

THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN
WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

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PREFACE

The aesthetic approach to Wordsworth's poetry illuminates it and gives it an eternal depth. Scholars have long recognized its power to stimulate an enjoyment and appreciation of nature and have realized its power to reveal the primitive and fundamental elements in human nature. In their appraisals they have never made a full and exclusive study of parental emotions and love. A desire on my part to interpret Wordsworth's attitude towards children led me to a study of his parent-child images.

Wordsworth was truly a poet of domestic love; his sensitive soul bore the human burden of parental and filial aspirations and disappointments. His images were the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always offer. His portraits of real and imaginary persons reflect the general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated. His imagination has harmonized discordant elements and perpetuated the universal in man and society. His poems are a solid presentation of life by a realist, who is a romanticist but not a dreamer, they fit into the reader's past and future experiences, and they contain phrases and experiences that can be contemplated with understanding.

A student encounters only a few great and impressionable teachers, who can give his life a deeper and richer

meaning. I am indebted to Dr. Audrey Nell Wiley for having enriched my life by her sympathetic guidance in this work and by the inspirational teaching that I received from her. I am especially grateful to her for having introduced me to the study of aesthetics, which has enriched my life by giving literature a new and deeper meaning.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some justification may be expected for one's entering into a study of the parent-child relationship in Wordsworth's poetry. No one has done a work given entirely to this phase of his poetry; yet much of his poetic writing deals with familial affections and passions. Wordsworth knew a father's heart; he knew a mother's heart; he understood the child's heart. Since he believed the child is "father of the man," he wrote much to show that the elemental feelings or relationships in a family were the passions that purify a heart and elevate a mind; that these paternal, maternal, and filial affections reconcile the mind to the internal and external life of the conscious reader, and that this sensibility is a link to the external world. He was a close observer of parents and children; he was a conscientious parent; and he found in the family the ordinary passions and affections of the common classes, and the universalities that he celebrated in verse, for the family is universal. He chose to portray lowly life in which parents and children are the core. Very few of his relationships deal with the nobility, because he was not concerned with this class; however, one of his letters reveals that he felt the child of nobility to be a different type from that of the bourgeois:

Such a child (of the nobility) will always be too much noticed; hard to guard against evil, hence vainly selfish. Vanity is not necessary to the natural growth of such temperament. If a child were neglected, it would be free from vanity. By nature it would be independent and sufficient. Such children, in these times, are rarely neglected; they are far too much noticed; so too much vanity. Now they too early and habitually feel their importance and unremitting attendance which is bestowed upon them. A child like yours would prosper where least noticed. She doesn't need the stimulus of praise.¹

Wordsworth was absorbed in the concrete, the immediate, and the contemporary. Every observation about life was potential material for poetry. The daily life of his humble neighbors was a phenomenon to him, and the familial life, though ever so sordid, was important to him. As a matter of fact, he was intensely concerned with environment, inheritance, and atmosphere, because he was interested in psychology and in an attempt to probe the causes of many of man's external actions; that is, he wanted to see if the child gained or lost emotional strength from his environment. He wanted to know why some parents failed in their guidance, while others succeeded; therefore he studied the weak, the mad, the strong, and the loving parents. The Indian woman's child was carried off by other hands; the two beggars were "very like" their mother; Michael gave Luke fond care; and Margaret wandered

¹The Letters of Dorothy and William Wordsworth: The Middle Years, 1806-20, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), I, 101.

from her cottage, often leaving her hungry infant alone. Each of these parents had a problem, and each represented humble parents. Their problems were interesting to the poet, who, though he was not what his neighbors called sociable, felt deeply for them. He was the first poet of distinction to probe into the heart of the affections. The artificialities of classical poetry were not adapted to such treatment. With the exception of prosaic writers, Godwin and Rousseau, he was the first to focus attention on love for people. He seized this attention by treating of the most substantial possessions of the world--parents and children--with preoccupation with reality fertilized by a deep and tender imagination, which elevated the reader's passion when he reads of a city laborer's bringing his sick child out into the sunshine:

. . . . One will I select;
 A father--for he bore that sacred name--
 Him saw I, sitting in an open square,
 Upon a corner-stone of that low wall
 Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
 A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate
 This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched
 Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
 For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
 Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
 He took no heed; but in his brawny arms
 (The artificer was to the elbow bare,
 And from his work this moment had been stolen)
 He held the child, and, bending over it,
 As if he were afraid of the sun
 And of the air, which he had come to seek,
 Eyes the poor babe with love unutterable.¹

¹William Wordsworth, "The Prelude," The Poetical Works of Wordsworth (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), Bk.VII, ll. 603-618. All references to the poems will be from this edition; therefore, the facts about the edition will not be repeated.

The child of a parent may be an offspring of any age. Yet Wordsworth uses many synonyms for child--babe, offspring, son, daughter, infant, little one, young one, and first or new born. Since he dealt, then, with all ages and stages--infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, early adulthood, and maturity--it seems necessary to attempt to establish the chronological ages that he considered in each of these stages. The best basis for his conception of infancy, childhood, and maturity rests on the schematization of his own life as revealed in the Prelude, with support from references to other children. Babe and infant are not synonymous: Many of his allusions are to the "babe" and the "infant." The baby apparently is the one who lies in the parents' arms drinking in the parental bliss and receiving tender care. He mainly receives, gathering passion from his parents' eyes and gaining pleasure in his mother's arms and at her breast. The infant is the "feeding babe," who, without uttering words, "sings at his mother's breast."¹

Then, when his body seeks expression in "glad animal movements" and his senses expand, he enters into childhood. Considering the fact that most children are from twelve to eighteen months old before they can move rapidly enough to give much expression in their movements, one can conclude that

¹"Michael," ll. 346-348.

Wordsworth ended infancy with this age, one year or one and one-half. Childhood proper begins with the individual's perceptive ability and continues until he enters the emotional stage, or adolescence. Most modern psychologists define adolescence as the period beginning with the approach of the teen years. Wordsworth, however, set his own emotional awareness at ten years but that of another child at twelve years of age:

. . . . Twice five years
 Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
 With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
 Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
 For their own sakes, a passion and a power.¹

Of a young boy's death he wrote:

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
 In childhood ere he was full twelve years old.²

Naturally, not all people enter into a stage of life at the same chronological age. Perhaps, the poet, too, felt variance in one's mental powers, for he frequently used numerical adjectives to limit the age of his child. He wrote of the child with "two steady roses that were five years old," "I a five years' child," "I have a boy five years old," or

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size.³

¹Prelude, Bk. V., ll. 552-556.

²Ibid., ll. 389-390.

³"Intimations of Immortality," ll. 85-86.

Just as the adolescent may at times cling to a favorite toy, sport, or whim of his childhood, an individual child may dream of maturity or be treated as an infant by his parents:

Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes.¹

The individual at seventeen is in transition from adolescence to youth, a time when the mind attempts to be creative and a time when youth partakes of conceits and forced associations. He also begins to assume responsibility. Luke was eighteen when he left the parental roof. In the later stage of youth, which Wordsworth believed to be twenty-two,² because it was then that he began to put man foremost in his affections, the individual begins to set aside fancies and wild dreams and becomes aware of the world teeming with its problems of social justices and injustices.

When full social awareness and the assumption of adult responsibilities is reached, the individual has ripened into the first fruits of maturity. In accepting mature responsibilities, one, however, does not become oblivious to his past experiences and influences. His thoughts may dwell on parental relationships, those of his own parents or those of himself as a parent.

¹Ibid., ll. 88-89.

²Prelude, Bk. VIII, l. 349.

Using Wordsworth's own life as a criterion, one may classify infancy as the period that ends around eighteen months, childhood as beginning then and ending at ten or twelve years of age, adolescence from ten or twelve until seventeen when one becomes a youth, and adulthood as beginning at twenty-two when one becomes conscious of social duties and problems. Wordsworth's study of parents and their offspring involved all these stages; however, the majority of the relationships that he portrayed are those of the younger offspring.

Before the eighteenth century the child had been given little space in literature. The classicists, who did not deal with their subject in terms of observations, certainly could not use their artificialities to treat of children. Furthermore, ornate diction is not the suitable language for a portrayal of childhood. A true portrayal comes only from the use of the language of commonmen. Wordsworth's insistence on using the everyday vernacular and on treating of the affections of the common man made him a true poet of childhood and of the psychology of parental-filial behavior. His was indeed a novelty, his unaffected verse about parents and children; for until about the middle of the eighteenth century poetry had been didactic, satiric, and rational. Little place for children existed in such an atmosphere. Just as the child

had little place in poetry, he had little place in society. He was the proverbial square peg driven into the round hole. Oftentimes, a beast received better treatment than a child, especially an underprivileged child. The aristocratic child fared only a little better; he was delegated to the nurses and governesses and shut off in a wing of the house away from any geniality. Adults did not realize that children were individuals with ambitions, aspirations, and emotional awareness; rather, they treated children very much as modern man treats a motor-propelled machine. The discipline for them was rigid; individual differences were ignored; schooling was stern and sober; and they were not treated with compassion, forethought, and affection. If the child were unfortunate enough to be an orphan or a foundling, he was subjected to worse abuses than beasts. Rousseau's theories on education and other writers' essays on child labor and charity wards were necessary to stir the emotions, thoughts, and attention towards children and to pave the way to consideration for children in poetry. It was as late as 1860 before the child was observed and treated as an individual. Before this date only the children of quality were treated, and the first poems dealt with birth, birthdays, or death. John Gay's "To a Lady" showed interest in the emotional

reactions of a child.¹ Ambrose Philips, though he complimented the children of patrons, used a language which "reflected the sweetness and grace of childhood."² In 1768 and 1771 the two most widely read poems were Shaw's "Monody to the Memory of Emma" and "An Address to a Nightingale," both of which revealed sorrow and grief.³ During this period poetry began to manifest a minuter and more specific interest in infants.⁴ Ekins's "On the Birth of a First Child" was the first to treat birth in a natural manner.⁵ It was Thomson who first became awakened to the sufferings of the underprivileged child and endeavored to stir the social consciousness to a heart-felt sympathy.⁶ After the middle of the century the state of the orphan gained frequent mention. Many poets tried to check the wanton waste of the child who had to suffer the bitter consequences cast upon him by degenerate parents. Yet, none of these poems brought about a complete revolution in thinking. Perhaps, too much of their imagery was drawn from bird and animal life. Then, the aristocratic class feared that too much attention devoted to the outcast children

¹Adolph Charles Babeuroth, Wordsworth's Treatment of Childhood in the Light of English Poetry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 25.

⁵Ibid., p. 39.

³Ibid., p. 34.

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

⁴Ibid., p. 38.

was revolutionary--an attempt to raise them above their social level and make them unfit to do menial tasks.

Wordsworth's poetry that depicted a "child as father of the man" was a gentle idea that spread over England. The child became a creature of passion, ideas, and pleasure nurtured by parents and a society that recognized him as an individual rather than an image of man's own preconceived idea. Wordsworth denounced the state for its neglect of its wards. His denunciation of educational fads brought about many systems of home education to replace the discredited, established curriculum.

"More than any other eminent English man of letters, Wordsworth is the poet of childhood."¹ His wide observation of children in the Lake District furnished him a rich fund of experience. He has exalted all phases of childhood from birth to maturity. He has depicted the moods and activities of children more extensively than any other poet before him. Perhaps, few, if any, of his successors have extended the interpretation of the details about children. His heart was attuned to childhood in all its manifestations. With childhood he associated all that is beautiful and ennobling in life. His poems contain a gallery of individual portraits--"Michael,"

¹Ibid., p. 260.

"An Anecdote For Fathers," "Dora," "To--Upon the Birth of Her First Born Child, March, 1833," "The Beggars," and many others. His children are flesh and blood, not idealistic beings created to exalt poetic emotions. He kept his eye focused on the individual child and his experiences. A child, to him, was a satisfying illustration of the simple life. "He found in the child unspoiled by man the most satisfying illustration of the simple life." Charles Babenroth says, "He would rejuvenate society by the way of the child."

He was the first poet to give poetic treatment to the natural joy occasioned by the birth of a child. His imagery was in harmony with his seriousness. Though Ekins dealt unaffectedly with the birth of a child, he failed to display the spiritual insight of Wordsworth, who considered the plight of the helpless babe, the mother's throes, and the pains of life which the child may endure:

Like a shipwrecked Sailor tost
 By rough waves on a perilous coast
 Lies the Babe, in helplessness
 And in tenderest nakedness,
 Flung by labouring Nature forth
 Upon the mercies of the earth.
 Can its eyes beseech? -- no more
 Than the hands are free to implore;
 Voice but serves for one brief cry;
 Plaint was it? or prophecy
 Of sorrow that will surely come?
 Omen of man's grievous doom.¹

¹"To--Upon the Birth of Her First-born Child," ll. 1-10.

The mother's throes being ended, her "silent thanks" tend
"incense-like"

. . . . to mingle and to move
With the gush of earthly love,
As a debt to that frail Creature,
Instrument of struggling Nature
For the blissful calm, the peace
Known but to this one release-¹

He was matter-of-fact in his observations concerning children.
Luke slept for two days after his birth "as oft befalls to new-
born infants." The "frail, feeble, Monthling,"--Dora, evoked
an observation about a smile:

Smiles are beginning, like the beams of dawn,
To shoot and circulate; smiles have there been seen;
Tranquil assurance that Heaven supports
The feeble motions of thy life, and cheers
Thy loneliness; or shall those smiles be called
Feelers of love; put forth as if to explore
This untried world. . . .²

In The Excursion he notices not only the smile of the new
infant but also the grasp of a tiny finger and the stretching
of his tiny legs:

Mark the babe
Not long accustomed to this breathing world;
One that hath barely learned to shape a smile,
Though yet irrational of soul, to grasp
With tiny finger--to let fall a tear;
And, as the heavy cloud of sleep, dissolves,
To stretch his limbs, bemocking as might seem,
The outward functions of intelligent man.³

¹Ibid., ll. 16-22.

²"Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora," ll. 67-74.

³The Excursion, Bk. V, ll. 261-269.

Wordsworth did not attempt to forecast the future of the child, because he realized that the individual is forever different from his fellows. His future cannot be forecast because life does not come in an exact mold; man's being is a law unto himself. The poet felt that the child is an individual who shapes his destiny and that he is worthy of study and consideration because of the manifestations of his own individuality, moods, or actions. He was interested in the child for what he is rather than for what he might become. He wanted to find the secret of individuality.

He saw in children the manifestations which had won him back to nature and self after the moral crisis of the nineties. With childhood he associated all that is beautiful and ennobling in life.¹

Since Wordsworth did not write for the child but about the child, he was interested in parents. Just as he may be called the first English poet of childhood, he may be called the first English poet of parenthood. For him, then, family life, or the lack of family life, became a psychological study. He noted the paternal influence as well as the maternal; he dealt with the former influence as deftly as he did with the latter.

He valued motherhood as a culture and grace to civilization. He felt that it transcends the loftiest heritage of

¹Babenroth, op. cit., p. 344.

mere humanity. A mother's influence, he felt, is not only precious but also necessary to the natural development of a child. He upbraided the social injustices of the industrial age which usurped the mother of poverty and sapped her energy. As a mother proffers influence which shields a child from subjection to materialism and novelties in education, she needs security so that she can guide him. He felt that a child who has the loving surveillance of a mother is indeed fortunate:

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 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.¹

It is indeed strange that others before Wordsworth had not felt the need to see that a child's beginnings were more noble and pleasant. It is stranger to note how modern his psychology seems; for the foregoing lines are definitely the theses of present psychiatry. The lack of proper maternal care is the theme of many of his poems; perhaps, it can safely be said that in this we discover the major reason that the

¹The Prelude, Bk. II, ll. 232-242.

majority of his poems depict harassed parents and children from the lower strata of society.

Fathers, too, have an obligation to their children. A child's life is marred or strengthened by the paternal influence. Wordsworth was an artist as well as an aesthete in treating of the moods, passions, and attitudes of fathers; but before dealing further with paternity, it is best to examine Wordsworth's influence and problems as a parent. It is fitting, then, that the first chapter of the Parent-Child Relationship in Wordsworth reveal his own attitudes, successes, and failures as a parent and that the remaining chapters treat of his creative use of the parent-child image and of the source and extent of the image.

CHAPTER II

WORDSWORTH, THE PARENT

"Biography, as a guide to the real man, to the inmost mind and the deep foundations of experience in him, is as uncertain and may be misleading with Wordsworth as with most other poets."¹ Since Wordsworth's parental relationship, however, strengthened his observation of children, a study of his role as a parent is significant.

Wordsworth was an observer of children long before he became a parent; in fact, Babenroth believes that children "won him back to nature and to himself after the moral crisis of the nineties."² As a parent, though, he had many opportunities to study children, for his parental experience came to him as the father of a French girl, Carolyn, with whom he spent such little time that his parenthood was not developed through association with her; as a father to Basil Montagu and Hertley Coleridge; and as the father of Mary Hutchinson Wordsworth's five children. Since he had little, if anything, to do with the care and development of Carolyn, his success or failure as a parent in this first opportunity is negligible, but his attentions towards his foster sons and his and Mary's

¹Lascelles Abercrombie, The Art of Wordsworth (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford Press, 1952), p. 37.

²Babenroth, op. cit., p. 344.

children are worthy of study. His real paternalism is, of course, manifested in his attitudes towards Mary's children.

His status as a foster father is not, however, to be ignored, for through studying his ideas on rearing a child, one may see how his views changed as he himself advanced in maturity. His work with Basil Montagu, whom Wordsworth and Dorothy took when he was an infant, his mother having died in childbirth,¹ was strictly Rousseauistic, though it was not the method that he used later with his own children, whom he often treated as toys although he also supervised their studies critically. In 1796, however, when he was young and receptive to Rousseau's philosophy, he let Basil enjoy independence. Dorothy's letter to Mrs. Marshall shows the enjoyment that she and her brother received from Basil:

We don't make him our plaything. I think that most likely to ruin a child's character. I don't think any pleasure more delightful than that of marking the development of a child's faculties and observing his little occupations.²

Wordsworth permitted Basil to develop as the child's curiosity demanded. He outlined his system in a letter to Jane Marshall, March 19, 1796:

We teach him nothing at present, but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an

¹George McLean Harper, William Wordsworth (London: John Murray, 1935), p. 274.

²William Wordsworth, The Early Letters, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 146.

insatiable curiosity which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability. It is directed to everything he sees, the sky, fields, trees, shrubs etc. He knows his letters, but we have not attempted any further step in the path of book-learning. Our grand study has been to make him "happy," in which we have not been altogether disappointed. We have no punishments, except such as appear to be, so far as we can determine, the immediate consequences that grow out of the offence.¹

With his children, as with Basil, his concern was that they, too, be happy; he never mentioned punishing them. Perhaps they, like Basil, escaped punishment. However, he did not follow Rousseau's ideas on education with them; neither did he refrain from spoiling them or at least from being too solicitous about them.

A man of strong affections, he was a doting father with a deep sense of family devotion. His children were a delight to him; and if one is to judge by the numerous references to them in his correspondence, he constantly thought of them. He spent many anguished moments over their many critical illnesses, which resulted in the infant deaths of two of them--Catharine, on June 4, 1812, and Thomas, on December 1, 1812. In his letters concerning John's ineptness for the classical languages and William's lassitude about gaining an education or securing a position, he sounds like a twentieth-century parent who attempts to shoulder all

¹Ibid., p. 164.

responsibility for his child. Perhaps a modern psychiatrist, if he were to make a study of William, would conclude that he was suffering from over attentiveness from his father. It is, however, freshening to know that Wordsworth showed a humanistic concern for not only his own children but also for all children since the prevalent attitude of the nineteenth century was neglectful and more or less ruthless in this regard.

Necessity caused Wordsworth to absent himself from his first child, Carolyn, daughter of Annette Vallon, charming French girl who wanted to taste the whole of life and who was receptive to everything around her. Annette accepted Wordsworth as a lover and became the mother of his child, Carolyn, who was born on December 15, 1792. Because of the French Revolution it was impossible for him to stay with his daughter and Annette; neither could he take them to England. Thus the agonizing torture of separation befell him, because it was not intended for him to forget either Annette or Carolyn, both of whom he kept in contact with through his and Dorothy's correspondence to the end of his life. In her Journal Dorothy makes frequent mention of the Wordsworth-Annette letters-- February 15, 1802, a letter from Annette; February 22, 1802, a letter from Annette and Carolyn; February 24, 1802, William wrote to Annette; March 26, 1802, William wrote to Annette;

June 12, 1802, letter from Annette; on June 14, 1802, and July 5, 1802, Dorothy wrote to Annette.¹ Wordsworth, Dorothy, and some of Wordsworth's friends visited Annette and Carolyn in July, 1802.²

In 1792 he left France to return to England, a moody man full of despair and despondency, to be tended and rehabilitated by the understanding and sympathetic Dorothy. Ten years later he married Mary Hutchinson, with whom he enjoyed a long and congenial life. To their union were born five children, to all of whom he made a very kind and attentive father. He considered his family a luxury; in a letter to Thomas Poole in 1809, he wrote that his "luxuries" were composed of a "wife and four fine children."³ Later, after all five of his children had been born and after two of them had died, he wrote to Poole:

My marriage has been as happy as man's could be, saving having lost two sweet children (out of five). This was a heavy affliction to us, as they were as amiable and promising creatures as a House could be blest with.⁴

Wordsworth's life was a poem, the legitimate part of which began with the birth of John on June 18, 1803. Whether or

¹Dorothy Wordsworth, Journals, ed. William Knight (London: Oxford Press, 1904), I, 122-124, 128, 156-157, 167.

²Ibid., p. 197.

³William Wordsworth, The Middle Years, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), I, 280.

⁴Ibid., II, 596.

not he took the birth of this son in a rather matter-of-fact way, one can not say. He wrote no letters concerning the small infant, nor do any of the poems concerning babies coincide with this date. Since Dorothy and William often shared ideas, we surmise that her comments in a letter to Lady Beaumont, March, 1805, revealed William's sentiments also: "Johnny is the finest boy ever born--no trouble--he plays with companions in the sweetest way; he has a good memory and is very loving."¹ Though Dorothy mentioned Johnny thus in many of her letters, he was nearly five years old before his father mentioned him more than casually in his letters. Then he wrote many letters about him. In his letters at first he was very much concerned about Johnny's illness and at the same time moved with admiration for his child. On April 17, 1808, he wrote to Francis Wrangham about Johnny: "I have apprehensions about my eldest boy, a child for his beauty, strength, and sweet disposition the admiration of everyone, is laboring under that dreadful malady, the water in the head."²

Most of Wordsworth's letters about John were written when the boy was in his teens; then the father was very much concerned about his boy's advancement in education. Though

¹Ibid., I, 10.

²Ibid., p. 139.

he had advocated nature as the best teacher for Basil as well as for some of his poetic children, he was concerned about John's steady perusal of books. Like many fathers, he had hoped to reincarnate himself in John. He had planned to enjoy many hours of studying Greek with his young son and apparently was a little grieved to find that Johnny was not an apt scholar in the classics. He, when John was only nine years old, worried about the boy's slow learning in a letter to Francis Wrantham in the spring of 1812:

My children amount to five--all affectionate, good-tempered, and I hope free from vice. As to their intellectual powers they are none of them remarkable except the eldest who is lamentably slow. This is to me a mortification as I promised myself much pleasure in rubbing up on Greek with him. He is in other respects a very fine boy; and I think will make a sensible man, but he has no quickness of mind.¹

This does not sound like the man who had advocated freedom with nature as the best teacher for Basil and who wrote in 1798: "Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife."² He did not depend on nature to instruct his own children; even on holidays his children were expected to follow a routine with their studies. Dorothy once complained that she had too little time with the children when they were home on vacations because they were too busy with their lessons. Though he had

¹Ibid., II, 487.

²"Tables Turned," l. 9.

aspirations for his children to excel in scholastic aptitude, he never despaired over their weaknesses, because he felt that when the right time for pursuing a course came the child would succeed, as he wrote to Christopher Wordsworth in 1829:

John is now making steady advances in the study of composition to which he had never been trained. I made many attempts to put him upon it but always failed; his time was not come; which is another proof added to the many I have had that one should never despond.¹

John and William Jr., however, failed to fulfill this expectation, for they both failed to find a work that they could do well.

Wordsworth showed as much anxiety and protectiveness for his mature offspring as he showed for them in childhood. He tried to gain profitable employment for John and William when they were in their late twenties and early thirties. Dora was thirty-five when he challenged Guillinan about his attentions to her. When John was twenty-six years old, his father wrote to Christopher Wordsworth with great esteem for his accomplishments:

John (I am glad to say) has got charmingly through the measles; he is an excellent arithmetician for his years, and an admirable penman. He seems pretty fond of English Reading--but of Latin he knows little. He has a very sound understanding, great zeal, and admirable temper. As a Preacher he has one gift of nature, a voice at once powerful and sweet, which when he is more

¹William Wordsworth, The Later Years, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), I, 373.

perfect in the management of it would fit him for a large Church and Congregation.¹

Just as he praised the accomplishments of John in a manner befitting the father of a much younger child, he showed undue concern for Dora's love affairs when she was thirty-five. Feeling strongly that it was his parental duty to supervise her life, he wrote a stern letter of rebuke to Edward Quillinan on April 13, 1839, insisting that he and Dora should not marry until her health was more robust and his pecuniary responsibility more tangible:

Upon subject of extract, I can not enter without premising that calling upon her in so peremptory a manner to act on so important an occasion during the absence of her parents, is, to say the least of it, an ill-judged proceeding. This was agitated between you when you were at Rydal; If hereafter I should have an opportunity of making a provision for you, I will certainly do so, and I could not ask you to run the risk if I thought it possible that my death would leave you destitute of resources from my side, I have not any fear as to that. The thing is will you dare to run the rough chance? You must have overlooked the state of Dora's health, or you could not have called upon her parents to give their daughter up to rough chance. Please tell what your expectations of settlement upon her in case of death are.²

Wordsworth, however, was not a meddling, domineering parent; he was merely an indulgent, solicitous father manifesting a protective love for a daughter, the idol of his heart. He was not jealous of a lover's attentions; he merely meant to

¹Ibid., p. 373.

²Ibid., II, 970.

see that his nestling was not carried off to become the prey of debtors. To be sure he felt no joy over the prospect of his daughter's departure especially when she had been his constant companion.

Indeed, Dora had been not only a companion but also an inspiration. It was she, who, born on August 16, 1804, furnished the theme for three of his poems--"Triad," "Longest Day," and "To--my Infant Daughter, Dora." She was always a source of pleasure to her father. His only worries about her were his many apprehensions about her health. She certainly did not cause him the concern that his other two children did. Doubtless, he could not have wished for a more nearly perfect child, and perhaps "the deepest sorrow of his life fell upon him in his old age when Dora died."¹ It was a blow from which he never entirely recovered.

Many years before, he had lost children; but, sore as was the affliction to his affectionate fatherly heart, these died young, and when he himself was young enough to outgrow his grief. For thirty years Dora was his only daughter, a dutiful, attaching child, the comfort of her parents, married since 1841, to Mr. Quillinan, an accomplished man of letters. When, after having been for forty-four years entwined round his warmest heart-strings, doubly endeared to him by filial devotion and intellectual sympathy, she was torn away from him, the wrench was fearful.²

¹George H. Calvert, Wordsworth, a Biographic Aesthetic Study (Boston: Lee and Shephard, 1878), p. 221.

²Ibid., p. 231.

A month after Dora's death on August 9, 1847, he wrote to Moxon: "We bear up under our afflictions as well as God enables us to do. But oh! my dear friend, our loss is immeasurable. The loss of her has taken the sunshine out of my life."¹

Perhaps, it is impossible for one to realize the paternal grief brought on by the death of the child who had not only filled a daughter's place but also had provided the companionship furnished by a sister after 1836, when Dorothy sank into a state of hopeless mental weakness. After Dorothy's debilitation, the father had become more and more dependent upon the sustaining love and companionship of Dora. His need for her had made him apprehensive about her marrying Quillinan, who was much older than Dora, who was penniless, and who was a Catholic. Never would he have consented to Dora's marrying this man, had he not realized that his objections were affecting her health and spirits.² After her death, she was on his mind constantly. A few hours before his death when one of his nieces came to his room, he asked, "Is that Dora?"³ Of his five children it was the memory of Dora that lingered with him until his death.

¹The Later Years, III, 1313.

²C. T. Winchester, William Wordsworth: How to Know Him (New York: Bobbs Merrill Company, 1916), p. 279.

³Ibid., p. 279.

Thomas, born on June 16, 1806, and Catherine, born on September 6, 1808, died in 1812, only five months apart. They were adorable children; and though they suffered many illnesses--influenza, upset stomachs, severe teething disturbances and convulsions--they were the delight of their parents' hearts. After the death of Thomas, Wordsworth wrote many letters to his friends, perhaps, in order to sustain himself. On December 1, 1812, the day of Thomas's death he wrote three letters to his friends. To DeQuincy he wrote: "Thomas died, sweet Innocent, about six this afternoon. His sufferings were short, and I think not severe."¹ He expressed his love and sorrow in a letter to Daniel Stuart:

You will be grieved to hear that my family are in great afflictions; the measles having just torn from us after an alarm of a few hours, a heavenly-tempered Boy, six years and a half old, who was the hope, delight, and pride of us all, and the admiration of all who knew him.²

In his letter to Basil Montagu he gave a detailed account of the boy's death:

I write words of heaviest sorrow. My sweet little Thomas is no more. He was carried off by an inflammation in the chest; he was seized with symptoms of the measles last Thursday. He went on most favorably till Tuesday at eleven, when the inflammation

¹The Middle Years, II, 525.

²Ibid., p. 525.

commenced and in spite of all that could be done he was a corpse before six o'clock in the afternoon. Mary supports this second stroke with resignation and fortitude. I bear it as well as I can.¹

Then a few days later, December 27, 1812, he wrote another letter in anguish to Basil:

We have suffered as much anguish as is possible to undergo in a like case, for he was a child of heavenly disposition, meek, simple, innocent, unoffending, affectionate, tenderhearted, passionately fond of knowledge, ardent in the discharge of duty, but in everything else mild and peaceful. I trust that Almighty God has received him amongst the number of the blessed.²

Wordsworth loved Catherine, but the only letters he wrote concerning her death were a report on Mary's condition and did not reveal any anguish on his part. He did not use "my daughter" or "our daughter" in his first references to her death. He used only the expression "her daughter" in a letter to Richard Wordsworth, 1812: "Mary has been much enfeebled by sorrow for the loss of her daughter Catherine, and her spirits continue to be very bad."³ A year after Catherine's death, however, his letters began to reflect the ingrained personal sorrow that he was suffering:

In the course of the last year I have lost two sweet children, a girl and a boy, at the ages of four and six and one-half. These innocents were the delight

¹Ibid., p. 524.

²Ibid., p. 528.

³Ibid., p. 520.

of our hearts and beloved to everybody that knew them. They were cut off in a few hours--one by the measles and the other by ¹convulsions; dying one half a year after the other.

The loss of Thomas and Catherine was so great that the family quitted Grasmere. Dorothy wrote to Cookson on December 31, 1812, that they found it necessary to move: "We are determined to quit Grasmere. Thomas played in churchyard. We are reminded of children everywhere we look. There is no comfort but in firm belief that what God wills is best for all of us--though we are too blind to see what way it is best."² Eight days later in a letter to Lonsdale, Wordsworth expressed the same sentiments:

The house which I have for sometime occupied 's the Parsonage of Grasmere. It stands close by the churchyard; and I have found it absolutely necessary that we should quit a place, which by recalling to our minds at every moment the losses we have sustained in the course of the last year would grievously retard our progress toward that tranquillity which is our duty to aim at. We shall move to Rydall.³

To be sure, Wordsworth loved all his children, but it was the last child, William, who seemed to receive the most attention from his father. It was also he who caused his father great anxiety. Wordsworth was not at all reserved in his verbal expressions about his young son. He wrote many letters in which he revealed his strong attachment for

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 529.

³Ibid., p. 537.

the boy. Each letter expressed sentiments comparable to those in a letter to Catherine Clarkson, New Year's Eve, 1814: "William is a charming Boy; beautiful and animated. He is the delight of my eyes."¹ Perhaps, Dorothy's letter to Catherine Clarkson, March 2, 1817, written when William was seven years old, reveals better than any other communication Wordsworth's attitude toward his younger son: "Willy's father fondles over him and talks to him just as if he were but a year old."² Wordsworth, though he practically idolized Willy, must have had apprehensions concerning his outcome, for in his letter of 1814 to Catherine Clarkson he wrote: "Pray that I may not have to say as Ben Jonson: 'My sin was too much hope of thee, beloved Boy.'"³ Wordsworth wrote many letters of alarm about Willy's colds, fever, and difficult breathing. The entire family, in fact, often suffered similar panic and alarm, as is indicated in their letters by such phrases as "Willy's bad cold always alarms," "his croupy sound is most difficult to bear," "dear little William's danger," "anxious time," "best news is Willy's improvement," and "we have been much alarmed."

When William reached adolescence, his father was as much concerned about his lassitude with books and his lack of

¹Ibid., p. 621.

²Ibid., p. 777.

³Ibid., p. 621.

ambition to seek a worthwhile profession as he had been about his health. When he first went to Cambridge, his father hoped that he would "acquire a taste for books by next Christmas."¹ Wordsworth even declined a trip to Italy with Samuel Rogers because he had to remain at home to assist William in establishing himself:

I could not think of leaving England for so long a time till I had disposed of my younger Son, who, as I have just learned from him, is bent upon being a beggar either in the honourable character and profession of a soldier or of a farmer. Could you suggest to me anything better for this infatuated youth--any situation in a counting house or a public office? He dislikes the thought of the University because he sees nothing afterwards open to him but the church, which he does not think himself fit for, or that he can ever be made so.²

Two years later, in 1829 when William was nineteen, the father was still trying with difficulty to get his son settled down in a formal education: "He cannot be made to work at medicine. I am about to send him into Germany with a view to his learning that language and going on with his classics at the same time, for an English University is a 'pis aller.'"³

It was just as difficult for Wordsworth to get his son started into work as it was to get him interested in schoolwork. Apparently, the boy suffered from spoiling, which

¹The Later Years, II, 92.

²Ibid., p. 282.

³Ibid., p. 348.

could have been the aftermath of many illnesses. At first Wordsworth was apologetic about his son's weakness; then he began to defend his son, saying that he had taken "pains about a position"¹ and that it was the family's fault because they had permitted him to suffer ill health:

I more than once mentioned the parental anxiety which I felt for my younger Son, having been, through an error of judgement, the cause of his losing his health, and greatly impairing his constitution; by sending him while yet too young for so great a change to the Charterhouse. He was consequently turned out of the course of life, viz., the University for which I designed him.²

As a last resort to secure work for his son, he, in his old age, was willing to relinquish his position as Distributor to an able-bodied son:

He is now twenty-five years of age and has been acting more than three years as my Subdistributor, a situation that leads to nothing and is dependent on many contingencies. In the present Government I have more than one friend who is desirous to serve him, but an opening might not occur till a change takes place; and I have therefore written to my honored Friend the Earl of Lonsdale expressing a wish to give up my office of Distributor of Stamps which I have held nearly twenty-two years, in case his Lordship, through the present prime minister could procure a transfer of it to my son. I request that you do what you can consistently with your public Duty to forward my views, which I am sure you as a Father will deem laudable. Should I be cut off, my Wife and Daughter would have little, though enough to support them in their humble way, but my Son

¹Ibid., p. 744.

²Ibid., p. 825.

would suffer exceedingly in mind were he to become in the least burthensome to them; indeed he would not endure it.¹

Thus the father was willing to make a great sacrifice for his prodigal son, whom he had considered a great child of promise in 1814.

Perhaps, he made a mistake in not letting him become "a beggar soldier or farmer" or to "run wild with nature," as he had permitted Hartley Coleridge to do. However, a free communion with nature did not guide Hartley to a well-balanced manhood. With one psychology or philosophy applied to William and another to Hartley, the parent found that some children fail in spite of the pattern cut for them. Since both boys were failures, he could not prove either method to be infallible.

The father who possessed all "his children with trembling" was never able to become free of that trembling. Hartley Coleridge, his foster son, whom he had regarded with paternal watchfulness and solicitude, slipped into intemperances. Though he had once brought happiness to Dorothy and Wordsworth, he became an anxiety to them later. They loved him, however, and tended him on his dying bed and selected a grave for him in their own lot at Grasmere "to lie" by

¹Ibid., p. 724.

them, "as he would have wished it."¹ His own two sons were unstable. John, who had entered the Church after leaving Oxford, became Vicar of Brigham, though Wordsworth had expended much effort to secure better appointments for him, an erratic and irritating person unable to support himself and his family. Even Wordsworth had to admit that John was a "strange creature."² Now was William, still harassed by ill health, ever able to find security and thus relieve his father's worries. To these disappointments--his friend's son Hartley, his own son William--may be added Dora, his greatest joy who pained him when she married the penniless Quillinan.

His own sons proved his philosophy: "The child is father of the man." Wordsworth's childhood, adolescence, and early manhood were very much of a parallel to those of John and Willy. The early Wordsworthian letters show that the Wordsworths were concerned because William would not study mathematics, would not work on his foreign languages, and would not show any desire to settle down to a position. The family worried about his going on tramping tours when he should have been trying to find employment. He refused to go into the ministry, just as his own son Willy refused

¹Ibid., III, 860.

²Ibid., p. 973.

to do. His own early letters show that he had no other thoughts than to work in the field of poetry. It was here that the destinies of father and sons separated. The father furnished posterity great pleasure and profit; but the sons never gave a great work to the world.

None of Wordsworth's poetry on parental grief contains personal expression of his own disappointments. Since he firmly adhered to his creative concept of emotions "recollected in tranquillity," he did not hasten to pour out his own parental joys and sorrows in verse. Of all the children with whom he had parental relationships, he used only Basil Montagu, Hartley Coleridge, Caroline, and Dora in poems, none of which revealed an intense anxiety; rather, they dealt with the probings of a child's mind and its ability to draw the parent to it. Since his sincerest portrayal of parental-filial attitudes occurred long before his own children had failed him, one cannot attribute the attributes of his poetic children and parents to his own family.

CHAPTER III
CREATIVE USE OF PARENT-CHILD IMAGERY

Wordsworth did not create a poem to suit another's fancy or merely to have a poem of his to appear at a certain time in publication. When a friend asked him in 1814 to write an inscription for a monument which he intended to erect in his garden, he refused, saying that his poems had all risen up of their own accord.¹ Later in January 24, 1824, in a letter to James Montgomery he again expressed his need for an inward impulse before he could write: "But at no period of my life have I been able to write verses that do not spring up from an inward impulse of some sort of another; so that they neither seemed purposed or imposed."² Sometimes, however, he did write a poem requested by someone else, but he waited a long time between the request and its fulfillment. An aesthetician can appreciate the fact that true poetry is a result of a poet's having a desire to communicate a sincere feeling, rather than from a desire to please someone or to meet a publication date. There are some who believe that the true poet hears a "call" to write a poem. Often a number of years may pass between the experience and its communication.

¹The Middle Years, I, 761.

²The Later Years, I, 50.

Usually the passing of an extensive time is necessary for the imaginative perception to color the incident sufficiently enough for it not to be mere imitation. Profound poetry is not imitation, which belongs to the writer of jingles. Wordsworth did not produce an imitation of an experience; rather he glorified the poetic experience into the warm depth of passion, not melodramatic but objective and dramatic. He depicted passions that hold the soul as in a vice for years.

Often, it is difficult to disentangle the original from what was written upon reflection after a lapse of years. The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Dorothy's Journal relate the original experience of many of the poems containing parental images. Poems with parental images--especially, the "Anecdote for Fathers," "Beggars," the "Thorne," "George and Sarah Green," "To--upon the Birth of her First-born Child," "Dora," "Address to my Infant Daughter," "Kitten and the Fallen Leaves," "The Childless Father," "Guilt and Sorrow," and some passages in The Prelude and in The Excursion--resulted from true experiences of the poet or of his friends, as related in the Letters or in the Journal. Many other poems, such as "Michael," the "Idiot Boy," "The Emigrant Mother," "The Sailor's Mother," and "The Cottager and Her Infant," seem to be the result of various observations and experiences. The source and extent of his images will be

discussed later in Chapter IV. Apparently, most of the poems based on domestic affections evolved from the poet's personal observations since he was concerned with depicting the natural affections. In a letter to James Fox, January 14, 1801, concerning the "Brothers" and Michael, the poet revealed the source for his poems that deal with the domestic affections: "In 'Brothers' and in 'Michael,' I've attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the North of England."¹

He was concerned not only with the affections but also with the effects of the landscape on the individual, as he shows in "Michael," which gives a picture of a man whose affections are rooted in the land and in solicitude for a son. Dorothy's Journal reveals that the poem is connected with a particular spot, hidden in the green bosom of hills about two and one-half miles from Grasmere. On a fine October day Dorothy and William walked up Greenland Gill in search of a sheepfold, which they found, in the form of a heart unequally divided and falling away; the stones, after one hundred and twelve years had retained this shape. Michael, the shepherd, who was "stout of heart," "frugal," "apt of

¹Harper, William Wordsworth, p. 411.

heart," "watchful more than ordinary men," and "patient of mind" toward his son, is a creation of the imagination, depicted from Wordsworth's idea of what Thomas Poole would have been under such circumstances. In a letter to Poole on April 9, 1800, Wordsworth wrote:

In "Michael" I have attempted to give a picture of a man of strong mind and lively sensibility agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart--parental and landed property, including feelings of inheritance, home, and personal family independence. I have depicted such a man as you might have been under such circumstances.¹

In addition to being the father that Poole would have made, Michael, who was created by the poet's imagination in 1800, seemed to be the type of father that Wordsworth wanted to be and the type in many ways that he did become after the birth of John in 1803. Michael's constant companion at work among the hills was his son Luke. The poet was a companionable father, who took many walks with his children, oftentimes carrying the small ones piggy back, and who helped them with their lessons. Just as the shepherd had planned to pass an unencumbered inheritance to his son, the poet had dreamed of his own son's being adept with the classical languages and their having many enjoyable hours studying together. Many of his letters reveal how grieved he was at the fact that

¹The Early Letters, p. 418.

John was not expert in languages. The anxieties that he suffered over William's not studying or finding work showed that a child

. . . . more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature must needs fail.¹

"Michael" was the artistic product of numerous poetic experiences and observations, such as the Industrial Revolution occasioned, weakening as it did the economic status of many Northern families who had enjoyed close familial ties while they sought sustenance from the land. Wordsworth, who was a neighbor to these families, knew their love for the land and for independence. A couple about whom he wrote in a letter to James Fox, 1801, could have easily furnished him the background for his poem.

I have two neighbors, a man and his wife, both upwards of eighty years of age; they live alone; the husband has been confined to his bed many months and has never had, nor till within these few weeks has ever needed, anybody to attend to him but his wife. She is now lame and feels that they must go to Poor. She said, it was hard, having kept house together so long to come to this, and she was sure that it would burst her heart. I mention this fact to shew how deeply the spirit of independence is, even yet, rooted in some parts of the country. These people could not express themselves in this way without an almost sublime conviction of the blessings of independent domestic life. If it is true,

¹"Michael," ll. 146-50.

as I believe, that this spirit is rapidly disappearing, no greater curse can befall a land.¹

As the last resort, many rural youths had to migrate to the towns and cities to seek employment. Naturally, many of them were exploited by evil doers, and attentive parents who had sacrificed and worked hard to try to build a solid future for their children were made to suffer heartbreak. The hopelessness and despair of a father who had poured all his affections into an only son and into the land, a symbol of familial ties and steadfast roots, which he hoped to pass on unencumbered to the son, is an image in which the essential passions of the heart find their maturity. The mind receives elevation without a gross stimulant.

Wordsworth's encountering a "straggling heap of unhewn stones" inspired him to write the first of the domestic tales of shepherds, whom he had learned to love from his contacts with them in the North country. Even when he was a boy "careless of books," the power of nature led him to think on "man, the heart of man," and human life." He recorded paternal passions in "The Affliction of Margaret," "Andrew Jones," "Two April Mornings," "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," "The Last of the Flock," "Repentance," "The Emigrant Mother," "The Childless Father," "The Fountain,"

¹The Early Years, p. 261.

"The Beggars," "Ruth," "Guilt and Sorrow," "The Idiot Boy," and "The Thorn" before he and Mary had children. Of these only "Guilt and Sorrow" was composed before his French experience, which centered his heart on "man's inhumanity to man." Since he had left a child in France, he was highly sensitive to the role of parenthood. "Michael," which he wrote four years before he was to know the joys of having an own son, shows his sensibilities in noting the actions and feelings of a father observing a child from birth until his eighteenth year. In depicting the father's love, he resorted to the naming of emotions to show the "inestimable worth of the son--the son was Michael's heart and his heart's joy;" Michael "loved to have the boy near him;" he made the objects "dearer" to the father's "heart;" he was "his comfort and daily hope;" all the boy's life had been the "father's daily joy;" and "exceeding was the love." The naming of the emotions rather than the describing of the emotional state is characteristic of Wordsworth. In only two instances--when Michael drew Luke to him and cried and in the "Idiot Boy"--did he depict reactions.

The poet, though objective in his poetical experience with "Michael," showed how a father's love and joy expands with the little daily kindnesses that he proffers to his offspring with the penetrating understanding and emotion of one

who had experienced the companionship of a son. No other artist has portrayed the father's emotions as successfully as did Wordsworth in this poem.

Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.¹

Rustlings of paternal love developed into an "unbending mind":

To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep.²

Just as the fetters held the sheep, the son fettered the father's heart. When the boy was five, Michael cut him a shepherd's staff, the exact replica of his own. The child, something between a "hindrance and a help," received from his father "hire of praise" he evoked the image of a loving father. The father's love grew so abundantly that when the child was ten years old, objects which the Shepherd had "loved before became dearer," and the "old Man's heart," seemed born again. "Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up."³

¹"Michael," ll. 152-160.

²Ibid., ll. 160-164.

³Ibid., l. 178.

When time came for Luke to depart, the father, who had stones ready for a new sheepfold, took him to the pile and asked him to lay one stone, a covenant between father and son, a link of love, which Michael hoped would turn the son from evil companions to the strength of God. The father's parting words lie heavy on the reader; yet the reader is not subjected to minute explanations of a father's emotions or reactions. "A promise," "full heart," and "daily joy" convey the seriousness of the occasion to the troubled father:

Tomorrow thou wilt leave me; with full heart
 I look upon thee, for thou art the same
 That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
 And all thy life hast been my daily joy.¹

The aesthetic experience is further heightened by the father's reminiscences of the joy that he felt because of the tiny infant:

. . . . thou didst sleep away
 Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
 Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
 And still I loved thee with increasing love.
 Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
 Than when I heard thee
 First uttering words a natural tune. . . .²

Two personal relationships could have taught the poet the traits of a new-born infant and the exaltation of a father: his experience with Caroline or his close association with

¹Ibid., ll. 330-336.

²Ibid., ll. 341-347.

Coleridge in 1796, when Hartley was born. Records do not show that Coleridge was responsive to the affections of a child; and since Wordsworth was always deeply moved by passions, the reader may ask whether or not his knowledge of babies' sleeping "two whole days" came from his observation of Caroline or Hartley.

The bond between father and son was the mutual enjoyment that comes from deep-rooted love of home life. The father had always been kind and good, though he had to work hard:

And in the open fields my life was passed
 else I think that thou
 Hadst been "brought up upon thy Father's knees.
 But we were playmates

 Even to the utmost I have been to thee . . .
 A kind and a good Father.¹

Such a father regardless of "whatever fate should befall" his son would naturally feel as Michael said he felt for Luke:

. . . . but whatever fate
 Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
 And bear thy memory with me to the grave.²

Despite the father's covenant with the son and despite his love which he had shown daily and even despite his grief breaking into tears as he "pressed his son, kissed

¹Ibid., ll. 349-362.

²Ibid., ll. 415-417.

him, and wept," the son erred, became a victim of evil associates. Thus Wordsworth reminded his readers that moral goodness and love can not be so strongly impressed on a child that he can withstand evils when he meets them daily. If eighteen years of rightful living could not preserve a person, the poet must have rejected the theory that one's character is formed during the first seven years of his life, as some advocated; perhaps, he wished to show that the Industrial Revolution was so monstrous that it could destroy a child who had been carefully and rightfully nurtured by moral parents. One can not be sure of Wordsworth's philosophy about habits incurred in the formative years; for, as Luke departed from his early training, Wordsworth in The Prelude attributed his own habit of "coercing all things into sympathy" to a "habit rooted now deeply in my mind."¹

The final pathos of the poem is symbolized in the unfinished sheepfold, a symbol of unfinished work all over the world, and in the disappearance of the "Evening Star," a symbol of life's disappointment. It is this pathos felt for the failure of a child to fulfill parental expectation that gives universality to the poem. Wordsworth said that he knew that the poem had brought tears to many.

¹The Prelude, ll. 389-390.

When the poet in his younger years dealt with extreme frustration, he sometimes resorted to a description of emotional reactions, as in "Guilt and Sorrow" and the "Idiot Boy." He used fewer descriptions of emotional reactions in the former, which was based on a true incident that was told to him, than in the latter, which was drawn from his observation of mothers of abnormal children. His detailed account of the anxious mother's reaction could have resulted from his desire to make extreme situations seem understandable and from his desire to arouse in men sympathetic attitudes for such people. He was conscious that people of the nineteenth century recoiled from idiots; the very word idiot evoked repulsion. Perhaps, he considered it necessary to give the mother's frustrated actions in order to impress people with the fact that mothers of such children did love them. "Guilt and Sorrow," however, dealt with a more understandable idea, that a harassed father could vent his ire on an innocent child. The nineteenth-century father was often cold and domineering, and when he became a victim of unavoidable circumstances, he was sometimes unpleasant and unreasonable.

"Guilt and Sorrow" has two different parental images-- the Soldier's widow whose husband had deserted her and her little ones, who later died, and the brutal father whom she and her company encountered. It is the latter image which

shows the poet to be adept in handling four emotions: the vehement anger and repentance of a brutal father and the love and fear of a helpless mother. The story of the soldier's widow had been told to Wordsworth years before by a woman who had suffered as the woman of the poem suffered. The rest of the poem suggested itself to him as he wandered through the country, observing destitution and suffering among the humbler class produced by half a century of war.¹ He had experienced the suffering in France; the war in America had caused suffering; and he had just recently seen the fleet sail out to the commencement of war in 1793, a war which he was sure would be long and "productive of distress and misery beyond all possible calculation."² The widow and her companion approached the horrible scene where a father had just beaten a child unmercifully as its helpless mother looked on. The poet, in his depiction of the incident, was sympathetic towards the couple, whose lives had been misdirected because of the chaos that existed in a war-torn world, and towards the child, whose miserable experience during the formative years would affect his future. He communicated the horror of the situation with the auditory

¹Harper, William Wordsworth, p. 228.

²Introductory note prefixed to "Guilt and Sorrow," p. 18.

image, "a scream bursting shrill," which lingers in a reader's ear, and with the visual image of a woman who stood with "quivering lips and pale" as a man "foamed with anger vehement." The father, angered by some "thoughtless play" of the child had beaten the child with "each blow deadlier than the last." As the Soldier's Widow heard the report of the brutal beating from the child's mother, she stood "pallid with dismay and aghast," while her grayhaired comrade cast "stern looks" and spoke with "indignation rising higher in his voice." Then inward anguish dampened the Sailor's brow as repentance overwhelmed him:

Softly he stroked the child, who lay outstretched
 With face to earth; and, as the boy turned round
 His battered head, a groan the sailor fetched
 As if he saw--there and upon that ground
 Strange repetition of the deadly wound
 He had himself inflicted. Through his brain
 At once the griding iron passage found;
 Deluge of tender thoughts then rushed amain,
 Nor could his sunken eyes the starting tear refrain.¹

Unlike "Michael," which traced the paternal passion through the lifetime of a normal son, the "Idiot Boy" traces the subtle wanderings of the maternal passion through a few hours. However, the poet portrayed as enduring love in the latter as in the former. Critics of his time argued that the poem is not art; many aestheticians of today advance the

¹"Guilt and Sorrow," ll. 487-495.

same argument. If art cannot deal with unpleasant subjects, if art cannot stress an emotional state, if art must be calm and dignified and not deal with hustle-bustle, then the poem is not of aesthetic value. However, if art is a portrayal of natural and realistic feelings, the poem is in that respect art because it certainly does portray realistic reactions of the boy, whose lips did "burr for joy" a tedious number of times, and of the mother who ran here and there and everywhere, fearing the worst for her son. The poet's purpose was to show the public that a mother could have a natural, maternal love for a freak of nature. It cannot be denied that he succeeded in having his reader understand that unnatural children are not produced by unnatural mothers. He wanted to show maternal love in its primitive, isolated form in circumstances which would put it to the supreme test. The weakness of the poem is not due to the depiction of the mother's emotion, but it is due to so much concern with the boy's lips that "burr for joy" as he rides the "mild and good pony." It is not the stanza that is weak; it is the refrain that tires. Recoiling from the refrain is justifiable, but shrinking from the theme is denying art the right to treat of unpleasantness. The only unpleasantness of the poem is in the image created by the word idiot, for there is no physical description in the poem to cause a

sickening of the heart. When critics attacked the poem as weak, drab, and too commonplace, Wordsworth answered them with a long explanation, the longest that he made for any of his other poems, which, when it is understood, showed that his interest was in the hidden anxieties of a mother's heart, which he penetrated almost uncannily for a man. The theme does not mar the poem; what mars it is his insistence on revealing his most minute observations, which makes the poem too long and too commonplace.

Wordsworth's defense of the poem is the best defense that can be given:

You begin what you say upon the "Idiot Boy" with this observation, that nothing is a fit subject for poetry which does not please. Here follows a question does not please whom? Some have little knowledge of natural imagery of any kind, and, of course, little relish for it; some are disgusted with the very mention of the words "pastoral poetry," "sheep" or "shepherds," some cannot tolerate a poem with a ghost or some supernatural object in it. Others would shrink from an animated description of the pleasures of love, as from a thing carnal and libidinous; some cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions of society Others are disgusted with the naked language of some of the most interesting passions of men because it is indelicate as many fine ladies could not bear certain expressions in the "Mother and the Thorn."

Few ever consider books but with reference to their power of pleasing these persons of higher rank; few descend lower among cottages and fields and among children. A man must have done this habitually before his judgment on the "Idiot Boy" would be in any way decisive with me.

The loathing and disgust which many people have at sight of an idiot, is a feeling which, though having some foundation in human nature, is not necessarily attached to it in any virtuous degree, but is owing in a great measure to a false delicacy and a certain want of comprehensiveness of thinking and feeling. Persons in the lower classes of society have little or nothing of this. If an idiot is born into a poor man's house, it must be taken care of, and cannot be boarded out, as it would be by gentlefolks. The poor seeing frequently among their neighbors such objects, easily forget whatever there is of natural disgust among them and have a sane state so that without pain or suffering they perform their duties towards them.

I have often applied to idiots in my own mind, that sublime expression of Scripture, that their life is hidden with God. Among Alps, where they are numerous, they are considered a blessing to their family. I have looked upon the conduct of fathers and mothers of lower classes of society towards idiots as the great triumph of the human heart. It is there that we see the strength, disinterestedness, and grandeur of love; nor have I ever been able to contemplate an object that calls out so many excellent and virtuous sentiments without finding it hallowed thereby, and having something in me which bears down before it every feeble sensation of disgust and aversion.

My Idiot can articulate and isn't disgusting in his person. Quite the contrary, and I have known some quite handsome. There is one, at present, within a mile of my house.¹

The reader receives an aesthetic experience from the poem when he thinks of the mother's love for the idiot boy as the great "triumph of the human heart," which all may sympathize with. Though many critics have found little in it to praise, one critic, Calvert, considers it an aesthetic triumph:

¹The Early Letters, pp. 294-297.

The wonder of the "Idiot Boy" is not that an idiot should be the subject of the poem, but by his treatment of such a subject he should have wiped from it all repulsiveness, and have built out of three such unpromising figures as two lonely women and the idiot a story which fascinates and delights the competent reader. This it does by letting him into the minute confidence of the healthy human and especially the maternal heart. The "Idiot Boy" is an incomparable feat.¹

Hope that a child will succeed is a natural paternal instinct. Michael had hopes for Luke when he was a child. The mother of the idiot "stood fixed" as she watched him go, "proud of him" and hopeful:

The silence of her Idiot Boy
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart.²

Proud of him, just as Michael was of Luke, she was sure that he would bring help. At Susan's side she talked incessantly of "Johnny's wit" and "Johnny's glory." Poor mother but how natural were her actions! Mothers sing praises of their offspring, regardless of how incompetent they may be. They must find something in the child to praise. This mother was proud that her very own was off on a mission:

You plainly in her face may read it
Could lend out that moment's store
Five years of happiness or more
To any that might need it.³

¹Calvert, op. cit., p. 78.

²"The Idiot Boy," ll. 92-93.

³Ibid., ll. 132-135.

Soon, however, the mother's joy turned into apprehension:

And Betty's drooping at the heart,
That happy time all past and gone.¹

Her state became one of panic: she "talked to herself," she walked, she ran, she saw him "high and low" in "tree and tower." When she found the boy, she was "almost stifled with her bliss." "A few sad tears does Betty shed."² Her joyous state was restored:

She kisses o'er and o'er again
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy;
She's happy here, is happy there,
She is uneasy everywhere
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the Pony, where or when
She knows not, happy Betty Foy.³

In the above poems one can see that the poet, long before he was a parent was able to penetrate the parental heart, not with a sordid desire to stimulate gross emotional reaction but with a pacification which showed that love is a calm and intelligible emotion. To him the relationship between parent and child was one which the most unemotional reader should understand as irreplaceable. In 1799 he composed "The Fountain," showing that no one can take a child's

¹Ibid., ll. 162-163.

²Ibid., l. 386.

³Ibid., ll. 387-403.

place. Matthew, his teacher, bemoaned the fact that there were none who lived that loved him enough. To this lamentation the poet offered:

And, Matthew, for thy children dead
I'll be a son to thee!¹

but the teacher showed him how impossible his impulsive offer was of realization, as he replied: "Alas that cannot be."²

Since man imagines nothing which he does not already know, one is sure that Wordsworth seized upon a few facts suggested by a chance meeting or a word of friendly talk, involving the basal affections, and converted them into poetic idealization. Wordsworth's imagination joined the visible and invisible world. Because of his keen observation and use of concrete detail he showed the steady influence of parental love and the simple primary affections. Many of his poems--especially, "Michael," "The Idiot Boy," "Guilt and Sorrow," "The Affliction of Margaret," "The Emigrant Mother," and "The Beggars"--are idealized biographies of rustic folk, upon whom he placed the hopes of a better society. He felt that mankind draws its faith and fortitude to withstand misfortunes from humbler sources and that pain, especially derived from painful and sacrificial love, strengthens human

¹"The Fountain," ll. 61-62.

²Ibid., l. 66.

conduct. In his poems he painted no fantastic pictures; nor did he invent any charms; he revealed what all people might see but had not seen. He looked upon the individuality and mood of a child as a fit subject for poetry. He believed that a child brings "hope" or "inquietude" to man:

Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all
Than that a child more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts
And stirrings of inquietude, when they¹
By tendency of nature needs must fall.

Not even the parental affections of nature were ignored by him. He understood the affections and cares of the beasts and the fowl. The motherly cry of the sheep on seeing her young fall into the stream pierced the poet's heart:

The lamb had slipped into the stream,
And safe without a bruise or wound
The cataract had borne him down
Into the gulf profound.
His dam had seen him when he fell,
She saw him down the torrent borne;
And, while with all a mother's love
She from the lofty rocks above
Sent forth a cry forlorn.²

The swan who tenderly cared for her offspring attracted him:

The female with a meeker charm succeeds
And her brown little ones around her leads,

¹"Michael," ll. 145-150.

²"Idle Shepherd-Boys," ll. 67-75.

When winter came, the beggar was no better prepared than in summer. With no place to lay her head, she had to soothe the sleepy cry of her children by pointing to a shooting star. Finally, she was unable to shield them from the cold. After death the two babies rested where

No tears can chill them, and no bosom warms,
Thy breast their death-bed, coffin'd in thine arms.¹

Too often, the poet felt, a mother suffers either from her own human frailty or from the unsympathetic attitude of her fellow man. Too often she has no pleasant memory; but the fowls who follow nature's plan prosper, and they are not besieged by unpleasant failures. Because of their foresight they prosper or find security.

Rest, Mother-bird! and when thy young
Take flight, and thou art free to roam,
When withered is the guardian flower,
And empty thy late home,

Think how ye prospered thou and thine
Amid the unviolated grove
House near the growing Primrose-tuft
In foresight, or in love.²

Wordsworth blended nature and human personalities at times; his mother was the center of her family just as the mother hen was. At other times he contrasted them. At times, as in the "Wren's Nest" and in the "Swan," he was impressed

¹Ibid., ll. 299-300.

²"A Wren's Nest," ll. 65-72.

with nature's superiority over man. At other times, as in "Ruth" and "Margaret," he felt that nature through landscape affected human personalities. He drew symbols from nature and from man's activity near nature to accompany his parental images. Michael built a heart-shaped sheepfold where he and his "heart's joy" spent many happy hours on the land that was dear to his heart. His home the "Evening Star," a bright ray in his happier days and a guiding light, vanished three years after his death--no son, no father, no "Evening Star," but the remains of the heart-shaped fold remained for long years. The "knotted forlorn thorn," clasped by creeping mosses, intent to drag it down resembled the miserable Martha Ray, a wretch who had been dragged down by society, a creeping moss that chokes the weaker people. Martha Ray was never free of misery; the thorn stood melancholic and dejected, stripped of leaves and "prickly points" nearby a "muddy pond of water never dry." Yet both had a brightness. The woman in a scarlet cloak often sat between the muddy pond and the thorn, beside which was a lovely sight.

A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,
Just half a foot in height.
All lovely colours that were ever seen;
And mossy network too is there,
As if by hand of lady fair
The work had woven been;
And cups, the darlings of the eye,

So deep is their vermillion dye.
 Ah me! what lovely tufts are there
 Of olive green and scarlet bright,
 In spikes, in branches, and in stars,
 Green, red, and pearly white.¹

The red, scarlet, and vermillion do not symbolize a ray of hope that the misery will someday drop from the thorn; rather, they seem to be a symbol of the infant's blood which will eternally flow in the mother's breaking heart. Whether the baby was an infanticide or a victim of natural causes, the mother cannot rid herself of the thoughts of it and her own downfall when she succumbed to the amorous wiles of Stephen Hill.

Besides the poet's use of symbolism in the "Thorn," the reader also finds a manifestation of his power to harmonize the dejection of human affections with the forlornness of nature. The thorn free of its leaves and thorns, alone on a wild moor, had no more happiness or utility than the woman stripped of her faith and cheer.

From the primary passions of the humblest ranks of society--the love of a shepherd for a son, the ire and fear of vagrants, an anxious mother's frustration about an idiot son, and a fallen girl as dejected and alone as a thorn--Wordsworth constructed potent media of philosophic truth in a simple language free of abstractions and artificial diction. The chief of all affections is love. He showed in these

¹"The Thorn," ll. 36-48.

poems the strength and the pain of love. Love may be an exaltation; yet it may be a saddening malignancy which drags a heart to despair. Love is accompanied by stated emotions: love, joy, woe, happiness, light heart, heavy heart.

Wordsworth divided the passions into hope and fear, joy and grief, love and hatred. The terms that reveal these passions --affection, love, hate, fear, tears, joy, laughter, and hope--occur with regularity and abundance in his poetry.

What is important to recognize in Wordsworth's treatment of parents and children is that he traced the parental-filial affections in their subtle wanderings with simple words of emotion, which relied on the senses to convey a poetic weight without amplification. When he did find it necessary to elaborate on an affection or emotion, he used only what elaboration was fitting, true, and poetic. His power to present emotion without elaboration clearly has made him an enduring poet.

CHAPTER IV
THE SOURCE AND EXTENT OF IMAGERY

In observation Wordsworth was keen and perceptive. He was versatile in his imagery, and because of his versatility he was able to supply images from diverse sources and to put a warmth of feeling into his poems. He drew from his actual experiences and from his contacts with both nature and people. He drew from realities, which his fertile imagination idealized; he rebelled against making the ideal seem real, for the ideal is not the true pattern of life.

Since much of poetry is subjective by nature, it is often quite difficult to distinguish only the objective; the objective manifestation may be the result of a subjective experience which may have long lain dormant in the subconscious. Most of Wordsworth's objective parental images were inspired by legends; such as "The Seven Sisters," "The White Doe of Rylstone," and "Hartleap Well." In some of his nature poems, such as "To the Daisy," he thought of the natural object as "Child of the Year," "Child of Mother Earth," and "Nature's Child" and did not treat the passions introduced introspectively. Seldom did he treat of the affections extrospectively. In such a poem as the "Sailor's Mother" he looked at life from afar, but he warmed the reader's heart

as artfully as he would have had he exposed the minute sympathies of himself or of the reader. "Tall and straight as a Roman matron"¹ the sailor's mother begged an alms. With her she carried a bird in a cage protected from the elements by a cloak. She carried the bird because the dead son had taken so much delight in it. To her it was all that was left of the son. Yet this was not completely objective, for, as the poet pondered:

The ancient spirit is not dead;
Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair.²

Few poems, such as the "Idiot Boy," the "Emigrant Mother," and the "Russian Fugitive," which expand the maternal image into the whole poem, are objective. Wordsworth was so much concerned with the whole of life that he could seldom isolate himself from it. Abercrombie says that the "real man is not any more apparent in what is called his life than in his poetry."³ He continues: "His poetry is his life; outside his poetry, his visible behaviour may be largely unimportant for what we want to know, or quite misleading."⁴

¹"Sailor's Mother," l. 6.

²Ibid., ll. 7-10.

³Abercrombie, op. cit., p. 34.

⁴Ibid.

It is because his experience is significant that the poet is urged to express it, and we are willing to receive it. Experience, however, cannot but be personal; and the more we feel of the poet's personality in the experience his art transmits to us, the better we understand the nature of the experience to which we submit, and the force of the significance it carries. For what do we mean by the poet's personality--that is the personality we feel in his art? We mean that peculiarly individual relationship with his world, inner and outer, in which the spirit of the man most naturally and profoundly and completely lives. In this central habit of experience his poetry originates.¹

and it is precisely because his poetic experience proceeds out of this fundamental relationship between himself and his world that the poet's self-expression comes to us charged with significance.²

Poems that evolved from his actual experiences ranged from those portraying reflection on his familial affections to those referring to his neighbors. His familial affections dealt with his mother's love, as shown in The Prelude, "Catechising," "Confirmation," parts of the Excursion; his love as a father as shown in "Address to My Infant Daughter," "To--My Daughter, Dora," the "Longest Day in the Year," "To--Upon Birth of Her First-born Child," which shows his interest in his grandchild; his love for his foster son, Basil Montagu, in the "Anecdote for Fathers;" his love for Hartley Coleridge in "To H.C.;" his love for his foster mother at boarding school in the Excursion and in The Prelude. His

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²Ibid., p. 39.

neighbors, his fellow beings, furnished him the idea for many of his poems, some of which are "George and Sarah Green," "Michael," "Maternal Grief," "Beggars," "Complaint of the Forsaken Indian Woman," "The Infant M--M," "Idle Shepherd Boys," "The Fountain," "Childless Father," "To The Sons of Burns," and many of the experiences related in The Prelude and the Excursion.

In some of his poems he used metaphors and similes drawn from the family to abet his portrayal of his theme. He used these allusions with the assurance that all readers had known the sentiments of such parents and children as he mentioned. When the poet wrote the lines: "Venus cried, 'A mother's heart is mine,'" and "Alive to all a mother's pain," he felt that all who would read the lines would understand a mother's heart and pain, especially brought on when a child languishes or pines away. He made numerous references to the Virgin Mary and to England as mother of sons. He felt that social justice would come to all Englishmen if England had a "mother's heart" or a "parental ear."¹

He drew from the maternal image more often than from the paternal or filial image for his poetry. At least twenty-

¹The Excursion, Bk. IX, l. 260.

five poems treat at length the maternal image.¹ The Prelude and the Excursion have many long passages, or short poems, developing the maternal image. Many poems contain passages referring to mother and child. The mother-image occurs two hundred and twenty-five times; foster mother, four times. There are probably three reasons for the predominating mother-image in his poetry: he missed the love of his mother, who was wrested from him when he was young; since the mother is the pillar of home and society, he considered the maternal image potent and universally communicative of the emotions, evoking the most exalted passion in many people; he recognized the value of culture and the graces of civilization that motherhood develops.

He was, however, concerned with the father, and some of his best poems are written about the father. "Michael" has probably drawn tears from many a parent; it certainly has given poetic enjoyment to many. The "Childless Father," the "Fountain," and "To the Sons of Burns" are not inferior to

¹"Elegiac Stanzas," "To--Upon the Birth of Her First-born Child," "Idiot Boy," "The Infant M--M," "Maternal Grief," "Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," "The Beggars," "On Nature's Invitation," "Widow on Windermere Side," "Catechising," "The Female Vagrant," "Affliction of Margaret," "Wild Duck's Nest," "Vaudracour and Julia," "The Emigrant Mother," "The Sailor's Mother," "The Jewish Mother," "The Thorn," "The Matron of Jedborough," "The Birth of Love," "Margaret, or the Ruined Cottage," "Her Eyes Are Wild," "Wren's Nest," "Pet Lamb," and "Sonnet XIV."

"Michael" in showing the depths of a father's heart. With the exception of these poems, the other poems that deal at any length with the paternal are those that resulted from his own paternity: "To My Daughter," "The Triad," "To H.C.," "Address to My Infant Daughter," "Anecdote for Fathers," and the "Kitten and the Fallen Leaves." Some of his figures of speech were drawn from the paternal relationships. He used the word father one hundred and seventy times in his poems and foster father three times.

The Excursion, "Lucy Gray," "George and Sarah Green," and some of the epitaphs combine the maternal and paternal images. In fact, Wordsworth alluded to parental care in so many of his poems that it seems that the study of parents was an obsession with him. He used the parental relationship to extend the pathos of such poems as "The Thorn," "Her Eyes Are Wild," "George and Sarah Green," and "Margaret." He used it to show the joy of pleasant relationships in such poems as "Anecdote for Fathers" and "To The Sons of Burns." He used it to show the care and disappointments in families in such poems as "Michael," "Vadracour and Julia," and "Ruth."

A breakdown of the words for offspring shows that child or children occurred more than any other image. The image of child or children appears one-hundred and thirty-five times; suckling, nursling, babe, and baby appear seventy-

five times; maiden or daughter, thirty times; infancy or infant, forty times; boy, forty times; son, seventy times; girl, twice; first born, new born or eldest born, three times; little one or young one, fifteen times; foster child, twice; the adjective filial, ten times; and offspring, five times.

The parental, maternal, filial images total eight hundred and sixty-five, including the words family (once), parents or parental (thirty times), and maternal (seven times). Josephine Miles tabulated single words that the poet used five hundred times or more; she found only thirty-six, counting all forms of the word; that is noun, adjective, verb, etc.¹ This shows that the inclusion of all familial terms would rank between eye, nature, and time, which appear seven hundred times, and day and heart, which appear one thousand times.

Although Wordsworth drew from his own family for the purpose of communicating the deep sympathies that evolve from familial life, he did not reveal his personal passions. In "Catechising," in "Confirmation," in The Prelude, and in a passage from the Excursion he calmly revealed his personal recollections of his mother, who was wrested from him before he was old enough to remember her every undertaking. Solemnly

¹Josephine Miles, Wordsworth and The Vocabulary of Emotion (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1942), p. 171.

does he remember his confirmation and "the happy hand" that had arranged the flowers which he wore. It, indeed, was a scene which the average person has witnessed:

Each with a vernal posy at his breast,
 We stood, a trembling, earnest Company!
 With low soft murmur, like a distant bee,
 Some spake, by thought-perplexing fears betrayed;
 And some a bold unerring answer made;
 How fluttered then thy anxious heart for me,
 Beloved Mother! Thou whose happy hand
 Had bound the flowers I wore, with faithful tie!¹

Though the reader may have witnessed such ceremonies, the psychical distance is such that he dare not intrude upon the mother whose "anxious heart fluttered" as her "trembling, earnest Company" answered with "thought-perplexing fears" or with "bold unerring answer." He rather experiences the warm feeling of the son who lost his mother "too early for the frequent tear":

O lost too early for the frequent tear,
 And ill requited by this heartfelt sigh.²

In the "confirmation," the twenty-fourth of the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," he showed how deeply he had communed with a mother's heart, or with his mother's heart, since the maiden alluded to apparently was Dorothy. He had caught the eager, intense, and sympathetic vibrations of a mother's

¹"Catechising," ll. 3-10.

²Ibid., ll. 13-14.

heart in the short time that he had with his mother:

I saw a Mother's eye intensely bent
 Upon a Maiden trembling as she knelt;
 In and for whom the pious Mother felt
 Things that we judge of by a light too faint;
 Tell, if ye may, some star-crowned Muse, or Saint!
 Tell what rushed in, from what she was relieved
 Then, when her Child the hallowing touch received,
 And such vibration through the mother went
 That tears burst forth amain.¹

In only one other poetic passage can one definitely establish Wordsworth's own mother as the source of the image. Its beauty and simplicity are enhanced by the blending of the image of the human mother with the parent hen, which moves her little brood "with tenderness and love, scratching and ransacking up the earth" for food for them and herself. He remembered his mother with perfect love and gratitude:

. . . . Early died
 My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
 And hinge of all our learnings and our loves;
 She left us destitute, and as we might,
 Trooping together. Little suits it me
 To break upon the sabbath of her rest
 With any thought that looks at others' blame;
 Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.
 Hence am I checked: but let me boldly say,
 In gratitude, and for the sake of truth,
 Unheard by her, that she not falsely taught,
 Fetching goodness rather from times past
 Than shaping novelties for times to come,
 Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
 Nor did by habit of her thoughts 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,

¹"Confirmation," ll. 1-9.

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.
 This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 From anxious fear of error or mishap
 And evil, overweeningly so called;
 Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce; rather loved
 The hours for what they are, than from regard
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
 Such was she--not from faculties more strong
 Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
 And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
 Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
 A heart that found benignity and hope
 Being itself benign.¹

Wordsworth's first paternal experiences with sons were with his foster ones, Basil Montagu and Hartley Coleridge, who were responsible for his studying the workings of a child's mind and who inspired "Anecdote for Fathers," "To H.C. Six Years Old," and "Intimations of Immortality." In 1798 he composed two poems on the child's inability to comprehend the depth of reasoning--"We Are Seven" and "Anecdote for Fathers." In the former poem he treated of the futility of leading a child to understand death. "'Twas throwing words away"² to attempt to explain death to an eight-year-old child whose deceased brother and sister lay in their graves only

¹The Prelude, Bk. V, ll. 256-293.

²"We Are Seven," l. 66.

"twelve steps or more from her mother's door."¹ People used to think "We Are Seven" merely childish; today, however, scholars feel that it has profound meaning.² It shows Wordsworth's interest in a child's mind. In the latter poem he showed the futility of pressing a child for direct answers to questions. In both poems he defined the chronological years of his children, a consistent method of his in treating with the period of childhood, as mentioned in Chapter I.

"Anecdote for Fathers" reveals his paternal satisfaction with the companionship of an attractive, gay child:

I have a boy of five years old;
His face is fair and fresh to see;
His limbs are cast in beauty's mould;
And dearly he loves me.³

Being with the cheerful child made it impossible for the adult to feel pain and gave the poet a refreshing experience:

A day it was when I could bear
Some fond regrets to entertain;
With so much happiness to spare,
I could not feel a pain.⁴

Attempting to force reason where nature had not yet granted reason to the child mind taught him:

¹Ibid., l. 39.

²Abercrombie, op. cit., pp. 17-18. "For myself, I should say that 'We Are Seven' is a poem of singularly profound meaning. . . . We should not think much of a critic nowadays who cannot give it serious consideration as important works of art."

³"Anecdote for Fathers," ll. 1-5.

⁴Ibid., ll. 13-16.

O dearest, dearest boy! my heart
 For better love would seldom yearn,
 Could I but teach the hundreth part
 Of what from thee I learn.¹

He depicted the full essence of a young child as well as the fears and anxieties of a parent as he views the "faery voyager," "whose fancies from afar are brought" in his poem about Hartley Coleridge, "To H.C." The parent thought of "times when pain might be thy guest" or of time when "Grief" might touch him. He feared the future for the "dew-drop of nature" and the "gem that glitters while it lives." He felt that

Nature will either end thee quite;
 Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
 Preserve for thee by individual right,
 A young lamb's heart among the full grown flocks.²

Hartley proved to be the "dew-drop" "ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,"³ and Wordsworth showed himself to understand a child's disposition and to have prophetic powers of a child's outcome.

His real argument for the joy of paternity is manifested in "Address To My Infant Daughter, Dora," written when his daughter was a month old and when he had decided that paternal love is superior to mother love:

¹Ibid., ll. 57-60.

²"To H.C.," ll. 21-24.

³Ibid., l. 28.

And the maternal sympathy itself,
 Though strong, is, in the main, a joyless tie
 Of naked instinct, wound about the heart.
 Happier, far happier is thy lot and ours!¹

The infant filled not only her heart but also her father's with brightness. As she so contentedly slept in a "heedless peace," the father elatedly reflected on her tiny form:

. . . . for on thy face
 Smiles are beginning, like the beams of dawn,
 To shoot and circulate; smiles have there been seen;
 Tranquil assurance's that Heaven supports
 The feeble motions of thy life, and cheers
 Thy loneliness: or shall those smiles be called
 Feelers of love, put forth as if to explore
 This untired world, and to prepare thy way
 Through a strait passage intricate and dim?²

The thirty-four year old Wordsworth, holding in his arms his laughing baby girl as she watched a frolicsome kitten play with leaves, was sobered by the melancholy thought that the gleam of careless youth had vanished from him and that he did not fare as the "thoughtless pair":

Such a light of gladness breaks,
 Pretty Kitten. from thy freaks,
 Spreads with such a living grace
 O'er my little Dora's face;
 Yes, the sight so stirs and charms
 Thee, Baby, laughing in my arms
 That almost I could repine
 That your transports are not mine,
 That I do not wholly fare
 Even as ye do, thoughtless pair.³

¹Ll. 36-40.

²Ibid., ll. 65-74.

³"Kitten and Falling Leaves," ll. 106-110.

However, he felt that he would receive hours of gladsomeness from young things as he gamboled with "Life's falling Leaf":

And I will have my careless season
 Spite of melancholy reason,
 Will walk through life in such a way
 That when time brings on decay,
 Now and then I may possess
 Hours of perfect gladsomeness
 --Pleased by any random toy;
 By a kitten's busy joy,
 Or an infant's laughing eye
 Sharing in the ecstasy;
 I would fare like that or this
 Find my wisdom in my bliss,
 Keep the sprightly soul awake,
 And have faculties to take,
 Even from things by sorrow wrought,
 Matter for a jocund thought,
 Spite of care, and spite of grief
 To gambol with Life's falling Leaf.¹

This philosophy indeed proved true throughout his life; for he managed to withstand the grief over the illnesses and deaths of his children and to withstand the disappointments of his sons' not being able to find successful employments. Dora was the child that furnished him wisdom and bliss. So much gladsomeness had she given him that when she died, sorrow ravaged his spirit. He became "Life's falling Leaf." He could not regain joy, or even peace, with Dora, "worthy of earth's proudest throne," gone. It was she

Whose skill can speed the day with lively cares,
 And banish melancholy
 By all that mind invents or hand prepares;

¹Ibid., ll. 110-128.

O Thou, against whose lip, without its smile
 And in its silence even, no heart is proof;
 Whose goodness, sinking deep, would reconcile
 The softest Nursling of a gorgeous palace
 To the bare life beneath the hawthorn-roof.¹

The father obsessed by love for his daughter considered her a person whom a lover could desire and a happy spirit who could gladden the heart of any. She was certainly a poetic experience to him as well as a companion and comforter:

For She, to all but those who love her, shy
 Would gladly vanish from a Stranger's sight,
 Though, where she is beloved and loves,
 Light as the wheeling butterfly she moves;
 Her happy spirit as a bird is free,

 High is her aim as heaven above,
 And wide as ether her good-will;
 And like the lowly reed, her love
 Can drink its nurture from the scantiest rill:
 Insight as keen as frosty star
 Is to "her" charity no bar,
 Nor interrupts her frolic graces
 When she is, far from these wild places,
 Encircled by familiar faces.²

As Whitman said of himself, "I am a part of all I survey," so may we say of Wordsworth: he was also a part of all he surveyed; his heart throbbed in rhythm with all whom he met. Missing the attention of parents, he affectionately allied himself with adults who proffered him loving attention; that is, he became, as it were, a sanguine son to his teacher, the Matthew of his poems, and to Anna Tyson, his boarding

¹"The Triad," ll. 62-69.

²Ibid., ll. 121-125, 145-153.

house mother at Hawkshead. He never forgot Miss Tyson's motherly interest in him. At her "cottage threshold" he had a "glad welcome with some tears, perhaps," from the "kind and motherly woman" who "perused him with a parent's pride."¹

He expressed his love for her thus:

. . . . while my heart
 Can beat never will I forget thy name.
 Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
 Honored with little less than filial love.²

In drawing his parental images from nature, he did not make them the subject of an entire poem. As in the "Pet Lamb," he used the image to emphasize the naturalness of filial instinct, or inheritance, to follow the pattern of the parent. The image of the lamb and ewe shows that the mother's heart works in the little one, who follows the pattern of his inheritance. The little lamb pulled at the tether seeking something that was wanting to its heart.

. . . . can it be
 That 'tis thy mother's heart which is
 working so in thee?³

is imagery well suited to the poet who entertained a feeling of having missed something. The animal and the man shared the same feeling. Though the lamb's mother was gone from its

¹The Prelude, Bk. IV, ll. 28-29.

²Ibid., ll. 32-39.

³"The Pet Lamb," l. 24.

side forevermore, it was not content to be tended by the tender lass and to share the warm hearth of her home, because communion with nature made it such that the lamb wanted to continue on the mountain-tops as its mother had, and because

Things that I know not of belike
to thee are dear,
And dreams of things which thou canst
neither see nor hear.¹

Perhaps, the Lucy poem is the major one that is an expansion of the image from nature. Lucy, as a child of nature, shared close companionship with Mother Nature, being docile to Her teachings and leaving a void when her "race was run." Nature was "both law and impulse" to her "darling," molding her by "silent sympathy."

He drew from nature to show the natural instincts of parents, especially mothers. He likened his own mother to a hen which was the center of her brood when she scratched for food. The wild duck's nest lined with the softest down from the mother's plumes made him sigh "For human-kind, weak slaves of cumbrous pride."² The daisy "bold in maternal Nature's care" suggested some "concord with humanity," as it would teach man, who is soon depressed to find

¹Ibid., ll. 50-51.

²"Wild Duck's Nest," l. 14.

A shelter under every wind,
A hope for times that are unkind and every season.¹

The swan that so tenderly cared for her little ones and the mother hen are his two longest images drawn from the realm of nature. He used the mother hen to enhance his portrayal of the tenderness of his own mother. He used the tenderness of the swan who never pushed her young ones out in the cold to contrast with the weakness of the vagrant mother who wandered with her little ones instead of finding protection for them.

Wordsworth treated an objective poem with such minute analysis that the reader feels that he is receiving the communication of the subjective; yet he cannot prove that the feeling is Wordsworthian. The notes and prefaces of the Oxford edition prove that the "Emigrant Mother" and "Her Eyes Are Wild" are objective; yet one feels the pathos and the revelations of the emotions are such that the poet was drawing from himself. "Her Eyes Are Wild" is a good example of his power to penetrate the feeling of another. No such experience or thought could have ever befallen him. The mad mother's little boy was a joy for her to see. His personal contact drew pain away from her:

Suck, little babe, oh suck again!
It cools my blood; it cools my brain,

¹"To the Daisy," ll. 12-15.

Thy lips I feel them, baby! they
 Draw from my heart the pain away.
 Oh! press me with the little hand;
 It loosens something at my chest;
 About that tight and deadly band
 I feel thy little fingers prest.

Oh! love me, love me, little boy!
 Thou art thy mother's only joy;¹

In the final stanza the mother shared her bitter state with the reader:

Oh! smile on me, my little lamb!
 For I thy own dear mother am
 My love for thee has been tried;
 I've sought thy father far and wide.
 I know the poisons of the shade;
 I know the earth-nuts fit for food;
 Then, pretty dear, be not afraid;
 We'll find thy father in the wood.
 Now laugh and be gay, to the woods away;
 And there, my babe, we'll live for aye.²

Wordsworth, certainly, never lacked sources for his poems; for he was sensitive to all that he surveyed. When inspiration prodded him for expression, he readily knew from what past experience--either personal, mythological, spiritual, or mystical--he would draw so that he might communicate intelligibly to his readers. Sometimes, his entire poem would contain an extensive imagery; at other times, the image would be only a figure of speech. Naturally, for the poems based on parental affections, he expanded the parent-child

¹"Her Eyes Are Wild," ll. 31-42.

²Ibid., ll. 90-100.

image into the whole poem. In many poems he used the image only as a figure to abet the communication of an idea, for example, in "Yea, Carnage is thy daughter." In some poems the image is a small part of the poem, but it is necessary to convey the theme of the poem, as in the "Idle Shepherd Boys." The boys negligent of their shepherding duties permitted a lamb to wander and to fall into a stream while the ewe looked on in pain, emitting a painful bleat. The Prelude and The Excursion contain many images of parents and children to convey the deep, penetrating essence of influences and contacts on the poet's life. These latter two uses--figures and short passages--are numerous, but they are not the subject of analysis in this thesis, which is concerned with the poems which contain extended familial imagery which is in three categories--the paternal, the maternal, and the paternal-maternal.

The paternal image is found in "The Childless Father," "Michael," "The Fountain," "The Last of the Flock," "At the Grave of Burns," "Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora," "Anecdote for Fathers," "To H. C. Six Years Old," "The Longest Day," "The Kitten and the Fallen Leaves" and the "White Doe of Rylstone." It is interesting to note that eight of these poems draw from real people--"At the Grave of Burns," "The Fountain," "The Last of the Flock," "Address to

My Infant Daughter, Dora," "Anecdote for Fathers," "To H.C. Six Years Old," "The Longest Day," and the "Kitten and the Fallen Leaves," the latter five treating of Wordsworth both as a natural and as a foster father. Of interest, too, is the fact that "Michael," which analyzes a father's heart for a son was written before Wordsworth had a son; furthermore, the poet did not make his sanguine sons the theme of any poem. Only one poem, "The White Doe of Rylstone," contains a severe father. He dominated his children, pushing their lives to an unhappy and destructible end. The daughter, against her will, was forced to make the banner to be carried in the rebellion. The only son of the seven who refused to fight for the cause, as he opposed it, was drawn as a magnet draws iron to it to the scene of the battle. When he saw his father and brothers fall, he seized the flag and was killed before he could place it on the hill. His sister was left to a life of loneliness.

Maternal love is the theme of many poems. With the exception of "Michael," the poet dealt more pathetically with mothers than with fathers. None of the fathers was frustrated; none of them was an outcast, and none of them was truly dejected. The mothers seem to have suffered more than his fathers did. In all poems the children constituted a real problem for the mothers. Not one of his poems on

maternal love treats of a relationship that promises comfort and happiness; rather, mothers pay with fears and tears. In none of his poems did he reverse the problem; that is, he did not show the parent to be a problem to the children. "The Blind Highland Boy," Sonnet XXXIII of "Elegiac Stanzas," "The Emigrant Mother," "Margaret, or the Ruined Cottage," "The Sailor's Mother," "Her Eyes Are Wild," "The Idiot Boy," "In Sight of the Town of Cockermouth," "Maternal Grief," "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," "Confirmation Continued XXIV," "The Beggars," "The Thorn," "The Highland Broach," "Catechising," "A Jewish Family," "The Widow on Windermere Side," "The Russian Fugitive," "Female Vagrant," "The Affliction of Margaret," "To--Upon the Birth of Her First-born Child," and "The Infant M--M" interpret a mother's heart. The last two poems do not contain disappointment; but, pain, through the throes of childbirth, appears in them. Only "To--Upon the Birth of Her First-born Child," "The Infant M-M-," "Catechising," and the "Confirmation Continued" had real mothers as their source. The other mothers, though some may have had real counterparts, were drawn from the poet's imagination.

Both the paternal and maternal images are portrayed in "Ruth," the "Waggoner," "Vaudracour and Julia," "Guilt and Sorrow," "George and Sarah Green," "Lucy Gray," and "Michael."

Unless one wants to agree with those critics who maintain that "Vaudracour and Julia" is an autobiographical account of the Wordsworth-Vallon romance, only one of these poems, "George and Sarah Green" treats of real parents. The other parents resulted from the poet's imagination.

Most of Wordsworth's poems about parents belong to psychology. A sameness runs through them as they reveal the conduct of human beings. The poet dealt with sorrow deeply and with love penetratingly. He interpreted the accidents of fortune by a revelation of faith; he was sometimes stern, sometimes tender, and sometimes prophetic; he was always calm and desultory in revealing his sympathy for individuals and their problems.

He taught a philosophy of love taken from humble life, sufficiently familiar to the reader; yet he revealed this philosophy in a novel manner--that of simplicity and endearment. He used the vernacular of daily life, which he considered the natural manifestation of human conduct. He found the moral law of love and beauty in the commonplace, not in legends, in kings, queens, and aristocrats. He felt that the law of faith worked through love:

. . . . The law of faith
Working through love, such conquest shall it gain
Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?¹

¹The Excursion, Bk. IX, ll. 672-673.

He believed that the charities that soothe are like flowers at man's command and that gratitude and hope fit into the scheme of equality, for he wrote:

The primal duties shine aloft,--like stars;
 The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless
 Are scattered at the feet of man--like flowers.
 He, whose soul,
 Ponders this true equality, may walk
 The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;¹

He used his parental-filial image to advance equality, to bring about a brotherhood of man, as it were. He felt the futility of the democratic idea evolving into a universality without hearts that beat in time. He aroused the sympathy of the aristocratic by using the age-old image of love of parents struggling to protect their offspring. He showed the wrongs of society by contrasting them with the rights of nature. Was the swan to have a better life for herself and her cygnets than the female vagrant and her little one, starved and cold? Did a more magnanimous heart beat in the heart of a king than in the heart of Michael, the Mad Mother, or Sarah and George Green? Did not Alice Fell's coat mean as much to her as the king's crown to him?

He was resigned to the fact that we do not suffer and mourn without hope. Hope, however, is not an easy victory. It cannot bring back the former delight of the mad mother; it

¹Ibid., 11. 235-242.

cannot give mentality to the idiot; nor can it bring back the instinctive delight of the vagrant sailor or a shepherd boy. Man can, however, surrender himself to fate as willingly as the flora and fauna do to Mother Nature.

His artistic insight and sympathy for the family relationship was put into the smiles on an infant's face, the care of a mother hen or swan, and the tragedies of human parents that are nearest to the universal human heart. He never abandoned human sympathies in showing the new conditions of the social life of the nineteenth century. He revealed his insight in subjects that previously had been considered unworthy of poetry or beneath its dignity--the idiot boy, simple children, beggars, and vagrants, aged widows and widowers, the everyday hopes and loves of rustics. He had confidence in the sympathetic understanding of readers, in his belief that the trivial and ignoble passions are after all the Creator's scheme for a perfect whole, opening a new world to thought.

Wordsworth was an artist who drew his material from whatever source was necessary for his communication and who used his matter sparingly or extensively, figuratively or literally according to his desires. He possessed an absolute genius for taking the usual and transforming it into the significant. Whether he used only allusions to the family

or expanded the familial relationship into poems, his language and imagery were fresh, and he successfully communicated his experience to the readers, who can say: "This I have felt; this I have experienced; I am strong in spirit for having encountered this idea."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As the reader of this thesis turns to its close, he must reflect upon universality and remember the use of the earth as an old poetic image of motherhood. Frequently, Wordsworth used only allusions to the earth as a mother and did not develop the mother-image, seeming, as it were, to assume that all readers would know the characteristic traits of a mother and realize them in the epithet "Mother Earth." However, his poetry contains many images of the earth-mother which expand into human-like elements. The "Invocation to Earth," for example, is an expanded metaphor of the earth as a mother. It depicts maternal characteristics and in the following passage shows how the earth, like the human mother, is fettered:

'Rest, rest perturbed Earth!
Oh rest, thou doleful Mother of Mankind!'
A Spirit sang in tones more plaintive than the wind
'I come thy stains to wash away,
Thy cherished fetters to unbind,
And open thy sad eyes upon a milder day.
The Heavens are thronged with martyrs that have risen
From out thy noisome prison.'¹

Wordsworth concluded his image of the earth-mother with the adjectives: "obdurate, proud, and blind," which have been

¹"Invocation To The Earth," ll. 1-10.

used to describe human mothers. It is hardly necessary to say that when he used the earth as symbolical of motherhood in his poetry, Wordsworth resorted to such an old and frequent figure of speech that modern generations are inclined to think in terms of Mother Earth, rather than Earth, and to let the words slip out of mind without summoning up an image. Many English poets before Wordsworth looked back to Chaucer's Mother-Earth metaphor in "The Pardoner's Tale," in which three rioters seeking Death so that they could slay him met "an oold and a poore," who said:

Thus walke I, lyk a restless kaityf,
 And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,
 I knobbe with my staff, both erly and late,
 And seye, 'Leeve mooder, leet me in!
 Lo how I vanysse, flesh, and blood, and skyn!
 Allas! whan shul my bones been at reste?
 Mooder, with you wolde I change my cheste
 Than in my chambre long tyme hath be,
 Ye, for an heyre clowt to wrappe in me!¹

The best known of Wordsworth's mother-earth images is developed in his greatest ode:

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
 And even with something of a mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely nurse doth all she can
 To make her Foster-Child, her Inmate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
 And that imperial palace whence he came.²

¹Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Pardoner's Tale," The Poetical Works of Chaucer, Cambridge ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1933), ll. 727-736.

²"Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," ll. 76-84.

The earth in this image was a possessive mother. She wanted her children to forget the former glories that they had known and give themselves entirely to her. To them she would be both law and impulse, as Nature was to Lucy:

Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A Lady of my own.

'Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The girl in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.'¹

Thus Wordsworth reflects upon parental possessiveness, which is the universal attribute with which I conclude my study of the parent-child theme.

All human mothers are possessive to an extent. Yet, none of Wordsworth's mothers were so possessive as was Nature or Earth. His own mother was not noticeably possessive; he remembered her only as offering expert guidance. Perhaps, his yearning for the love of a mother made him overlook in mothers the narrowing traits of possessiveness and to see only the redeeming qualities: forgiveness, unlimited love, pride in children, sacrifice, and happiness in the bondage of maternal love. To the possessive mother her children are her strength and hope.

¹"Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower," ll. 2-12.

All Wordsworth's mothers found strength and hope in their children. The mother in "The Waggoner" found peace and comfort when she was snug within Benjamin's wagon:

By this time she was snug within;
 She and her Babe, which to her breast
 With thankfulness the mother pressed.¹

Margaret, who fell into despair over her sick husband who had left her without farewell so that she could not follow him to sink "Beneath the misery of that wandering life,"² found her only strength in her children, who saved her from dying a death of sorrow.

. . . . but for her babe
 And for her little orphan boy she said,
 She had no wish to live, that she must
 die of sorrow.³

The mad mother in "Her Eyes Are Wild" found her only joy in her infant, who "saves for me my precious soul"⁴ and gave her strength to live:

Without me my sweet babe would die.
 'Then do not fear, my boy, for thee
 Bold as a lion will I be
 And I will always be thy guide.'⁵

The desire to possess and caress children is so great in some women that they can find comfort in the children of another

¹"The Waggoner," ll. 242-246.

²The Excursion, Bk. I, l. 681.

³Ibid., ll. 848-851.

⁴"Her Eyes Are Wild," l. 48.

⁵Ibid., ll. 50-53.

woman. This is especially true of women who have never given suck to their own child or who have lost one of their own children either in death or through separation. The emigrant mother, driven from her home and child in France to England, daily visited a poor neighboring cottage: "For sake of a young Child whose home was there."¹ The poet imagined that she expressed the "workings of her heart" thus:

'Dear Babe, thou daughter of another,
One moment, let me be thy mother!
An infant's face and looks are thine
And sure a mother's heart is mine.
Thy own dear mother's far away,
At labor in the harvest field:
Thy sister is at play;--
What warmth, what comfort would it yield
To my poor heart, if thou wouldst be
One little hour a child to me!'²

The child afforded the emigrant peace and contentment as long as she was with it:

'While thou art mine, my little love,
This cannot be a sorrowful grove;
Contentment, hope, and mother's glee,
I seem to find them all in thee.'³

The desire for complete possession is often so great that a mother can hardly bear the idea of another woman's having her child. The Indian woman felt that her child belonged with her until her death. She was pained to know that he had been

¹"The Emigrant Mother," l. 8.

²Ibid., ll. 15-20.

³Ibid., ll. 85-88.

given to another. Though he were only an infant, she imagined that he cast longing looks at her, not wanting to depart from her:

My child they gave thee to another,
 A woman who was not thy mother.
 When from my arms my Babe they took
 And me how strange did look!
 Through his whole body something ran,
 A most strange working did I see;
 As if he strove to be a man,
 That he might pull the sledge for me;
 And then he stretched his arms how wild!
 Oh mercy! like a helpless child.¹

Her only consolation in dying was in imagining that her child would have protected her. She felt that dying would be easy if the child were near:

My poor forsaken Child, if I
 For once could have thee close to me,
 With happy heart I then would die,
 And my last thought would happy be.²

Besides the child's being the strength and hope of his mother, he may likewise cause her anxiety, which is present in all types of mothers. The possessive mother, however, is full of fears and holds her children prisoners of fond fears, only releasing them when fortune is fair. Only one of Wordsworth's mothers, Luke's mother, hid her anxiety; she concealed her anxiety for Luke in her fears of what his departure would mean to him. To reveal anxiety in mothers, Wordsworth chose

¹"The Complaint Of a Forsaken Indian Woman," ll. 31-40.

²Ibid., ll. 64-67.

mothers of defective children, mothers who suffered pangs wrought by the death of their children, and mothers who did not know what fate had befallen their children. If the anxiety were relieved, all his mothers succumbed to hysteria. Many of the mothers who never received an alleviation to their anxious minds developed psychoparesis and became wandering vagrants. When the Idiot Boy was lost, his mother was impotent with fear, becoming hysterical when she found him. The mother of the Blind Boy suffered likewise. She had always protected her son, of whom she was very proud:

And proud she was of heart when clad
 In crimson stockings, and tartan plaid,
 And bonnet with a feather gay,
 To kirk he on sabbath day
 Went hand in hand with her.¹

She loved him, no doubt, more than her other children, for her anxiety, as is true of most mothers, for him seemed to strengthen her love. Wherever she was,

She thought of him with constant care,
 And more than mother's love.²

She felt that she would sin if she suffered ill to befall him. When he went out to sea in a Turtle-shell to seek his father, who was a sailor far out in the seas, she fainted with fear; then, when she discovered that he had been found, she rejoiced and loosed uncontrolled tears:

¹"The Blind Highland Boy," ll. 31-35.

²Ibid., ll. 29-30.

Rejoiced when waking she espies
 The child; when she can trust her eyes
 And touches the blind Boy.

She led him home and wept amain,
 When he was in the house again;
 Tears flowed in torrents from her eyes;
 She kissed him--how could she chastise?
 She was too happy far.¹

Two poems especially--"Maternal Grief" and "The Sailor's Mother"--show Wordsworth's artistry in penetrating a mother's grief and emotion over a dead child. The former deals characteristically with a mother, who, grief-stricken over the death of one child, neglects another child, who, reproached by a mother's distress and grief, steals away to find joy in his "known haunts." Though the mother had the twin son left with her, she grieved so over the deceased daughter that she could not be thankful for having been spared one child to uphold her maimed spirit. Rather than find consolation in the surviving child, she found pain and "food for self-reproach" in his "sweetest voice" and "from his happiest looks":

The Mother, in her turns of anguish, worse
 Than desolate; for oft-times from the sound
 Of the survivor's sweetest voice (dear child,
 He knew it not) and from his happiest looks,
 Did she extract the food of self-reproach,
 As one that lived ungrateful for the slay
 By Heaven afforded to uphold her maimed
 And tottering spirit. And full oft the Boy,
 Now first acquainted with distress and grief,

¹Ibid., ll. 231-240.

Shrunk from his Mother's presence, shunned
 with fear
 Her sad approach and stole away to find,
 In his known haunts of joy where'er he might,
 A more congenial object.¹

Fortunately, the mother's pangs softened, and she began to renew the association between her and the son, who, "like a scared Bird," turned eyes full of pensive fear upon his mother when she stooped to kiss him. Eventually, however, both became calm and cheerful enough to join in walks which led them each time to the grave of the deceased child. "The Sailor's Mother" portrays a mother who finds solace in the child's most valued possession. The Sailor's mother, typical of the parent who wants some tangible possession of the deceased child, traveled on many long, wearisome journeys seeking for anything that her son might have left behind him when he last sailed. In her search she found a singing-bird, which he had left behind: "From bodings as might be, that hung upon his mind."² The bird which she carried with her gave her comfort because her son "took so much delight in it."

Perhaps, no worse fate can befall a mother than to have her child disappear and never to learn what fate he may have encountered. The gnawing anxiety and hopeful longing cankers the mind. Margaret, typical of the mother who has a

¹"Maternal Grief," ll. 41-54.

²"The Sailor's Mother," l. 24.

child to disappear, was unable to find solace. Her son, who was among the "prime in worth," was also

An object beauteous to behold;
Well born, well bred, I sent him forth
Ingenuous, innocent, and bold:
If things ensued that wanted grace
As hath been said, they were not base;
And never blush was on my face.¹

In her many horrible imaginings, she thought of the various horrors that could have befallen her son:

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
Or thou upon a desert thrown
Inheritest the lion's den;
Or hast been summoned to the deep
Thou, thou and all thy mates to keep
An incommunicable sleep.²

She had expected some telepathy from him; at last, however, she had despaired of such intercourse:

I look for ghosts; but none will force
Their way to me; 'tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Between the living and the dead;
For surely, then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.³

Her mind was fraught with apprehensions which "came in crowds":

I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass.
I question things and do not find

¹"The Affliction of Margaret," ll. 15-21.

²Ibid., ll. 50-56.

³Ibid., ll. 57-63.

And that will answer to my mind,
And all the world appears unkind.¹

She was troubled beyond relief when she could not receive some news which would bring surcease to her sorrow; she was agitated by uncertainty, which had held her for seven years, seven years "To have despaired, have hoped, believed"² and to have been forever beguiled. She was alone with her grief without any earthly friend to console her.

Really, all Wordsworth's parents, both fathers and mothers, are to a degree possessive, for he depicted no parent who permitted the child complete liberty, whether the liberty meant success or failure. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sternness and severity were the traits highly regarded in parents. Even today, the modern methods and teachings of psychology have not developed in great numbers the parent, especially the mother, entirely free of possessiveness. "Nothing is rarer than the mother who respects the human person in her child, who recognizes his liberty in failure," says Mme. de Beauvoir in her book entitled The Second Sex.³ Wordsworth certainly could not have sanctioned mothers' giving their offspring complete freedom when he as a parent granted no such license to his own children, as I

¹Ibid., ll. 65-70.

²Ibid., l. 11.

³Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex: Woman's Life Today, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 586.

have shown in Chapter II, Wordsworth, The Parent. To him the animal mother, which he used frequently, represented the perfect mother, brooding over her young, giving them suck, defending them, and fearing for them. The animal mother, "blessed by all a mother's joys," is not often subjected to the sorry plight that human mothers meet. Only one of Wordsworth's animal mothers, the ewe, was beset by worry for her young, and that anxiety was only momentary, for when her lamb fell into the stream, it was rescued immediately by two small boys, who replaced it by the mother's side. His human mothers, despite their extreme care and devotion with respect to their children, often knew only sore distress. Their only pleasure evolved from their willing assumption of their maternal responsibilities and duties. Adversities--lack of a husband and home, economic insecurities, the cruelties of society and nature--did not diminish their care and affection for their children.

Ah! little doth the young one dream,
 When full of play and childish cares,
 What power is in his wildest scream,
 Heard by his mother unawares!
 He knows it not, he cannot guess:
 Years to a mother bring distress;
 But do not make her love the less.¹

Wordsworth felt that motherhood brought a recompense that outweighed any penalties that accompanied it, that there

¹"The Affliction of Margaret," ll. 22-28.

was a pleasure in association with the "very weakness" of the infant which "captivates like passive meekness" the mother

. . . . under warrant
 Of the universal Parent
 Who repays in season due
 Them who have, like thee, been true
 To the filial chain let down
 From his everlasting throne,
 Angels hovering round thy couch,
 With their softest whispers vouch,
 That--whatever griefs may fret,
 Cares entangle, sins beset,
 This thy First-born, and with tears
 Stain her cheek in future years--
 Heavenly succor, not denied
 To the babe, whate'er betide,
 Will to the woman be supplied!¹

His wife, Mary Wordsworth, likewise became a "thankful captive of maternal bonds," with the approval of her husband and resigned "Her share in the freedom of that life"² enjoyed by them in common, leaving the wild paths alone to her husband.

Wordsworth, feeling that the parental traits of a father differ very little from those of a mother, drew word portraits of some fathers analogous to those of mothers. He did not, however, depict an extremely dominating mother, whereas he did make a few of his fathers extremely domineering. Perhaps, he delegated domination to his fathers because dominance was characteristic of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fathers. His own grandfather and uncles, who, perhaps,

¹"To-- , upon the Birth of her First-born Child," 11.45-59.

²The Excursion, Bk. III, l. 552.

furnished him some of his images, he considered domineering and meddling. In most instances it was girls who suffered most from paternal domination; and in rebelling from restraint, they met with painful distress which usually resulted from illicit love affairs. One girl only, the Armenian Lady, found happiness in her escape from the domination of a father. With high and holy affections she departed with her lover from her father's house without

. . . . a knell
Of sorrow in her heart while through her
father's door,
And from her narrow world, she passed
forevermore.¹

to find pleasures where

Gentle pleasures round her moved,
Like a tutelary spirit
Reverenced, like a sister loved.²

Ruth, however, was not so fortunate when she chose marriage as a means of escape from her unpleasant home and its sordid surroundings. The youth from Georgia deserted her. Becoming psychotic, she was put into a prison, whence she escaped to become a vagrant who sought "her shelter and her bread" where "she liked best."³ Sons, likewise, suffered ill fate as a result of the power wrought by a domineering and relentless

¹"The Armenian Lady's Love," ll. 76-78.

²Ibid., ll. 146-148.

³"Ruth," l. 210.

father. Vaudracour, like Julia, had his happiness marred because his unyielding father indignantly spurned the thought of the son's alliance with a woman who, though attractive and ingenuous, was plebeian. Though the young couple were forbidden to marry, they continued to meet clandestinely and finally succumbed to the evils of clandestine affairs. Determined to protect Julia, an expectant mother, Vaudracour went to his father to sacrifice his birthright so that he might secure a financial settlement and then be able to pledge his love "Upon the altar to the Maid he loved."¹ The father, infuriated by his son's intention, ordered him seized by three armed men, one of whom Vaudracour murdered. After having served his sentence for murder, he, then only twenty-four years of age, took his son, orphaned by Julia's entrance into a nunnery, to a deep lodge in a forest, where he found consolation in tending the baby until it died. From this time forth, "He never shared a smile with mortal creature."² Nine Norton brothers met death because they were victims of a father's selfish desires. Eight of his sons followed their father into battle and death. The ninth son, drawn by the magnetism of his father's sternness and domination, followed to the scene of the battle, which he observed from a distant hill. Seeing his loved ones fall, he rushed to

¹"Vaudracour and Julia," l. 119.

²Ibid., l. 284.

the scene, grabbed the banner, which his only sister had made under her father's stern command against her own desire, and marched into the affray to meet death, leaving the only daughter of Norton to lead a lonely life.

Fortunately, not all of Wordsworth's fathers were stern and cruel like those to whom I have referred or like the Roman Consul who doomed to death his sons "Who had their country betrayed."¹ Most of them, like his mothers, bore their paternal obligations proudly and ably, gaining strength and pleasure from their children. Neither did they love their errant children less for their failures; they also suffered, though none of them succumbed to madness, as did some mothers when their children failed. With the exception of Michael, whose despair led him to his grave, the fathers, perhaps, bore their sorrow more commendably than did the mothers. Timothy's self-control was characteristic of the suffering fathers. When the coffin bearing his last child had passed across his threshold,

Old Timothy took up his staff, and he shut
With a leisurely motion the door of his hut.

And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek.²

Mateless, they found assurance in caring for their children. One father, who had been the "solitary prop" of many children

¹"Sonnets Upon the Punishment of Death," l. 2.

²"The Childless Father," ll. 15-20.

for eight years, felt no sadness when he thought of what he saw daily in his happy family, though the father was not gay:

--Bright garland form they for the pensive brow
Of their undrooping Father's widowhood,
Those six fair Daughters, budding yet--not one.

Deprest, and desolate of soul as once
That Father was and filled with anxious fear,
Now, by experience taught, he stands assured,
That God, who takes away, yet takes not half
Of what he seems to take; or gives it back,
Not to our prayer; but far beyond our prayer;
He gives it--the boon produce of a soil
Which our endeavors have refused to till,
And hope hath never watered.¹

Wordsworth loved both fathers and mothers. He considered Father and Mother to be the greatest names that could be bestowed upon a man and a woman. The terms were sacred to him, as may be seen in the Prelude in such observations as, "A Father,--'fore he bore that sacred name,"² and in the following verses from "Sponsors":

Father! to God himself we cannot give
A holier name! then lightly do not bear
Both names conjoined, but of thy spiritual care
Be duly mindful: still more sensitive
Do Thou, in truth a second Mother, strive
Against disheartening custom.³

A loving father, Wordsworth felt, lives eternally in the memory of a child:

¹The Excursion, Bk. VI, ll. 1127-1139.

²Prelude, Bk. VII, l. 603.

³Ll. 1-6.

That Pile of Turf is half a century old;
 Yes Traveller, fifty winters have been told
 Since suddenly the dart of death went forth
 'Gainst him who raised it, his last work on earth's
 Thence has it, with the Son, so strong a hold
 Upon his Father's memory, that his hands,
 Through reverence, touch it only to repair
 Its waste.¹

A pile of stones near a yew tree brought memories of his own
 father, whom he knew for only a short time:

. . . . Who he was
 That piled these stones and with the mosay sod
 First covered, and here taught this aged Tree
 With its dark arms to form a circling bower,
 I well remember.--He was one who owned
 No common soul. In youth by science nursed,
 And led by nature into a wild scene
 Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth
 A favored Being, knowing no desire
 Which genius did not hallow; 'gainst the taint
 Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy and hate,
 And scorn,--against all enemies prepared,
 All but neglect. The world, for so it thought,
 Owed him no service; wherefore he at once
 With indignation turned himself away,
 And with the food of pride sustained his soul
 In solitude.

.
 In this deep vale
 He died,--this seat his only monument.²

The value of living and affectionate parents was
 understood and appreciated by Wordsworth. To him the per-
 fect household bliss depended on both parents' being alive.
 Surviving grandparents, however, enhanced the family bliss,
 which could be obtained in spite of gloomy surroundings:

¹"Filial Piety," ll. 5-12.

²"Lines," ll. 7-24, 46-47.

There, by the door a hoary-headed sire
 Touch'd with his witherd hand an aged lyre
 Beneath an old-grey oak as violets lie,
 Stretch'd at his feet with steadfast, upward eye,
 His children's children joined the holy sound,
 A hermit--with his family round.¹

He felt that a happy family, though ever so underprivileged
 and impoverished, even if it were of a persecuted race, had
 elements in it bespeaking holiness and Heaven:

The Mother--her thou must have seen,
 In spirit, ere she came
 To dwell these rifted rocks between,
 Or found on earth a name;
 An image, too, of that sweet Boy,
 Thy inspirations give--
 Of playfulness, and love, and joy,
 Predistined here to live.

Downcast, or shooting glances far,
 How beautiful his eyes,
 That blend the nature of the star
 With that of summer skies!
 I speak as if of sense beguiled;
 Uncounted months are gone,
 Yet am I with the Jewish Child,
 That exquisite Saint John.

I see the dark-brown curls, the brow,
 The smooth transparent skin,
 Refined, as with intent to show
 The holiness within;
 The grace of parting Infancy
 By blushes yet untamed;
 Age faithful to the mother's knee,
 Nor of her arms ashamed.

Two lovely Sisters, still and sweet
 As flowers, stand side by side;
 Their soul-subduing looks might cheat
 The Christian of his pride:

¹Descriptive Sketches, ll. 170-175.

Such beauty hath the Eternal poured
 Upon them not forlorn,
 Though of a lineage once abhorred,
 Not yet redeemed from scorn.

Mysterious safeguard, that, in spite
 Of poverty and wrong,
 Doth here preserve a living light,
 From Hebrew fountains sprung;
 That gives this ragged group to cast
 Around the dell a gleam
 Of Palestine, of glory past,
 And proud Jerusalem!¹

In this thesis the writer has endeavored to show that a great part of Wordsworth's imagery was drawn from actual occurrences and from imaginative incidents which were realistic enough to make the reader accept them as true experiences or as experiences which could occur. The poet's images revealed truths, which were acceptable, though some of them were sordid. They were of ordinary society, adaptable to ordinary society. They, void of the sensuous and the discordant, transformed the prosaic into the poetic, giving the reader, through their intensity, evocativeness, audacity, and fertility, an emotional reassurance from the sense of communal feelings. Wordsworth's acute observation and his use of concrete details, arranged so as to draw attention to particular values that the reader might realize, excite the sympathy of the reader, who feels a harmony in the union of internal and external man. His images of parents and children become a rich and

¹"A Jewish Family," ll. 9-48.

pure source of reflection for the reader, who feels better for having encountered them as he draws a solemn image of a family to his heart to love:

Glad sight wherever new with old
Is joined through some dear homeborn tie;
The life of all that we behold
Depends upon that mystery.
Vain is the glory of the sky,
The beauty vain of field and grove,
Unless, while with admiring eye
We gaze, we also learn to love.¹

¹"Poems Of The Fancy," xx, 1-8.

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