WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S USE OF THE EYE AND THE EAR IN ESTABLISHING HIS PHILOSOPHY

A THESIS

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PREFACE

William Wordsworth is a poet whom many people read, each with his own interpretation and enjoyment. His poetry is read by young children, high school and college young people, and by the more mature adults. The question has often come to me why all can enjoy him, and with this study, I have seen that Wordsworth did what he set out to do as stated in his "Preface"; that is, he wrote in the language of the people, always with his eyes and ears attentive to Nature and man; therefore, many can read him today with a degree of understanding.

A course in the Romantic Poets led me to a deeper interest in Wordsworth and his philosophy, and observing the numerous mentions of the eyes and the ears in his writings, at a suggestion from Dr. Walton, I have endeavored to trace Wordsworth's life through a study of his usage of the eyes and the ears.

I wish to thank Dr. Charles E. Walton who gave me encouragement, help, and many critical suggestions in the

writing of this paper. Also, I wish to extend a word of appreciation to Dr. June Morgan for her suggestions and help.

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CHAPTER I

AN APPROACH TO WORDSWORTH'S USE OF THE EYE AND THE EAR

During his lifetime, William Wordsworth placed a considerable emphasis on the eye and the ear, the two senses that made him " . . . a sensitive being, a creative soul." (The Prelude, XII.207) The eye and ear were the two senses that kept him in communion with Nature

> . . . through earth and heaven
> With every form of creature, as it looked
> Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
> Of adoration, with an eye of love.
> One song they sang, and it was audible,
> Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
> O'ercome by humblest prelude or that strain,
> Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.
> (The Prelude, II.411-418)

Wordsworth's unusual perception and observation may be noted here, because he trained his eye and ear to be alert and to observe things as they were in connection with the landscape about him. Wheresoever he moved, he unveiled qualities of every season because of his watchful eye and attentive ear, and by virtue of this, changes were made in his life and work. Some of these differences he explains in the following passage:

> Perceived in things, where to the unwatchful eye,
> No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
> Sublimer joy; for I would walk alone,
> Under the quiet stars, and at that time
> Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
> To breathe an elevated mood, by form
> Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
> 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.
> Thence did I drink the visionary power;
> And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
> Of shadowy exultation; not for this,
> That they are kindred to our purer mind
> And intellectual life; but that the soul,
> Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
> Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
> Of possible sublimity, whereto
> With growing faculties she doth aspire,
> With faculties still growing, feeling still
> That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
> Have something to pursue.
> (The Prelude, II.300-322)

Listening to the approaching storm, Wordsworth thought that he could detect the "ghostly language of the ancient earth" in the sound of the winds. All that he saw, heard, or felt made him appreciate Nature and gave him "something to pursue."

Wordsworth had an intense desire to learn, and both his eyes and his ears were always ready to assist him during his life. The eye and ear were prepared to understand the workings of Nature and of man.[1] They were ready to mark the differences noted above, so that what was unnoticed by some

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[1]Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, p. 51.

was noticed by him, because these two senses were the masters of his life. (The Prelude, VIII.223)

Nevertheless, Wordsworth, knowing that the eye and the ear were very important, added to them the qualities of the mind, better to approach a true understanding of the operation of Nature and of man, as is revealed in the following verses:

> The eye--it cannot choose but see;
> We cannot bid the ear be still;
> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against or with our will.
>
> Nor less I deem that there are Powers
> Which of themselves our minds impress;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness.
>
> ("Expostulation and Reply," 17-24)

Wordsworth also employed the eye and the ear to gain entrance into a world of spiritual reality,[2] and a consecrated vision of the soul.[3] His employment of the visible world brought him closer to the invisible world.[4] He, then, confessed his dependence upon the Supreme will of God, rejecting his first world of eye and ear,[5] and recognized

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[2]Solomon Francis Gingerich, Essays in the Romantic Poets, p. 113.

[3]Ibid., p. 117.

[4]Newton P. Stallknecht, "Nature and Imagination in Wordsworth's Meditation Upon Mt. Snowdon," PMLA, LII (September, 1937), 835.

[5]Florence Marsh, Wordsworth's Imagery--A Study in Poetic Vision, p. 89.

that the " . . . hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them."[6] In a sense, he worshipped Nature all of his life, but, specifically, he worshipped her for her ministry.[7] He observed the Deity as an active principle through Nature, yet above Nature.[8] To him,

> . . . the mighty world of eye and ear was the main gateway to the world of the spirit, the center of his emotional and religious life, the soul of his moral being, the chief means of communion with his higher self and with the Infinite.[9]

FAKE

this quote does not exist in Havens

Since he believed himself a part of Nature and, also, in Nature, the presence in Nature was made very meaningful to him, and, thus, he could see " . . . into the life of things."[10]

With advancing age, when Wordsworth could not depend solely upon his world of eye and ear, he gained much pleasure from his stored treasures of visual images.[11] Although his mind often had much weary inner darkness, he, who from his youth had seen the wonders of Nature, could now recall

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[6]Proverbs 20.12.

[7]Raymond Dexter Havens, The Mind of a Poet, I, 96.

[8]Gingerich, op. cit., p. 190.

[9]Havens, op. cit., I, 96.

[10]Christopher Salvesen, The Landscape of Memory, p. 69.

[11]Geoffrey H. Hartman, The Unmeditated Vision, p. 43.

much of his joyous feeling, and by knowing in his mind the workings of Nature, he could portray a clear picture of its domain in his poetry.[12] He recognized that his senses, as they were being extinguished, threw a light upon the world which lay beyond the reach of the senses,[13] and now he saw " . . . his hope rather than what he had hoped to see."[14] With this new, sad appreciation of Nature, he saw the mutability of human life and Nature.[15] His journey in life had its ups and downs, but it had given him

> Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
> Of human Being, Eternity, and God.
> (The Prelude, XIV.204-205)

The world of the eye and the ear never departed entirely from Wordsworth's world. He was always able to sense in Nature a sublime something in the setting sun, the round ocean, the living air, the blue sky, and the mind of man, and he states:

> Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,

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[12]Bennett Weaver, "Wordsworth's 'Prelude': The Poetic Function of Memory," SP, XXXIV (July, 1937), 558-559.

[13]Heathcote William Garrod, Wordsworth: Lectures and Essays, p. 41.

[14]Hartman, op. cit., p. 526.

[15]Charles J. Smith, "The Contrarieties: Wordsworth's Dualistic Imagery," PMLA, LXIX (December, 1954), 1187.

> And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
> In nature and the language of the sense
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.
> ("Tintern Abbey," 102-111)

His eye saw the hedgerow, but his eye had to create the sportive little lines of wood running wild ("Tintern Abbey," 16); his eye saw the smoke from the cottage, but he created the vagrants of the dwelling ("Tintern Abbey," 20). Even though the cowardly also see what they half create,[16] Wordsworth was brave in half creating the natural world with life " . . . even before the Spiritual eye saw into the life of things."[17] By delving into Nature and even going beyond it, he found satisfactory answers to his life.[18] Wordsworth best elucidates this philosophy in the following well known lyric:

> My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky;
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> Or let me die!
> The Child is father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.
> ("The Rainbow," 1-9)

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[16]Carl Woodring, "On Liberty in the Poetry of Wordsworth," PMLA, LXX (December, 1955), 1034.

[17]Marsh, op. cit., p. 41.

[18]Earl Griggs (ed.), Wordsworth and Coleridge Studies in Honor of George McLean, p. 31.

Although both senses (the eyes and the ears) were important to him, one notes with interest that the word eye appears more than fifty times in The Prelude, and the word ear only twenty times. This evidence tends to indicate that Wordsworth placed a greater emphasis on the visual sense and that he spent much time in the training of the eye. Although the ear was certainly important to his learning, Wordsworth, who was more the solitary figure, did not rely upon the ear as frequently as he sought the help of his visual sense.

CHAPTER II

THE "EYE" IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Wordsworth in the "Preface" wrote that he, at all times, " . . . endeavored to look steadily at his subject"[19] so as to describe accurately what he saw and heard. He had a love for the simple and the natural things of Nature and man, all of which he exalted in retrospect through the " . . . strength of a reflective sensibility."[20] The eyes to Wordsworth were important instruments in establishing a philosophy of life regarding Nature and man, in his youth, in maturity, and in his later life through meditation.

A. EYE IN YOUTH

Wordsworth, first, explains that in youth he was so occupied with the fact of seeing and gaining pleasure through the eye he had little time for reflection, although unconsciously he was actually storing up images for his

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[19] Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, p. 736.

[20] Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, p. 1005.

future use.[21] He sought out, for the sake of their visual impressions, all things which were vivid to his keen eyes.[22] The sun, the moon, the stars, the plains, the mountains, the bridges, and the streams had esoteric shapes which elevated Wordsworth's mental state. They accorded him " . . . harmonious thoughts, a soul of truth refined, / Entire affection for all human kind." ("Evening Walk," 84-85) For example, one of his evening walks led him to the shores of a tranquil lake where he observed the graceful swan; here, his eye " . . . [marked] the gliding creature, [saw] / How graceful pride can be, and how majestic, ease." ("Evening Walk," 220-221) To him, the swan, her care of her little ones, the evening glow, and the lone black fir were those features of Nature on which " . . . no favoured eye was e'er allowed to gaze . . . . " ("Evening Walk," 299) From such experiences, he gained new pleasure often as his eye wandered across Nature, even though he had " . . . no conscious memory of a kindred sight / And bringing with [him] no peculiar sense / Of quietness or peace . . . . " (The Prelude, I.574-576)

Wordsworth also loved the qualities of the sun and the moon, often dreaming away his intentions as they hung

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[21] Salvesen, op. cit., p. 73.

[22] Havens, op. cit., II, 572.

midway between the hills, yet still conscious of their belonging to his dear Vale. (The Prelude, II.178-195) The sun was " . . . the surety of [his] earthy life, a light" (The Prelude, II.180) which made him feel alive because he had " . . . seen [the sun] lay / His beauty on the morning hills, [had] seen / The western mountains touch his setting orb." (The Prelude, II.183-185) The half-veiled moon showed to him her lovely face and brought a welcome light to the gloomy valley, the western slopes, imparting an autumnal tint to the woods and the green corn.[23]

At times, he saw fear in Nature. For example, he once took a small boat from its cave and silently moved on, " . . . leaving behind [him] on either side / Small circles glittering idly in the moon, / Until they melted all into one track / Of sparkling light." (The Prelude, I.363-366) Again, he reveals how his eye perceived all of the beauty of the night, when suddenly he saw the " . . . huge peak, black and huge, raise its head." (The Prelude, I.378-380) This peak, " . . . growing still in statue, / Towered up between [him] and the stars . . . / And with . . . measured motion . . . / Strode after [him]." (The Prelude, I.380-385) In his mind's eye, he was troubled many days because of what he had seen, and " . . . o'er [his] thoughts / There hung a

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[23]"Evening Walk," 331-338.

darkness, call it solitude / Or blank desertion." (The Prelude, I.393-395)

Later, Wordsworth appreciated the freedom he had experienced as a youth, and in recollection, he says that in his youth he was of a race of real children,

> . . . not too wise,
> Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
> And bandied up and down by love and hate;
> Not unresentful where self-justified;
> . . . . . .
> Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
> Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
> In happiness to the happiest upon earth.
> (The Prelude, V.411-420)

He protests at once against all of the " . . . guides and wardens of the [child's] faculties" (The Prelude, V.354) who strive to control the child--particularly his activities, and his vision. He asserts that the adult world, when it meddles with the child, should learn that

> A wiser spirit is at work [for the child],
> A better eye than [the adult's], most prodigal
> Of blessings, and most studious of [the child's] good,
> Even in what [seems the child's] most unfruitful hours . . .
> (The Prelude, V.360-363)

It is clear the influence of Nature upon a child was an impressive subject with Wordsworth. As a child matured, he explains that this influence may be detected in a great many ways. For example, the young man, Leonard, who had been reared among the mountains, left for the sea, yet constantly there

> Flashed round him images and hues that wrought
> In union with the employment of his heart,
> He, thus by feverish passion overcome,
> Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
> Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
> Saw mountains; saw the forms of sheep that grazed
> On verdant hills--with dwellings among trees,
> And shepherds clad in the same country grey
> Which he himself had worn.
> ("The Brothers," 57-65)

Cazamian says that in Wordsworth Nature " . . . speaks to the child in the fleeting emotion of its early years, and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and the rest of this life."[24] Furthermore, one notes that in a letter to John Wilson, Wordsworth wrote that all of Nature " . . . has an effect on man, and has been the father of their passions and nourished the young before they became a man."[25] He confesses that most of his early time was spent out of doors, and by his wandering he gained a calm mind.[26] He deplores the fact that too many people sacrifice what Nature can teach to " . . . what little can be learned from books and masters."[27] To him, only book knowledge without Nature was

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[24]Legouis and Cazamian, op. cit., p. 1010.

[25]Ernest De Selincourt (ed.), The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, IV, 292.

[26]Ibid., II, 30.

[27]Ibid., IV, 329.

nonsensical, and he knew that, to the eye of a lowly Christian, it is unnatural.[28]

He notes that, as a youth, he often watched his shadow in the water as he hung over the edge of a boat and with his eye fancied and saw many wonderful discoveries. Furthermore, he explains that he was perplexed on these occasions as to which were real and which were the imagined. At times, the imagined things led him on with the greatest happiness. (The Prelude, IV.256-275)

In youth, the eyes were Wordsworth's main gateway to an appreciation of Nature and man. By their means, he saw the beauties of the lake, the valley, the mountain, the day and the night. This predominance of sight and his close observation of Nature gave him the " . . . one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense."[29]

B. EYE IN MATURITY

When Wordsworth became a man, gone were his days of aimless wanderings. He now strolled about from one locale to another, merely waiting to be taught by Nature. He explains this state of existence as follows:

> And as I paced alone the level fields
> Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
> . . . . . .

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[28] Ibid., IV, 329.

[29] Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 736.

> I looked for universal things; perused
> The common countenance of earth and sky:
> . . . . . .
> I called on both to teach me what they might;
> Or turning the mind in upon herself,
> Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts
> And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
> Incumbencies more awful, visitings
> Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
> That tolerates the indignities of Time,
> And, from the centre of Eternity
> All finite motions overruling, lives
> In glory immutable.
>
> (The Prelude, III.93-121)

To everything Wordsworth saw he now gave a moral life, so that the entire world gradually became a part of him. He asked the Earth and the Sky " . . . to teach him what they might." He realized that his bodily eye was his strongest aid in searching for the lines of differences in all forms of Nature, whether near or far, searching for a place where " . . . his eye might sleep" (The Prelude, III.155-163), yet he found no such domain. There were now limits as to where his feet could walk, but to his eyes the boundless space was an invitation or guide to lead him into eternity. (The Prelude, XIII.147-150) Like the Shepherd, he " . . . rather [made] / Than [found] what he [beheld]." (The Prelude, III.515-516) This "intervenient imagery" (The Prelude, III.522) pleased him more than did the social life in this period of his maturity.

When he returned home after having been for a time in school, he now saw things more clearly, because each had

an additional charm enhanced by early memories,[30] and he now assessed them in a different light. For example, with a clearer eye, he observed with an open understanding the quiet woodman, the shepherd, the grey-haired Dame, and the youth. (The Prelude, IV.195-208) These, which he had seen many times before and had not understood to appreciate, " . . . distinctly manifested at this time / A human-heartedness about [his] love / For objects hitherto the absolute wealth / Of [his] own private being and no more . . . . " (The Prelude, IV.232-235)

In a letter to Dorothy, he wrote that often he had conversed with the objects of the country for such a long period that, when asked to leave, he felt as if he were parting with a dear friend.[31] Furthermore, as he looked he wrote. When he saw the Alps, Wordsworth did not think of man but of the Creator who had produced this "terrible majesty."[32] To Southey, a friend, he explained that he wished he could reveal the hidden wonders and the boudoir of his Paradise.[33]

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[30] Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, p. 95.

[31] De Selincourt, op. cit., I, 34.

[32] Ibid., I, 33.

[33] Ibid., I, 372.

As noted before, Wordsworth had trained himself to look " . . . steadily at his object,"[34] so as to create the true picture of Nature and man as he saw them. At all times, he " . . . endeavoured to dwell with truth upon those points of human nature in which all men resemble each other, rather than all the accidental."[35] Often, he had a good eye and dedicated patience in his observation of objects as they actually appeared.[36] For example, on his solitary way home after a party he stopped abruptly when he saw a lone soldier. The appearance and the " . . . low muttered sounds" (The Prelude, IV.405) of the man frightened him, although after he had watched the man for a short time, he had the courage to greet the stranger. As they walked to a cottage, they spent some time in conversation; then, their " . . . discourse / Soon ended, and together on [they] passed / In silence through a wood gloomy and still." (The Prelude, IV.445-447) Leaving the soldier at the cottage, he cast a glance backwards and, then, with a "quiet heart" (The Prelude, IV.469) he went home carrying these words of the soldier with him: "My trust is in the God

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[34]Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 736.

[35]De Selincourt, op. cit., IV, 127.

[36]Roger Murray, Wordsworth's Style, Figures and Themes in the Lyrical Ballads, p. 50.

of Heaven, / And in the eye of him who passes me!" (The Prelude, IV.459-460) According to Wordsworth, the rural rustic people who were living solitary lives could be more easily depicted, because they had the freedom to portray their own desires.[37] On the other hand, he felt that the sophisticated urban society, whose affections were constantly suppressed and hidden, could not be portrayed at all, because he was unable to "see" into them.[38] He well portrays the rural rustic person, for example, in Michael, the faithful husband and father, who tries to implant in Luke, the son, a sincere love for the rural scenes and the offerings of Nature. But, Wordsworth did not hesitate to portray in the same poem the deep sorrow and tragedy that came to Michael when Luke abandoned this rural setting: the eyes saw the unfinished Sheep-fold, the lone oak, and the Cottage named THE EVENING STAR sold. ("Michael," 467-482)

Wordsworth had a keen eye for observing objects as they actually appeared, but he included only those things essential to the picture with which he was concerned in his poetry.[39] Murray explains that only with a " . . . process

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[37]Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 752.

[38]Kenneth MacLean, Agrarian Age, A Background for Wordsworth, p. 50.

[39]Murray, op. cit., p. 45.

of close observation and meditation can a fruitful exchange with Nature occur."[40] Wordsworth was trying, now, to observe the message that Nature could give:

> . . . he sought the one behind the many, the real behind the appearance, the abiding behind the flux, the eternal behind the transitory, the changeless behind the mutable, the perfect behind the incomplete.[41]

Wordsworth gained in realism, describing his characters as if he were writing actually with his eye upon the subject.[42] For example, Michael, a man of courageous heart and sturdy limbs, is clearly depicted. The little child in "We are Seven" has vitality, thick, curly hair, and very fine eyes. In "The Last of the Flock," one sees the father coming down the road, his cheeks wet with tears and a little lamb in his arms. In these tears, Wordsworth encompasses the heart-aches of a father who had sacrificed all for his dear children.

In his traveling upon the moor, Wordsworth commented:

> I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
> I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
> Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
> . . . . . .
> I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;
> And I bethought me of the playful hare:

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[40] Loc. cit.

[41] Havens, op. cit., I, 2.

[42] Adolph Charles Babenroth, English Childhood, p. 301.

> Even such a happy Child of earth am I;
> Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
> Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
> But there may come another day to me--
> Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.
> ("Resolution and Independence," 16-35)

Formerly, all of these sights had always brought him joy, but now they depressed him utterly. His eye fell upon the old Leech-gatherer, scarcely hearing the voice of the old man, and explaining,

> . . . all troubled me:
> In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
> About the weary moors continually,
> Wandering about alone and silently.
> ("Resolution and Independence," 128-131)

Wordsworth did not see the world, now, merely as an ideal place of happiness, freedom, and joy, but rather as a world with its difficult problems and, in it, man with his problems. Yet, in the midst of all of this depression, he saw a beam of hope connected with an understanding of Nature.[43]

Having once lost his love and appreciation for Nature, he had next to be led back to an understanding of Nature. His sister Dorothy was one of the main forces enabling him to do so. She was the one who had guided his eye to the sense of beauty in his youth. Now, she was back in full duty, and together they traversed many miles.[44]

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[43]Harold Bloom, The Visionary Company, p. 123.

[44]David Masson, The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, II, 239.

Giving him once more a richer perception of the common things, Dorothy became his salvation. He states that she was

> The Blessing of my later years
> Was with me when a boy:
> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.
> ("The Sparrow's Nest," 15-20)

With Dorothy he visited many places, and once, together, they climbed the old castle towers to see the rich reward of the morning and to hear the faint whisper of the flowers and grass in the passing breeze. (The Prelude, VI.215-223) Later, he was able still to see with closed eyes these same trees and meadows. These mental pictures elevated his spirits when depressing moments came or when in life he needed their restorative powers. (The Prelude, VI.210-432) Dorothy, also, was a firm believer in this philosophy, and she advised Mary once to " . . . seek quiet or rather amusing thoughts . . . study the flowers, the birds, and all the common things that are about you now for refreshment of the soul later."[45]

With such discipline of the eyes, Wordsworth had learned the art of purifying the ugly things in life.[46]

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[45]Selincourt, op. cit., IV, 173.

[46]Marian Mead, Four Studies in Wordsworth, p. 206.

His eyes were trained to detect images of beauty, romance, and power. "He now looked through the hazy one of vague Sensibility."[47] He heard and saw and began to achieve an understanding of the meaning of Nature in human life.[48] The eye had its established lines, and, then, at times, it transcended these lines to create a new visual force.[49] He states that each poet (and he includes himself) has " . . . his own peculiar faculty, / Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive / Objects unseen before, . . . / An insight . . . / whereby a work of his . . . / may become / A power like one of Nature's." (The Prelude, XIII.301-312) Wordsworth did not fear to follow where knowledge led him, often treading on hallowed ground. (The Prelude, XIII. 251-252)

Wordsworth's eye was selective, although, at times, he wearied of not seeing complete images. For example, when he viewed Mont Blanc, he was grieved

> To have a soulless image on the eye
> That had usurped upon a living thought
> That never more could be . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,

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[47]Selincourt, op. cit., IV, 173.

[48]MacLean, op. cit., p. 88.

[49]Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Wordsworth's Descriptive Sketches and the Growth of a Poet's Mind," PMLA, LXXVI (December, 1961), 524.

> 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 young and old.
> (The Prelude, VI.526-547)

He saw things that few others could have seen had the images not been pointed out. His eye had been trained, and he usually knew how to use it, trying to fit that which he saw to his "unripe state."

The great power of Wordsworth in describing Nature comes from his " . . . subtle fidelity, the brave sheer penetrating power."[50] In maturation, he saw the outward beauty of Nature observed by others, but he also had his eyes trained to see beyond into man's relationship to Nature.

C. THE MEDITATIVE EYE

Wordsworth became more conscious of his link with Nature in maturity.[51] Nature, he noticed, now had an influence which it exerted upon the human mind.[52] For example, the daisy was a " . . . friend at hand, to scare

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[50] C. H. Herford, The Age of Wordsworth, p. 150.

[51] Mead, op. cit., p. 217.

[52] Selincourt, op. cit., II, 223.

his melancholy." ("To A Daisy," 40) In observing this flower, he derived, he said

> Some apprehension;
> Some steady love; some brief delight;
> Some memory that had taken flight;
> Some chime or fancy wrong or right;
> Or stray invention.
>
> If stately passions in me burn,
> And one chance look to Thee should turn,
> I drink out of an humbler urn
> A lowlier pleasure;
> The homely sympathy that heeds
> The common life our nature breeds;
> A wisdom fitted to the needs
> Of hearts at leisure.
> ("To the Daisy," 44-56)

He looked upon the golden daffodils that made his heart happy, and, later, they flashed "upon that inward eye / Which [was] the bliss of solitude," ("I Wandered Lonely," 21-22) and, again, his heart was filled with pleasure. (23)

Wordsworth had now come to see with a " . . . quiet eye, to see into the life of things for themselves and not for their potential use."[53] The things in Nature which he observed were not as they immediately appeared, but rather as he felt them to be.[54] Briefly he now described what he saw, and then more fully explained the meaning which each occurrence had to him.[55] In other words, he was first

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[53]Bloom, op. cit., p. 129.

[54]Havens, op. cit., I, 145.

[55]Ibid., I, 160.

conscious of the beauty of Nature; then, his mind roamed to the Shepherd who was privileged to live in Nature, allowing Nature to reveal her wonders. He witnessed the pastoral scene so that only his " . . . Fancy might run wild" (The Prelude, VIII.187) and " . . . make his imagination restless." (The Prelude, VIII.167) Some of the natural details and facts were now merely trivial or irrelevant, but those that had their purpose, he used.[56] This would be contrary to what Coleridge had said of him: "Wordsworth had a laborious minuteness and fidelity in his representation of objects, and their positions, as they appeared to the poet himself."[57]

At this stage in his development, Wordsworth claims to have gained a clear insight into

> . . . a new world--a world, too, that was fit
> To be transmitted, and to other eyes
> Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
> Whence spiritual dignity originates,
> 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 eye that sees.
> (The Prelude, XIII.370-378)

To others who saw and maintained the requisite balance of eye and meditation, this insight was also granted.

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[56] John E. Jordan, "Wordsworth's Minuteness and Fidelity," PMLA, LXXII (June, 1957), 443.

[57] Elisabeth Schneider (ed.), Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Selected Poetry and Prose, p. 343.

Wordsworth linked the power of the eyes with creative power and explained the relationship between physical sight and the vision of the soul.[58] He saw not the mere supernatural, but, in the natural world, he was aware of the Presence of a higher power, one which was concealed from most people.[59] Hence, Nature to him was not allowed to become " . . . as is a landscape to a blind man's eye." ("Tintern Abbey," 24)

A sense of beauty was noted as he viewed these objects. Usually the emotion of his mind was stronger, eventually becoming the foundation of his poetry. Legouis explains that all of Wordsworth's radiant visions of the imagination were due " . . . to the beauty and intensity with which he himself infused external nature"[60] entering at the same time into direct communion with her.[61] Indeed, one recalls that Wordsworth wrote to Fletcher explaining that his poetic duty was " . . . not so much with objects as with the law under which they are contemplated."[62] Obviously, he saw beauty in Nature only to go beyond it.[63]

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[58]Gingerich, op. cit., p. 117.

[59]Stallknecht, op. cit., p. 835.

[60]Legouis, op. cit., p. 52.

[61]Ibid., p. 50.

[62]Selincourt, op. cit., IV, 184.

[63]Griggs, op. cit., p. 31.

In his later years, he lost some of this visionary greatness, but still he could depend on the utility of his vision of recall:[64]

> When the light of sense
> Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
> The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
> . . . . . .
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.
> (The Prelude, VI.600-608)

Although the Alps have now disappeared, Wordsworth enters, nonetheless, the "invisible world" to participate in the Imperial Greatness and make his home. He asks for no trophies of Nature, content to be " . . . blest in thoughts / That are their own perfection and reward." (The Prelude, VI.611-612)

> Such hues from their celestial Urn
> Were wont to stream before mine eye,
> Where'er it wandered in the mourn
> Of blissful infancy.
> This glimpse of glory, why renewed?
> Nay, rather speak with gratitude;
> For, it a vestige of those gleams
> Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.
> ("Composed Upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty," 61-68)

When Wordsworth put off his veil and stood "naked as in the presence of God" (The Prelude, IV.150-152), comfort and strength eventually came to him. He explained thereafter

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[64] C. M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination, p. 78.

that he had been lost, but that he had once again regained the former concept of the "glory" of the power of Nature.

In a letter of Isabella Fenwick, a very close friend in his later years, Wordsworth wrote that some of the appearances in Nature now emerged in his eyes like objects in a dream.[65] He had known the lofty exaltations for some time previous.[66] To his family, he wrote that he had " . . . little talent for dwelling with objects so new to him" and confessed that " . . . his impressions were . . . different from what others receive."[67] Now, he could write poetry with " . . . a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure."[68] He recognized that the " . . . eye and senses of man" are man's favorite guides to an appreciation of Nature. In his poetry, he tries to " . . . teach the young and the gracious of every age, to see, to think, to feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous."[69]

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[65] Selincourt, op. cit., VI, 1083.

[66] Bowra, op. cit., p. 100.

[67] Selincourt, op. cit., II, 246.

[68] Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 737.

[69] Selincourt, op. cit., II, 126.

CHAPTER III

THE "EAR" IN WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

The ear, though not as fully depended upon as the eye, performed a controlling part in establishing a philosophy in Wordsworth's life. In his youth, he listened attentively to the sounds in Nature as he wandered through the vale, and, later in his life, he spent more of his time in listening to what others about him thought.

A. EAR IN YOUTH

In one of Wordsworth's first poems, "An Evening Walk," the ear plays a predominant part in his wanderings during the evening. He explains that the whole wide lake lay quietly in deep repose. He heard the bells from the lonesome chapel in their rustic chimes, and the sounds of the water against the boat. ("Evening Walk," 124,138-140) All sounds that he heard by the calm lake were sweet to him, and Wordsworth drank in all of these sounds to be stored for future days:

> How sweet its streamlet murmurs in mine ear!
> Where we, my Friend, to happy days shall rise,
> Till our small share of hardly-paining sighs

(For sighs will ever trouble human breath)
Creep hushed into the tranquil breast of death.
("Evening Walk," 350-354)

Upon the Thames, Wordsworth wrote "Remembrance of Collins," comparing the quiet sound of the poet with the calm Thames:

How calm! how still! the only sound,
The dripping of the oar suspended!
--The evening darkness gathers round
By virtue's holiest Powers attended.
("Remembrance of Collins," 21-24)

As a youth, Wordsworth heard mainly the quiet, peaceful sounds of Nature:

How still! no irreligious sound or sight
Rouses the soul from her severe delight.
An idle voice the sabbath region fills
Of Deep that calls to Deep across the hills,
And with that voice accords the soothing sound
Of drowsy bells, for ever tinkling round;
Faint wail of eagle melting into blue
Beneath the cliffs, and pine-wood's steady sugh;
The solitary heifer's deepened low;
Or rumbling, heard remote, of falling snow.
All motions, sounds, and voices, far and nigh,
Blend in a music of tranquillity;
Save when, a stranger seen below, the boy
Shouts from the echoing hills with savage joy.
("Descriptive Sketches," 352-365)

All of the sounds which he heard blended "in a music of tranquility" and were soothing to him.

At the age of ten, he spent many hours wandering about at night, the " . . . moon and stars shining o'er [his] head," (The Prelude, I.315) when he heard " . . . low breathings coming after [him], and sounds / Of undistinquishable motion, steps / Almost as silent as the turf they

trod." (The Prelude, I.323-325) Again, on another night, he heard the bells toll, and he knew that it was time to go ice skating. This was the time of rapture for all who were assembled there, and " . . . not a voice was idle . . . / the precipices rang aloud; / The leafless trees and every icy crag / Tinkled like iron." (The Prelude, I.440-442) One day while up in the area of a crag above a raven's nest, he hung while " . . . with what strange utterance did the loud dry wind / Blow through [his] ear! the sky seemed not a sky / Of earth--and with what motion moved the clouds!" (The Prelude, I.337-339)

After he had been in school for some time, Wordsworth, with joy, returned home to his own bed and lay awake listening to the voices of Nature. At that time he recalled how often he had heard the roaring wind and the rain beating down upon the roof, and recalls that he had given less thought to these sounds previously than he now accorded them in recollection.[70]

During one period in his life, he lost all of his appreciation of Nature. It was a time during which Nature did not speak to him. He offers two reasons for his drifting away from his first love: one was the French

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[70]The Prelude, IV.85-92.

Revolution;[71] the other, his affair with Annette.[72] The French, having turned traitor to the cause of freedom, depressed him miserably, because he had wholeheartedly endorsed the Revolution and had given his allegiance and time to publish a few articles on its justice after England had declared war on France in 1793.[73] Having always loved his own country, he was now harassed. He had listened to many tales and stories of the Revolution and to the events that led up to the Revolution; he had scanned everything and watched every gesture; yet, he explains he now

> . . . nothing found
> Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
> That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
> And ill could brook, beholding that the best
> Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.
> (The Prelude, IX.210-214)

His affair with Annette brought him nothing but trouble. At one time, he confesses that he had loved her. She had a child by him, and because he had to flee from her country, they were separated for many years. During their separation, he returned to England to visit Mary Hutchinson at which time he realized that he did not love Annette, nor could he marry her. Eventually, he discussed his problem with Annette and their daughter, Caroline, and later

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[71]Garrod, op. cit., p. 41.

[72]Emile Legouis, Wordsworth in a New Light, pp. 20-32.

[73]Garrod, op. cit., p. 41.

married Mary, with whom he settled into a peaceful, quiet homelife.[74]

With his great loss of an appreciation of Nature, he also had to fight his way back to his original feelings. His ears that had heard the peace, the calm, and the quiet of Nature now had to return him to his former love.

B. THE MEDITATIVE EARS

In his meditative years, Wordsworth learned to listen to the sounds of Nature in an attempt to restore the calm of his inner being. Sometimes, on these occasions, he listened as if he were in a dream:

> The old Man still stood talking by my side;
> But now his voice to me was like a stream
> Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
> And the whole body of the Man did seem
> Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
> Or like a man from some far region sent,
> To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.
> ("Resolution and Independence," 106-112)

He still heard the sky-lark warbling its song,[75] and the nightingale's song

> . . . of love, with quiet blending,
> Slow to begin, and never ending;
> Of serious faith, and inward glee;
> That was the song--the song for me!
> ("O Nightingale," 17-20)

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[74] Legouis, Wordsworth in a New Light, p. 33.

[75] "Resolution and Independence" 29.

He even had strange longings to see London. Once, when a classmate had returned from the city, Wordsworth questioned him only to be greatly disappointed, for his friend's answers " . . . fell flatter than a caged parrot's note." (The Prelude, VII.100) Later, he himself visited the city, " . . . with no unthinking mind" (The Prelude, VII.220) and noted all of the characters, animals, plants, and all the "imitations of life" to the exact scale of famous areas, and concluded that he was very much disappointed with city life. All of the sounds of the metropolis were false to his ear and each of his senses, and he found that these " . . . shows were a shock for eyes and ears." (The Prelude, VII.581-685) To the one who had loved the rural setting, the city had become a

> . . . 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--
> . . . . . .
> But though the picture weary out the eye,
> By nature an unmanageable sight,
> It is not wholly so to him who looks
> In steadiness, who hath among least things
> And under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
> As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
> (The Prelude, VII.722-736)

He had now often listened to Nature in a different manner, often hearing

> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue.
> ("Tintern Abbey," 91-93)

Most of the voices of his various characters were sad, melancholy utterances. For example, the ill Indian mother, forsaken by her own to die, prayed for death; Margaret, one who had no other earthly friend, anxiously awaited her son's return; the emigrant mother had a sad pleading voice for her infant; and the Solitary, although surrounded by all of the beauties of Nature, told a sorrowful tale. Neither did Wordsworth appreciate the noises of the Fair or the garrulous sounds of neighborly gossip.[76]

The happiest sounds to his ears, now, were the singing of the birds, the joyous lambs, and the tuneful hum of Nature. (The Excursion, I.597) All brought a natural comfort to his ears and released his restless thoughts.

With many great minds of the world now stressing education far too much and excluding man, Wordsworth insists that he still

> . . . 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.
> (The Prelude, XIII.179-185)

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[76] The Prelude, VII.100.

He recorded and wrote poetry out of the things that he heard and wished others to hear:

> If future years mature me for the task,
> Will I record the praises, making verse
> Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth
> And sanctity of passion, speak of these,
> That justice may be done, obeisance paid
> Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,
> Inspire; through unadulterated ears
> Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,--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: . . . . . .
> (The Prelude, XIII.233-245)

Both the eye and the ear were important senses to Wordsworth as he wandered about the natural landscape of England, although most of his time was spent in the Grasmere area. The green pastoral fields were very dear to him, and the soft sounds of Nature elevated his thoughts. In later years, he dreaded the time when he would not be able to hear or see these glories of Nature; therefore, he stored up mental pictures and sounds for use in his later life. He was a sincere worshipper of Nature, unwearied in its service. ("Tintern Abbey," 153)

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