

1915

Ideas and Artistry
in the "Prelude"

English IV

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Ideas and Artistry in The Prelude

In discussing the literary production of any poet it is difficult for a critic "to differentiate between the man and the poet. When that poet chooses to write on the "Development of his own mind", the difficulty is even greater. He himself, is no judge of what mental events affected the mind of the poet and what the mind of the man. The fact he himself is no absolute judge of his own mental events and which ones were more or less influential to the development of either the man or the poet. The speaking of one's own mental experiences are on unsure ground in any case. The speaking on nature and the French Revolution, Wordsworth does not differentiate between experience, which affected the poet or the man as such, yet it is evident that there is a difference. However enthusiastic the man may have been over the French Revolution it is evident that the poet as such was not moved to the same extent over it as he was over the influence of natural objects. When Wordsworth is discussing the mental experience, which affected the man rather than the poet, his art suffers.

However, ^{both} as a man or poet, he had ideas.

Although few critics have credited him with being a philosopher of high repute, he did have some sort of a philosophical system. Arnold, in his essay states that "the wordworth we cannot do him justice until we examine his formal philosophy". Nevertheless it is essential to the understanding of the mind of the man and poet, to know something of his formal philosophy. It must be remembered that however separated, it was the man who was the poet and his mind went into the making of his poems.

It is also well to note in this connection that

Wordsworth's philosophic systems were all second hand.

His psychological and philosophical theories of Hartley and Spinoza, reached him through Coleridge. The

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latter drafted the systems which Wordsworth the poet actualized them. In his book "The Romantic Theory of Poetry" Mr A.E. Powell states that Wordsworth was "not an adherent to a system but a poet trying to

understand his own experience." As a poet he was interested in expression and he chose a system with which he could express his profound experience. "The

Prelude" then, is not a verified rendition of Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy. In places it is inspired but it is simply an artistic appreciation. This essay however will attempt to discuss those ideas in his philosophical system which are directly mentioned in the "Prelude".

The discussion will begin with an analysis of Wordsworth's nature philosophy: the belief in the power of nature over the mind of man and man's ability to receive her influence. Then his psychology with references to the senses and the creative imagination will be discussed. Some reference will be made to the author's ideas of books and science. Some mention will also be made of his ideas on man and society.

The autobiographical elements will also be discussed inasmuch as they are essential and that this entails believing that anything which has influenced the man will, subtly, if not directly, influence the poet. The earlier critics of Wordsworth looked at the autobiography and concluded it "a large faint veil ... strange pieces of furniture to be found in the soul of a Kewpie." The attempts to appreciate only the artist Mr. Arnold ignored. Mr. Stephen's discovery that "William Wordsworth had seen through a hard experience." a full appreciation of the artist however demands that one know something of the man's spiritual crises. It is also true that the poet, after the storm, wrote his best poetry. Therefore this

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essay will attempt also to trace through the author's intellectual development as he himself records it: - his early appreciation of nature, its development, his idealism with reference to man and society, - the destruction of his faith - his skepticism and finally his resolution.

The majority of Wordsworth's ideas are taken up with Nature and her powers. It must be mentioned here, if it is not already too obvious to mention, that Wordsworth - the nature poet, is not concerned with the description of nature only. His aim is the expression of an experience. He has to do with the influence of natural objects. He is subjective rather than objective. His method is predominantly one of introspection.

One of the most important influences of these natural objects is a moral one. Wordsworth himself considered that his own purpose was to point out and teach this among other persons. When he is on his holidays from Cambridge and returns home through the dawns from a village dale: -

"I made no vows, but vows

Were then made for me; fond unknown

To me was given. That I should be, else sinning greatly,

A dedicated spirit." ©

This "dedicated spirit", in talking of his own moral growth, releases the responsibility for any virtues that is in him, upon the natural surroundings of his boyhood.

"Yet were I grossly destitute of all

Those human sentiments which make this earth

So dear, if I should fail, with grateful voice

To speak of you. Ye mountains and ye lakes.

And sounding cataracts! Ye mists and winds

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that dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth, I have been pure in heart
If, mingling with the world, I was content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and nature communing, removed
From both enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours; ^①

Natural objects have an elevating effect on the mind of man.
As well as giving man a certain power which spurs
the best pleasures of life, natural objects influence
our elementary feelings;—These because they are more
simple, "In that condition the passions of men are
incorporated with beautiful and permanent forms of
nature" ^②

Of these passions, the two most influential on the
mind of man, or the two of which wordsworth speaks the
most, are the appreciation of beauty and fear. He
speaks of his own boyhood in this way— "I grew up
fortified alike by beauty and by fear." ^③ These two
elements influence him most in his moral growth. He
refers to the fear that pervaded him while rowing
across the lake. In referring to the environment
concerned his favorite "Balcony", he refers to the same
two elements:—

"Yet beautiful and beauty that was felt.

But images of danger and distress.

And suffering amongst awful scenes and forms." ^④

The shepherd must live a life of danger among the
snows of the mountain and its winds. The peasant
is a "freeman, wedded to his life of hope." This natural
reaction to an "improvement of fear and beauty, is the.

① Prelude: Book II Ls. 437-448

② Preface: 1802 edition Lyrical Ballads.

③ Prelude: Book I L. 306

④ " " Book VIII L 210-212

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cause of a high moral character. The grandeur and beauty of nature reacts upon the mind of man, the awe-inspiring gives it a "life of hopes" so that it —

"Belains an obscure sense of possibly sublimity, to which with growing faculties she does aspire, with faculties still growing, feeling still that whatever point they gain, they still have something to pursue." ①

The sea with its awesomeness and grandeur gives to man the same high moral conviction —

"And as the sea propels, from shore to shore

its cements; magnifies its shoals of life

Beyond all compass; spreads and sends aloft

Armies of clouds — even so its powers and aspects

Shap for mankind, by principles as fixed

The views and operations of the soul

To magnify" ②

This not only scenic nature but natural laws and principles have an elevating influence upon the moral soul of man. This workman reaches the conclusion that is the only valid basis for the faith of an idealist —

"Although, full oft the objects of our love

Were false, and in their splendour overbright,

Yet, surely, at such times no vulgar power

Was working within us, nothing less, in truth

Than that most noble attribute of man —

--- That wish for something loftier." ③

Natural objects also have an influence over the mind of man, As a basis of this doctrine, ~~introduction~~ is using, to a great extent, the empirical psychology of —
Hartley

① Prelude Book III 4336-341

② Prelude (1850 edition) Book VII

③ " 1805 " Book V 4593-599.

For Hartley, all knowledge is acquired through the senses. Sense impressions set up motions in the brain. Their influence remains there, and later if further impulses are given of a like kind, then these motions are again set up. Thus the intellect, having had an experience, can have it recalled so that it remembers how it felt, but what it felt remembers not. In his preface to "Lyrical Ballads," 1802 edition, Wordsworth speaks of the human mind and its "continued influxes of feelings, modified and directed by thoughts which are indeed the representatives of our past feelings." However, the psychological system of Wordsworth is not important ~~not~~ itself. It does help to have it as a basis on which to discuss his treatment of the mind of man.

In nature, the impressionable mind finds objects which cause sensations that are pleasant. Other unpleasant sensations are subordinate. Wordsworth finds in her, -

"these hallowed and pure motions of the senses which seem, in their simplicity, to own

An intellectual charm, that calm delight

Which, if I ever not, surely must belong

To those first-formed affections that fit

Our new existence to existing things

And in our dawn of being, constitute

The bond of union between life and joy." ^①

With the Hamiltonian psychology in the back of his mind Wordsworth insists that natural objects are the most likely to cause rapid intellectual development.

Wordsworth does more than record the ecstasy of the sense attack. He does this plus an implication. There is this spontaneous joy, plus a sense of almost.

Classic harmony. In Book XIII of the prelude he speaks of another two elements in the influence of natural objects, those of emotion and calmness. Out of the interchanges of peace and excitation, genius is born. From excitation, comes the energy to find truth; and from calmness comes the peace to accept it when it comes. (He would seem here to be almost deserting his "wish for something loftier, but there is something to be said for taking "time out" once in a while). Thus from the influence of "nature the mind receives the "Power that is the visibly quality and shape of the right reason".

As well as providing the energy and calm necessary for the discovery of truth, nature influences the mind of man by a process of psychological association: -

"Like rivets have the forms

Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less

The changeful language of their countenances

Quickens the slumbering mind, and awakes
the thoughts

However multitudinous, to move
with order and relation." ①

For wordsworth, however, the mind is not entirely passive. There is no "tyranny of sense. The mind of man has a creative activity and "outward sense is the obedient servant of her will". The mind of the young lad who was lost cast a peculiar mood of disavowal over the scene of the young girl struggling to carry her pitcher against the wind with the beacon shining across the lake. This vital power, which wordsworth chooses to call the imagination, not only sees things as they appear, but has the ability to

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change them. It is the power to idealise and to unify is to "see the parts as parts, but with a feeling for the whole." ① In this there is a parallel faculty between the mind of man and one of the phenomena of nature. In Book XIII of the Prelude Wordsworth describes for us a scene upon a lonely mountain where this primitively was at work. He and his friend have climbed the mountain at night. Of a sudden the turf becomes light. The moon has risen and bathed the mist and the distant lake in her light. —

"At a distance, not the third part of a mile was a blue chasm; a fracture in the vapour, a deep and gloomy breathing space through which mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams innumerable, roaring with one voice.

The universal spectacle throughout was shaped for admiration and delight, grand in itself alone, but in that breach through which the homeless voice of waters rose, that dark deep throughfare had nature lodged the soul, the imagination of the whole." ②

This transcendent power of one aspect of a natural scene to dominate, and to unify all the other elements into an ideal form or harmony, is a function of nature which is parallel to the imagination in the mind of man.

"The power which these acknowledge when thus moved and stirred. ~~Which nature thus forth~~ upon the scene, is the ~~exposed~~ resemblance ... And brother of the glorious faculty which higher minds bear with them as their own. That is the very spirit in which they deal with all the objects of the universe.

① Prelude Book VII L. 711-713.

② ~~ibid.~~ Book XIII L. 55-65

They from their native selves can send abroad
Like transformations..."^①

Thus in the exercise of this imagination, in the struggle to unify and idealize objects of the universe, Wordsworth is conscious of a unity with the universal spirit in nature. The exercise of this creative faculty, although it is an independent activity, can be said to be, to some extent, ~~due~~ ^{by} to the influence of natural objects on the mind.

It is with these ideas that Wordsworth, the poet, is ^{not} influenced ^{most} to a large extent they gave him the skeleton for his art. How ever false they are to the abstract reasoner, they give him a basis through which he can utter poetic truth. Without some philosophical system or intellectual content the poet, upon approaching nature could do nothing but describe. There must have been some method of attack in interpreting and channeling of his experience so as to make it communicable if not understandable. Thus the ideas of the man, however false, and however ignored by posterity are necessary for the making of the poet.

Mrs. Arnold is right however when she says that the abstract thinker as such, is not the poet. "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in ~~simple~~ primary affections and duties --- and renders it so as to make us share it."^② It is the power which communicates an experience like the following which makes Wordsworth the poet:

"For clouds walk alone

Under the quiet stars, and at that time

I have felt what'er there is of power in sound

^① Prelude, Book XIII L. 84-94.

^② Matthew Arnold - introduction to an Anthology of Wordsworth.

found nothing in the royal stamp of orders and scepters. A

^③ Prelude Book II L. 321 - 332. ^④ ibid L. 784-785

.. Book VIII L. 445 - 450. ^⑤ ibid L. 782-783

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belief in antithesis was a "faith in variety and emptiness." His social doctrine, is however, rooted in his respect of the Dalmatian. We must be remembered that he was writing during the time of the "enormous movement". He is interested in these native men, like Michael, rooted in the soil, rather than the abstract conception of liberty as witness his apathy towards the slave emancipation movement. His ideal social type and that undivided for which liberty is the right is "man free, man working for himself, with choice of time and place and object." "None, in the Dalmatian you have the individual world of freedom and faith."

Wordsworth also makes some mention of abstract science and geometry. In his Prelude Book III he pays tribute to Newton, in Book I he mentions the liking Coleridge had for science and praises him for it. In his vision of the Arabian son ~~Quintus~~, it is poetry and geometry he is seeking to possess on earth. After his spiritual crisis caused in part by the French revolution, abstract science, among other things helps bring him back to a state of tranquillity. It is however the artistic nature towards approached again. The attractions for him in science is the "relation of abstractions to natural laws"

His approach to books is also that of the artist. Dr. De Selincourt points out that Wordsworth did much more reacting than he admits of in the Prelude. This is likely true but it is also just as true that at least Wordsworth thinks he has learned more of truth from nature itself. As an artist and poet he does have an appreciation of book learning. As well as the influence of natural objects, his book learning has given him a classic vision. As a lad, when he comes upon the scene of the raising of a

drowned man, he feels no honor. He had seen all this before in his childhood reading. —

"Hence came a spirit halloving what I saw

With decoration and ideal grace

A dignity, a smoothness, like the works

Of Grecian Art, and sweet to say." ①

For the pedant he has nothing but scorn: one who

knows' telescopes into curvities and maps". " spells the

slans" — can string you names of districts; cities towns,

the wholly wonderful" — and seeing two, each both drops

of wisdom as it falls into the dimpling cisterns of his heart: —

one who lives thus, "lives a life of lies" and unlike

the child who has been educated by nature loses

"One precious gain that he forgets himself" ② The

eternal vanity, connected with such knowledge is repugnant

to him. For such a "wise man", conceit is the very soul of all he sees.

Let us now turn to a discussion of the autobiographical elements in the Prelude. As the poet himself points out in the subtitle, he is giving us the "development of a Poet's mind."

In discussing this element of the Prelude, I cannot help

but quote the following extract from "Lord Jim". manna

is commenting on Jim who has just been very definitely about

something in his own mind: —

"...he complicated matters by being so simply too. — The

simplest poor devil. — By Jove it was amazing. There

he sat telling me that just as I saw him before my

eyes he wouldn't be afraid of anything — — and believing in

it too. I tell you it was fabulously innocent and

it was enormous" ③

Furthermore, any autobiographical outline of mental development is always complicated. He attempts to give poetic expression

① Prelude, Book V 478-481

② Joseph Conrad — "Lord Jim"

③ Ibid 48, 320-365.

to himself as he stood outside his own part. "He himself concedes that he cannot avoid enquiring something of his mature mind to his youth." ^① The whole thing is therefore clouded, we are not sure whether we have here the development of a poet's mind, or an interpretation of how it got where it is added to the record of one or two spiritual crises. However we have what he gave us.

The development begins with a litch-bake on his mother's breast whose infant sensibility are augmented and sustained "as it grows in experiences of the natural world about it. As we have seen, "fostered by beauty and by fear," the child grew up and obtained a moral strength and voice. All the while, his sensibilities are joyfully moved by natural sounds and sights. His mind, as well as experiencing this sense ecstasy, is also calmed and taught to think in an orderly fashion by the observance of natural objects and laws. Then ~~unlike~~ ^{unlike} ~~knowing~~ ^{knowing} ~~other~~ ^{other} ~~days~~ ^{days} he has a profound experience in which he dedicates himself to poetry. At the age of twenty three, by some dubious process of which we have made some reference, he comes to love man. He comes to see a resemblance between the majesty and power of nature and the majesty of man in what the "great city was suffering and about to suffer." Thus full of a faith in the aspiration of man's soul to majesty, he faces the French Revolution with great hopes.

"But this was it, in that dawn to be alive

But to be young was very heaven." ^②

When giving the development of his political ideas, Wordsworth especially clouds the issue by the retrospective method he employs. He is constantly apologizing for the radical idealism of his youth.

He picks up a piece of the Bastille, in the "Gives of an enthusiast"

^③ Sperry - "Wordsworth's Anti-Climate"

^④ Prelude - Book X, 693-694

He calls the elements of his political faith "Jenny's Errors". At the time of writing, the Post seems more affected by his "Return to Albion's Shore" when he hears English spoken by Englishmen, than his residence in France. However the historical facts would suggest that, at the time he did have radical convictions and had a refreshing faith in this new movement towards liberty and equality. He argues with the Royalist Officers, He and Beaupre discuss the revolution together. Near again wordsworth is getting his cloths second-hand. It is also Beaupre who points out to him -

"a hunger bitten girl

Who crept along, fitting her laming gait

Unto a Kipper's motion, by a cord

Tied to her arm, and reaching thus from thy lane

Her sustenance, which the girl with her two hands

Was busy sitting, in the artless mood

Of solicitude." @ - - -

At this wordsworth the man and poet will genuine ~~the~~ sensitivity, is the true revolutionary. Near are no abstractions. It is a concrete scene which works on his artistic sensibility. -

"And at that time my friend said

With agitation said 'Tis against that

Which we are fighting" I wish him believed

Devoutly that a spirit was abroad

Which could not be withstood, that evening.

At least like this, would in a lively time

Be found no more." @

He retains his idealism through the September

massacres, He rejoices that a republic is set up. Even

when Robespierre and the Paris commune is gaining power, he

has a

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a trust - "In that Godhead which is ours

Can never utterly be charmed or stilled." ①

Britain declared war on France. The sensitive scholar in his walks by the sea can hear the "small cannon". He rejoices when Englishmen are overthrown.

Then France, instead of fighting a war of defence, becomes imperialistic. The terror increases in its ruthlessness. A Pope is called in and an Emperor crowned. The basis for the idealistic faith is gone. Having "Approached human nature from the golden sick" his sensitive spirit is repelled. When attempting to solve the social problem of man, his mind ~~loses~~ all its power. He finds "our reason of least use when needed most" "a clasp of folly and a start of time"

" - demanding proof

And seeking it in everything I

Lost all feeling of conviction, and, in fact

Sick, wearied out with contradictions

Yielded up moral questions in despair." ②

It is beyond a doubt that Wordsworth went through some sort of spiritual crisis like this. It is interesting to note that in the prelude we find his only political poetry. During the years of his enthusiasm he seems to have written nothing on his political views. Yet when we accept the author's rendition of his crisis or not, it must be admitted that it was there. It is especially evident in Tintern Abbey which was written somewhere around that time. It is given historical validity by the testimony of Dorothy & Coleridge.

The skeptical and disillusioned poet turns to

mathematics for his only sphere of enquiry. His sister and his "Dear Friend" help him "maintain an intercourse with his true self." ③ Through their help he experiences again

① Boswell L. 171-172

② elbid L. 915

elbid L. 897-901

a trust - "In that Godhead which is ours

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Britain declared war on France. The sentiment elaborated in his works by the sea can be heard by "sunset cannot". He enjoys when Englishmen are overthrown.

Then France, instead of fighting a war of defence, becomes imperialistic. The terror increases in its ruthlessness. A Pope is called in and an Emperor crowned. The basis for the idealistic faith is gone. Having "Approached human nature from the Golden Sides" his sensitive spirit is repelled. In attempting to solve the social problem of man, his mind loses all its power. He finds "our reason of least use when needed most" "a clasp of folly and a start of time"

" - demanding proof

And seeking it in everything I

Lost all feeling of conviction, and, in fin

Back, wearied out with contrivance

Yielded up moral questions in despair." ②

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① Book X L. 171-172

② elid L. 915

elid L. 897-901

the "calm that nature breaths". But there is more than this implied, or the right approach is to say that there is no more than this implied. The Cry of the Poet and "ex idealist" is ... "O h flowerly Vale

Of Emma, is there not some work of Thine ---
 Dearest sacred to restorative delight?"^②

In speaking of Dorothy, and her spirit which restored his and which he emulated, what he says

"Yet I knew a maid ---

... From exaltation, like thee

She - gently resistant, as well she might

Was wholly free, far less did critic rules

Or barren intermeddling subtleties

Purplex her mind ---

She welcomed what was given, and craved no more.

--- her common thoughts

One riot, her life is gratitude."^③

In stead of the "aspiration of the soul to majesty" or "that most noble stimulus of man - the search for something loftier" we find in this "restored imagination," the consolation, but the hope in

"One great Society alone on earth

The noble living and the noble dead."

And when "Once more in man an object of delight is found"

-- I sought for good in the familiar face of life

And built thereon my hopes of good to come."^④

The resolution of the spiritual crisis has been a

complete self-out of his ecstasies. The faith demands nothing of its adherents, but that they wait. It is a philosophy of peace + gratitude.

In discussing the Artistry in the Prelude.

^① Book X L. 1003 - 1006

^② Book XII L. 84 + L. 66-68

^③ Book XI L. 199 - 223.

one of the first questions to raise is the admirability of the subject matter and in relation to it, ^{the} degree of authenticity with which he handles it. The subject is, as we have doubtless gathered by this time, autobiographical. Ernest De Selincourt says that "Wordsworth was in evidence a great deal with Milton on the true nature of Epic Subject ... a desire to bring within its confines a more spiritual conflict." ¹⁰ As De Selincourt himself says, only the poet ~~could~~ would disagree with this. It does not ~~surprise~~ however, that an autobiographical method is the most artistic or communicative way to portray a spiritual crisis. Mr. De Selincourt goes on to say in this connection ~~to say~~ that "Wordsworth was most eloquent when he wrote of himself." ¹¹ This will bear with a lively investigation.

Wordsworth's method, if we are to believe the author himself, was both romantic and classic. Undoubtedly there were violent forces at work in him. He had the romantic experiences but not dwell on paper. There was the "Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" but they were "recollected in tranquillity." They were recreated by an independent act of the imagination. Thus in giving poetic expression to the past development of his mind with its spiritual struggles, he is, out of necessity, quite removed from the immediate experience. When he is purely autobiographical and just talks about his experiences rather than ~~expresses~~ it, the result is unimpassioned. Anyone talking directly of one's own mind, without any help from dramatic situation is at a loss to communicate his experiences. The development of the poet's mind is gained much more vividly by comparing the two editions of the Preface, than in reading what the poet tells us about himself. His very method preserves him, except in a few magnificent occasions, from

¹⁰

De Selincourt - Introduction to 1805 Edition of "The Preface" p. xi

¹¹

called

expressing the subtle elements of his own mind, because it is impossible that he should recognise them in himself. His method prevents him from communicating his mind to us because he is constantly telling us about it. It is true, as he wrote De Quincey in 1804 "it seems to have a dead weight about it. In a poem of this nature its artistic achievement lies in the degree to which it communicates. The work, taken as a whole, is surely lacking."

The above having been stated in direct opposition to Mr De Selincourt, let us quote again from that eminent wordsworthian. He admits one stylistic error in Wordsworth's "too generous concession to vulgar taste for poetic ornament"^① In places he uses blank verse excellently, in places it is vulgar. The long verse paragraph, with little variation is used throughout. When speaking of his natural scenes, he does the trick. When he uses it for every thing else it becomes monotonous and in no way expressive of the subject he is discussing at the time. He uses this long verse paragraph with many syllabled words to describe the immortal women of the city. Well it he confesses, oh bitter shame, to being clumsy in Milton's Room. He attempts to describe the London street scene and the Elaters. He gets very much involved with it when he tries to communicate to us his dream of the Arab. At times he feels it full of abstract language and pompous phrasemaking. At times like deep his style, its lack of variety and adaptability, is wholly unrewarding.

In such a long poem we naturally look for a development and artistic form. To some extent his method does not allow him to work to a climax, he is in a position which unwitting in which he knows all the answers

and periodically he tells them. Concerning the unity of world like to repeat the following citation:

— "The Prelude in particular, is a long discussion both autobiographical and analytical ¹⁶ of mental processes and of which poetry comes, together with much relevant and irrelevant reference to political events of the day. The analysis of the working of a poet's mind is from time to time punctuated by short poems intended to illustrate and to vindicate the psychology." ¹⁷ This surely is a just description of the poem. There is definitely wanting, in so long a poem, an approximation of unified structure. The Author, for no apparent reason than that they occur just then to his mind, lets us in on all kinds of little incidents. We read of a dog he owned, of a soldier he met on the hills who lost his stick. There is reference made to Coleridge's appreciation for seeing. At Cambridge the events are even more confused. In Book II, after getting well underway, he returns to his babyhood. We get stories of both boys and sheepdogs and their sons. All through the poem he reforms to memory of his youth. For some unknown reason he leads up to that magnificent poem on the canyon in the alps by telling us the details of his getting lost: About this time he tells us he cannot sleep because the insects were so bad. The Boats on the French revolution are especially confusing. Yet in the face of all this, and much more, Mr. De Selincourt states, and in it anticipates all criticism: — "The poem has a unity of design and epic structure which" springs directly from the poet's mind and personality. — The Prelude is a great poem, it is also the autobiography of a great man, it cannot be judged solely by canon. ^{of poetry above} It owes its peculiar charm to the intimate revelation of the writer. — To many, he is not a poet, but.

¹⁷ Sneyd - "Wordsworth's Anti-Chinax" p. 17.

" a friend, and among our friends the most trivial admissions are often welcomed because, in their very triviality, they seem to bring us nearer to the object of our love." ^①

One is tempted to leave this without comment, but this shall be said. For sake of argument let us admit that it is an intimate revelation of the writer, and (even less readily) let us admit that it brings us nearer the object of our love. Certainly there is still the question of whether these elements are sufficient to make ~~it~~ ^{it} an artistic whole?

The ^{fact} ^{is} ^{that} ^{the} ^{average} ^{reader} ^{is} ^{that} ^{he} ^{wishes} the Romantic poets refrained from writing long poems. This poet seems to be unable to grasp a vision of artistic structure. There are places however where as a poet he is unequalled. It is in the "short poems" which seem to have been "lugged in," of which ~~most~~ ^{many} ~~speakers~~ ^{speakers}. The reader who wades through the prelude - either because he has vast patience or because he has to write an essay on it, is refreshed every once in a while by the appearance of beautiful little poems. Here Wordsworth's genius has not failed him. Especially ⁱⁿ these, expressing the joy of communion with nature, his images present the mood. His style of the long verse paragraph expresses well the panorama of nature and her sounds. When in English literature is there anything of its kind to equal:-

" a gentle shock of mild surprise

Has carried far into his heart

The voice of mountain torrents" ^② ?

His style again does not fail him when he speaks of the majestic and profoundly moving natural laws. In speaking of the eternal forces behind the universe he is again a poet among the great. Such is the quality of that passage, amongst for which alone, the Prelude is famous:-

- "The immeasurably height

^① De Selincourt Introduction page xvi

Prelude Book V L 407-400

Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of water-falls,
 And energic caving the hollow vent
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
 Black chugging crags that spoke by the wayside
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream
 The unfettered clouds, and region of the heavens,
 Tumult and noise, the darkness and the light
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
 Characters of the great apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of eternity
 Of first and last and midst, and without end." ①

It is in such passages as these that the poetic artistry
 in the *Guide* is really found. In such a sparse wordwork of
 numbers, ^{filled} among our Great Part.