountains and slopes at night after birds or nests. Unconsciously the boy understands the weight of transgression of his attitudes, provided that he is acting against the normal order of things and exposing himself to the dangers and risks of a wild world. Roving at night he is, on one side, acting like a prey animal of nightly

habits; on the other side, he is a human being dislocated from his proper order, an intruder disturbing the wild and secluded world of the beasts, plants and even unknown daemonic powers. The whole Nature intuits the transgressive and risky sense which falls over the boy, and the natural elements manifest aggressive in their motions. The presence of the boy disturbs the normal state of the things so that they react, passing through a transformation in tone. The forms and motions of Nature become terrorizing and manifest anger in their appearance and roaring voices. So much the boy feels guilty that he gets the feeling of some obscure entity chasing after him:

Ere I had told
 Ten birth-days, when among the mountain-slopes
 Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
 The last autumnal Crocus, 'twas my joy,
 With store of springes o'er my shoulder slung,
 To range the open heights where woodcocks ran
 Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
 Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
 That anxious visitations; – moon and stars
 Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
 And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
 That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
 In this night wanderings, that a strong desire
 O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
 Which was the captive of another's toil
 Became my prey, and when the deed was done
 I heard among the solitary hills
 Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

(Book I, ll.306-325).

The sequence of wicked and wanton acts related in the three stanzas comprised between the verses 306-400 of the first book attaches Wordsworth to the tradition of confessional autobiography. Even dealing with secular problems, he brings forth the deep sense of the religious confession. The poet tells the story of how he was possessed by a strong desire which impelled him to catch the bird of another boy's snare. Confessing his idle "desire" and his shameful "deed", Wordsworth comes close to St. Augustine's confession of transgression in the second book of his *Confessions*, where he tells the events when he, as a boy, together with a group of fellow boys, stole a load of pears from a neighbour's garden only to satisfy the desire of theft:

Theft is punished by Thy law, O Lord, and the law written in the hearts of men, which iniquity itself effaces not. [...] Yet I lusted to thieve, and did it, compelled by no hunger, nor poverty, but through a cloyedness of well-doing, and a pamperedness of iniquity. For I stole that which I had enough, and much better. Nor cared I to enjoy what I stole, but joyed in the theft and sin. A pear tree there was near our vineyard, laden with fruit tempting neither for colour nor taste. To shake and rob this, some lewd young fellows of us went, late one night (having according to our pestilent custom prolonged our

sports in the streets till then), and took huge loads, not for our eating, but to fling to the very hogs, having only tasted them. And this, but to do what we liked only because it was disliked. Behold my heart, O God, behold my heart, which thou hadst pity upon in the bottom of the bottomless pit. Now behold, let my heart tell Thee what it sought there, that I should be gratuitously evil, having no temptation to ill but ill itself. It was foul, and I loved it; I loved to perish, I loved my own fault, not that for which I was faulty, but my fault itself. Foul soul, falling from Thy firmament to utter destruction; not seeking aught through the shame, but the shame itself!²⁸⁶

J. M. Coetzee's brief approach to St. Augustine's *Confessions* comes to elucidate a profound and somewhat obscure aspect about the adventures told in *The Prelude*: that behind the transgressive acts confessed must lie a deeper truth about the self. Coetzee explains that:

Confession is one component in a sequence of transgression, confession, penitence, and absolution. Absolution means the end of the episode, [...] liberation from the oppression of the memory. Absolution in this sense is therefore the indispensable goal of all confession, sacramental or secular. In contrast, transgression is not a fundamental component. In Augustine's story, the theft of the pears is the transgression, but what calls to be confessed is something that lies behind the theft, a truth about himself that he does not yet know²⁸⁷.

The tone and atmosphere of confession, if not determining at all for the whole structure of Wordsworth's spiritual story, is at least long time pervading, thus extending a gloomy shade over all sports and adventures performed by the protagonist and his fellow boys during the nights. Augustine's fellowship with the group of young boys weighs as augury and fate over Wordsworth's behaviour. That is the reason for the speaker to shift the person at times from "we" to "I" during the wicked sports. Even though the day light sports might be under the status and sign of a different cosmos from the nightly ones, which protects the happiness of society, there is still a slight hint of that confessional, transgressive, guilty and truth seeking atmosphere roaming around the boys. This aspect will appear as a veiled but affecting suggestion in the further sections where the adventures of the boys in *The Prelude* are brought in close association to the universe of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

The whole Nature around the lonely young hero behaves like a giant ferocious beast. The climatic action of the wintry wind, described as the "breath of frosty wind" which had "snapped" the weeds functions like the cursed breath of a mysterious being desolating the whole place. Now Nature is alive, but of an uncanny raging power. The

²⁸⁶ AUGUSTINE, St. *Confessions*. PUSEY, Edward Bouverie. (Translated by). 1952, p. 10-11. Book II, iv.

²⁸⁷ COETZEE, J. M., *Confession and Double Thoughts: Tolstoy, Rousseau, Dostoevsky* (1985). In: COETZEE, J. M.. *Doubling the Point*. 1992, p. 251-252.

boy seems to provoke Nature in order to see her reaction, since behind his apparent harmony in the joys with his rambles he seems to be in opposition with the external world, through which he is not welcome there, for Nature seems to distrust him. The problem hinted at in this part of *The Prelude* is the search for the truth of Nature and furthermore the truth about the self's own relation with Nature. If any disorder is there in his mind, he is testing Nature to probe to which extent she is capable of tolerating him in her wrath or healing him in her motherly love.

Wordsworth's failure of reason under the pressure of desire is justified simply by the anxiety of satisfying the experience of calling and getting the response of her unsoundable lurking spirit. He provokes Nature to occasion an encounter with her uncanny spiritual being, to see it manifesting before him. His plight is the unconscious doubt about the existence of a superior intelligent power which could cope with his damaged moral and creative being so as to reorientate his disordered mind. With St. Augustine in background, Wordsworth inverts the religious concern for sin and for the negligence of God in order to express in the tumult of the senses of the the boy the disturbance about the idea that man is forgetting Nature.

If the boy's adventures disturb Nature, there could be no other reason but the existence of an opposition between them. Some factor must have broken the natural harmony between the child and the natural world, provoking the reaction of the natural spirits against him. About children, Hölderlin asserts the opinion that "Der Zwang des Gesetzes und des Schicksals betastet es nicht; im Kind ist Freiheit allein" (*Hyperion*, p. 226). If law and destiny are no hindrance for children and freedom is their attribute, why does the freedom shown in the boy's actions among the wild disturbed Nature's peace? In this stage of his life, the protagonist is no longer an innocent child, and his liberty affects the world with the weight of potential idle passions or perverse intentions, as we may infer from one passage in Thomson's *Seasons* which probably suggested the tone of Wordsworth's dizzy boyhood adventures:

Now, giddy Youth, whom headlong Passions fire,
Rouse the wilg Game, and stain the guilless Grove
With Violence, and Death; yet call it Sport,
To scatter Ruin thro'gh the Realms of Love,
And Peace, that thinks no ill.

(Winter, ll. 82-86).

Is the boy vilifying with lower passions a perfect order of love and innocence, breaking that pure sentimental attitude which allows man to understand Nature? Or is he violenting a womanly order which was to fit to the human world in lovely marriage, as

Harold Bloom suggests apropos of the fragment *Nutting?* Whereas Thomson's charitable Muse "disdains to sing" that theme, Wordsworth rehearses it to demonstrate that no actions employed by Nature are vain; as well as how even the mean objects and aims might produce noble ends and effects, since like Thomson, Wordsworth seems to believe that the "Unlavish Wisdom never works in vain" (Spring. l. 734). Are the sinful and immoral deeds a warning taste of vice, vanity and folly – evil powers which vex the soul (Winter, ll. 209-222) – the necessary burden of the formative path in *The Prelude*, which will lead the subject towards that moment of conversion that will make of him a loyal, wise, conscious and virtuous servant of holly Nature?

The boy seems to get frightened by daemonic spirits of Nature, so terrible and uncanny entities as was the power of the Moirae (Fates) or the Erinyes (Furies) in the ancient Greek imaginary. Nature is now in opposition with the boy because the break of innocence and awakening self-consciousness in him – which splits the subject's moral unity and integration with the world – opens that space for the human conflict with the Universe which obliges Nature to warn the self that his surrender to Eros' power – the satisfaction of the desire – might cause a possible confrontation with his destiny. Unconsciously, the idea of being facing his destiny, reflected in the signs of daemonic beings following the boy, terrifies him. Lucy Newlin states that Wordsworth confesses minor misdemeanours instead of the true cause of his sufferings: Wordsworth's history reveals an event of early manhood in which the presence of Eros brought the strongest shock and the longest suffering of his life – the tragic ending of his affair with Annete Vallon due to the outbreak of Terror in France. The expression "strong desire" indicates the guilty mark which his self was to biterm for that disgrace. If the boy has not yet committed the shameful deed by command of Eros, he suffers in advance by intermediation of the narrator, which as representing the persona of the adult poet, carries in his memory the mark of his moral crisis. On the other hand, the hero's "deed" might bring into the foreground the mark of a moment of disobedience, to his parents I presume, whose remorse and regret sting his cnsconsciousness, specially with the sorrow caused by their loss. Thus, the boy's relationship to Nature might be hinting at the incidents of his fillial relation with his parents.

In *On the Concept of Punishment*²⁸⁸, Hölderlin states that "All suffering is punishment" as a concluding phrase for the argument that because we find resistance towards our will, we end at considering it evil. There is a fundamental law which the

²⁸⁸ HÖLDERLIN, Friedrich. **Essays and Letters on Theory**. PFAU, Thomas (Edited by). 1996, p. 36.

subject recognizes by principle beforehand: the law of customs. Every time this law opposes man's will, it results suffering from that opposition, and in consequence man sets the worth of his will according to that relation with the grounding law. The justice or value of the opposition can be measured by the very means of sorrow in the human disposition. The feeling of having been chased and the consequent fear were sorrowful symptoms of a mind in a critical stage of opposition – a hybristic boast – against the fundamental laws of Nature, even though this stage was a necessary formative part of his spiritual development.

The key to recognize who is that entity whose “low breathings” and silent “steps” the boy heard coming after him comes again from Hölderlin, who opens his essay as follow: “It seems that [...] the Nemesis of the ancients had been depicted as a daughter of the night less because of the frightfulness than because of her mysterious origin”²⁸⁹. The fact that the boy's actions had been represented at night clearly suggests a mythical turn over the mysteries of Nature, so that the being chasing him was Night's daughter: Nemesis. Nemesis is commonly described as daughter of Nix (Night) alone, although there are versions which attribute her parentage to Erebus and Nix, to Dike or to Oceanus and Tethys. Among the Greeks, Nemesis is the Goddess of justice, depicted as a winged female bearing a sword, a whip, a balance, a lash and an apple-branch as her attributes. Her name indicates the personification of the noun *nemesis*, which means “distribution of what is due”, from the verb *nemo*, i.e. apportion, and therefore can be understood as the dispenser of the dues. Nemesis is responsible for the vicissitudes of mortal life and often associated with the chthonic figures of the Moirae and the Erinyes.

Nemesis is a personification of the moral reverence for law, of the natural fear of committing a culpable action, and hence of conscience, and for this reason she is often mentioned along with Aidôs, i.e. shame. Other aspects can be enhanced in her character, considering her a kind of fatal divinity, for she directs human affairs in such a manner as to restore the right proportions or equilibrium wherever it has been disturbed. Furthermore, she measures out happiness and unhappiness, and he who is blessed with too many or too frequent gifts of fortune, is visited by her with losses and sufferings, in order that he may become humble, and feel that there are bounds beyond which human happiness cannot proceed with safety due to the envy of Gods. Nemesis was thus a check upon extravagant favours conferred upon man by Tyche or Fortune, and from this idea lastly arose that of her being an avenging and punishing power of fate, who, like

²⁸⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 35.

Dike and the Erinyes, sooner or later overtakes the reckless sinner. Nemesis was the goddess of indignation against, and retribution for, evil deeds and undeserved good fortune. She was a personification of the resentment aroused in men by those who committed crimes with apparent impunity, or who had inordinate or undeserved good fortune.

Wordsworth indicates a number of signs of Nemesis' presence making the guilt burden fall over his shoulders and punishing him: a fortunate life attached to his mother which caused an envious power to strip him off her; or any disobedience or offense against her which lashed his memory after her death; the boyish joy in ranging the open heights in which he disturbs the equilibrium of the natural order; and the moment when he caught the other's prey, in which he – taken by desire, what suggests the metaphorical possession by Eros, by the principle of pleasure – committed a shameful act. Nemesis also punishes the crimes of blood. As he performed the role of a beast of prey, unconsciously he assumes his archetypal guilt and merit to be pursued by the punishing goddess, since metaphorically the act of prey transferred to him the bleeding character signaling the animals of prey. “The beast of prey, / Blood-stain'd, deserves to bleed”, preaches Thomson in *The Seasons* (Spring, ll. 357-358). Responsively, the boy's dire straits mean that for Wordsworth fear suffices; being frightened is lesson enough when wickedness has a higher purpose.

In allowing the analogy with the beast of prey, Wordsworth opens space for the hypothesis that the guilty truth about the young boy has to do with the sense of the degradation of the self by the laws of necessity, which pull the human being down towards a stage below the moral realm so as to hinder the ascent to perfection. Thomson's verses teach us about this relation with moral improvement:

High Heaven forbids this bold presumptuous strain,
Whose wisest will has fix'd us in a state
That must not yet to pure perfection rise:
Besides, who kows, how rais'd to higher life,
From stage to stage, the vital scale ascends?
(Spring, ll.374-378).

In this sense, the encounters with the daemonic guardians of Nature are ministries of fear employed to prevent the descent into necessity and foster the elevation into the moral perfection. The suggestion of Nemesis implies that, since the goddess is in charge of avenging excessive happiness by inflicting loss and sorrow, the boy had already been punished by the extravagant fortunes of early life: even in apparent forgetfulness of the fact, the boy is still under the mourning effect of mother loss, which caused his

transplantation for the vale of Hawkshead. Without his mother (lately without his father too) his bliss might not be complete, and Nemesis appears to remind him of that.

Besides the bliss attached to his adventures, the boy discloses the pride which signalizes his hybris: the arrogance of self-conceit which makes him challenge Nature irreverently. As he faces her powers, she must test him in order to educate his spirit. His acts in entering the wild at night show that he disclosed no fear of the cosmic forces; thus, impelled by self-centered pride, manifested the signs of a lessened respect for Nature. Thence, the imaginative apparition of Nemesis, not at once recognized, comes to bring him to face the fundamental truth about himself – which was to be figured out much later through successive reflections spurred on by the onslaught of fear and shame: that the spiritual growth towards human perfection which would turn possible the fulfilment of his vocation of poet was necessarily grounded on the love of Nature.

The alterations in Nature operated in those moments of beauty and fear occur in three levels: I) they start as simple physical modifications like the snap of twigs under the boy's tread, or the wavering of the water while he stepped into the lake pushing the boat forward; II) then by analogy the hero rehearses a sort of empathic identification with the characteristics of the natural entities inhabiting the secluded places in order to experience their own modes of living; III) finally, the boy's acts become motivated by metaphorically and mythical sinful and vicious intentions which lead him to violate the quiet order of the natural system, so that what moves Nature now are no longer the physical actions but the symbolical, imaginary acts performed behind the boy's concrete interventions. At these moments the elements rebel against him and manifest the supernatural powers hidden under the stillness and obscurity of the night.

The consummation of his deeds bares an analogy to the sense of a child's sin: it always keeps a halo of innocence that appeases the judgment, but remorse is inevitable. Thus, "when the deed was done / I heard among the solitary hills / Low breathings coming after me" (Book I, ll. 321-323). The consciousness of the doom character of his deeds is expressed in the words employed apropos of his acts during the night ramblings: "the captive of another's toil became my prey" (Book I, ll. 320-321), "Roved we as plunderers" (Book I, l. 327), "an act of stealth" (Book I, l. 361).

It is necessary to remark that every time that the hero's adventures come to the climax he is alone, a peculiarity which indicates both the human exposure to the agencies of the sublime, and, in advance, the eccentricity of a poet's character. In the eighth stanza of Book I, where the speaker tells of his bird nesting plays, in the

beginning he employs the pronouns “we” and “our” to indicate that such a sport was collectively shared among children and used to be played when the kids, probably the speaker’s siblings, were grouped together. However in the very moment designed to consummate the deeds the boy appears in solitude and the act becomes an individual experience:

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
 Roved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
 Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
 Our object and inglorious, yet the end
 Was not ignoble. Oh! When I have hung
 Above the Raven’s nest, by knots of grass
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
 But ill sustained; and almost [...]
 Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
 Shouldering the naked crag: Oh, at that time,
 While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ears! The sky seemed not a sky
 Of earth, and with what motions moved the clouds!
 (Book I, ll. 326-339).

The experiences of the sublime often imply the self being removed from the eye of society, so that by secluding the self may get an encounter with himself and experiment the limits of his own subjectivity. Alone the self is put to proof and has his reason, his passions and desires tested, and the human nature is allowed to manifest in its full and extreme dimensions.

Such is the sense in which Wordsworth’s presence operates the second level of transformation in Nature: the sensitive and imaginative powers of the boy are transfused to the elements so that he could reach an imaginative identification with their specific ontological nature: his human nature blends with the wild essence of the animals he gets touch with when he enters their environment and tries to taste the peculiar powers of their species. The solid materiality of the rocky ground on the mountains and the fluidity of the air and water make him feel a higher consistence of life than the human being is used to in his own habitat. The blending of pleasure and sorrow is proper of the sublime experience: the boy delights with the animal-like playing on meadows, mountains and lakes and feels at home at the nocturnal hour by a species of identification with the elements: he ranges the open heights like the woodcocks which run among the green turf; he hangs on the perilous crags above the raven’s nest, as though “suspended by the blast”, i.e., he tries to experiment the raven’s own power to fly, to be suspended by the air; as he sails on the lake he feels the boat “heaving through

the water like a swan”: thus he tastes in his imaginative existence the motion of the swan in its watery nature.

Besides the transgressive experience, the boy’s wickedness leads him to undertake some risky acrobatics, challenging the rules and powers of Nature. This is the experience of hearing the voices of Nature raging against his attitude and menacing him with imminent danger. The human presence transforms the natural forms and operations so that Nature and the self can enter into an intimate communion, and in order for Nature to communicate her meanings to the self. If in the speaker’s most innocent moment the murmur of the river was felt as a nurse’s lulling song, now when the boy’s wicked nature makes him exert his wickedness over innocent beings – the birds – now the face of Nature gets loaded with grim countenance and its voice starts to convey the rough and uncanny tone of anger which implies punishment: Nature acts like a judging mother and the wind displays the rudeness of a whip. However, the punishment is not gratuitous but aims at accomplishing an educative objective. That is the reason for the utterances of the wind to be conveyed into the boy’s ears: it is an admonishment which comes as a doctrine designed to teach and distinguish the right from the wrong.

The counterpart of sorrow results from the terror of committing illicit acts: “it was an act of stealth and troubled pleasure” (Book I, ll.361-362); and the boy’s adventures were, in the manner of a fairy tale, accompanied by the back sound and the haunting visions which create an undistinguishable mood out of the strange sounds and motions perceived in the world without. The narrative of the incidents makes clear that “the voice of mountain echoes”, the “low-breathings” and “sounds of undistinguishable motions”, and the “strange utterance” done by the “loud dry wind” constitute the intuited sounds of phrases to prevent the self against the worldly temptations. In the scene of bird-nesting on the crags the boys find themselves exposed to the temptation of gathering the raven’s eggs on the nest, thus up to commit those evil deeds against the harmonious animal life which Thomson had criticized:

Oft, when returning with her loaded bill,
The astonish’d mother finds a vacant nest,
By the hard hand of unrelenting clowns
Robb’d, to the ground the vain provision falls;
Her pinions ruffle, and, low-drooping, scarce
Can bare the mourner to the poplar shade,
Where all abandoned to despair she sings
Her sorrows through the night.

(Spring, ll. 717-724).

It is possible to hear the echo of Thomson’s verses indicating the set:

High from the summit of a craggy cliff,
 Hung o'er the deep, such as amazing frowns
 On utmost Kilda's shore, whose lonely race
 Resign the setting sun to Indian world,
 The royal eagle draws his vigorous young.
 (Spring, ll. 755-759).

In his pride as testing his skills, the boy has been depicted in exchanged roles in the wild: if the royal eagle and the raven are endowed with the natural capacity to fly from the summit of the cliffs, by hanging on the crags suspended by knots of grass and fissures in the rocks the boy challenges the natural limits of the human nature and assumes the position of those birds. In defying the limits imposed by Nature herself, he is almost radically pleading the right to belong to the natural order, to which according to the biblical lore the human beings were sent after the Fall, yet not entirely belonging to her. Commenting the delicacies of life in that Golden Age where man was originally to abide, Thomson explains how man lost that harmony, so that in the iron times in which man then finds himself, the “distempered mind” has lost the “concord of harmonious powers” that “forms the soul of happiness” as the result of a corresponding liberation of evil in the inner life:

The passions all
 Have burst their bounds; and reason half-extinct,
 Or impotent, or else approving, sees
 The foul disorder.

(Spring, ll. 278-281).

Thomson's point is that if man was designed to be morally superior to the animals, he must at least learn with them to be so fair as they are in their high endowments by the intelligent animation of Nature and participation in her highly organized order. However, what the speaker observes is that man often shares with the brutes their subjection to the laws of necessity and their unreasoning instincts that leave no place for pity, aspects which nevertheless imply no problem for the animals, since they do not depend on moral laws to govern their reign. However, it is precisely that irrational preying aspect which proves degrading about man, and created that ironic shadow upon the fundamental truth about the human being which Thomson, critically about the human being but sympathetically with his fate, could not help remarking:

But man, whom Nature formed of milder clay,
 With every kind emotion in his heart,
 And taught alone to weep – while from her lap
 She pours ten thousand delicacies, herbs,
 And fruits, as numerous as the drops of rain
 Or beams that gave them birth – shall he, fair form!
 Who wears sweet smiles, and looks erect on heaven,
 E'er stoop to mingle with the prowling herd,

And dip his tongue in gore?
(Spring, ll. 349-357).

Wordsworth's response reflects a sceptical belief in the idealized conception of humankind as superior beings. He employs a biblical image to remind where man comes from, thus, the necessary world to which he is attached by principle:

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society.
(Book I, ll. 340-344).

Whatever elevation, whatever improvement in the human constitution is designed by Nature's rational mind and operated by her powerful essential principle through the intercourse among the subject and the objective world.

As darkness has the power to intensify the fear caused by the impressions of ghosts, even more when the self is alone in places removed from society, the occasions in which the boy performed his adventures were fit to produce terrorizing forms in his imagination. So was it in the incident in which the school boy, at the time when Wordsworth attended Hawkshead School, found the shepherd's boat tied to the willow tree by the shores of Patterdale when he was rambling alone from the village inn:

I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the cover of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being. Over my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.
(Book I, ll. 380-400).

It is an account of a traumatizing event. Referring to Nature's severer interventions, ministry "More palpable, as best might suit her aim" (Book I, ll. 355-356). In the account of those three events there is the hint that the boy starts his sports

with joyous enthusiasm: “’twas my joy / With stores of springs o’er my shoulders hung / To range the open heights” (Book I, ll.309-311); “But now, like one who rows, / Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point / With an unswerving line” (Book I, ll.367-368). However, in all cases the speaker assumes to have gotten the feeling that the boy’s presence and acts seem to have disturbed the order of the elements. In reaction Nature imprints such a disturbance on his passions that he cannot sleep well: the agitation which he started to suffer after those incidents transformed his dreams into nightmares, leading his mind into the haunting realm of romance and fairy tales.

Fear and beauty are the “passions that build up our human soul”, as the mature voice of the poet affirms in the reflection about his boyish night rambles. In the occasions when the boy invades the solitary places in Nature, he “seemed to be a trouble to the peace / That dwelt” under “the moon and stars”; and the stealthy catching of the boat to sail “a troubled pleasure” on the summer evening. However, when the boy retires Nature’s reactions chased his mind and “were a trouble” to his dreams. In this sense, we notice that at the moment when he started sailing he was impelled by rejoicing mirth, but he ended his tour and went back home, like after a serious and chastening lesson, “in grave / and serious mood”.

In his enigmatic and profound “sense” of “unknown modes of being”, Wordsworth might be hinting at the conception of forces of Nature very similar to those which used to haunt the ancient Greek folk in the presence of natural power; or disturb the northern sensibility of the ancient Germanic heroes in the gloomy nights. These “unknown modes of being” come close to the Greek conception of daemons, the cosmic forces acting over Nature. In this part of *The Prelude* there is going on something like the encounter with an uncanny power, something close to destiny in the ancient, pagan sense of the word. There is not really a protected Christian cosmos, it is doubtful whether the world and Nature are well ordered by providence. This lack of confidence in the unifying and secure order of the Universe is reflected in the boy’s disordered mind. Hence, in this felt vulnerability is grounded the boy’s assault by fear in noticing that the external world was peopled by a multiplicity of obscure spirits moving and acting by their own.

The motions of beings chasing the boy present a daemonic nature, akin to that of the pagan spirits endowed with cosmic power roving around the world. As Herbert Read explains, this conception of mysterious beings in charge of building and guarding Nature can be testified in the 1799 version of *The Prelude*, in which, in the same stanza

where in the 1805 and 1850 versions Wordsworth refers to the “Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe”, the poet had referred to pagan daemons, attributing the ministries of Nature to those spirits instead of the Pantheistic Animating Spirit. According to Wordsworth’s early handle of that ancient belief in daemonic entities acting over Nature, to haunt the self through uncanny presences is the way Nature found to make the experiences of commerce between human being and natural system generate the due passions and reflections which would bring the personal and poetic consciousness of the boy into maturity, directing and shaping:

The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself!
(Book I, ll. 349-350).

As Read demonstrates, the correction to which Wordsworth submitted the poem gave to the song a more philosophical tone, yet without harmonizing the whole matter. Maybe such a strangement in tone happens because the power of the experiences expressed in the haunting passages resisted adaptation to the philosophic hint. They reflect either a trouble of consciousness inside the subject as projecting his trouble in the form of provocation towards the world, or a primitive state of being or mysterious mode of existence in Nature showing its power to remind man of his meanness and frailty in comparison with the terrorizing force of Nature, as well as warn him that he can do nothing against her will. As Geoffrey Hartmann²⁹⁰ points out, “Nature is a haunted house through which we must pass before our spirit can be independent. Those separated too soon from this troubling and sensuous contact with Nature – the strongest passages in Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem are devoted to Nature’s ministry of fear rather than her ministry of beauty”. Hartmann explains that Wordsworth’s originality has to do with the way the idea of correspondence between Nature and the human consciousness “emerge from the depth of felt experience”. In this sense the scholar calls them “organic thoughts” which grow on him in a process where the poet struggles with his own “imaginings”.

7.5 The Regular Motions of Nature and the Pantheist Spirit of the Universe

²⁹⁰ HARTMANN, Geoffrey. Nature and the Humanization of the Self in Wordsworth. In: ABRAMS, Meyer H.. (Edited by) **English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism**. 1957. p, 123-124.

Immediately after telling the three haunting episodes of his childhood, Wordsworth inserted his praising reflection on the “Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!”. This passage may deceive the reader, leading him to understand that it was that metaphysical entity which took shape and turned into an apparition to lurk the protagonist. But the “Spirit of the Universe”, a Neoplatonic principle which animates and regulates the world manifests itself only in the clear characteristic motion and normal behaviour of things, not in any kind of abnormal apparition. The Universal Soul operates by a sort of rational intelligence, regular and organized, infusing life and motion into the natural beings, so that their motion serves the ministries of Nature in the education of a future poet by the means of patient and passionate observation, as he does regarding the impressions of the seasons on the face of external Nature. Thus through the sensible aspects and visible appearances man gets access to the profound secrets of Nature so that the contemplative mood gets attuned with the eternal essence through the transitory phenomena.

The key to understand Nature’s influence on the formation of the poet’s thoughts and feelings, on the development of his personal and poetic mind, can be gathered in the following fragment, which implies the active, intelligent and purposeful operations of Nature on the human life:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
 That gives to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion, not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man
 But with high objects, with enduring things –
 With life and nature – purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

(Book I, ll. 401-416).

The mean and non-durable things suggested by negative way belong to the universe of objects made by man’s hands, the artificialities created to serve the sophistications of the named civilized society, which addresses directly the customs of urban life, as represented in the despise of the eighteenth-century Classicist poets towards rural life and wild sceneries. What distinguishes the Romantic sensibility is the devoted love for the natural objects, as they appear in their original conditions, i.e. in the wild and non-

cultivated landscapes, where the poet is to find those forms which, sharing of the eternal Substance, last beyond the mortal fleeting life.

The invocation above implies the belief in an animating principle which gives life to every being and structure to the world. By addressing Wisdom, Spirit, and Soul, the speaker refers to the spiritual and intelligent power which, according to the Neoplatonic thought, gives unity, shape and order to the Universe, emanating from the realm of Ideas to the world of senses. It is a divine force, an essential intelligence which some philosophers call Spirit of the Universe, while others denominate it Soul of the World. Such approach derives from Plato, but more rigorously from Plotinus, an Egyptian philosopher of the third century who worked at Alexandria and became known as the father of the Neoplatonism.

For Plotinus²⁹¹, the divine essence was the Soul, i.e. the element which establishes the connection between the world of matter and the spiritual essence. He describes the Supreme region in terms of the Intellectual Kosmos where the Authentic Essence, or Real Being, dwells; whose noblest content consists in the Intellectual Principle, or Divine Mind. Among those contents there are souls, which animate the bodies in the world of matter. Yet the souls are the emanation of the supreme Soul, which contains the animation of the whole universe and distributes life to the diversity of animates in the lower spheres. The Soul shares of the same essence of the Intellectual Principle, yet whereas the latter is a concentrated All, which admits of neither distinction nor division, the former exists without distinction and partition in the essential order, yet with such a nature turned to divisional existence which allows it to enter into body in the material order. Thus, the Soul manifests itself at once attached to the Supreme and reaching down the natural sphere. To explain this process, Plotinus employs a special image: “like a radius from a centre”. The Romantic conception associates the idea of the Soul’s emanation with the image of a pouring off fountain or a source of light, overall the sun and the moon.

The Soul, which comprehends the essence of the universe, belongs to an intellectual kind, like a great consciousness, of which the human consciousness partakes. It works as the eternal matrix which grounds the content and form of man’s temporal thought. It is the sit of the eternal Forms. As Idea and Spirit, it confers the feeling and virtue, will and motion to the beings as it is due according to their specific nature. The degree of communion in the Idea leads to that pure realm of Soul which

²⁹¹ PLOTINUS, *The Six Enneads*, 1952, p. 139.

determines each being's ascent towards perfection. This spiritual principle is also characterized as Wisdom, for it consists in a universal Intelligence which constitutes a model of organization and a plan of regular order, whose power infuses the rational design governing the motion and relation of the elements and beings in the natural sphere.

Even though the term *spirit* normally remits to Christian connotations sedimented along centuries of Catholic and, after the Reformation, Protestant preaching, Wordsworth builds a new, aesthetic order of the poetical cosmos of Romantic feeling. The dissonances from the Christian ideas lead the reader to ask what is implied by everlasting motion?, and consequently who or what is Wisdom?, who or what is Spirit?. The special subtlety in the invocation suggests even that those entities might be gods, in a sense that the 'motion' could contain the energy of the Greek Eros. That association with the mythical entities helps to clarify the function of this hymnic invocation of cosmic forces of Nature after the speaker's report of those kinds of daemonic encounters during childhood walks. This aspect confers an ambiguous, even polysemous meaning to that segment, what requires deeper layers of comprehension. However, Wordsworth is talking about a conception of Nature which consists, precisely, neither of the Christian idea of spirit, even though it echoes behind the speaker's voice, nor of the Classical deity. The poet has in mind the secularized and at the same time philosophically based notion of spirit, derived from the NeoPlatonic thinkers and Natural theologians in a metaphysical treatment.

The poetic model for this reflection on the "influence of the natural objects" was probably borrowed from Thomson's *The Seasons*, since Wordsworth's verses clearly echo Thomson's argument, in which the poet describes the *influence* of the Spring on the inanimate matter, on plants, on animals and on man. If, on the one hand, the seasons are represented allegorically, as personified entities, the mythical Hours, a fair maiden or a long white bearded man, on the other, its affections express the activities of the *anima mundi*, and constitute signs of that animadversion shared by man and the outer world. The seasons produce the sensible manifestations through which man has access to the universal reason; they are the disclosure on the external world of the spiritual principle which animates the whole Nature, whose communion is the principle of art. Wordsworth's invocation of the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe" is modeled in Thomson's digressions and invocations in which he worships the universal essence:

Hail, Source of Being! Universal Soul
 Of Heaven and Earth! Essential Presence, hail!
 To thee I bend the knee; to thee my thoughts,
 Continual, climb; who, with a master hand,
 Hast the great whole into perfection touched.
 By thee the various vegetative tribes,
 Wrapt in a filmy net, and clad with leaves,
 Draw the live ether, and imbibe the dew.
 By thee, disposed into congenial soils,
 Stands each attractive plant, and sucks, and swells,
 The juicy tide.

(Spring, ll. 555-566).

This is an important idea behind Wordsworth's praise of the infant sucking from his mother's breast: the mother metaphorically represented as a holy link and spiritual source through which the human being sucks the juicy and ethereal elements from the Universal essence. Such a doctrine about the spiritual essence animating and informing the world is synthesized in the thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries around the concept of Nature, as will be presented in the following section.

7.6 The Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe Revealed in the Presences of Nature

The transcendent ideas attached to the metaphysical conception of Nature lunge out behind the sensible phenomena arousing the intimation of a spiritual reality burning within the elements, with which the poet feels driven to commune:

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
 And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
 And Souls of lonely places!
 (Book I, ll. 464-466).

Wordsworth reiterates in these laudatory verses the pedagogic value of the ministries employed by Nature to attract him to solitude and there show him the characters of danger and desire impressed upon the forms of the beings so as to teach him that terror and pleasure are the key affections which prepare the spirit of man for poetry:

Can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
 Such ministry, when through many a year
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impressed upon all forms the characters
 Of danger or desire? And thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth
 With triumph and delight, with hope and fear
 Work like a sea?

(Book I, ll. 466-475).

Wordsworth represents the mytho-poetics of the seasons associated with the boyish adventures in the natural world in an imagistic harmony in which the external motions and appearances in Nature are capable of revealing her spiritual essence. Immediately after his meditation about the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe, the poet describes his early intercourses with Nature when, as a young boy, he used to pay attention to the external details of the seasons during his walks:

In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such an intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters all the summer long.

(Book I, ll. 416-424).

The depiction of the activity of the natural processes indicates not only the ontological rationality of the Universe, but also the sense of pagan spirits keeping the natural order. The term “intercourse” was not gratuitously employed. It conveys a sense of possession in which the speaker indicates the boy being assaulted or consentedly getting a kind of interrelation with those pagan spirits of Nature encountered in his way – above all Eros, the principle of desire; and Nemesis, the goddess of punishment. The misty aspect of the atmosphere, obscuring the limits of the places and hiding the objects made more propitious the lurking and assault of any uncanny beings, be they deities or daemons, making it easier for them to victimate the passing boy’s imagination, alone in his way home. On the other side, through the tone of his reports, their possession seem to have been welcomed by the boy, who seemed to have been desirous of them, probably having something genial to gain from those encounters.

The confessional tone on one side of this chain of adventures and the awe-inspiring, admiring contemplation on the other side of it suggest a deeper truth about the self which was to be solved, in the sequence of the confessional structure, with the revelation of his poetical vocation in the famous moment of vision of that majestic scene of Nature in his return home after a night of feast during the first Summer vacation in the region of Hawkshead. Here raises a parallel between the moment when a strong desire, a kind of possession by Eros, overpowered the boy’s “better reason” impelling him to catch the bird from another guy’s snare, and his mood of mundane gayety, the “heartless chase of trivial pleasures” which took place at that night when,

under the innebriating effect of spirits and lustfulness of lovely maids' presence, the "transient pleasures mounted to the head / And tingled through the veins" (Book IV, ll. 318-319). Those events of festivity represent "vanities" which, Wordsworth suggests, hinder the imaginative sympathies of man and ties the self's creativity in morosity. Wordsworth confesses the truth about his poetic self, which now hinders now stimulates his genial being: it is the desire of idle, mundane pleasures which make the other side of is subjectivity, consisting of lofty, virtuous and sacred qualities.

The illusion of mundane affairs and spectacles causes torpor to the contemplative faculties through which the poet enters that silent state necessary for a higher comprehension of the world. Analysing the contradictions and impediments which make the balance of the youth's creative mind and sound intellect waver, the speaker hints at a trace of moral weakness in those surrenderings to hedonistic experiences involved in society affairs, acknowledging a guilty feeling disturbing his creative powers by distracting him from his firm and sacred duty:

all conspired
 To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
 Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
 And damp those yearnings which had once been mine
 A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
 To his own eager thoughts. It would demand
 Some skill, and longer time than may be spared
 To paint these vanities, and how they, wrought
 In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.
 It seemed that the very garment that I wore
 Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream
 Of self-forgetfulness.

(Book IV, ll. 286-296).

Here Wordsworth discloses a subtle concern with virtues. From Plotinus Wordsworth learnt that virtues are higher than the sensible beauties, since they are pure qualities of the Soul, thus belonging not to the matter but to the Supreme. The passage above contains the recollection of a moment of worldly temptation checking the protagonist's moral strength, followed by the meditation on a private search of human beauty contained in the moral qualities and the fear of being unworthy of the highest human grace, i.e. dispossessed of the splendour of Moral Wisdom. He feared what Plotinus names "ugliness of the Soul", and tested himself against that, seeking among Nature and men's society the proofs to warrant for his "veritable self" the possession of the "beauty of the Soul" which would link him to the Beauty of the "Real-Being". Wordsworth praises the splendour of virtues in the way they are recognized in the self, according to the Plotinian conviction that they rest upon the soul: "It is that you find in yourself, or

admire in another, loftiness of spirit; righteousness of life; disciplined purity; courage of the majestic face; gravity, modesty that goes fearless and tranquil, and passionless; and, shining down upon all, the light of good-like Intellection”²⁹². The poet’s playful fear of the vices is worth quoting Plotinus’ argument against the ugliness of soul:

Let us then suppose an ugly Soul, dissolute, unrighteous: teeming with all he lusts; torn by internal discord; beset by the fears of its cowardice and the envies of its pettiness; thinking, in the little thought it has, only of the perishable and the base; perverse in all its impulses; the friend of unclean pleasures; living the life of abandonment to bodily sensation and delighting in its deformity. [...] What must we think but that all this shame is something that has gathered about the Soul, some foreign bane outraging it, soiling it, so that, encumbered with all manner of turpitude, it has no longer a clean activity or a clean sensation, but commands only a life smouldering dully under the crust of evil; that, sunk in manifold death, it no longer sees what a Soul should see, may no longer rest in its own being, dragged ever as it is towards the outer, the lower, the dark? [...] An unclean thing, I dare to say; flickering hither and thither at the call of objects of sense, deeply infected with the taint of body, occupied always in Matter, and absorbing Matter into itself: in its commerce with the Ignoble it has trafficked away for an alien nature its own essential Idea²⁹³.

Wordsworth believes that the Wisdom and the Spirit of the Universe purify the elements of feeling and thought, and sanctify the passions of the human soul to create greatness in man’s heart. Thinking of that discipline taken from Plotinus and St. Augustine, Wordsworth gets the conviction that man must escape from the sinful and perishable mud in which he might fall, “besmearing” himself, according to Plotinus’ warning: “his ugly condition is due to alien matter that has incrustated him, and if he is to win back his grace it must be his business to scour and purify himself and make himself what he was”²⁹⁴.

In this context “unworldly-minded” connotes morally and imaginatively innocent, in the sense of the aesthetic sacralization which the Romantic view requires from the poet’s faculties. It is significant that the speaker characterizes those mundane vanities as forces which are hidden in “haunts” whose effects have been to “prey” his strength. The weight attributed to his clothes suggests the weight of matter in that it symbolizes the mundane affairs staining the human soul and hindering the self’s ascent towards the Ideal. The confessional tone echoes here, showing that deeper truth depressing the youth’s memory, menacing him with the image of the limits between sterility and creativity.

²⁹² Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 23.

²⁹³ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 23.

²⁹⁴ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 23.

Those daemonic “strange modes of being” punishingly and ragingly roaming on the remote places of Nature and making the feeling of chasing the boy after his slaughter of wicked desire were attenuated and converted into the fair and sublime forms of the seasons, regularly impressed upon the surface of earth and gradually impressed into the boy’s mind along his first ten years of life. This transition is announced and can be accounted for in the speaker’s reflection about the influence of the natural objects, which, in the interface between the two-book version of *The Prelude* finished in 1799 and the five-book version of 1805, suffers a transformation in tenour that runs between a pagan-archaic and a pantheistic-metaphysical view, mediating the passage from the terrorizing experience of identifying archaic and powerful entities scattered along the landscape, associated to the on-going natural activities of the place; to the “majestic vision” of fair and sublime forms in which Nature manifests her own aesthetic creative power, modifying the forms, colours and shades of matter with a living veil of continuously renovating (and self-renovating) shades which establish the aesthetic link between the natural and the ideal in the poet’s relation with the surrounding world.

There is a Neoplatonic cast in Wordsworth’s discovery of a source of transcendence in the objects of empirical perception. This wholistic conception of Nature linking the external forms accessible to man with the spiritual essence of the All remits Wordsworth back to Plotinus. Plotinus considers that “Beauty addresses itself chiefly to sight”²⁹⁵. But he also admits a kind of beauty addressed to hearing, perceived in the melodies and sounds, what implies a relation between the external appearances and the senses. In his inquiry about the principle underlying beauty, “from which all take their grace”, the philosopher asks what is it “that shows itself in certain material forms?”, what is it “that attracts the eyes of those to whom a beautiful object is presented, and calls them, lures them, towards it, and fills them with joy at the sight?”. The question of what constitutes the beauty recognized by the eye in the visible things, as it is in fact recognized by the other senses in those forms presented to the human sensibility, presupposes a universal property derived from a higher source: the Being. Plotinus conceives that “this Principle that bestowes beauty on material things [...] is something that is perceived at the first glance, something which the soul names as from an ancient knowledge and, recognizing, welcomes it, enters into unison with it”. The philosopher asserts that “the soul – by the very truth of its nature, by its affiliation to the noblest Existents in the hierarchy of Being – when it sees anything of that kin, or any

²⁹⁵ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 21.

trace of that kinship, thrills with an immediate delight, takes its own to itself, and thus stirs anew to the sense of its nature and of all its affinity”²⁹⁶.

The intercourse with the beauties of Nature along infancy and childhood fostered Wordsworth’s spirit with poetic emotions. However, when the autobiographical hero was sent to Cambridge at the age of seventeen he was cut off from the surprisingly fair landscapes of his native country and set in a region of rougher scenarios. In the beginning, he felt his mind dazzled with so many distractions raised in the new collegial life, until, having left the crowd and the buildings, in a moment of solitude, walking among the fields he felt the mind “into herself returning” and recognized “her native instincts” (Book III, ll. 90-99). There he gives an account of a vision, first outward in sight, then inward in thought, linking earth and sky with the Greater Being; a moment when he felt the “visitings of the Upholder of the tranquil soul” (Book III, ll. 116-117), thus exulting in recovering his soul’s own nature and feeling that “the first-born affinities” (Book I, l. 555) early recognized between himself and the natural beauties of the “existing things” belong to the same essence of the affinity with the Universal Soul.

Clearly, by thinking of phenomenal affinities Wordsworth seeks that by Plotinus held “likeness between the loveliness of this world and the splendours in the Supreme”. The Neoplatonic key to understand the nature of Beauty in the natural forms is that “the loveliness of this world comes by communion in Ideal-Form”²⁹⁷. By this means, Beauty presupposes integration in the Idea and Universal Reason, the participation in the Divine Thought. Plotinus’ treatises render that the infusion of Ideal-Form determines the elements of a diversity of parts in order to become a harmonious, patterned and coherent unity, provided that “the Idea is a unity and what it moulds must come to unity as far as multiplicity may”. More than excite the senses the contemplation of beautiful things elevates the soul due to the principle that the material objects become beautiful “by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine”²⁹⁸.

In his inquiry about the perception of Beauty, Plotinus does not decide between the existence of a special faculty addressed to the judgement of beauties in the realm of sense and the immediate action of the soul itself to affirm “the Beautiful” where it finds the accordance with “the Ideal-Form” in the material objects. He discusses the issue of Beauty perception searching for the principle of “accordance [...]”

²⁹⁶ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 22.

²⁹⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 22.

²⁹⁸ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 22.

between the material and that which antedates all Matter". In the human mind, the principle of Beauty is conceived as a kind of "inner ideal" recognizable in the objects, stamped upon the material mass which, correspondingly, as immanent in and emanating from the external things given to perception, consists in an essential Principle manifested as "the indivisible exhibited in diversity", whose labour is to determine matter through patterns which come into being and appear on images and harmonies. He describes the work of the perceptive faculty as:

discerning in certain objects the Ideal-Form which has bound and controlled shapeless matter, opposed in nature to Idea, seeing further stamped upon the common shapes some shape excellent above the common, it gathers into unity what still remains fragmentary, catches it up and carries it within, no longer a thing of parts, and presents it to the Ideal-Principle as something concordant and congenial²⁹⁹.

Beauty in its sensible form is thus recognized as the splendour of the Ideal-Principle held on the material world.

²⁹⁹ Idem, *Ibidem*. p. 22.

Chapter VIII

8 The Return to Nature: Autobiography, Nostalgia and Healing Power against the Social, Political and Historical Adversities of Wordsworth's Age – Man, Nature and Society in the Horizon of *The Prelude*

8.1 The Critical and Theoretical Agenda Implied in the Hero's Reaction to the Social, Political, Educational and Historical Context

In the general structure of this dissertation I aimed at: I) reconstructing the narrative steps of the subject's trajectory of love, distancing and return to Nature as a constitutive process in the formation of the self; II) analysing the function of the experiences of Nature in terms of sensorial contact (visual and aural) and sentimental rapport (feelings of body and soul) with the external aspects of the world; III) rehearsing the relationship between the role of experience of Nature as Wordsworth depicted it in a realistic mode and the suggestion of traditional tropes, literary references and conceptual rhetorics drawn from the religious, philosophical and scientific realms in the Western lore in the structure of the narrative. This chapter is designed to close arguments of the third part of this research. Here I intend to discuss some points that mark in Wordsworth's narrative of love and return to Nature the critical and theoretical agenda of the protagonist's reaction against the adverse forces immanent in the social, political, economical, educational and historical structure of the modern context as it emerged from the Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the rising of the urban society, the French Revolution, the degradation of the ideal of liberty into the tyranny of Terror, and the Napoleonic Imperialism. Wordsworth's critical position against those which he conceives as negative or oppressive factors in his days presupposes a conception of Man, of Nature, of Human Life and of Society that is informed by the ideals of Beauty, Love, Virtue, Freedom and Humanity. Along the formative process reported in the autobiographical account those principles that came to enable the protagonist/poet to criticize the surrounding reality have been found in Nature. Here I am supposed to focus more on the theoretical problems and critical

positions on the theme than on the analytical possibilities presented by the poetic structure of the events narrated.

The autobiographical poem *The Prelude* was planned to consist in the introductory part for a philosophical work to be entitled *The Recluse* which had been designed to express the author's views on three main subjects: Man, Nature and Society. Therefore, *The Prelude* should serve for the author to review the present intellectual state of his mind as well as the formative means and processes through which Nature and Education had prepared him to become a qualified (both gifted and instructed) poet able to carry on that aesthetic project. This is stated in the Preface to *The Excursion*, published in 1814, where Wordsworth gives an account of his poetic-philosophic achievements. In this text, the poet sets the place and status of the autobiographical effort in relation to the whole of his philosophical ideas, namely, how a formative process along the events of his life had provided such a development for his mind that enabled him to create a major work where he could express his feelings and opinions on such major themes of his day – on Man, Nature and Society:

Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature and Society; and to be entitled 'The Recluse'; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement³⁰⁰.

The main events related in Wordsworth's autobiographical account reveal the deep antagonisms that divide man and Nature from society. Wordsworth still sees the first two elements in the guise of their ideal state, whereas the third term contains those factors of an overruled, civilized, artificial and sophisticated reality, where but vice, corruption, disorder and evil found place. In fact, Wordsworth's thought is oriented by a sincere will to unite those three terms, since the poet recognizes the human nature both as natural and social. As long as Nature is the proper world where the human beings are destined to realize their own lives and humanity, a design that necessarily presupposes social relations, Nature herself constitutes simultaneously a humanized place and

³⁰⁰ WORDSWORTH, William. *The Excursion*. Preface to the Edition of 1814. In: WORDSWORTH, William. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). 1959, p. 589.

socialized space, and thus presupposes a degree of social organization. In this sense, Wordsworth's man and Nature in their innate goodness and virtue are not opposed to society itself, but to the conflictive and oppressive configurations of a complex structure of society which has gradually come to dominate his time. Indeed, Wordsworth's man is social and his Nature presupposes a sound integration with society – at least a certain mode of socialization and social life –, since Nature, conceived as the proper place where humankind lives, consists itself in a space of social relations. Out of David Aers'³⁰¹ discussion on Wordsworth's model of Man, one notices the implication of the "necessary social nature of man" in "Wordsworth's avowed subject". According to this optics, the themes of Man, Nature and Human Life bear a strong connection "with the determinate productive activity through which people create the possibilities of continued human existence". In the scholar's words, "Man does not live by bread alone, but he does not live at all without it, and the ways in which it is produced and exchanged, the overall relations of domination, conflict and collaboration will contribute decisively to the forms of life available to human beings"³⁰². Even though not considering it directly, Wordsworth has in his background the Aristotlean conception of man as a social and political animal, destined to live in community and dependent on the interaction with other people. Thus, even though Wordsworth's poetry manifests, as David Aers highlights, "contempt" and "fear" for society, i. e. the configuration of the modern society, he does not ignore that the main subjects of his interest – Man, Nature, and Human Life – presuppose the existence of some social order. David Aers anchors Wordsworth's poetic attitude towards the human life as referred to the world man lives in back into a tradition founded on the medieval figure of the virtuous labourer as portrayed in Langland's poem *Piers the Ploughman*. After Aers, the Romantic attitude of taking seriously "the incarnate nature of man" implies that the poet "was constantly obliged to return to the social and collaborative existence without which there simply would be no human spirituality"³⁰³.

It is not in vain that Wordsworth mentions in his Preface the fact that the autobiographical poem could be started in the retirement in his native country, where his intellectual powers might be invigorated and his passions corrected by Nature – the

³⁰¹ AERS, David. Wordsworth's Model of Man in 'The Prelude'. In: AERS, David; COOK, Jonathan; PUNTER, David (Edited by). **Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing, 1765-1830**. 1981, p. 65.

³⁰² Idem. Ibidem. p. 65.

³⁰³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 65.

place where, in the protagonist's opinion, the moral and socialized spirituality of the human beings could have found the perfect conditions to be realized. Wordsworth had an honourable purpose for retiring into Nature and rural life: he wanted to seek true values in order both to preserve the virtuous and authentic mode of life traditional in countryside and defend it against the invasion of the industrial modes of production and commercial transactions – embodied and symbolized in the image of the city –, since he believes the poet to be “the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love”. But besides that, the speaker seeks in the native recesses of Nature for that restoration of his moral being, a principle of cure and strength that he assumes to be valid for the whole humankind, grounded on the aesthetic basis that either in presence or recollection the beautiful forms of Nature bring man pleasure, a higher type of pleasure which in delighting the senses relieves, renews and elevates the spirit, as one is already summoned to understand out of the images of the Vale of the Wye in *Tintern Abbey*, to which the speaker had owed through absence “mid the din of towns and cities,”

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration: – feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure:
(*Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, ll. 27-31).

Highlighting Romanticism's character of reacting “against what lay around it” Johanne Schneider calls the reader's attention to the fact that to understand the “historical importance” of Romanticism “it is critical to reach beyond the myths to the events, people and legacy of this fascinating era”³⁰⁴. Examining the role of the events that influenced the Romantic era, Schneider's observations may help to understand social issues against which the poet's new worldview expressed a reaction. As the author sketches a definition of Romanticism certain aspects have been highlighted that create the opposition against the dominant issues in the historical context: in this sense, common themes as the cult of individuality, emotion, imagination and personal feeling, attachment to Nature and nostalgia for the past, in which a positive cast can be identified, combine with negative positions like the rejection of progress in the modern civilization and the suspicion of uniformity and conventions, and the rejection of the city as the place that concentrates the injustice and corruption of civilization. The social backdrop against whose oppression the Romantics reacted in aesthetic and intellectual

³⁰⁴ SCHNEIDER, Johanne. *The Age of Romanticism*. 2007, p. xiii.

terms consisted in the following context, as delimited by Schneider: “From 1750 on, economic and social changes associated with the beginning of industrial manufacturing unleashed forces that would affect where people lived and how they earned a living”³⁰⁵. The author also calls the attention for the traditional political monopoly of the European kings and nobility and the resulting social inequalities. Schneider summarizes the “forces” that “serve as stimuli” for Romantic writers as including “challenges to *ancien regime* society, reform ideas generated from Enlightenment thought, and the political and social upheaval tied to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era. Romantic writers, artists, and musicians responded to the events and ideas around them. In a time of unprecedented change, whether caused by social, technological or political events, it was imperative to confront these uncertainties and try to find answers”³⁰⁶.

E. P. Thompson describes the social relationships in the eighteenth-century England as a paternalist country where the social distance between the upper classes and the peasants is reflected in the distance between the educated/refined, dominant culture and the culture of the poor/uneducated, subordinated people. The degree of culture and social prestige had been measured according to class hierarchy. The Romantic Movement reflected a generalized tendency to review and contest the disparity that separates men from men in the social plan. Thompson asserts that it is in the decade of 1790s under the impact of the French Revolution, the *Rights of Man* and the political vindications of *égalité* that the complete idea of cultural subordination is radically put into question³⁰⁷. Wordsworth started to express love and compassion for the poor and employ the situations of humble life as the subject matter of his poems. Thompson detects in Wordsworth’s feeling for the life of the poor that intensity which confirms it as a real and fundamental experience, and remarks that in so doing the poet reverts the presuppositions of the refined culture. Besides, Wordsworth attempts to bring forth the proper mode of life of humble people as something intense and worthy of poetic treatment.

In revising the social patterns that kept the gap between the refined and the common people Wordsworth also reviews the established pattern of education and proposes a mode of education acquired by observation rather than formal instruction. In

³⁰⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 7.

³⁰⁷ THOMPSON, E.P.. **Os Românticos**: A Inglaterra na Era Revolucionária. Sérgio Moraes Rego Reis (Tradução de). 2002, p. 19.

The Prelude when the protagonist goes into the lonely roads he finds the real virtues of men:

When I began to enquire,
To watch and question those I met, and speak
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed;
There saw into the depth of human soul,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes. And – now convinced at heart
How little those formalities, to which
With overweening trust alone we give
The name of Education, have to do
With real feeling and just sense;

(Book XIII, ll. 160-172).

What is at stake here is Wordsworth's contrasting conception between the formal education, which affirms the rules of society, and the knowledge received in the school of life and Nature, where the hero finds in the contact with humble man "real feeling and just sense". This contrast is emphasized when the speaker considers the impossibility of the existence of love in places dominated by extreme misery, oppression, lack of access to culture, and excessive labour or poverty, where as a consequence of the modern regime of exploitation those external factors affect the human being in his very nature. The difficulty of meeting with true love is extended to the urban life:

Nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.

(Book XIII, ll. 202-205).

Want of love or corrupted feelings form an issue that is aggravated, or at least not lessened by the lack of true beauty, in that the delight of the senses is endowed with healing, humanizing power. Here a contrast between Nature and society is marked. The authority of the native country imposes itself when the hero feels deeply the affection of Nature as her domains are imparted with the aura of simplicity, virtue and purity of heart of the working inhabitants:

Here calling up to mind what then I saw,
A youthful traveller, and see daily now
In the familiar circuit of my home,
Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the powers of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.

(Book XIII, ll. 221-226).

8.2 The Return to Nature: Healing Power against the Social, Political and Historical Adversities of Modern Life

The universe of *The Prelude* mirrors the reaction against a bare and disenchanted reality that disturbs the poet. The society and the historical age in which Wordsworth lived had been passing under a general change disturbing for the men of sensibility, peculiarly because the general conditions had been leaving almost no place for the things of spirit. Graham Hough detects the results of that state of affairs as it had repercussions on the eighteenth-century worldview:

The scientific and philosophical revolution of the seventeenth century bore its fruit in the eighteenth. Its most obvious result was a general sense of reassuring certainty, a sense that many dark corners had been thoroughly swept and illuminated by clear daylight. Newton had laid bare the nature of the physical world, Locke that of the human mind, and henceforth, though there might be many details to fill in, it was felt that the general scheme of things was pretty well understood³⁰⁸.

Wordsworth's autobiographical and symbolical return to Nature represents a nostalgic attempt to re-enchante and re-signify the world as a whole – which in a way had been reduced to the mechanical laws and forms of matter –, and, especially, to reenact the charm and value of the natural beauties, dismissed as disgusting forms by the too-cultivated taste of the eighteenth-century ruling intellectual minds. In this sense, Hough exposes the general view about Nature – namely, the universe of the human mind and that of the visible world – that in a way prepares the Romantic reaction that would give back her prominent place in the human sensibility:

The fact is that the concept of Nature, which seemed at first to offer a liberation from so many barbarous and obscurantist errors, had become by the end of the century a prison-house for the emotions. Nature meant human nature, which the eighteenth century already knew all about, since the Ancients had described it rightly by instinct, and the modern philosophers had further illuminated it by science. It also meant the visible frame of things, whose workings were becoming steadily more familiar. Yet as the universe became ever more well paved and brightly lit there seemed to be less and less on which the emotions could fix themselves with satisfaction. The great machine aroused after all only a temperate reverence, and its Architect only a distant respect. Those who felt an instinctive need for a stronger and more intimate response to experience were often driven to seek it in fiction, failing to find it in the great world³⁰⁹.

³⁰⁸ HOUGH, Graham. *The Romantic Poets*. 1976, p. 25.

³⁰⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 26-27.

The reverence to Nature in *The Prelude* is an attempt through poetry to save the world from disenchantment. In the autobiographical account, the mature hero settles back for good in his native country after having experienced the shocks of urban life in places like Cambridge, London and Paris. This return was caused by the nostalgia which commits the poet both to Nature and to his infancy, a sense that Paul de Man helps us to understand, thinking of a penchant of “nostalgia for the natural object, expanding to become nostalgia for the origin of this object”³¹⁰. Thus the presence or remembrance of the object brings back the image of a past associated with the poetic idea of an ideal, happy state in one’s subjective history. Kevis Goodman identifies the Romantic nostalgia with “the renewed interest or imaginative investment in national and cultural pasts, the turn from polite culture to the ‘very language of men’”³¹¹. Goodman claims that the sentiment of nostalgia aims at a “reanimation” of the oral cultures when “the bards were inauthentic”³¹². This says much if one considers that one of Wordsworth’s chief objectives as a poet consists in the professional and vocational duty of re-endowing poetry with authentic power and value based on what one may call a genuine access to truth. For Goodman, nostalgia, defined as “the sentimental and safe retrospect, the pleasing melancholy, the whitewashing of less lovable aspects of history, past and present alike”, involves an “understanding” that “casts the phenomenon as a distancing, even a falsification, of the pressing realities of modernity: urbanization, the vexed national politics within a newly but uneasy united kingdom of Britain, the equally if not more vexed international politics, warfare and colonial endeavors, print technology and the marketplace”³¹³. Nostalgia, thus, possesses the power to clarify and redeem history by Nature’s power to call into memory the moments of authentic knowledge and happiness once lived in the presence of valuable objects.

In order to re-enchant the world and reenact a renewed aesthetics based on its symbolism the Romantic generation promoted a revolution in the previous view of Nature. The basic conception of Nature and the most prominent attitude towards the natural world among the Romantic poets, as Joseph Beach³¹⁴ argues, tended to qualify the world without and the feelings aroused in the contemplation of its forms with tints

³¹⁰ MAN, Paul de. *The Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image*. In: MAN, Paul de. **The Rhetoric of Romanticism**, 1985, p. 6.

³¹¹ GOODMAN, Kevis. *Romantic Poetry and the Science of Nostalgia*. In: **The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry**. CHANDLER, James; MCLANE, Maureen N. (Edited by). 2008, p. 195.

³¹² Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 195.

³¹³ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 195.

³¹⁴ BEACH, Joseph W. **The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry**. 1956, p. 1-12.

derived from religion and metaphysics. Beach proposes the existence of a religious feeling in the Romantics' approach toward the forms of the world without, which might be understood as that of a worshipper of Nature. The scholar demonstrates that the prevailing conception of Nature among that generation derives from the variety of intellectual domains lying in the ground of that age. In this sense, the poetic view of Nature was far more than a sole aesthetic regard, although the aesthetic was the ruling and synthesizing realm which transforms and amalgamates all other intellectual concerns into the emotional results of poetry. A large and varied conceptual body was integrated into the analogical, imagistic, metaphorical and symbolic devices of the poetic language. Beside the indebtedness of the Romantics to the sensibility established by the preceding Poetry, the intellectual activities which form the background of the Romantic thought were assigned to the areas of Philosophy, Theology, Science and Psychology: Poetry was conceived as a major activity supposed to reflect the whole knowledge produced by those separate fields.

Joseph Beach³¹⁵ calls our attention to the sensitiveness of Romantic poets to the "beauteous forms" of Nature, and their disposition to refer to Nature in extravagantly "honorific" terms. Thus it has implications "beyond anything justified by the mere aesthetic charms of nature" and led to the study of the metaphysical concept of "universal nature". The idea of universal Nature is prominent in Wordsworth, conceived as the Spirit of Nature or the Soul of the World. It means "an activity sufficient to account for the animated and purposive behavior of things and so avoid the stigma of a purely mechanistic philosophy", thus accounting for "man's craving for a moral and intelligible universe".

Wordsworth and Coleridge manifested the new kind of mood in the presence of Nature in several poems published in *Lyrical Ballads*, as well as in poems like Wordsworth's *A Night-Piece* and *The Yew-Tree* or Coleridge's conversational odes *Frost at Midnight*, *The Aeolian Harp* and *Dejection: An Ode*. In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth states the chief object of his poems, namely, "to choose incidents and situations of common life", described "in a selection of language really used by men", an object that the poet justifies on the ground that in the conditions of rural life "the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms

³¹⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 1-12.

of nature”³¹⁶. The influence of Nature on the spiritual growth of man is elaborated with the greatest praise for the values of the natural affections in the autobiographical story of *The Prelude*, where the main subject refers to the way man keeps his body and soul opened to experience the sensory motions from Nature as they get converted into inner feelings and thoughts and create patterns of memory which link the subject knowingly and poetically with the images of his past. Believing that *Tintern Abbey* was that poem which immediately anticipates *The Prelude* in mood and scope, Ronald Gaskell³¹⁷ explains how in *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth, recognizing a change in himself reflected in the changes observed in the vale of the Wye, “tries, almost for the first time, to understand the development of his feeling for nature”. Therefore some issues which Gaskell brought out in *Tintern Abbey* can be understood as grounding the standard of *The Prelude*, as the critic’s own words will reveal:

The genre to which its first readers would relate it, the poetry of landscape and moral generalization, was well established. For Wordsworth, as for Thomson and Cowper, woods and streams lead naturally to reflections on human life. But for Wordsworth this means primarily his own life, especially the life of feeling, where to reflect is also to clarify and evaluate. This is not a process of analysis and deduction. It is a matter of keeping open to experience; of listening to the heart and allowing its promptings to remind us how the present keeps faith with the past; of renewing the conscious mind from the hidden sources of its strength, and so confirming the values that will steady it through the future.³¹⁸

Departing from Wordsworth’s general statement conceiving *The Prelude* as the poem on a poet’s mind, Gaskell understands that “This growth was neither simple nor straightforward, and though the poem can be read as a spiritual autobiography, it is clearly a great deal more”³¹⁹. Such excedent indicated in Gaskell’s phrase corresponds to the implication in his claims that “like *The Prelude*, *Tintern Abbey* makes it clear that, except for a brief period, Wordsworth’s feeling for Nature as the guide for his moral being “was never simply or even mainly a delight of the senses”³²⁰.

The delight of the senses is not the end of Wordsworth’s commerce with Nature. It is the starting point that brings moral reflection, aesthetic creativity and spiritual development. The contemplation of the natural forms and the memory of past experiences along with the rural places and landscapes serve to lay the ground of the hero’s self-transformative consciousness and to set the meanings on which his

³¹⁶ WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In: HUTCHINSON, Thomas (Edited by). **The Poetical Works of Wordsworth**. 1959, p. 734-735.

³¹⁷ GASKEL, Ronald. **Wordsworth’s poem of the mind: an essay on The Prelude**. 1991. p. 4.

² Idem. Ibidem. p. 1-2.

³¹⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. vi.

³²⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 1.

consciousness has been informed in the history of his life. This significant development of consciousness in the history of life, that configures the autobiographical dimension of *The Prelude*, constitutes a formative course which sediments a number of moral values, aesthetic patterns, emotional capacities, intellectual notions and historical-cultural insertions. It configures a play between personal conceptions, which involve his view of his own self; and historical determinations, which involve the social conditions and political-economical contingencies. This whole corollary of personal significations leads the protagonist to interact with the objective world in a play of spontaneous (unconscious) and interpretative (conscious) approach towards the surrounding reality. In this sense, Wordsworth's narrative operates through such a perspective where the hero sees a fissure that divides reality into human-natural and human-social-historical spheres. In this sense, the love of Nature collides against the despite of the growing impacts of the urban-modern society. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between the conceptions of Nature with the sentiments aroused by the subjective experience of her forms, especially as they were connected with the hero's native land; and the factors in the modern social world that oppressed the hero, inhibiting the free development of his faculties and the strong, intimate response to Nature's stimuli. The symbolic function of Wordsworth's return to Nature as he settles back in his native country consisted in re-locating Nature in her due place as a source of emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual experience, a place of which she had been deprived by the action of modern, scientifically based and progress-turned worldview.

The connection with the native country represents the bond with a type of society where the essential character of Nature still exists and is still dominant. The difference between the northern region where Wordsworth was born and the rest of society in England sets the foundation for the opposition between Wordsworth's worldview as compared with the cultivated mentality of the eighteenth-century English society. This fact, whose motives created the conditions for the Romantic shift in worldview, has been explained by Graham Hough:

The real poetic revolution could only be accomplished by one whose birth and education was within the eighteenth-century cultural pattern, yet on the edge of it, within sight of other kinds of experience. This was Wordsworth's position. Born at Cockerthorpe, and early removed to school at Hawkshead on Esthwaite, he grew up on the fringe of a wilder, less tidily economic country than most of rural Britain, and in a society materially and spiritually different from the normal English squirearchy. The "statesmen" of the Westmorland and Cumberland valleys were a race of independent yeomen, the last survivors of an English peasantry, something very different from the tenant-farmers or the landless cap-touching labourers which was all that the

enclosures had left in most parts of England. Independence and equality were the keynotes of his society; in his boyhood experience Wordsworth, as he tells us, had hardly met the notion of a social superior. The early experience of a social hierarchy no doubt predisposes the mind to the notion of a hierarchy of accepted ideas. In his remote upland valleys Wordsworth knew neither³²¹.

The natural scenes of the familiar landscapes bear a special signification for the poet's *Bildung* as they are attached to the ideal of a mode of life that offers both the reaction against a previous aesthetic taste characteristic of a civilized elite, and the resistance against a rising transformation in economics, politics and society towards a pattern of modernization which left little place for the things related to the values of Nature and cultivation of the human spirit.

As Nicholas Riasanovsky³²² notices, Nature has been "a constant presence in Wordsworth's life". Yet the author indicates the idea of intermittent moments of Nature's absence – or the poet's own retreat from her – along the course of his autobiographical poem. He shows that those interregna consist of Wordsworth's reported periods spent in Cambridge, London and France, which constitute intervals of separation from Nature, paralleled by imaginative-creative emptiness. They normally precede and predispose the poet for subsequent moments of return to Nature, in which he is to recover from a crisis in moments of impactant experience with the vividness of Nature. Since the "spots of time", which in Riasanovsky's perspective constitute moments when Nature's "presence becomes overwhelming", are recollected after the crisis of Wordsworth's French period reported along Books IX to XI, they represent moments of "recollected scenes of terror or intense uneasiness from [Wordsworth's] childhood which seem to him in later years paradoxically refreshing"³²³. John T. Ogden attempts to elucidate this structure in *The Prelude* in terms of the relationship between the single event and the entire lifetime in which the particular experience unfolds in a sequence of experiences:

Between the single event and the development of a lifetime the structure of the imaginative experience may be seen unfolding in various intermediate spans of experience. [...] [B]roader spans of development are evident in the way Cambridge, London and France present Wordsworth with obstacles to imagination that ultimately serve to stimulate its activity. His experience with each of these places begins in a mood that is attentive though light-hearted, even fanciful, but it soon shifts into a second stage, which predominates. In each case, imagination sleeps [...]. His mood soon becomes troubled by the emptiness, vanity, and perversion that he encounters. His language becomes consciously artificial and satirical to

³²¹ HOUGH, Graham. *The Romantic Poets*. 1976, p. 27-28.

³²² RIASANOVSKY, Nicholas. *The Emergency of Romanticism*. 1995, p. 15.

³²³ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 15.

accord with the situation, and his bitterness and frustration increase until, in the case of France, he falls into despair. Each of these experiences, however, prepares Wordsworth for a succeeding stage of imagination and fulfilment: Cambridge is followed by summer vacation, where he gains a human heartedness to his love [...]. After his stay in London he attains a new perspective that elevates his view of human nature [...]. The disaster of the French Revolution forces him into the realization that political reform depends upon moral reform, which in turn depends upon a reform of sensibility, which he as a poet can hope to effect³²⁴.

8.3 The Romantic Re-Enchantment of Nature against a Disenchanted Civilization: Searching Moral Values in Nature

Wordsworth's alleged urge for a political reform on the basis of a reform in morals and sensibility should pass through an aesthetic purpose of poetic renovation. Following Peter Marshall³²⁵, we understand that the Romantic attitude toward Nature developed from the reaction against the process of disenchantment accomplished by Enlightenment philosophy, which, fostering "the development of [logical] reason and [analytical] science", prepared what the author calls "the triumph of civilization over nature". The philosophical dominion of the eighteenth century, which in Marshall's words "launched the modern idea of inevitable progress" prepared a worldview and practical deeds on political and educational realms that the Romantics abhorred as damaging both to the conception of Nature and Man.

In this sense, Marshall shows the implications of Enlightenment philosophical principles: "Its principal thinkers [...] believed that man is potentially rational and largely a product of his circumstances. Vice is ignorance; all that is needed is to educate and enlighten human beings and they will become wise, virtuous, and free. It was an optimistic creed which had disastrous results for the earth"³²⁶. Summarizing Marshall's teaching on the eighteenth century worldview one may say that in mechanical terms the world was viewed as a great machine, and, due to a utilitarian tendency, Nature was looked at as created for man's use. Indeed, Judeo-Christian tradition justified man's dominion over Nature. Instincts and passions had to be tamed by rules.

³²⁴ OGDEN, John T.. *Structure*. p. 295-297.

³²⁵ MARSHALL, Peter. *Nature's Web: Rethinking our Place on Earth*, 1994, p. 214.

³²⁶ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 214.

However, a change in sensibility was operated leading to the Romantic release of the passions and the love and respect for Nature. First, Rousseau has reverted the idea of the superiority of civilization and its institutions over Nature searching for an idea of primitivism and the image of the noble savage. Rousseau promoted the ideal of the return to Nature as a form of criticism towards the rationalism of the eighteenth-century society. Accordingly, the “cult of primitivism” operated in a metaphorical parallel with the “lost golden age”. Nature started to be seen as the place of what is original in the nature of man, whereas civilization is conceived as being built on what is artificial. He criticized a society where “the misuse of reason” curbs “the natural instincts” and implied that “the natural man” would not “be immoral” since “conscience is a divine instinct and a sure guide”. Nature, thus, is the place where moral goodness could be realized, opposed to civilization and its “unjust and corrupt institutions”³²⁷. Second, the idea of man’s sovereignty over Nature, which based an attitude associated to man’s “degree of mastery over it” began to change. Notwithstanding, as Marshall demonstrates, certain values continue: “The traditional anthropomorphical tendency to project human values on the natural world continued. The natural world became the mirror of political organization and communities of animals were seen in terms of human society”. Therefore, as Marshall remarks, “Nature could provide a lesson” for humanity³²⁸.

The late eighteenth century started to see in Nature a place of moral goodness and to find in Nature a source of moral lesson for humanity. In this sense, men started to reveal a changing attitude which led to the moralization and spiritualization of Nature. Marshall refers to a shift in consciousness which permitted to overcome the illusion that the whole animated Nature had been created for humanity’s use, so that “the new sensibility towards creation became increasingly apparent”. He reminds us that “Coleridge extended the notion of fraternity from human sphere to the animal world”; while Blake displayed an attitude in which “everything that lived was holy”. The scholar sees in the Romantic poets the strongest bridging of the moral gap “between man and the rest of the creation”, fostering a “moral community”³²⁹. From the core of Marshall’s exposition it is easy to infer a conception of poets regarding natural objects as sentient, spiritualized beings.

³²⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 239-240.

³²⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 245.

³²⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*, p. 251-252.

8.4 The Preparation of the Romantic Reaction in Classicism's Treatment of Nature: Countryside and Nature as Opposed to City and Civilization

The Romantic Nature poets react to the treatment given to that subject matter by the poetry of the whole eighteenth century, positively assimilating many attitudes matching to their poetic views, negatively subverting the most characteristic positions of genuine Classicist and Mechanistic-Rationalistic cast. Nevertheless, if the attitudes, concepts and diction changed to the opposite pole, the elements brought into play were, with little variation, the same.

Myra Reynolds, in her exam of the treatment of Nature in English poetry traces its development between Pope and Wordsworth as to indicate that the classical period itself contains the elements that were to undermine its ideologies and conceptions, so that in the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century there started to rise new forces in worldview, taste and consequently in aesthetics and poetry that concurred with the most orthodox patterns of classical art. The scholar indicates the classical period subdivided in the following schema: the period of inception, beginning with Waller's first coupleted poems in 1621 and involving his followers like Denham and Cowley; the period of establishment, delimited between the Restoration and 1700, with Dryden as the central figure; the period of culmination involving more or less the first quarter of the following century, centered in the work of Pope; and the period of decadence that follows up to the end of the century, involving the classicism of Johnson on one side, and the Pré-Romantic attitude of Thomson, Gray, Young, Bowels, Cowper, Collins, just to indicate some of the foreboding names.

If Reynolds made certain generalizations about the period, it is because her purpose is to indicate the general qualities and the typical features of the classical poet's conception of Nature based on the analysis of specific instances. The dominant spirit of the classical period is founded in the time of Dryden and Pope. The scholar points the "love of town" as illustrating a central characteristic of the orthodox classicists, who kept a strong aversion to countryside and country life. Exactly the opposite is the genuine Romantic love of Nature and aversion to town, as one deprehends from Johnson's praise of London: "When a man is tired of London he is tired of life", and Wordsworth's suffocating aversion to a "monstrous ant-hill on the plain of a too busy

world”³³⁰. The appreciation of classicists like Boswell to country appears just to the extent that some scenes correspond to “the finest descriptions of the Ancient Classics”. Men were not likely to be reconciled with country life, an issue due to the dreariness, monotony and difficulty of such environment. There was no society in the sense those men, grounded on their requirement of common sense, conceived it. The preference for town life follows the opinion of insipidness and dullness in country folk and bewilderment of country wilderness. Even when those men manifest some love of country, it implies just “the tamest of its possible delights”. Pope’s country pleasures, for instance, consist in “the presence of ‘gardening, rookeries, fish ponds, arbours’”³³¹. “The genuine lover of country in the classical age expanded his enthusiasm on the mild and easy pleasures of a well kept country-house easily accessible to the city”. Such a mentality would not allow any “sane man” to move for a secluded place like Wordsworth did to Lake District. As Reynolds indicates, the only availability of country retreat would be for one to recruit jaded energies, to find refuge where he could hide disappointments, to overcome displacement or forget disgraces³³².

In the classical period the “ignoring of the grand and terrible in nature comes home to the mind as the most convincing proof of the prevailing distaste for wild scenery”. Reynolds illustrates the “positive dislike’ of such scenes in the “poetical treatment of the mountains and the sea”. There was rarely “any trace of the modern feeling for mountains”. The references usually indicate the travelers’ “difficulty to surmount them”, and the passages expressing the general dislike of the savage and untamed, as Reynolds highlights, give evidence of “close observation” and are “the outcome of personal experience”: men did not fail to perceive the characteristic mountain qualities”, yet they were only “exciting repulsion and terror”. There was no place for “the sense of sublimity and beauty of mountain” to find expression. Mountains were conceived as “monstrous”, unpleasant, and “useless” things opposite to the sophisticated and delicate sweetness of French and Italian gardens. Bringing the case of Addison into discussion, the scholar notes that “the ‘irregular, misshaping scenes’ of a mountainous region gave him little pleasure”³³³. Burnet of the Carter House, in his

³³⁰ WORDSWORTH, William. **The Prelude**, Book VII, 149-150.

³³¹ POPE, Alexander. **Letters**, Vol IV, p. 476. Cf. From Soame Jenyns in the Country to the Lord Lovelace in the Town. Apud: REYNOLDS, Myra. **The Treatment of Nature**, p. 5.

³³² REYNOLDS, Myra. **The Treatment of Nature**, p. 6.

³³³ ADDISON, Joseph. **Remarks on Italy**. Geneva and the Lake. Apud: REYNOLDS, Myra. **The Treatment of Nature**.

*Theory of the Earth*³³⁴, gives a theological account of the existence of the mountains, conceiving “the present world as a gigantic ruin”, amounted “as a result of sin”, revolving the perfect original smoothness of the earth as configured according to the myth of golden age. As a result of sin, mountains are “an indigested heap of stone and earth”, contrary to the innocent uniformity of the plain crust. Reynolds also informs us that “In 1715 Pennecuik said that the swelling hills of Tweeddale were, for the most part, green, grassy, and pleasant, but he objected to the bordering mountains as being ‘black, craggy, and of a melancholy aspect, with deep and horrid precipices, a wearisome and comfortless pieces of way for travelers’”³³⁵.

In 1756 Thomas Amory commented on the “dreadful northern fells”, and called Westmoreland a “frightful country”, and spoke of “the range and groups of mountains horrible to behold”³³⁶. In 1773 Samuel Johnson uttered of the Highlands of Scotland in this way: “An eye accustomed to the flowery pastures and wavering harvest is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility. The appearance is that of a matter incapable of form or usefulness, dismissed by nature from her care”³³⁷. According to his view, as Reynolds appends in footnote, such disgust of the Highlands is an affirmation of his “power of distinguishing”, what means, in the spirit of the Age of Reason, an appeal to the faculty of understanding, against which the Romantics will oppose the full faculty of Imagination. Reynolds notes further that, in the same year, “Hutchinson deprecates the ‘dreary vicinage of mountains and inclement skies’ in the Lake District”, describing Stainmore as a place:

[W]hose heights feel the fury of both eastern and western storms; [...] a dreary prospect to the eye, the hills were clothed in heath, and all around were a scene of bareness and deformity. [...] All was wilderness and horrid waste over which the wearied eye traveled with anxiety. [...] The wearied mind of the traveler endeavours to evade such objects, and pleases itself with the fancied images of verdant plains, purling streams and happy groves³³⁸.

The descriptions of Nature in the passages referred to by Myra Reynolds advance many of the Romantics’ subject matter and approach to Nature, only that their attitude, feeling and tone change to the extreme pole of praising this kind of scenery and the qualities and subjective effects it rises, so negatively described by the classical literature. If I use too thoroughly Reynolds’ quotations, it is because a mere paraphrase

³³⁴ BURNET, Thomas. **Theory of the Earth**. Ch. on “Mountains”. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

³³⁵ PENNECUIK. Descriptions of Tweeddale, p. 45. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

³³⁶ AMORY, Thomas. **Life of John Bunce**, Vol I, p. 291; II, p. 97. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

³³⁷ JOHNSON, Samuel. **Works**, Vol IX, p. 35. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

³³⁸ HUTCHINSON. **Excursion to the Lakes**. pp. 11, 17. Apud. Idem. Ibidem.

of the authors' statements and expressions is not enough to account for the way the Romantics react to – be it assimilating or rejecting – and discuss the same problems already put up by the Classicists. That is possible to do in the referring and allusive style of the Romantic poems. For instance, Wordsworth's massive appeal to streams and groves, craggy heights, barren mountains, inclement skies and abrupt precipices does not form an insulated theme apart from the writers of the classical age, but rather responding to their treatment of the matter he endeavours to guarantee a secure place and statute of value for Nature as the most noble and honorable mater for poetry, as well as to establish a new framework in terms of mood, emotion, and thought in Nature's presence.

For the Romantic poets the delighting quality of Nature as appealing to the senses was not avoided as dangerous to man's spiritual development, but welcomed as a source of spiritual, sensitive, intellectual and imaginative growth, fostering man's aesthetic and poetic faculties. As Reynolds reminds us, the classical use of Nature disposes of it as “a store house of similitude for man's passions and actions”; the transitional attitude recognizes the world as beautiful and worthy of study, though detailed and external rather than penetrating and suggestive; the Romantic attitude presupposes “a cosmic sense”, the “recognition of the essential unity between man and nature”³³⁹.

8.5 Contrasting Nature with Society: The Countryside as the Place of Virtue and Goodness against the City as the Set of Vice and Corruption

Based on Freud's concept of trauma as a terrible experience “whose distinctive symptomatic feature of ‘repetition compulsion’ is said to respond to a past so catastrophic at the time of its occurrence as to have precluded its conscious assimilation by the subject”³⁴⁰, Thomas Pfau identifies a traumatic structure in Wordsworth's imaginary in which “an enigmatic past continues to trace the conscious history of its subject with an oblique insistence for which ‘haunting’ seems just the right word”³⁴¹. This catastrophic and enigmatic past can be identified as the intersection of the

³³⁹ REYNOLDS, Myra. *The Treatment of Nature*, p. 25.

³⁴⁰ PFAU, Thomas. *The Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma and Melancholy, 1790-1840*. 2005, p. 193.

³⁴¹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p 193.

autobiographical with the historical traces of temporal experience. The underlying element of this enigmatic past, according to the scholar, consists in a disturbing knowledge which has to do with the social-economical dimensions that involve the Wordsworthian subject matter. The past returns in unconscious flashes to the subject's present mind bringing the meanings of his historical background that cannot be consciously understood or directly interpreted out of the manifestation of accidental phenomena. Freud's notion of repetition compulsion – as rehearsed by Thomas Pfau apropos of the traumatic structure through which the experiences of the past haunt the subject's consciousness – applies to the autobiographical feature which makes Wordsworth revisit the most striking moments of his life. Pfau distinguishes between Geoffrey Hartman's praise of Wordsworth's symbolism as "the embodiment of an inalienable spiritual knowledge" and the new historicist view of the "aesthetic form as the possibly unconscious evasion of a latent social knowledge"³⁴². In Hartman, Thomas Pfau identifies the sensitiveness to discriminate "spiritual and economic, familial and social, past and present matter", in synthesis, "to divide the essential (human) from the contingent (historical)"³⁴³. Pfau identifies in the Wordsworthian happiness of agrarian life the undermining sense of the affiliation "with the intricate and hazardous urban world of manufacture, trade and credit-based speculation"³⁴⁴.

The type of knowledge that, following Pfau, haunts the subject in Wordsworth's universe comes from a hidden awareness of the social, political and economical transformations that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. The subject has the unconscious intimation of an underlying historical reality that runs below the seemingly stability of the visible reality in the rural dominions of the country. It occurs as a silent destabilization of ancient values and traditional modes of life by the rising patterns of the modern, industrial and urban world. Pfau highlights Adam Smith's analysis of the economic transformations at that time as a "revolution" brought by "the silent and insensible operation of commerce and manufacture"³⁴⁵. For Pfau, the importance of this revolution resides in the fact that it "not only accounts for the gradual decline of feudal landownership and the simultaneous transmutation of landed wealth into mobile capital" but it "also ensured that an attachment to the older, feudal notions of inalienable property relations – underwritten not by distant markets but by

³⁴² Idem. Ibidem. p. 195.

³⁴³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 195.

³⁴⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 196.

³⁴⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 197.

consanguinity ‘connections,’ and local knowledge – would sooner or later become a costly illusion”³⁴⁶. Based on Roy Porter’s reports on the economical pressures upon the small farmers in the late eighteenth-century England, Pfau remarks the practical results of such a tendency that can be summarized as follow: owing to the high cost of the landed property and to the low price of the wares due to the increase in agricultural productivity many families who had been farming their lands for generations underwent a wave of bankruptcy. Labour is no longer a guarantee of self-sufficiency in the farming activities in face of the pressures of the complex structure of the economical reality, marked by “urban commerce and speculation”³⁴⁷. This context tended to create an outbreak of rural exodus and urban marginalization.

The blundering phases in Wordsworth’s spiritual story show that the laws of the natural world have been affected by the logic of the “market economy” which replaces the land’s status of “inalienable ‘soil’” for the mutable “status as a form of capital”³⁴⁸. In this sense, Pfau recognizes as a symptom of modern relationships the lurking of a “phantasmagorical”³⁴⁹ reality imposing its virtual possibilities upon the material and spiritual relations between man and the natural world, since, as Pfau derives from Anthony Giddens’ writings, in modern times the space becomes “penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them”, since the “spatial dimensions of social life” are no longer dominated by presence and the nature of space is no longer structured by “that which is present in the scene”³⁵⁰. The knowledge that haunts the subject in Wordsworth’s universe, Pfau acknowledges, comes from the awareness of the social, political and economical transformations that took place in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. The subject has the unconscious intimation of an underlying historical reality that runs below the seemingly stability of the visible reality in the rural dominions of the country.

The culture of presence, endowed with the aura of the present objects, even though presentified through the recollection from the past, is dear to Wordsworth and will become part of his moral and aesthetic cure in the narrative of his return to Nature. In the symbolism of returning/recollecting/revisiting Wordsworth intends to understand the alienating elements in the past to subvert them by bringing back the cult of presence

³⁴⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 197.

³⁴⁷ Idem. Ibidem. p. 198.

³⁴⁸ Idem. Ibidem. p. 200.

³⁴⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 200.

³⁵⁰ Apud. Idem. Ibidem. p. 200.

reenacting the beautiful, delighting, joyous and blessing elements contained in the past experience of Nature. Wordsworth attempts to bring back and to re-actualize the presence of a range of past experiences in a world endowed with natural, human and spiritual integration which coped with an ideal kind of subjective formation in order to endure the menaces of a modern world that tended to be ruled by a deep sense of historical fragmentation, economical volatility and social relations of absence.

The healing function of presence is projected in the subject's relation of observer placed in front of natural objects and moving elements:

Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence.

(Book XII, ll. 9-14).

Perceiving the intercourse between elements and objects, the subject distinguishes the action between the dynamic energy of the invisible motions upon the living power of objects and beings. The protagonist intuits the affection of the invisible by means of the motions impelled on the visible – as appears in the rivers, trees and flowers moved by the breeze. The natural things affect the subject by the association of sensory and sentimental effects: the association of feelings with sense perception allows the subject to draw moral issues from the contact with the world without. Praising the beneficial power of the wind, the brooks and the sea-waves, the speaker ends this worship of natural things paying homage to:

Ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:

(Book XII, ll. 24-28).

The cure found in the natural objects is associated with the effects of relief, soothing and invigoration found in the acts of resting, sleeping, eating and drinking, thus recovering the human being from the external effects wearing in the physical reality and oppressive in the social relations; as well as from the damages connected to his inner anxieties. The speaker defines the type of effect found in the ideal presence of Nature as an antidote for social annihilating action:

In Nature still
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,
Maintained for me a secret happiness.

8.6 Nature, Politics and Society in *The Prelude*: The Quest of Liberty Through Landscape Contemplation

Tim Fulford³⁵¹ analyses texts of Romantic writers from Thomson to Wordsworth under the perspective that the “writer’s authority as an observer of nature is in some respects threatened [...] by his participation in the politics of the day and by the unstable relationship with patrons and market”. The scholar adds that for Wordsworth and Coleridge “the representation of a commanding view was a means of establishing their own authority over the objects of their contemplation and the whole cultural field”. In this sense, as the author remarks, the two poets “were deliberately exposing the ideological nature and limited exclusivity of gentlemanly taste [and] its perversion by the contemporary gentry”³⁵². Wordsworth and Coleridge attempted at revising the taste in the discussion on landscape and in so doing to represent and challenge the tensions that disturbed the human subjects in the social order, thus establishing the foundation for what they understood actually to be a good social order.

As the stability of the nation was grounded on the possession of land, Fulford demonstrated that “Nature’s political significance” emerged in the early eighteenth-century in relation to “the consolidation of landed interest”. Thus, the scholar informs, “Power remained predominantly in the hands of the landed nobility and gentry, many of whom increased their wealth and influence by investment in commercial activities in the City and on their estates [...]. But it was the possession of an independent income from heritable property, giving both freedom from labour and continued stake in the country, that was seen as conferring upon the landed interest their legitimacy as legislators”³⁵³. Fulford demonstrates the origin of such change in perspective: “Nature, in such representations, predominant in eighteenth-century culture, was a ground on which the legitimacy of gentlemanly power and taste could be tested and confirmed, above that of ‘a man bred to trade’ and despite particular political disputes that might occur within the

³⁵¹ FULFORD, Tim. **Landscape, Liberty and Authority**: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth. 1996, p. 11.

³⁵² Idem. Ibidem. p. 11.

³⁵³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 2.

landed interest". Accordingly, the eighteenth-century art and poetry codified the political and economic power of the rich landowners which is confirmed by an "appeal to taste" attached to the prospect of the landscapes, which bear a strong correlation to property and landownership. Fulford argues that "through the prospect-view the propertied classes were able to present their political dominance as confirmed by the natural scene. The ability to distinguish and possess shared standards independent of self-interest (standards of aesthetic value or taste) in agreement about the beauty and sublimity of landscape seemed not only a mark of the viewer's gentlemanliness but a criterion for the exercise of legitimate social and political power"³⁵⁴. For Fulford "The representation of landscape was never simply a disguised ideology presenting gentlemanly aesthetic judgment as naturally, and by implication socially and politically, valid. It was also a discourse in which that judgment could be redefined, challenged and undermined"³⁵⁵. It was Wordsworth, in the end of the eighteenth century, who started to reverse the legitimacy of value attached to the rich landowners in attributing it to the land workers such as ploughmen and shepherds. Those figures appeared as sensitive, virtuous and spiritualized characters in his poetry.

David Aers³⁵⁶ notices that as regards the "differences in forms and conditions of work and in social circumstances [...] Wordsworth's imagination is not engaged enough with the subject to display what he might mean in concrete terms". However, such vagueness is constitutive of the ideal figures of men as represented in Book VIII of *The Prelude*, where the figures of rural workers appear aggrandized and beautified by their labour in the presence of natural objects in the countryside and also involved in the radiance of their moral virtue and spirituality:

Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object,
(Book VIII, ll. 152-153).

In the first instance such vagueness seems to result from a total alienation of Wordsworth, as Aers would warn us, concerning the "world of work" and the "differentiations between various kinds of work in cities, between various kinds of collaboration, domination and forms of life". However the scholar acknowledges the force of the criticism implied in the vagueness of the formal depiction of labour

³⁵⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 3.

³⁵⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 5.

³⁵⁶ AERS, David. Wordsworth's Model of Man in 'The Prelude'. In: AERS, David; COOK, Jonathan; PUNTER, David (Edited by). **Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing – 1765-1830**. 1981, p. 66-67.

circumstances in *The Prelude*, showing an ideal situation whose contrast reveals the tensions in the human desires of satisfaction in the realization of their own lives and the limits of their possibilities set by an actual context of exploratory working regime: “But the force of such myths was bound up with their convenience in diverting attention from the forms of life presently available in rural England where bigger landowners, developments of markets, and agrarian capitalism had long since destroyed even the remotest possibility of such a life for most people five hundred years before Wordsworth set pen to paper”³⁵⁷. Wordsworth’s myth-construction in the approach of the human figure is rather critical than evasive. The poet deals with the effects of beauty and sublime as those aspects involve the human figure and endows such affections with the ideal loftiness of sensitive, moral and spiritual values.

Analysing the genesis of the Wordsworthian self Thomas Pfau considers this self as constituted “in the intersection of diverse and often interfering political, economic, and aesthetic languages”; and proposes that “as reflex of a complex historical and cultural logic, the vagaries of personal biography [...] should gradually merge with larger, more anonymous patterns of historical experience and cultural productivity”³⁵⁸. For the scholar Wordsworth’s writings exemplify “how self-interest not only demands but indeed logically presupposes a significant measure of social (self-)discipline”³⁵⁹. The rural issues as characterizing the social space closest to Nature in terms of environment, scenario and images of memory constitute an essential element in Wordsworth’s autobiography. Thomas Pfau argues that “Wordsworth’s poetry offers itself as a figural solution by retelling the story of the poet’s vocational commitment to the imaginative recovery of an otherwise unattainable, precapitalist past”³⁶⁰. The passionate creation of rural universes immersed in the subjective *fugere urbem* sentiment produces the “social reflexivity”, to employ Pfau’s term, attached to the love of Nature as conditioning the poet’s spiritual growth. Thomas Pfau considers Wordsworth’s treatment of professional and vocational development throughout his autobiographical trajectory as related to the creation of an image of the formation of the English middle class:

Social reflexivity – the construction and self-representation of individuals as members of an imagined middle class community – is thus understood as a result gradually wrought by displays of authorial productivity and

³⁵⁷ Idem. Ibidem. p. 66-67.

³⁵⁸ PFAU, Thomas. **Wordsworth’s Profession**. 1997, p. 5.

³⁵⁹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 5.

³⁶⁰ Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

corresponding interpretive proficiency. [...] I advocate reading the multiple aesthetic practices and symbolic forms of Wordsworth's and his contemporaries' Romanticism as the simultaneous realization and encryption of collective desires rather than a simple 'expression' of an autonomous, self-conscious individuality³⁶¹.

8.7 The Experience of Nature as Political Subversion: The Rhetoric of Travel to Find the Historical Background of Nature and Imagination

In his interpretation of the Simplon Pass episode in *The Prelude* Alan Liu³⁶² attempts at inserting the function of history in the activity of imagination. The author reports Wordsworth's passage to James Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, and connects both works through the impact of "disappointment" and "deep emptiness" at the peak of experience, in Wordsworth's case, and at the source of experience, in Bruce's account. According to Liu's point of view Bruce's procedures and achievements provide elements to draw the logic behind Wordsworth's search for experience in the episode referred to:

At the moment of discovery, suddenly, it is tour that dominates and exploration that seems out of place. A tour is designed only to make sense of passage, not of a goal. If an exploration were a sentence, its goal would be the last word. But in a tour, the real goal is the sense of the sentence's overall completion, a sense that cannot appear within the sentence but only on the plane of the grammar framing sentences. From a viewpoint within a tour, therefore, any sense of completion posited at the terminus can only appear a gap, an absence³⁶³.

For Alan Liu, "history is the base upon which the issue of nature's sourcehood is worked out"³⁶⁴ in *The Prelude*. Instead of thinking the constitution of the self as based on the traditional relation of Nature and Imagination, Liu conceives the notion of self as arising "in a three-body problem: history, nature, and self"³⁶⁵. This view sets the issue of autobiography in the perspective of its historicity – at least of its symbolical and aesthetic historicity. Liu offers this view on the self's formation as a reformulation of Geoffrey Hartman's account of the self as it forms in the gap between Nature and Imagination, thus being configured "as a self-knowing displacement of nature's

³⁶¹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

³⁶² LIU, Alan. **Wordsworth, The Sense of History**. 2003, p. 3-4.

³⁶³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 4.

³⁶⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 4.

³⁶⁵ Idem. Ibidem. p. 4.

sourcehood balanced dialectically against restitution to nature”³⁶⁶. Reformulating Hartman’s “model of the mystic pilgrimage” Liu offers an alternative conception that accounts for Romanticism’s historicist concerns in which the self seems to form on the background of the “tour model” which inserts the subject in “its worldly concern”³⁶⁷. The author formulates the thesis that:

The Prelude organizes the 1790 tour so that ‘nature’ is precipitated in Book 6 only as a denial of the history behind any tour, and the goal of the denial – not fully effective until the purge of Books 9 and 10 – is to carve the “self” out of history. The theory of the denial is Imagination³⁶⁸.

As the author suggests the early detail of history appears for Wordsworth in the French Revolution. Apropos of the excursive events described on the crossing of Simplon Pass the scholar finds a definition of history in its “contact point with experience” which implies “a sense” that “the completion of the present depends perpetually on something beyond”. Liu identifies that “force beyond” in Wordsworth’s own term “realities” as the poet might be referring to “people, nation, and church”. Thus, for Alan Liu, Wordsworth roots the present and by consequence the historical sourcehood of the self in the past³⁶⁹. I have affirmed in the first chapter of this dissertation that Wordsworth develops a penchant for an excursive mind and excursive habits that led him to experience the natural and social impressions of distant sceneries. This becomes more evident in the tours through the Alps, the ascent of Snowdon, and also in the travels to move to Cambridge, London and France.

As Alan Liu demonstrates the logic of tour presupposes the background of history, so that the description of each charming scene in the sequence of landscapes presented to the traveler’s eyes implies the previous knowledge of historical description as inserting a deeper significance to the aesthetic depiction of the land visited. Liu explains that “Tours always describe motion through a land written over by history, even though they also carefully keep history [...] in the background as if it were supplemental to the delights of the present tour, as if, in other words, it were merely a flourish complementing foreground appreciation. As a convention of tours, history is ornamental”³⁷⁰. Thus, Liu warns the reader that convention uses to see history as beautifying the object described, since “tours *require* the ornament of historical synopsis in order to provide visible marks for an immense historical rather than cosmic,

³⁶⁶ HARTMAN, Geoffrey. *The Unmediated Vision*. Apud. Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 4.

³⁶⁷ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 4.

³⁶⁸ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 4-5.

³⁶⁹ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 5.

³⁷⁰ Idem. *Ibidem*. p. 10.

order in background”³⁷¹. Extrapolating and reformulating this point of view Wordsworth would rather allude to history as re-signifying the objects of Nature out there. I would rather say that Nature, with the notion of cosmic order behind her beautiful scenarios, provide the ideal ornament for the physical setting and virtual ambience of historical events. It is based on the feeling of sympathy, through which a pervasive energy overflowing from Nature gives life and meaning to events in the social, political and historical spheres. The idea of historical re-signification of Nature in the eyes of the tour traveler appears in Alan Liu’s argument that: “Background history composes the overall orbit of signification in which tours participate, an orbit that is no other than the social equivalent of cosmos”³⁷². Thus, through this inscription of tour in historical background Wordsworth redefines the connection between the aesthetic experience and the epistemological meanings of the other human domains.

Following Alan Liu’s perspective the individual tourist’s sight and viewpoint are socially marked and historically constructed, thus reflecting social and historical conventionality through which the individual shares collectively accepted values. Accordingly, the chain of landscape images perceived by the self implies that Nature constitutes the foreground backed by “a mark composed of historical synopsis” which “is crucial because its conventionality establishes the very perspective system, the social history or overall conventionality of vision within which foreground nature can be seen as a ‘delightful’ beauty in the first place”. The scholar closes this reasoning with the statement that “without history in the background, after all, a landscape is not a landscape; it is wilderness”³⁷³. In his relationship of observer of the landscapes in the foreign country Wordsworth recognizes the phantasmagorical character that configures Nature as a political, social and historical space. When the protagonist and his fellow Robert Jones landed at Calais on the anniversary of the Revolution and traveled southward the affections of joy and triumph realized in the French soil resulted from the marks of historical emotions:

there we saw,
 In a mean city, and among a few,
 How bright a face is worn when joy of one
 Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence
 We held our way direct through hamlets, towns,
 Gaudy with reliques of that festival,
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
 And window garlands.

³⁷¹ Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

³⁷² Idem. Ibidem. p. 10.

³⁷³ Idem. Ibidem. p. 11.

(Book VI, ll. 345-353).

As the two tourists walked the speaker's expressiveness reveals that the model for historical happiness and exultation spread all over the land is grounded on the mild and blissful feelings brought by an atmosphere of analogy with the seasonal return of Spring:

Among sequestered villages we walked
And found benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
Hath left no corner of the land untouched:
(Book VI, ll. 356-359).

The public space acquires and reflects the features of the elemental affections. The sounds and shades of the elms along the roads seemed to salute the passing travelers and the wind that provokes their undulation and rustle seems to blend the motions of Nature with the impulses impelling the historical moment. The elms that rustled over the travelers' heads produced their sound from the undulation caused by the motion of the wind just like every man in France expressed his happiness as a result of the general delight brought by the historical festivities. At this point I venture to establish the key to understand the essential motivation for Wordsworth "excursive habits" that impelled both the poet and the protagonist more than once to leave his native country thus configuring the paradoxical, double-way road effect of searching for Nature (and finding her) and abandoning Nature for something else's sake (and feeling the heartsickness of that alienation annihilating himself) that finally impelled him back to his native land once for all. Alan Liu remarks that "a tour is motivated by desire for some special *significance* (whether conceived as meaning or feeling) missing at home: a sense of eventfulness whose site is inherently 'out there', other, or elsewhere and so from the first adapted to the form of convention. Convention is the sense of a meaningfulness described by someone prior and other, a significance whose mere redescription in any itinerary will result in a "feeling of complete eventfulness"³⁷⁴. Here I intend to make a punctual distinction in the nature of Wordsworth's characteristic spatial movement: if Alan Liu distinguishes the logic of the tour from that of ruling journeys and exploratory travels, for my purpose the distinction between the dynamics of tours (which might include journeys and travels) and that of moving to live in a distant place from his native country, what includes the settlement in Cambridge, London and France is a necessary step. The conventional eventfulness (to employ Liu's

³⁷⁴ Idem. Ibidem. p. 7-8.

terminology) in the excursions back to Anny Tyson's cottage at Hawkshead during the hero's first Cambridge summer vacation, across the Alps during the third vacation, and to the top of Mount Snowdon is marked by an open search for Nature which is gratified, even though at times partially, by her responsiveness to his appealing (sensory, sentimental, emotional, intuitive, intellectual, moral and spiritual) surrender. However the eventfulness connected to the settlements and residence in Cambridge, London and France is dominantly marked by other aspects contained in the educational, social and political programs that compose the historical context which diverted the subject from Nature – an eventfulness that both installs and reflects Wordsworth's spiritual and aesthetical crisis. The beneficial impact of the natural beauties met in his settlement at Grasmere represents the element of cure and redemption of the self by his return to Nature. If in Wordsworth's tours, journeys, travels and excursions the logic of history suits that of Nature, in the three movements aiming at settling out of his native land the protagonist's self met the opposition of a conflictive reality where the power of Nature is oppressed, effaced and eluded by the dynamics of history. If the movement leading to those periods and lived throughout them presents an external background whose "significance" had been already advanced in the historical/intellectual/symbolical "synopsis" represented in the textuality of poetic and philosophical representations that in a way mirror the social, political and cultural background of Wordsworth's age, is it that the Cambridge represented in *The Prelude* is backed by the "synopsis" of Scholasticism, that the urban disorder and human corruption met at London is backed by the textuality of John Milton's Hell and Adam Smith's reflections on the logic of the capital and commerce in the *Wealth of Nations*, and the reversion of the ideal of humanity into tyranny witnessed in France reflected in the rationalism of William Godwin's *Political Justice*?

Alan Liu³⁷⁵ offers an investigation on Wordsworth's poetical attitudes in *The Prelude* which intends to constitute "a reexplanation by means of the subversion/containment analytic of Wordsworth's turn from radicalism in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1789". Liu employs "cultural criticism as a method of reading". The author states the thesis that "if there is a cultural fallacy [...] it lies in the constrictive interpretation of social representation empowered by the notion of the subject". Liu establishes the subject's zone of engagement and action between the poles of representation and practical affairs:

³⁷⁵ LIU Alan. **Local Transcendence**: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database. p. 72.

The hermeneutics of representation applauds the primarily theatrical power plays of subversion (a subject's *display* of resistance to subjection) while merely hanging a backdrop to indicate the detail of the zone beyond the theater. That zone is containment, the place before the stage where actions are not just dramatic or representational but also physical, logistic, rhetorical and political – that is, involved in an hermeneutics of movement and suasion not wholly coincident with the hermeneutics of representation. Subversion/containment can be unbound from its present stasis only when we see that subversion need not be just a stage act. It is an activity bound up with and within equally active *processes* of containment that do not so much recuperate subversion as enable the possibility of any action, subversive or otherwise³⁷⁶.

Poetry is a means whose representational content reflects or at least keeps a level of coherence with the poet's commitment with the demand of action in the other spheres of the real world: social, political, cultural and historical. Alan Liu calls the period comprised between 1793 and 1804 "Wordsworth's *long decade of subversion*". The scholar refers to one Wordsworth as "a strangely silent, if also politically radical persona that would seem as out-of-the-way as it is unexpected if the poetry and life records for the period after the return from France in late 1792 were not so full on this subject". Liu remarks for Wordsworth's figure not only the personality of a "champion of imagination" as represented in *The Prelude*, but also the championship of the "bloody-minded, extremely British patriot"³⁷⁷.

In Wordsworth's account of war between Britain and France in Book X, the speaker utters the moral confusion motivated by a deep dilemma between his patriotic feelings for his countrymen and his devotion to the representatives of the great ideals of liberty and humanity:

I brought with me the faith
That, if France prospered, good men would not long
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
And this most rotten branch of human shame,
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
Would fall together with its parent tree.
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
Britain put forth her foreborn strength in league,
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!
Not in my single self alone I found,
But in the minds of all ingenious youth,
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment; neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time;
All else was progress on the self-same path
On which with a diversity of pace,
I had been travelling: this a stride at once

³⁷⁶ Idem. Ibidem. p. 73.

³⁷⁷ Idem. Ibidem. P. 73.

Into another region. As a light
 And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
 On some grey rock – its birthplace – so had I
 Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
 Of my beloved country, wishing not
 A happier fortune than to wither there:
 Now was I from that pleasant station torn
 And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
 Yea, afterwards – truth most painful to record! –
 Exhulted in the triumph of my soul
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,
 Brave heart! To shameful flight.

(Book X, ll. 257-288).

The speaker records one moment when he took part on a patriotic prayer for the victory of the British armies, where “like an uninvited guest” the hero “sate silent [...] Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come” (Book X, ll. 297-299). Alan Liu situates the moment recorded in the historical events: “The time of prayer here is late summer 1793, possibly mid-September if the overthrow of Englishmen is the defeat at Hondschoote. The place, as Mary Moorman suggests, is North Wales, where Wordsworth was visiting his recently ordained college friend Robert Jones, and where patriotic sermons were symptomatic of the gathering Welsh counterrevolution led by Anglican churchmen”³⁷⁸.

The subject's inner sorrows were caused by the conflict between the personal feelings and convictions and the irreconcilable antagonisms in the historical reality. The hero's personal desire tended to synthesize the patriotic love for his country and the revolutionary, republican “worship to humanity” inspired by France. Following Alan Liu, the record of the moment when the silent poet disguising resented thoughts in the Welsh church represents an instance of “barely contained violence”³⁷⁹. Liu's notion of play between subversion and containment appears in the contradiction of Wordsworth's thought. The inner contradiction and the opposition between the personal felt convictions and the material and ideological facts in the reality of war unleashed the moral confusion that led to the poet's impairment of imagination and taste reported in Book XII and XIII. The mention to the flower in the rock tossed by the whirlwind is a metaphor for the hero's own position amid the historical forces, whose thoughts and mood have been shaken by personal and political turmoil. Both flower and rock are natural objects whose poetic association with the ideas of region and birthplace indicates the play of the protagonist's connection with his native soil and the

³⁷⁸ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 74.

³⁷⁹ Idem. *Ibidem.* p. 77.

conceptions culled in the experiences abroad: a movement through which the poet attempts at achieving a synthesis of principles for human life by integrating universal ideals with the local values. The appeal of the natural object reminded the hero of the natural (physical and moral) condition of the human being that implies an innate and essential connection with Nature, here embodied in the native land and in man's attachment to earth. This connection, as the flower's living cycle born and withered on the rock suggests, represents an idea of placement in lifetime. This is the idea that will bring Wordsworth back to his native land to reside at Grasmere. The protagonist's creative sensibility can be reestablished by the return to Nature since the image of the natural object appears both as a beautiful image delighting the subject's senses and as a metaphor which reinforces the notion of the vital connection between Nature and imagination. In this chapter I exposed the main ideas which link Wordsworth's depiction of distancing and return to Nature with issues of the historical, social and political context in which the poet lived as they import for the autobiographical structure of *The Prelude*.

CONCLUSION:

The Prelude tells the story of a personal and poetic education through the living contact with Nature along a sequence of striking experiences that affect the hero's emotions and leave their marks in his growing consciousness, thus through meaningful patterns established in his memory setting the foundations of his personality, creating the existential conditions and the epistemological substratum for the development of his intellectual and imaginative faculties, and finally moulding his aesthetical and ethical sensibility. Besides, the narrative represents the meanings of distancing from Nature in periods of practical interests that produced the anxiety of a poetic crisis and of returning to the bosom of the natural world in search of restoring the self's creative faculties. The cure must come through the benefic influence of the natural affections by the concrete possibility of living an organic life again in harmonious unity with a still organic and inspiring world; and by the recollection of self-transformative events of personal communion with the sceneries of his native region where the physical impulses, the playful motions, the living contacts and the sensory rapport with the material surroundings used to bring emotional response and imaginative effects. The close and harmonious communion with Nature; the distancing, shock and crisis; and finally the return to find cure and restoration in an organic life are parts of Wordsworth's personal and symbolical formation, thus they integrate the subjective process of growth of the poet's mind provided that through this movement the speaker created a poetic pattern of foundation, doubt and confirmation of taste, knowledge and imagination.

The problem in focus concerns the extent to which Wordsworth created a history and a language capable of expressing the subjective experiences of the objective world and of his own self – through sensory and sentimental commerce, arousing impulses linked to body and soul that create phenomenal and numinous bonds between the subject and the visible universe; and on the other side created a rhetorical system of literary tropes and suggestions of bonds to the place of origin indicating identity and affective belonging between man and earth. Complementarily, Wordsworth created a system of allusions to the natural order which turns many of the perceptive registers of natural images into metaphoric images or imagistic narratives that represent – in a mythic, symbolic and archetypal level – important tokens about the individual's life or about the world's history: for instance, in the renewing images of the dawn or in those

of the beginning of Spring Wordsworth rehearses the striking analogy with the beginning of man's life set in babyhood and infancy as well as with the origin of the World in the *Genesis* and in the myths of *The Golden Age*. The traveler's return to his original land (inspired by tales and travel books) bears a significant correspondence with the cyclical return in the cosmic and elemental world that comes periodically to bring the possibility of renovation to everything. Besides, the model for Wordsworth's ideals of travels and secluded life is found in the traditional travel books as well as in the figures of pilgrims and eremites, who represent for Wordsworth an inspiring ideal of knowledge acquired through experience and self-concentration and an instance of transmissible wisdom.

Considering my whole argumentation on the autobiographical issues of *The Prelude* I may surely draw the conclusion that Wordsworth's techniques consisted in allying in an associative process a close to literal mode of representing his own experiences in contact with the external world – whether they consist of sensory and sentimental commerce, intellectual and emotional processes, meditative and contemplative moments – as those experiences foster his spiritual growth, with a number of tropes, analogies and metaphors, symbols and myths taken from a repertoire of literary lore; a body of allusions to the travel books and to the scientific, philosophical and religious production of the western tradition since the *Bible* for the Christian background of images, icons and sentiments; and Plato and Aristotle, especially as to the unfolding of notions derived from the complementary conceptions of Physics and Metaphysics; as well as a set of linguistic allusions to the social, political, cultural, educational and historical discussions that agitated Wordsworth's time.

Both the depiction of experience and the allusions to traditional ideas point to the same doctrine: that the contact with Nature and the fruition of beautiful forms are not a matter of empty pleasure since it has to do with the constitution of knowledge and taste, with the development of man's subjectivity, with modes of staying in this world – whether rational, sensible, intellectual and emotional – and with a faithful belief in life and her values. Nature signifies the place where life fulfills its total manifestation, where every living being and every natural force is let free to grow up, reproduce and create by its own will, without restraint. The creative processes in Nature inspire the release of creativity in the protagonist's imagination. The contact with the productive forces manifested in the world without that establish the organic relationships in the

active system of life growing by its own power and organization reinvigorates the self both in his body constitution and imaginative activities. Rhetorically, Nature provides a model for the Romantic artist's own expressiveness, an idea derived from the concrete image of the fountain in terms of external objects; and from the Neoplatonic structure of the central fountain outpouring radiation upon the diversity of beings in terms of idealistic Metaphysics. Mythically and symbolically the course of man's life corresponds to the phases of the history of the world and the ages of the development of humankind.

One issue of autobiography on which my discussion lasted much is the idea that the primary elements out of which man informs his mind and develops his consciousness are found in the contact with the external world. The term "contact" can be conceived broadly as intercourse, communion, observation or contemplation of the external forms or objects along the sequence of personal events of life, so that as soon as the living phenomena of the concrete reality are given to the approach of man's sensations they get converted into inner images in the mind endowed with emotions, thoughts and feelings, ideal facts of consciousness destined to store his memory and to be manifested as remembrances according to the way that the past moments brought to recollection combine with the mood of the moments in the present which give rise to it. Even though considering that the human mind is endowed with the faculties proper to develop the understanding and knowledge of the world, I insisted all the time that the hero's personal and artistic subjectivity has been informed primarily through personal experience, i.e. the impressions from without and the striking moments in life have a necessary function for qualifying the subject's spiritual growth and transforming his consciousness by means of a natural and organic process.

What Wordsworth combines with the influence of the experience of Nature along life in the notion of human development employed in his autobiography is a belief that the human being is endowed with a general tendency to develop his consciousness according to the determination of a number of stages that dictate the disposition of the human faculties and sensibility to be informed and respond in one way or another and to produce their activities according to this or that type, quality and degree. In this sense, Wordsworth rehearses the idea that in infancy and childhood the human sensibility is – even though unconsciously – most apt to perceive sensory aspects in the world, to feel the sentimental and emotional impulses in the contact with the natural affections, to perceive the uncanny presences in the sublime aspects of remote environments as well

as to intuit the transcendental aspects in the phenomenal, physical and elemental aspects of the objective world. During boyhood the subject becomes gradually more conscious of himself, of the objective world as manifested around him and of the powers of his own faculties and sensibilities, especially to interpret universal passions out of the visible affections and to derive the numinous meanings out of the cosmic and meteorological manifestations. Such capacities get fully consciously matured in the age of youth, when man's subjectivity reaches complete attunement and communion with the images and affections of Nature, and understands the link between the physical and spiritual spheres. As adulthood comes, even though man's knowledge tends to reach maturity, the human sensibility tends to hardness and stagnation, since the subject is susceptible to the aspects of the formal, social and civilizational realities, which sometimes annul the poetic force proper of Nature, so that this phase might cause a spiritual crisis to a poet's mind or lead man to pursue other areas than those of the spiritual production.

A keen analysis of the main events that constitute Wordsworth's autobiography indicates a sequence of changes based on shocking or enchanting moments of transformation in the subject's worldview, knowledge and faculties that signalize the evolution in his consciousness, involving aspects such as the hero's character, intellect, sensibility and spirituality. Thus, as the subject's mind and imagination evolve in comprehension of the world and understanding of his own self – i.e. until, in the speaker's words, more mature seasons called back the objects impressed with bliss and joy to impregnate and elevate the mind – the hero/speaker is pushed back to revisit and revise the most striking experiences in recollection so as to reconfigure his consciousness in terms of knowledge, emotions and sensibility (which the speaker called "rememberable things", "vulgar joys", "faculties", "powers"). In this sense, to each stage in the evolution of the protagonist's worldview corresponds the representation of a dominant conception of Nature that determines the kind of reaction and response the hero will establish with the external reality. It is important to consider that, on the one hand, each specific conception of Nature has been built as a result of the types and degrees of experience which the subject had been submitted to; and on the other hand according to the possibility of reception and reaction to the external experience by the subject's imaginative disposition at each phase of life. In this sense, the ideal of organic growth and organic life has two sides: on the one hand, it received its primary impulse from the natural modes of experience which Wordsworth the

protagonist lived through in Northern England's countryside since childhood; and on the other hand it became conscious out of the Romantic discussions on the conceptions of organic order of things to cope for the structure of living beings in opposition to the life emptying precepts of Mechanicism. Each conception blossomed from experiences felt as living moments, and then are rehearsed and structured consciously by reference to doctrines, concepts, metaphors, symbols and myths found in literature and formal education. For instance, the episodes of the strange modes of being haunting the boy allude to romance fairies and pagan myths of Nature's uncanny entities; as well as the notions of Universe and World's Soul suggest a scheme drawn out of the study of Geometry treatises and Neoplatonic writings. However all those conceptions would appear empty without the background of beholding, contemplative and meditative experience in face of the external world.

Following this orientation, as a baby in his mother's arms Wordsworth the speaker claims for himself a type of experience dictated by the intercourse of touch, implying the infantine higher sensibility for the reception of the sensory and transcendent communion either with the material or the spiritual spheres. As an infant Wordsworth had access to the haunting of the archaic and daemonic powers that people the secluded places of Nature such as woods, rivers, moors and hills. As a boy, departing from the observation of changes brought by the seasons upon the elemental countenance of Nature, Wordsworth realizes the existence of an ideal, spiritual, intelligent principle determining the physical structure, the forms of life and the relationship among the elements and beings in the Universe. During boyhood the protagonist started to develop in moments of solitude that which the speaker denominates "visionary power", the power to feel deep and interpret the spiritual and moral meanings underlying the sensory appearances in Nature as a symbolical code. Furthermore, his boyhood also made possible the group sports among the natural sceneries of the North England region: at those moments the hero experimented the primary taste of liberty in playful activities. During childhood and boyhood the experience of Nature could be divided into three modes characterized by human occupation of the natural space and insertion into the sceneries in which the hero has been attracted to the natural images, passing from unconscious perceptions of delighting effects in the affections from without to the conscious and contemplative search for the hidden meanings in the images manifested in the interplay of the outer elements, objects and landscapes: I) the encounters in which the mysterious forces of Nature haunted the

boy in his night ramblings, where a terrorizing effect seems to have resulted from the boy's wicked provocations; II) the sequence of dizzy and noisy games with the fellow boys during the periods of cold weather, and with those sports of calmer delight during the summer vacations, in which the love for Nature seems to have come unsought; III) those moments of contemplative solitude in which Nature presented her beauties to the protagonist as a gift for a still not conscious desire to contemplate her charms, whose effects are those "vulgar joys" before the bright scenes which made the senses concentrate in pure contemplation, which nonetheless advance those moments that I called "sought grace", in which the protagonist seeks consciously and patiently the revelation of the visionary power that could allow him to intuit human patterns or signals of the transcendent order through motion or quietude of the natural forms. From this phase on, when Wordsworth was passing from the mature boyhood into youth, he started to become conscious of his mutual relationship with Nature and started to search Nature as a major purpose, sure to find in her the main ground of his aesthetic formation. The main cause through which the boy used to be attracted to Nature had been specifically the fascination exerted by the rural objects. At this point in the story of his life, the speaker started to develop the awareness of a greater impulse to follow Nature as a conscious act of knowledge, to contemplate her magnificence for her own, ideal essence.

Imagination can be understood as the activity through which the human faculties play their total contact with the outer world. Thus Imagination is characterized by levels of experience in which perception and figurative creation interact forming a unity or cleaving according to the state of man's sensibility. Wordsworth represents a model according to which the perfect state of human sensibility appears in the initial stage of childhood and is developed in its full strength until the phase of youth, generally passing through a breaking of course as adulthood comes. The poet's education occurs as a direct response to what he discovers and knows through experience: by seeing, hearing, touching, feeling and thinking. For Wordsworth physical perception comes together with spiritual intuition and consciousness of himself. From sensation ensues the growth of spirituality so that the knowledge of the external world brings the corollary of growing personal consciousness and progressing refinement of sensibility.

Wordsworth illustrates several complementary aspects of Nature in his contact with the external world along his autobiography: the physical and elemental qualities of

objects and landscapes affecting the subject's senses; the subtle presences of mysterious powers or uncanny spirits of Nature haunting the subject's childish mind in a prototypical pagan type of mythic fascination and terror; the philosophical intuition of a metaphysical essence gleaming behind the visible forms and configuring the Neoplatonic conception of Soul of the World or Spirit of the Universe; The Pantheistic transformation of the dogmatic religious conception of the Christian God into the natural feeling of God as manifested in Nature; the dialectical conception of Nature as the motrice power or intelligence that impels and determines the world's cultural development along history, a similar notion to the Philosophy of History's conception of spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*). All this leads finally to the conviction that Nature is the proper world where man is destined to live and realize his humanity, happiness and ontological perfection, by overcoming all conflicts between the natural and spiritual orders in the external reality, and by solving all discrepancies between the natural and spiritual dimensions in the human being, thus coping for the social, cultural and political place in this world. However, the point of departure for all representations lays in perception, in the sensory rapport that establishes man's living and active place in the concrete reality. Indeed Wordsworth rehearses a type of perception in which the senses perceive as they are feeling and thinking simultaneously. Out of perception passion, emotion, knowledge, morals and spirituality start to take place. Then, every other learned conception on Nature, on Man and on Society can be associated since they found a background in a deep understanding – derived from lastingly patient observation, contemplation and meditation – of the elemental and fundamental relationship among man and the world surrounding him. First comes life.

The three moments when Wordsworth represents a distancing from Nature correspond to moments of geographical dislocation in order the hero to reside in regions far from his native hills. The period of residence in Cambridge represents the interregnum when the hero left the beautiful Nature of Northern England for attending his formal education at St. John's College. The residence in London marks a space of time when the protagonist is impelled by his inner longings to leave the security of the habitual life in his known country to search the unknown in the big metropolis, where he urged to scrutinize the bonds of human society – the relationships among men in the city. The residence in France, overall in Paris, meant the moment when the poet left his motherland to testimony the political movements of the aftermath of the Revolution

searching to set the hope on liberty, justice, and humanity for redeeming the humankind.

If I were to answer what Wordsworth represents to the kind of society we live in, what his importance to men's worldview nowadays is, and in what sense he is – or is not – still up to date, I would like to assert that at Wordsworth's time – when the modern society started to acquire its disenchanting configuration with the advents of the Industrial Revolution and consequential consolidation of Capitalism, with the scientific Revolution that started to link truth to rational view, logical deduction, mechanical experiments and mathematical methods of measurements, and finally with the political Revolution in France that subverted the authority of the monarchy and conferred political power to the bourgeois society with its exploratory instincts (despite the whole effort to bring liberty and justice to the people) – the poet attempted to keep those values and virtues inherited from a traditional and earnest mode of living in which beauty had an essential connection with the whole existence in the Universe and with the genuine values of human life. For the poet Nature embodies the higher values of Humankind.

The analysis of *The Prelude* in relation to the quest for the motivations to study a Romantic poet's work, in special an autobiographical poem which tells about Nature and her influence upon the constitution of the human mind, led me to inquiry what sense might exist in bringing forth subjects of the Romantic period to nowadays cultural context; what relevance might have the reference to Romantic poets, the allusion to works, themes and tropes of Romanticism to the 21st-century society; and what the reading of Wordsworth, who praises in his poetry the values of humble life and sublime issues concerning both the universal structure and constitution of man's moral virtues, and who teaches how to feel deeply and find in personal sentiments the cure for spiritual illness and depression, can have to offer to the men of these days. It might be asserted that rescuing the reading of poets like Wordsworth is extremely relevant and necessary since it can remind the modern reader and critic of the necessity of renovating our own view on literature – and on human life. The interest for the Romantic poets might bring into discussion some of the main issues involving the aesthetics and ethics in terms of the appreciation of the work of art and the relation between art and life in our world. In other terms, in the disenchanting reality of the modern society where the utilitarianism, the rationalism and the technicalism rule the political and social relations, the reading and criticism of Wordsworth's works serve to show the necessity and to rehearse the

possibility of retaking those traditional values, ideals, sentiments, symbols and a worldview that allow man to connect with the universe around him in a more affective and essential mode based on the ideas of *Bildung*, truth, organic growth and unitary self, and finally moral, imaginative and intellectual wisdom; individual and collective liberty, social happiness and political justice. At the same time the careful attention to our own historicity reveals that we stand in an ironical position as to the possibility of reception and acceptance of those values that leads to consider the possible obsolescence of those elements, to which maybe there is no room in this society.

In a paper on the meaning of the Romantic ideals for nowadays life and fiction³⁸⁰ I considered that the modern life and the modern human condition bring the self to a point where he feels, behind the excess of reality, the onslaught of a fissured consciousness, an enigmatic lack of something in himself which leads him to need, even though unconsciously, a ground where the self might find his own standpoint, where he could support the idea of personal unity. Even if the idea of unity be a Romantic illusion, man needs it as well to base the hope in life, to bare the intermittent feeling of discontinuity in himself. The search of happiness is a signal of that longing for subjective unity, an ideal capable of bringing balance to the human wavering mind. Happiness consists in a metaphysical dimension in the subject, which he struggles to fulfill, which might not happen as an eternal state, but as a general feeling of which man is reminded in small moments of revelation everyday: unless man satisfies his soul with moments of bliss, he cannot find peace within himself. This intimate want, felt as an inner gap, this thirst of unity, manifests itself in the form of desire, so that in order to complete himself, man must always be looking for something out of his own self. Wordsworth taught the following generations to look at Nature in order to find his/her proper ontological standpoint.

Attentive to modern life and literature one feels such nostalgia of a superior aim to guide man's formative steps and spiritual pursuits that it is inevitable to ask what happened to the old ideas of *Bildung* and truth. Thence follows the question if that idea is still possible or necessary in nowadays conditions of life. The issues of formative condition make us ask if the Romantic worldview – a general idea of a powerful unitary self, a passionate mode of seeing the world as an integrated order, endowed with moral

³⁸⁰ COUTINHO, Márcio José. Romantic Ideal, Dishonour and Disillusionment in Coetzee's *Disgrace*. 2011. (Text still unpublished).

value, which complements the self with transcendent feelings, and a sincere, almost religious belief in Beauty as endowed with a spiritual, Ideal form, which elevates the human soul towards an authentic province of truth and happiness – is still possible and necessary. The fact that a writer like Coetzee, with too strong a view on art and on contemporary life, has been dealing with Romantic themes in the core of the narrative of *Disgrace*, *Diary of a Bad Year* and even in the autobiographical fiction of *Boyhood* and *Youth* is a clear demonstration of the topicality of Romantic issues. The Romantic worldview is still possible to the extent that it acts within the limits of the modern society, without clashing against the social rules, but dosing those rules, enlarging those boundaries and giving new light to the contemporary sensibility. It is still necessary to renovate the contemporary sensibility and give new force to the human relations, creating new possibilities of happiness in this life, to provide an imaginative comprehension of reality, and to provide sensitive patterns of taste and a new sense of value which might vivify the cold, deadened, disenchanting and rationalized relation of man with the world he lives in.

Most of the theoretical and critical writings on Wordsworth highlight the function of Romantic imagery, such as Whimsat and Paul de Man; the function of Romantic imagination, such as Maurice Bowra and Stephen Prickett; the function of experience as it is the case of Ifor Evans, Graham Hough and W.H. Auden; the function of transcendence, as Thomas Weiskel, who sets the focus on the forms of the sublime, and Harold Bloom who demonstrates the Romantic tendency to utter poetic truths based on a sort of prophetic inspiration and visionary revelation. The Romantic perspective through which the source of poetry is found less in the description of the objects out there than in the inner feelings, thoughts and emotions aroused by their presence, i.e. more in man's consciousness than in external Nature is explained by Meyer Abrams and Stephen Prickett as both critics highlight Wordsworth and Coleridge's reaction to overcome Locke's and Hartley's over-reliance on empirical data as well as the eighteenth-century art's ground on imitation. Nevertheless, neither Abrams nor Prickett deny the valuable role of Nature – overall in her concrete-sensory aspects in the visible world and objective reality – as an object of poetic worship either for her beauty and charms, for her religious and metaphysical signification for the human being, or for her influence on man's education. As to the metaphorical and symbolical meanings associated to empirical affections of the natural world on Wordsworth's hero Abrams mentions the inner journey and Geoffrey Hartman realizes the suggestion of the

eccentric path as instances of mythic and symbolic rhetoric that organize the narrative thread in *The Prelude*. Finally, Joseph Beach sketches the whole body of scientific, religious, philosophical, literary conceptions which Wordsworth associates to the charming experiences of external Nature; while Thomas Pfau demonstrates the role of the transformation of Nature's configuration and man's condition of experiencing her in virtue of the social changes brought with the capitalist economy and the modern society; and Alan Liu argues for the influence of historical and political events on Nature's conditions of justice, liberty and redemption for human life, since Nature was conceived as man's proper world endowed with historical providence over the destiny of humankind; on the other hand Liu reflects on man's own view and belief on Nature and on the attributions of man's deeds for humanity as determined by the deceptions brought with the oppressive and tyrannical results that reverted the rights conquered with the French Revolution.

This inquiry has been divided into two topics, one devoted to the analysis of empirical relationship between man's consciousness and the forms of the world without; the other to tropological and conceptual allusions to traditional cultural heritage. In the first part of this dissertation the hero's autobiographical course was sketched in order to establish to which extent Nature's experience has influenced the development of the poet's mind, what the part played by the developmental dispositions of the self's own faculties that determine the quality of the subject's activities was, and what has been the part played by experience in shaping the protagonist's mind was, in transforming his subjective dispositions and in creating the appropriate conditions to ground the rising of specific moods. In this sense, the function of experience has been analyzed in terms of sensory affections divided into perception of visual and auditory images; and sentimental affections, divided into bodily feelings and spiritual intuitions. Both sensory and sentimental experiences have been related to the specific thoughts which they create the conditions for, and, on the other hand, to the existential and ontological meanings of the living moments and events when they chanced to happen. The second part of this study focuses on the elaboration of the poetic experience of Nature on the ground of a body of conceptual, metaphoric, symbolical and mythical allusions to the western tradition. In this sense, I consider what has been the role of formal education, and what has been the determination of experience in its status of natural event by the influence of social, literary and cultural rhetorics. Wordsworth suggests that every personal experience in life is associated to the human knowledge encrypted in the aesthetic,

moral and epistemological doctrines of occidental science, philosophy, religion, psychology and literature.

I claim that the most recurrent worldview in *The Prelude* endorses the primacy of living experience over aprioristic activities of man's mind and over the function of formal education, even though both of them play a key active role for the human development in the world. Therefore, even though acknowledging the powers of the mind (and exaggerating it at times), Wordsworth tends to believe the poet's mind endowed with judgment to recognize beauty where it exists, the poet's presence in contemplation endowed with enough enchantment to strengthen the moods and features of Nature's countenances, and the poet's faculties powerful enough to participate in the creation of a scene in the very sentient act of beholding. However, Wordsworth knows that imagination alone does not create anything in Nature nor from Nature, that the mind cannot create anything in the world without out of pure ideal projection. Whatever the human mind produces belongs to art, to abstractions of the intellect or to the material productions of culture. Thus, for Wordsworth man's imagination and contemplation are active in the sense of participating of the images and motions of the world without by reacting emotionally; by contributing with feelings and moods on the visible scenes; by deriving thoughts inspired by the objects observed, associating conceptions to the images beheld or deriving conceptions out of the meditation on them; by projecting images out of the remembrance of past moments of the subject's living presence there over the visible images of Nature's landscapes; and by deriving symbolical meanings, visionary revelations and the access to the transcendental reality out of the impassioned and enchanted interpretations of Nature's sensory images by the subject's imagination. My thesis implies that even though possessing a large body of philosophical, scientific and literary background that influenced the framework of his poems and informed his aesthetic worldview, in *The Prelude* Wordsworth does not employ the representation of experience to ground intellectual conceptions but, on the contrary, the poet creates a system of rhetorical, metaphorical and tropological allusions to traditional ideas that combine with and confirm a general worldview created on the basis of the active sensory, sentimental, emotional and intellectual experiences lived among the sensible, elemental, concrete and transcendental forms of Nature since very early in life.

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