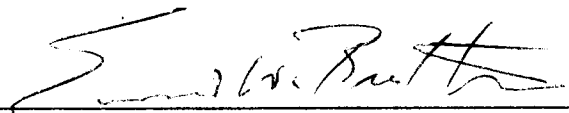
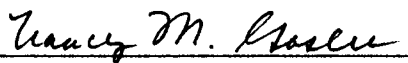
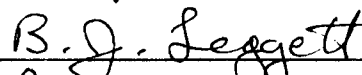
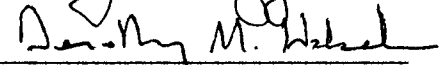


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Lisa Plummer Crafton entitled "The Strange Altering Eye: Patterns of Creative Perception in Wordsworth's and Blake's Lyrics." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.


Edward W. Bratton, Major Professor

We have read this
dissertation and
recommend its
acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost
and Dean of The Graduate School

THE STRANGE ALTERING EYE:
PATTERNS OF CREATIVE PERCEPTION IN
WORDSWORTH'S AND BLAKE'S LYRICS

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

Lisa Plummer Crafton
December 1990

This dissertation is dedicated to
my husband,
John Micheal Crafton,
for support and encouragement
beyond belief.

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ABSTRACT

This study is based upon the assumption that Blake and Wordsworth considered imaginative perception as a defining feature of their work, that they emphasized its significance for living one's life fully, and that they used their lyric structures as catalysts for developing their readers' creative perceptions. The general aims of my analysis are to reveal the powerful similarities between Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads and Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience in their heuristic intention, affective form, and rhetorical effect.

Both Wordsworth and Blake structure their lyrics to effect an imaginative change in their readers. Wordsworth's strategies are characterized by suspensions which occur in the texts on three levels: between his companion or Lucy poems, within the dialogue of characters, and within the rhetoric of the poem itself. Similarly, Blake evokes suspension between companion poems of Innocence/Experience, poems of dialogue within Experience, and rhetorically dialogic forces at work within the single lyric, typified by "London."

Finally, attentive readers of these texts can be enabled to participate in the affective structures so carefully shaped by the authors.

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Chapter I

Romantic Contexts and the Lyric as Genre

A recent review of an anthology of women's poetry takes up the status of one of the oldest and most common forms of poetry: the lyric. Entitled "The Hard Life of the Lyric," the article suggests that these "immense little wonders" that are most often grouped under the heading of lyric are, in a critically sophisticated age, underappreciated and oversimplified. The pages of recent academic discourse, however, prove otherwise. Critical attention to the lyric may, in fact, experience a renaissance if we heed the attention given the genre by a 1985 collection of critical essays. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker's compilation Lyric Poetry: After New Criticism points to a redefinition of the lyric through a variety of critical viewpoints. The editors validate the book's utility by arguing for its presentation of diverse critical axes which, focused on one genre, bring contemporary critical questions to bear in a way that is thoroughly accessible. This diversity is a major strength in the book, suggesting the extent to which these little "wonders" are rich fields for investigation. While critics cannot agree on a single generic definition of lyric, the essays exemplify various emphases that can be

made. By examining lyric as genre, we can posit a new strategy of interpretation that uncovers and reveals new emphases in Blake's and Wordsworth's early work. That is, a strategy which emphasizes how these poets shape the form of the lyric is most appropriate for a re-view of Blake and Wordsworth, for it is in their lyrics that we see a significant parallel. Blake and Wordsworth both use their lyrics to argue for and serve as catalysts for creative perception in the reader. By exploring representative lyrics from Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, we see an impulse not only to reform conceptions about man, nature, and society but also to reform human perception, as Blake challenges in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell to cleanse the doors of perception: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (E39).¹ Thus, Wordsworth and Blake, in both the aim and the subject matter of their poetry, seek to reform ideas about human perception by emphasizing the potentials of imaginative thinking, and the form of the lyric, with careful arrangement of

¹All quotations from Blake's poetry and prose are taken from The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (NY: Doubleday, 1988) and are documented by page numbers.

diction, syntax, imagery, and sound patterns, provides the actual engagement with the reader to stimulate this radical imaginative capability.

As a helpful starting point in investigating the genre, we might examine various modern approaches to lyric. In "Changes in the Study of Lyric," Jonathan Culler explores how critical approaches to lyric have changed since Northrop Frye's influential, almost legendary definition of lyric as "preeminently the utterance that is overheard" (Anatomy 265). That utterance, a subjective voice, then became the focus for New Criticism's reconstruction of a context for the voice: tone, situation, intention, and attitude of speaker. As M. H. Abrams' Glossary of Literary Terms defines it, lyric is "any fairly short nonnarrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling" (81). Viewing lyrics as mere utterances or plausible speech acts, however, limits their significance in many ways. The idea of subjectivity of voice may discourage careful stylistic attention to rhetoric and syntax. Culler suggests problems in using this approach to lyric because it is difficult to imagine a plausible context for many lyric passages, and, indeed, many of Wordsworth's and Blake's lyrics have unusual settings and events that work on the mind of the reader

primarily because of their implausibility. If we must try, as Barbara Hernstein Smith suggests, to "conceive of the kind of situation that might lead a man to feel thus and to speak thus" (33), then we might have to say about some lyrics that they are "fictive representations of utterances by speakers who are waxing poetical" (Culler 39). In other words, this theory may very well sidestep the careful artistry of syntax and sound patterns except as these elements can inform us about the speaker.

Some of the most important considerations of lyric may be seen under Frye's peculiar division of form into "babble" and "doodle." What Frye calls "babble" or melos refers to the sound associations that lead to rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and puns whereas "doodle" or opsis involves the elaboration of "verbal design" (Anatomy 278), the patterns of sentences and stanzas. This distinction is very effectively defined by Danby as intrinsic versus extrinsic relations, those of the words between themselves and those of pattern, structure, and stanza. In Frye's terminology, however, lies a significant revelation about lyric. As Frye suggests, verbal design works in the lyric as "riddle," or "the use of an object of sense experience to stimulate a mental activity in connection with it" (Anatomy 280). Further, riddle, originally cognate with "read," seems "intimately

involved with the whole process of reducing language to visible form" (280). Thinking of the "verbal design" or extrinsic form in terms of a riddle suggests that we view the poem as a creation that puzzles and must be figured out, an appropriate definition for the particularly puzzling lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth. Again, as Culler points out, to think of lyrics as representations of possible utterances "makes it harder to explore them as ingenious artifacts that puzzle or riddle" (41).

This idea of poem as puzzle is taken up by Riffaterre's Semiotics of Poetry, which treats the reading process in two stages: heuristic and hermeneutic. The hermeneutic, or retroactive reading, stage follows the heuristic, or first reading, and is the re-reading process in which a reader revises, modifies, reviews, and decodes what he read before. A poem becomes, in this view, an art form that "says one thing and means another" (Riffaterre 1), puzzling the reader with contradictions all the while but providing clues which the reader can identify: "Then suddenly the puzzle is solved, everything falls into place; indeed the whole poem ceases to be descriptive, ceases to be a sequence of mimetic signs, and becomes a single sign, perceived from the end back to its given" (12). This given focus is what he calls the "matrix," which is a kernel sentence or thought out of which the

poem has been constructed. Riffaterre's treatment of poem as riddle, then, suggests that lyric can be described without reference to the attitudes of a speaker.

Riffaterre finally takes this further to see poems as intertextual constructs which refer primarily to prior discourse of various sorts. Here he modifies the theory of intertextuality as worked out primarily by Harold Bloom. Bloom, of course, is concerned with poets, not just speakers, who create their poems by battling other poets in the tradition. For Bloom, poems are "psychic battlefields" where the poet creates a space for himself in the literary tradition through the misinterpretations of precursor poets. Poets may wrestle successfully with their precursor traditions, but, nevertheless, writers are directly or indirectly influenced by other writers' texts; thus, a part of one's own writing is rewriting others'. Riffaterre's theory of intertextuality, on the other hand, is firmly grounded within textuality, the relationships among texts which incorporate other texts. Thus, after New Criticism, many theories refer us to speakers who do not autonomously control their own texts, much less their feelings and speech, and who theoretically become a product of the intertextuality. Finally, the study of babble and doodle for their own sake, rather than how they inform the attitudes of a speaker, culminates in

deconstructive theories of de Man and Derrida. Paul de Man, for example, in his response to Cleanth Brooks' New Critical reading of Yeats' "Among School Children," shifts attention away from the complex attitudes of that speaker to the grammatical and rhetorical structure of the text, what we may call the problematics of language itself. A formalist search for organic, unifying forces is replaced by a recognition of contradictions, gaps, and discontinuities which the text creates.

Study of the lyric then from New Criticism through deconstruction has shifted in very significant ways. First, it has shifted from focus on the utterance of a speaker to language itself and increased interest in "babble" and "doodle" as a means in themselves. Also, there has been a reorientation toward an intertextuality which no longer sees only the conscious influences of one author (and all of his/her sociopolitical concerns) upon another but rather the invisible, involuntary ways by which texts assimilate other texts. At the same time, the lyric has also proved fertile ground for New Historical and Marxist critics, who see all these theories as deficient due to their neglect of the fact that every lyric voice had an original owner, the historical person who created the text, who was immersed in a sociopolitical context that must have informed his or her writing and

must inform our reading. Annabel Patterson, for example, suggests that lyricism is "a product of its relations [its sociopolitical contexts]. In her analysis of Jonson's The Underwood, Patterson implies that lyricism, not only Jonson's, must always be viewed in its sociopolitical context even in its "declarations of individuality and especially in its silences" (153). Further, she regrets any theoretical orientation in which lyrics become divorced from their contexts and are "treated as 'isolated' texts, decontaminated, as far as the critic can manage it, from any author's actual experiences or concerns" (151).

Each of these major shifts in the study of lyric-- focus on language and form, investigation of intertextuality, and a renewed, critically aware interest in historical aims and concerns of the author--provides a framework for a rewarding strategy to view the lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth. Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads provide striking parallels in ways other than the traditional comparisons of their content, social concerns, and ballad form. Critical studies of Blake and Wordsworth have often focused on their view of childhood, innocence, nature, or revolution or their respective poetic revolutions and epic

ventures.² However, the only focused, book-length study of the lyrics of each is Heather Glen's Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's Songs and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, which provides a survey of the popular and literary influences on their lyrics and an evaluation of their themes. This study is a step in the right direction, although far short of an objective comparative analysis of the texts themselves.³

Glen's study does, however, focus attention on what I believe is the most powerful link between Blake and Wordsworth --their appropriation of the lyric. As further chapters will prove, what will be most productive for studying the lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth is a critical investigation which can accomplish two things. It should

²For general comparisons of some of these themes, see the following studies: Kathleen Raine's Blake and the New Age (London, 1979); Herbert Grierson's Lyrical Poetry From Blake to Hardy (London, 1928); Northrop Frye's Fearful Symmetry (Princeton, 1947); E. D. Hirsch's Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake (New Haven, 1964); John Danby's The Simple Wordsworth (London, 1960); and Thomas Vogler's Preludes to Vision: Epic Ventures in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane (Berkeley, 1971). For a complete bibliography of comparative criticism through 1982, see James R. Bennett's "The Comparative Criticism of Blake and Wordsworth: A Bibliography," Wordsworth Circle 14.2 (Spring 1983):99-106.

³While Glen's is the first book-length study of the lyrics, Blake and Wordsworth have been paired as part of broader studies. See, for example, Wallace Jackson's The Probable and the Marvelous: Blake, Wordsworth, and the Eighteenth Century Critical Tradition (Athens, 1978) and Jacomina Kortelling's Mysticism in Blake and Wordsworth (Amsterdam, 1928).

account for authorial aims and concerns, thus giving validity to the authors' context and their purposes (avowed or implicit) for their poetry. For Blake and Wordsworth, that means a consideration of their avowed aims to stimulate what they saw as a complacent eighteenth-century reading public by engaging them in imaginative interpretation. A primary motivation for the lyrics of these poets was an attempt not only to represent vivid illustrations of people living imaginatively, creatively perceiving the world, but also to make those truths incarnate in the form of the lyric. That is, many lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth both show examples of and serve as catalysts for creative perception. Thus, a second goal of such an intertextual method is to take into account how the poem gestures toward an audience, since the poems seek to change the reader through their form as well as their content. Blake and Wordsworth clearly recognized and emphasized the importance of the effect of their work on their audience. This historical fact regarding their aim is enough to suggest that the field of reader-response criticism is not only viable but appropriate for these authors. As Meisenhelder points out, given Wordsworth's voluminous prose in which the issue of the reader's role consistently appears, "it is curious that the interaction between text and reader has informed

so little modern criticism of Wordsworth's poetry" (7). Similarly, Nicolas Warner has suggested the same regarding Blake, specifically that "Iser's phenomenologically based theory of reader-response" reveals a "striking affinity with Blake's own esthetic theories" (18). A rhetorical analysis of the lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth uncovers multiple possibilities of interpretation, and if the reader is indeed, as Riffaterre suggests, "puzzled" upon first reading, the hermeneutic stage allows a careful reader to discover keys to successful interpretation.

Frye's contemporary essay "Approaching the Lyric" implies ways by which reception aesthetics can be a profitable part of critical strategies to unravel the lyric.⁴ Frye's main point is that lyric is opposed to narrative by the reader's experience of space and time as he reads. That is, narrative poetry is built upon pure continuity--it has a beginning and tells a story until the end. Even though the narrative takes the reader away from factual reality to the dimension of the story, it is the lyric which truly contains an element of discontinuity. Through the author, we turn away from our ordinary experience in space/time. The lyric poet not only removes

⁴Frye points out that theories of lyric as pure subjectivity are inadequate; after all, The Prelude or Childe Harold's Pilgrimage is subjective but not lyric. Also, the lyric impulse may well be communal, as in the Psalms. See pp.31-2.

us from our ordinary experience, but also takes us to a dimension wherein a speaker is turning away from space and time, or the author deliberately obstructs the readers' participation in the narrative, placing them outside the "story" of the text. The author may employ various means to achieve these discontinuities. Most obviously, the poem's persona or subject may itself originate from some block of normal activity, e.g. a frustrated lover, a death, a dearth of critical inspiration. Or, the thread of discontinuity may be directed at the reader in several ways. The author may himself call out to the reader as does Wordsworth in several of his inscription poems. "Inscribed Upon a Rock" begins with the bold address, "Pause, Traveller! whosoe'er thou be," and "Stay, bold Adventurer" opens the poem "Written With a Slate Pencil On a Stone." Blake's prophetic addresses to the reader work in the same way, as in "Hear the voice of the Bard! / Who Present, Past, & Future sees," Blake's first lines to the "Introduction" to Songs of Experience. Furthermore, this discontinuity may be achieved in the apostrophic mode by calling out to whatever the author is reflecting upon. "O Rose, thou art sick," Blake chants as the opening line to his poem about (among other things) secret love, "The Sick Rose." Finally and most significantly for Blake and Wordsworth, this sense of discontinuity may be provoked by

difficulties in interpretation (what Wolfgang Iser terms a "hiatus" in the reading process). Whether the poem begins with a characteristically unbelievable or inaccessible setting or event (as often in Blake), or it leads up to an illogical, vexing conclusion (as often in Wordsworth), readers frequently find their experience of the poem discontinuous. Careful study, however, reveals that this discontinuity or blocking point becomes the entrance to another world of experience. This other world or creative dimension--realized at moments which Geoffrey Hartman (following Wordsworth) might call a suspension, Blake might call a "pulsation of the artery" (E127), or Iser a "hiatus" in the reading process--is a world characterized by creative perception for which the reader, in the apparent view of Wordsworth and Blake, is enabled through the unraveling of the poem. As Frye points out about Oriental lyric, all lyrics can be thought to have "hieroglyphic" qualities; that is, they give verbal cues but leave it for the reader "to recreate the process" ("Approaching the Lyric" 33). The lyric then for Blake and Wordsworth is an appropriate field for reception critics, especially if we note Blake's and Wordsworth's stated intentions for their poetry and if we are aware of the shifts in the field of language studies that were occurring in the last half of the eighteenth century.

Before we examine these and other crucial issues of context, however, we would do well to clarify exactly what tenets of the diverse field of reader-response criticism are useful to such an investigation.

As Jane Tompkins points out in her collection Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism, the field of reception aesthetics is not a conceptually unified critical position. Its only real unity exists in its opposition to the New Critical dictum against the Affective Fallacy (Beardsley and Wimsatt 1949). All reader-response theories argue that a poem can not be understood entirely separate from its effects on an audience, and there are two general tenets of reception aesthetics that are similar to and applicable for study of romantic lyric poetry: first, an assumption of the importance of the author's attitude towards his or her readers and second, an interest in investigating the role, if any, that readers play in the production of meaning (this is not the same as saying that readers actually provide the meaning). Other concerns of reader-response such as the status of the reader's self, the types of readers (Gibson's mock reader, Prince's narratee, Iser's implied reader, Riffaterre's superreader, or Bleich's community of interpreters), and the degree of textual autonomy are not issues which significantly add to my own

critical study. However, by investigating both the author's attitude toward his readers and the ways in which readers are called to participate in the production of meaning, we come to a richer understanding of Blake and Wordsworth.

The field of reader-response criticism could be said to have started with I. A. Richards on emotional response in the 1920's. Yet, more significant was Walker Gibson's 1950 essay on the mock reader because it shows reader-response evolving within formalism. Gibson is the first to suggest that readers' activities are relevant, even though he is still very text-centered. His mock reader is analogous to the persona in a text and is a role that the real reader is asked to play (to accept or reject) during the reading process. Riffaterre notably advances the emphasis on emotional and intellectual activities of a reader moving through a text line by line. He also moves toward a theoretical position which assumes that meaning is not isolated in the text but exists in conjunction with the reader's activity. From this supposition, some critics have viewed the reader's activity as actually constitutive of literary meaning. First to propose this was Stanley Fish, whose essay "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" makes the reader's cognitive activity the subject of study. Although I disagree with

Fish's conclusions, a major contribution is his narrow focus on the text as he rivets attention on the "sequence of decisions, revisions, anticipations, reversals, and recoveries that the reader negotiates through text" (Tompkins xvi). This kind of careful analysis is integral to a full understanding of Blake's and Wordsworth's aims to engage their readers in imaginative interpretation and to the aims of this study.⁵

From this short review, we can glean that the most valid and useful of these theories are simply those that encourage us as critics to examine the text in its rhetorical mode, in its position as message to an audience. For this reason, I believe the most valuable of these theorists are George Poulet and, most importantly, Wolfgang Iser. Both Poulet and Iser enrich an exploration of the Romantic lyric because they see the reading process itself as an active, vital experience, not just a

⁵Further variations of reception aesthetics include psychoanalytic critics Norman Holland and David Bleich, who put personal identity and self-awareness in the center of their studies, as well as the later work of Stanley Fish and that of Walter Michaels, who study the problematics of the interpreter's self, more a philosophical inquiry than literary criticism. See Norman Holland's Poems in Persons: An Introduction to the Psychoanalysis of Literature (NY, 1973); David Bleich's Subjective Criticism (Baltimore, 1978); Stanley Fish's "Interpreting the Variorum," Critical Inquiry 2 (Spring 1976): 465-85; and Walter Michael's "The Interpreter's Self: Peirce on the Cartesian 'Subject,'" Georgia Review 31 (Summer 1977): 383-402.

cognitive or grammatical one. Poulet, though he does not analyze a text's formal features, suggests that readers must steep themselves in the "consciousness" of the text in order to perceive its full meaning. Thus, by a kind of Wordsworthian "wise passiveness" (which isn't passive at all actually), we fully engage the text. Poulet's aim is similar to the Romantics' as he tries to understand how he "not only understand[s] but even feel[s] what [he] reads" (Poulet 60).

It is Iser's approach to reading that is strikingly similar to Wordsworth's stated and Blake's implicit theories of poetry. As Meisenhelder points out, in Wordsworth's Informed Reader, many connections between Wordsworth and reception aesthetics have yet to be explored by critics. "For Wordsworth, as for modern response critics, the meaning of a text is not an extractable philosophical 'truth' but an interaction between text and reader. The idea of a text as a 'dynamic happening' [Iser's phrase], as what a text does, is a crucial one for Wordsworth" (Meisenhelder 3). Iser theorizes that readers use various perspectives offered by the text which awakens responses as they move through the lines. For example, Iser suggests exploring the ways in which "sequent sentences" act upon one another, distorting and/or clarifying what came before. Most significantly,

Iser sees a reader's perception of texts as a dynamic, educational experience, and in this way he echoes both Wordsworth's direct statements on the aims of his poetry and what we may deduce from Blake's Marginalia, letters, and poetry. Iser points out that the fact that readers are differently affected by texts shows how "literary texts transform reading into a creative process that is far above mere perception of what is written. The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents" (Iser 278). That is, while all readers see the same letters and words on the page, each reader individually recreates, re-views, a version of that text. Also, Iser's theory undergirds Frye's definition of lyric as discontinuous in that there may be a "hiatus" in the flow of reading whose object may not be to complicate our response so much as to "make us aware of the nature of our own capacity for providing links" (Iser 279). This is much the same language used by Blake and Wordsworth in discussing what many readers found (and still find) the difficult nature of their texts. While Iser's theory, of course, applies to all reading, it is beyond the bounds of this study to offer a theory of reading. Rather, I believe that the Romantic lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth demonstrate and stimulate imaginative, creative perception in a consistently reader-

based way, and Iser's theories enable us to see that activity more clearly.

Finally, we can see the link between Iser's theory and the idea of individual perception, a subject that underwent radical transformation in the late eighteenth century. Iser's assumption that the human mind partly creates what it reads, what it perceives on the page, was at the forefront of philosophical debates about the origin and nature of knowledge and the role individual perception plays in the process of knowledge. However, the text for Iser is not defined solely by what an individual reader sees in it. In fact, it has a meaning infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations. The reader's perception of the various potentialities of the text is a dynamic experience that is shaped and limited by the text but not constituted by the written words. Finding meaning in literature is "not merely the discovery of the unformulated, which can then be taken over by the active imagination of the reader [an important part of the reading process], but it also entails the possibility that we may formulate ourselves" (Iser 294) or become transformed by the text.

Although Iser provides few practical applications for his theory, we may use his principles to formulate a strategy that deals with Romantic lyrics in a new way. We

must reconsider the changes in the study of lyric that have pointed to fruitful evaluation. First, the concern with language itself and its power over audiences should keep us oriented toward the text as an object of close scrutiny. Next, an awareness of intertextuality enables us to view Blake's and Wordsworth's lyrics profitably, not how they directly influence one another, but rather how their lyric poetic structures represent a common method. Finally, if we stay attentive to the fact that lyrics are not just pure subjectivity divorced from an actual context, we can allow for historical aims and intentions to inform our understanding. Further, such contextualizing will reveal how Blake's and Wordsworth's poetic structures work to educate their audience not simply by conveying a theme, but rather by stimulating readers' faculties. Likewise, the social, aesthetic, and intellectual contexts can be used to bring into sharper focus both the intentions and the achievements of the poetry. Understanding the contexts in which Blake's and Wordsworth's ideas germinated provides for a richer evaluation of the poets' aims.

The social upheaval of the years before and after the French Revolution and some of its philosophical underpinnings contributed greatly to Blake's and Wordsworth's views on perception. For Blake's work (Songs

of Innocence published 1789, Songs of Innocence and Experience published 1794), the influence of the revolutionary spirit itself informs his own. In these years, the French Revolution inspired a belief in the perfectability of man. As Abrams points out, coming so soon on the heels of the American Revolution, the initial successes of the French radical movement "shattered the limits of what had been thought to be humanly possible and raised the hope that . . . the race was at the point of entering upon enduring felicity in a renovated world" (Natural 330). Shelley, arguing for a "spirit of the age," claimed that the major poets were in large part created from "the new springs of thought and feeling, which the great events of our age have exposed to view" (Letters 127). The French Revolution was the foremost of these "great events," indeed, to Shelley, was the "master theme of the epoch in which we live" (Letters 504). Hazlitt described the mental temper of the early 1790's in what were to be recurrent contemporary metaphors: "That glad dawn of the day-star of liberty; that spring-time of the world" (4: 119). Wordsworth, in The Prelude, asserts "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!" (X.692-3),⁶ and Southey, nostalgically

⁶All quotations from The Prelude are taken from the 1805 version in The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850, eds. Jonathon Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill,

reflecting upon his radical youth, affirms, "Old things seemed passing away, and nothing was dreamt of but the regeneration of the human race" (qtd. in Abrams, Natural 330). The revolution was seen as a millennialist event, reviving the excitement of Milton and other seventeenth century predecessors. Blake's own prophetic poem The French Revolution (written 1791) depicts a peaceful consummation to the revolutionary events of July 1789. Blake envisions a radical change, a new Jerusalem, where the lion will literally lie down with the lamb, the soldier embrace the peasant, and the priest embrace the plowman. The ending of the poem suggests a calm that exists due to the efforts of his revolutionary heroes. However, the prophecy which the title page promises is to be "The French Revolution. A Poem, in Seven Books" was never completed, nor even published, possibly due to Blake's fear of being labeled seditious. Such a fear wouldn't be surprising considering that the suppression of the English radical movement included threats to publisher Joseph Johnson after the publication of Paine's Rights of Man, and in Leicester a bookseller who was described as a "dirty little Jacobin" spent eighteen months in prison for selling Paine.

More than just external oppression, however, the disillusion with events leading up to and after the execution of the King, the Reign of Terror, and the war affected the Romantics in a profound way. They began, by the end of the century, to move from a belief in apocalypse by revolution to belief in apocalypse by imagination--this, Abrams' thesis, is one of the definitions of Romanticism as a movement. The revolution that was such a cultural influence was a revolution that failed.

Wordsworth, in Books X-XII of the 1805 version of The Prelude, relates how the course of the Revolution, the war with England, his desperate attempts to rationalize the situation, and the ultimate loss of hope lead to a new, restored imagination in which he once again has sight of a new world. However, this new world is not a terrestrial one but a renovated vision of the world, a new way of seeing, a new interchange between "the object seen, and eye that sees" (XII.379). Even in 1798 when Wordsworth published Lyrical Ballads, he had begun to take up this challenge for a new way of seeing. This is not to say that Wordsworth does not argue for social reform, for revolutionary change in the world as well. His beggars, idiot boys, forsaken women, soldiers, and shepherds all comment on the ills of economic, military, and agricultural systems. However, it seems that Lyrical

Ballads, as a document, contains less movement toward social reform, more toward individual, internal reform than do Blake's Songs written during the thick of the aftermath of the French Revolution. Blake, during 1789-94 (years of the genesis of the Songs), may, as a whole, offer more direct treatment of social issues. This difference may be accounted for simply by Blake's being more of a "city" poet than a "nature" poet; that is, Blake's poetry offers more direct statements on the ills of London than Wordsworth's, and this concern logically points to more treatment of political issues. However, his interests in the ills of slavery, poverty, religious corruption, and child abuse (physical and emotional) are profoundly represented in his early works, whereas his prophecies or allegories of the reintegration of the imaginative man (The Book of Los, The Book of Urizen, and The Four Zoas, probably begun about 1797) are all post-revolutionary. Thus, perhaps the gap between 1789 and 1798 strengthened the movement toward imaginative perception as the redemption of man. Ultimately, however, while these social contexts provide us with possible distinctions between Blake and Wordsworth, the most significant point is that both authors, influenced by the revolutionary movement, are interested in changing

individual perception, thus the human capacity to change his or her world.

This assertion of the primary need for creative perception must in part be derived from the revolutions in philosophy as well. Changes in the study of philosophy from the seventeenth to eighteenth century evoked both positive and negative responses from the poets. While we can not claim direct influence, it is useful to set the poets' beliefs in the context of eighteenth century theories of perception. First, we should note the influence of and reactions to John Locke. Locke's sensory, empiricist stance provoked much argument from the Romantics. The philosopher's contention that all knowledge originates from sensory experience becomes a target as it informs Blake's early satirical treatises. In There is no Natural Religion, Blake renders Locke's tenets regarding the necessity of experience as "the same dull round" (E3). Arguing against Locke's claim that there are no innate ideas, Blake asserts the power of the prophetic spirit ("genius") in man as the basis of knowledge and strictly refutes the limitations of sensory experience: "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute') can discover" (E2). Locke's assertion that our raw data of experience comes from our five senses is offered

as an obvious truth. However, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake critiques these materialist assumptions: "How do you know but that ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (E35). Given such blunt denials of Lockean tenets, it is not surprising that Blake's early satirical prose piece An Island in the Moon contains direct satire against Locke as well as other philosophers. His view of the usefulness of philosophy may be summed up by his three representatives, Quid the Cynic, Suction the Epicurean, and Sipsop the Pythagorean who all sat together "thinking of nothing" (440). Locke and Hume both are parodied and denounced as the character Scopprell denigrates a book called "An Easy of Huming Understanding" written by John Lookye Gent (E456).

Wordsworth, typically in comparison with Blake, is much less radical in his reaction to empiricism. Wordsworth accepts Locke's basic divisions of knowledge into sensation/reflection (Hume's impressions/thoughts, Kant's sensibility/understanding). In fact, Wordsworth's famous declaration in the "Preface" that good poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" that is "recollected in tranquility" (Prose Works 1:148) partakes

somewhat of this division.⁷ There must be an overwhelming emotional experience (usually brought on by some sensory experience, although perhaps just memory of such) that is then reflected on by the mind. Even so, if Wordsworth concedes that the mind may materially work this way, his emphasis is on the imagination as the power behind reflection, that reflection is much more an organic, internal ability than a mechanical process. Indeed, the process of sensory perception itself is an active one; the mind is not the passive receptacle of sense data as Locke suggests. Of course, the extent to which humans are able to actively reflect upon what they see without becoming divorced from material Nature is an issue that Wordsworth debates. In fact, Hartman sees this dialectic between nature and the human creative imagination as Wordsworth's primary interest throughout this career. While it is never a black and white issue, then, we can see Wordsworth's vacillation not as a weakness but rather as an honest inquiry. Thus, although Wordsworth will not disown the material world, he again and again exposes the reasonable interpretation of sensory data as limited and ignorant of a spiritual reality, as in

⁷All prose quotations from Wordsworth are taken from The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) and are documented by volume and page number.

such representative poems as "We are Seven," "The Idiot Boy," and "Strange Fits of Passion." Thus, for Blake and Wordsworth, senses are used as ministers to the mind, but sensations may themselves become misleading.

While neither poet can be labeled an empiricist, Blake and Wordsworth both modify and ultimately reject idealism as well. Berkeley's idealism, however, which implies that the mind of man is creative in perception, is a crucial development in philosophy that must have influenced Romantic poets. We know of Coleridge's discovery of Berkeley as a young man, through his own marginalia and notebooks, and as Baker suggests, Berkeley's stance against the empiricists serves as a major influence for Coleridge (as perhaps for Kant) as he works toward an organic theory of imagination. Berkeley's fundamental principle, esse est percipi (to be is to be perceived - nothing exists unless it be perceived in the mind) emphasizes the mind as an active agent in the act of perception. Indeed, Berkeley, in his commonplace book, observed, "Certainly we create ourselves in some wise whenever we imagine" (295).⁸ Dr. Johnson's famous

⁸See Philosophical Commentaries, Generally Called the Commonplace Book of George Berkeley, ed. A. A. Luce (London, 1944). Also, we might say that Coleridge is more comfortable with the later, more Platonic Berkeley of the Siris which goes beyond arguing that the mind is the true active principle in knowledge toward a belief in a kind of Platonic theory of forms: "The most refined human

rebuttal action of kicking a stone and saying "Berkeley, I refute you thus," misses the point entirely. As Baker notes in The Sacred River: Coleridge's Theory of the Imagination, we know from Hazlitt's essay "My First Acquaintance With Poets" that Coleridge thoroughly apprehended Berkeley's emphasis and "condemned Johnson's literal and clumsy attempt at rebuttal" (Baker 21). Berkeley's point in Principles of Human Knowledge is not that the stone does not exist but that we can not know its being outside our own perception: "In short, if there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever know it" (158). Berkeley's principle then of the creative capacity of mind is analogous to that of the Romantics. His skeptical conclusions, however, are not. Even though Blake frequently asserts that nature is dead to him and that he is unaffected by what he sees with the "corporeal eye" rather than the spiritual eye, he does not doubt its existence nor our attempts to con its existence. Wordsworth more clearly urges us, to regard humans and nature as essentially adapted to each other. Wordsworth's desires for a dialectical relationship between man and

intellect, exerted to its utmost reach, can only seize some imperfect glimpses of the Divine Ideas, abstracted from all things corporeal, sensible, and imaginable" (Siris 337). All references to Berkeley list the paragraph number of the work in question since Berkeley meticulously kept this system.

nature, eye and object, are clearly opposite to Berkeley's conclusions. Nature is our foster mother whose influence we should never allow ourselves to outgrow. Human ability to retain this dialectical relationship is, however, very difficult. As one grows older, as the mind begins to overwhelm the senses, one must consistently search for a balance between individual perception and the material reality of Nature. In the Fenwick note to the Immortality Ode, Wordsworth tells us of his susceptibility to idealism, of times when he ran outside and clutched at trees in order to recall himself from the "abyss of idealism" and restore a sense of reality of outward things (PW 3: 194-5). Perceptions, for Blake and Wordsworth, are not constitutive of reality, but rather frame and mold a reality that somehow exists outside our thoughts.

Thus the romantic view of perception accepts wholly neither Locke's assertions that sensible objects exist entirely independent of our perceptions nor Berkeley's that existence is contingent upon being perceived. The poets partake of the Kantian via media, for Kant found in the world of experience the materials for knowledge but made the mind responsible for the forms of knowledge. Although Kant's precise categorizations (e.g. his view of the twelve pure concepts or forms of understanding) is too constrictive in scope and spirit, his bridge between

materialism and idealism (i.e. that the mind orders experience under its own forms) is significantly similar to the romantic poets' view of perception.

Kant's distinction between noumena (things-in-themselves) and phenomena (the appearance of things) is a significant, clearly romantic tenet. However, Kant goes on to suggest that noumena are unknowable, and therefore all attempts to penetrate the essence of objects lead to one of three Transcendental Illusions. Of course, Wordsworth and Blake urge just the opposite--that we must explore noumena or essence (not just phenomena) in order to give meaning to our lives in phenomena. Blake asserts the primacy of essence or spirit over material and encourages us to explore visionary realms and avoid the obstructions of the natural world, and much of Wordsworth's power as a poet comes from his ability to infuse material nature with a sense of mystery, as he says in "Nutting" that "there is a spirit in the woods" (line 55).⁹

Regarding the bases of knowledge, Kant agrees with Locke that knowledge begins with experience, but not from it. This difference is the foundation of Kant's conceptions of a priori knowledge. Both Blake and

⁹All quotations from Lyrical Ballads are taken from Lyrical Ballads, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London: Methuen, 1963) and are documented by line number.

Wordsworth agree with the existence of a priori knowledge, the existence of innate structures that shape our view of the world. When Blake urges us to cleanse the "doors of perception," this is clearly an internal process that will allow us to see aright. This basic idea is behind what is perhaps Wordsworth's most famous line from "Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth appreciates Nature for her role in our existence and avows that he loves the "mighty world / Of eye and ear, both what they half create, / And what perceive" (106-8). Here Wordsworth renders his belief that sensory data (what we actually perceive) is blended with an internal sense that "half-creates" all reality. Perception and conception then are necessarily linked. Thus the mind shapes material reality; this is what Kant terms in the Preface to the second edition (1787) of his Critique of Pure Reason his "Copernican revolution." That is, just as Copernicus' heliocentric view eliminated geocentrism, so Kant denied that the mind conforms to objects of reality; for Kant, objects conform to operations of mind. This does not mean that material reality is reduced to ideas only, but rather that a dialectical relationship exists. As Wordsworth echoes in

the "Preface" to The Excursion, "How exquisitely the individual Mind . . . to the external World / Is fitted:-- and how exquisitely, too-- / Theme this but little heard of among men-- / The external World is fitted to the Mind" (63-8).¹⁰

Certainly Kant is still counter in spirit to the romantic rebellion against scientific and empirical thinking. Attempts at categorization, objectification, and unification of knowledge are scoffed at by Blake and Wordsworth, who see in an individual's spirit his or her reality. Kant claims that any attempts to gain real knowledge of material reality and of humankind are untenable. But for Blake and Wordsworth such attempts are not only tenable but essential for a fulfilling life. Ultimately we can see the poets more richly if we know the major revolutions in philosophy of perception; this context then allows us to see a larger debate behind Blake's and Wordsworth's attention to individuals, what and how they see. Furthermore, connected to the idea of perception is that of reception; if Wordsworth and Blake have as one of their primary aims and subjects the reformation of human creative perception, then they also

¹⁰ All quotations from poems other than Lyrical Ballads are taken from The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Helen Darbishire, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952-9) and are documented by line number.

must give thought to how that message can be received. This interest in individual perception then links Blake and Wordsworth to concerns of reception, concerns that were behind some major changes taking place in linguistics in the late eighteenth century. These shifts in linguistic texts should inform our investigation of Blake and Wordsworth, especially with reference to methods used to stimulate an audience. Finally, then, in addition to the social and philosophical contexts we have discussed, we should examine the changes in representative theoretical and practical linguistic texts of the period.

Linguistic texts, both theoretical and practical, underwent a major shift in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Olivia Smith's The Politics of Language analyzes how, in the early part of the century, language ideas were largely elitist theories and codes of grammar: "Civilization was largely a linguistic construct, establishing a terrain in which vocabulary and syntax distinguished the refined from the vulgar" (vii). Murraray Cohen's Sensible Words points out that older linguistics was characterized by assumptions of a divine origin of language, the prospects for a universal language, and faith in the correspondence of language both to reality and mind. These ideals had been codified by three works which Smith suggests make up the "Linguistic

Trinity" (4) of eighteenth century grammar: Bishop Lowth's A Short Introduction to English Grammar (1762), Samuel Johnson's Dictionary (1755), and James Harris' Hermes (1751). Harris' is one of the most famous and most cited traditional theories. Praised as a universal grammatical theory, this tract seeks evidence of the "genuine Perceptions of a Pure Mind" (326). Words themselves are "comprehensive and permanent Ideas" (327), and only the spiritually correct mind is able to see these resemblances. That is, following Locke, Harris sees a difference between those who sense and those who think. Intelligent and pure minds then should see the value of "right" English, which included abstract words and frequent use of prepositions and conjunctions which would indicate a mastery of universal relations between things. Such words as "King" or "Constitution" were conceived of as forms of eternal ideas, not subject to historical change.

Because of political and philosophical changes, linguists began to change as well, moving toward study of the diversity of language, not universality, as well as emphasis on language change, and its direct effects on its users and hearers. The revolt against aristocratic, hegemonic language theories became a politically charged issue. For, to postulate that language change is

necessary and right has political implications as well. Joseph Priestley's Rudiments of English Grammar (1761) avows that trying to enforce linguistic change is vain, to try to inhibit it impossible. Language, after all, shares in historical change; it is no longer a defense against it. The English radicals during the French Revolution had not only to justify the abilities of the poor but to redefine the nature of language. Paine, for example, fears the power of the hegemonic language and concretizes the danger involved by using a metaphor of imprisonment: to give words such credence is to be "immured in the Bastille of a word" (2:320). Paine's Rights of Man, Cobbett's grammar for the self-educated, Thomas Spence's phonetic alphabet and dictionary, William Hone's brilliant self-defense on libel charges, and John Horne Tooke's pleas for acceptance of evolutionary language change--all these along with advances in printing and growing anger over repressive legislation against radical writers--provide the context wherein language was a pivotal idea in the late eighteenth century.

In the linguistic texts, there are many changes that parallel the political and philosophical ones. First, there is a new stress on social communication which parallels the Romantics' choice of real people, social situations, and a diverse array of characters as their

subject matter: the interest in "children, primitives, Celts, Highlanders, solitary reapers, and balladeers" (Cohen 80) echoes new methods of linguistic analysis stressing social communication. The ability of humans to understand one another, not the power of language to represent things or ideas, is seen to be the gift of language. This gesture toward society even informs new practical texts' concerns of grammar and pronunciation. James Buchanan's An Essay Toward Establishing A Standard for Elegant and Uniform Pronunciation of the English Tongue (1766) puts aside philosophical debates about the "proper" language and argues for an ideal of discipline and competence that can be gained by all, thereby achieving a social good. Instead of an ambitious bent toward perfecting language, the practical linguist now emphasizes the needs of its users. John Horne Tooke's interest in etymology helps explain changes in form and the placement of words. His theory, which argues against any internal difference between the refined and the vulgar, sets out to account for the diversity and mutability, assuming that a true study of language investigates change. Tooke also suggests that defining the nature and origin of language or dividing proper, traditional language from common language is a false activity in pedagogy, unnecessary for children learning the

language, indeed harmful to their inquisitive natures: "Children ought not to be disturbed or bewildered with a reason for everything; which reason they would not understand, even if the Teacher was always able to give it."¹¹ Language itself becomes less valued for its offering of particular meanings than its effects upon and stimulation of the reader. As Cohen puts it, "Words, gestures, and postures . . . are less carriers of particular meanings than expressive possibilities (emphasis added). It is their meaningfulness more than their clear meanings that writers were seeking" (80-1). This is a crucial point, full of many implications for Wordsworth and Blake studies. Language defined as expressive possibility emphasizes the creative element in writing and, more importantly, reading. Thus Blake's and Wordsworth's use of lyric in new and exciting ways parallels and in some degree must have been influenced by linguistic shifts that emphasize the audience.

These shifts toward rhetorical linguistics can be seen in various manifestations in late eighteenth century texts. One such effect of a new linguistic emphasis appears in books devoted to oral reading. Lindley

¹¹The Diversions of Purley (written 1798), ed. Richard Taylor, (London, 1840). Here Tooke sounds very much like Wordsworth in that Wordsworth's poems often assert this truth and his own practice in the poetry demonstrates it.

Murray's English Grammar (published 1810) aims to teach speakers how to "transfuse our sentiments into the minds of others" (28). More significantly, John Walker's A Rhetorical Grammar (1785) encourages readers to think of pronunciation as an "exact picture of the words," that is, the arrangement of voice inflexions and pauses so as to express each sentence with "appropriate passion or emotion" (93). Here then in linguistics we see the beginning of the romantic emphasis on emotion as the dominant effect of language. Similarly, James Buchanan's British Grammar (1762) claims that writing should have as its primary emphasis that "the various Affections and Emotions of the Soul, described by the Writer, may be more clearly distinguished and comprehended by the reader" (49). The reader then must always be in the mind of the writer, for real communication is the aim. Sounding very much like Wordsworth, Buchanan goes on to avow that the reading experience (and here he is talking about oral reading but it applies to reading in general) should "hold the Passions captive, and surprize the Soul itself in its inmost recesses" (65). Along with Walker, Thomas Sheridan is a leader in rhetorical grammar of the period, and it is Sheridan who pushes this concept further to suggest that there is indeed a language of emotion, identifiable by its effects. Sheridan distinguishes between language of ideas

(that expresses thoughts by words) and a language of emotion (that expresses internal feelings). Furthermore, he claims that writers are not simply enfused by an overflow of spontaneous feelings when they write (often mistaken as Wordsworth's main point), but rather they must carve out a language peculiar to their intentions:

" . . . there is not an act of the mind, an exertion of the fancy, or emotion of the heart, which have not annexed to them their peculiar tone and notes of the voice" (100-1). Turning the older linguistic ideal of universality against itself, Sheridan claims that these natural tones constitute a true "universal language, equally used by all the different nations of the world, and equally understood and felt by all" (120).¹² Universality is found then not in a prescribed set of words but in a common emotional effect.

Another revealing manifestation of these linguistic shifts is the discussion of how a writer may engage the emotions of his or her audience through syntax. Both Walker and Sheridan include a brief section on emphasis,

¹² Similarly, Blake's The French Revolution depicts the democratic movement as one that will create a shared language; that is, the peaceful conclusion of Blake's revolution will bring about "the breaking of clouds and the swelling winds" and with this apocalypse will come the "universal voice," illustrated in the poem as a shared language of the priest and the plowman, the soldier and the shepherd.

showing how a shift of emphasis from one word to another changes the meaning. In Lord Monboddo's Of the Origin and Progress of Language (1774), we find much attention to syntax as an important vehicle for ideas of emotion: "the words that compose [a sentence] must be some way or another connected together, so that the mind of the hearer may perceive their proper relation" (2:337). This "way or another" of connection is the poet's task.

Finally, if the linguistic changes of the eighteenth century are any indication, then we need to pay close attention to what are the affective structures of the romantic lyrics. It is at the minute level, the level of the word, the pause, the sentence, and the stanza, that Blake and Wordsworth realize their intentions. Even in the linguistic field, words themselves were viewed less logically and referentially than affectively. Cohen points out that "the shift from the complex and argumentative to the uncomplicated and evocative is evident in many popular forms, but none more revealingly than in the poetic use of popular song measures" (109). We see this shift to the simple and evocative clearly in the lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth; on the other hand, just as the linguistic texts claim, in these "simple" measures lie something much more. For Blake and Wordsworth, it is an emphasis on creative perception and

how it must be nurtured and maintained. Perhaps then we can view their lyrics as the carrier of a true universal language, in Sheridan's affective definition, and see why lyric form is the ablest vehicle for language's "expressive possibilities." While the lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth still offer every reader these possibilities, the poets were especially concerned about their contemporary audience, one whose reading habits needed to be revitalized. We should then next examine how Blake and Wordsworth, though very different in many ways, both concern themselves with the needs of their audience and seek to promote creative perception through the use of the lyric, which is appropriated by them to give examples of creative perception (and the lack of it) through the subject matter and, through the form, to serve as catalysts for this experience in the reader.

Chapter II

Lyric Intentions:

Blake and Wordsworth on the Poet's Role

The past two decades have witnessed quite an increasing interest in comparative scholarship of Blake and Wordsworth. Whereas contrast had been the rule with most critics, scholars since the 1960's have reopened the debate. James Bennett's annotated bibliography of comparative criticism of Blake and Wordsworth in the Spring 1983 Wordsworth Circle marks a new interest in re-examining some essential similarities. As Bennett summarizes, the differences between the two poets have been so generally assumed that they are nowhere examined systematically. Perhaps this assumption is in part due to the academic division of literature into centenary periods, placing Blake in the 18th century and Wordsworth in the 19th. This separation had, for many years, the result of isolating Blake from the Romantic tradition altogether, and since he fit in with neither the neoclassical writers nor the preromantic poets, he was often excluded from anthologies. With this separation came a difference in perceived stature of the two poets; Blake was not included in the MLA Bibliography of Romantic poets until 1985, before that, with the minor poets/essayists. Only in the last thirty years, then, has Blake become firmly situated as a Romantic poet, even

though David Erdman was willing this to be so as early as 1954 in Blake: Prophet Against Empire when he declared, "Today it is not uncommon to find Blake regarded as the greatest of the Romantic poets" (vii). As Blake grew in popularity, more recognition that Blake and Wordsworth shared many concerns was forthcoming as is evident from these influential comparative studies: M. H. Abrams' comparison of historical and political similarities, Thomas Vogler's study of their epic impulses, Wallace Jackson's analysis of both from the context of the 18th century tradition, Paul Privateer's discussion of Romantic identity, Laurence Goldstein's study of regeneration in Milton and The Prelude, and most recently Heather Glen's study of the lyrics.¹ Yet, in general, it seems many Romantic critics still prefer to emphasize the contrasts, usually to one poet's clear disadvantage. For instance, Heather Glen's comparative study of Blake and Wordsworth

¹See M. H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," Romanticism and Consciousness, ed. Harold Bloom. NY: Norton, 1970; Thomas Vogler, Preludes to Vision: The Epic Venture in Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart Crane. Berkeley: U of California P, 1971; Laurence Goldstein, "The Mercy of Eternity: Aspects of Regeneration in The Prelude and Milton," DAI 31 (1971), 6458A; Paul Privateer, "The Romantic Cogito: Poetic Identity in Blake and Wordsworth," DAI 39 (1979), 7361A; Wallace Jackson, The Probable and the Marvelous: Blake, Wordsworth, and the 18th Century Critical Tradition. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1978; Heather Glen, Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's Songs and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

provides useful comparisons between Wordsworth's debt to the ballad measures of magazine verse and Blake's debt to hymn verse; yet the majority of the analysis consists in contrasting Blake and Wordsworth mainly to show the superiority of Blake. Glen, for example, sees Blake as a god-like figure whose visionary prophetic powers continue to inspire whereas Wordsworth, whom Glen finds "deeply pessimistic as to human possibility," cannot be a source of "inspiration for a contemporary political praxis" (Glen 342). Even if this book does not, as one reviewer stated, "subordinate literary analysis to the needs of the contemporary left" (Friedman 160), it does skew interpretations of Lyrical Ballads in its attempt to make Blake's superiority more evident. Thus, while Glen takes a step in the right direction by writing the only book-length comparative study of Blake's and Wordsworth's lyrics, the analysis does not address the profound similarities between Blake and Wordsworth that call out for recognition. This chapter will suggest that Blake and Wordsworth see themselves as bards awakening a complacent public, and further that they share a fervent belief in the essential need for individual creative perception in viewing the world. Most significantly, they propose to stimulate this capability in their readers through rhetorical, affective structures. The chapter will

finally suggest in broad terms how Blake and Wordsworth appropriate the lyric for this purpose, with the chapters following being separate studies of Wordsworth's and Blake's specific strategies in the poems. To view Blake and Wordsworth comparatively in a new light, we need first to acknowledge the historical relationship between the two poets and its interpretation by their contemporaries, for very few poets have been so vehemently contrasted.

Early critics were perhaps justified in emphasizing contrasts if only because of Blake's documented vituperations against Wordsworth. Blake's remarks on Wordsworth are some of the most well-known critiques of him. While the Marginalia are usually the source of these comments, Blake's references to Wordsworth are scattered throughout nineteenth-century records, most notably Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary. One of the most notorious is Robinson's claim that when he read Blake the "Preface" to The Excursion it "caused him a bowel complaint that almost killed him" (Bentley 325). Robinson says that he tried to show Blake the similarity between Blake's own ideas and Wordsworth's but to no avail, and "Wordsworth was finally set down as a pagan--but still with great praise as the greatest poet of the age" (Bentley 313). We should not overlook the fact that Blake considered Wordsworth one of the greatest poets of the age. Thus, it is a dialectical

opinion of admiration/disapproval that characterizes Blake's view of his contemporary.

The most significant and frequent complaint against Wordsworth is his excessive love of Nature which Blake regards as an obstacle to true imaginative vision: "I fear Wordsworth loves Nature--and Nature is the work of the Devil--The Devil is in us, as far as we are Nature" (Bentley 317). Blake's Marginalia in an edition of Wordsworth's poetry provide us with more specific complaints against Wordsworth. His notes are based on the 1815 edition, which offers Wordsworth's poems classified under distinct headings. The first commentary occurs under the heading entitled "Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood" and summarizes Blake's opinion of Wordsworth's major fault: "I see in Wordsworth the Natural man rising up against the Spiritual man continually, and then he is no poet, but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true poetry or inspiration" (E665). Similarly, under the last lines of "The Rainbow," ("And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each with natural piety"), Blake proclaims, "There is no such thing as natural piety, because the natural man is at Enmity with God" (E665). Finally, under the heading "On the Influence of Natural Objects": "Natural objects always did & now do weaken & obliterate Imagination in me.

Wordsworth must know that what he writes valuable is not to be found in Nature" (E665). Thus, for Blake, the imaginative faculty of man is an independent spiritual one, neither prompted by nor in concert with Nature, as Wordsworth believes.²

As clear and emphatic as these occasional critiques are, Blake did not assume that his criticism of Wordsworth would be taken as his general opinion of the poet. He does praise Wordsworth in the Marginalia and is reported to have gone into rapturous fits (positive ones this time) upon reading some of Wordsworth's lines. For instance, under the little known poem entitled "Verses to H. C. Six Years Old," Blake has written, "This is in all the highest degree imaginative & equal to any poet" (E665). Furthermore, Robinson tells us of a visit with Blake in which he read aloud to Blake Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" which threw Blake into "an hysterical rapture" (Bentley 544). Robinson goes further to note that the stanza which Blake so loved was one which was most obscure, in fact one that Robinson said he often omitted because he could not explain it. This was the stanza beginning, "But there's a tree, of many, one," as later

²Cf. Wordsworth's claim in the "Preface" to The Excursion that man's mind and Nature are "fitted" to each other and Blake's vehement response: "You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted I know better & Please your Lordship" (E667).

chapters demonstrate, a most appropriate stanza for Blake to center upon.

Even though the differences remain the focus of discussions of the two, Blake and Wordsworth are in spirit very similar, as was noted by some of their contemporaries. Walter Savage Landor, according to Robinson's Diary, maintained Blake to be the greatest of poets and saw an affinity between Blake and Wordsworth. According to Robinson's diary for May 20, 1838, Landor admitted being "strangely fascinated by Blake's poems" (Bentley 230) and also "protested that Blake had been Wordsworth's prototype, and wished that they could have divided his [i.e. Blake's] madness between them; for that some accession of it in the one case, and something of a diminution of it in the other, would very greatly have improved both" (Bentley 230). Similarly, Charles Lamb is reported to have called Blake a "mad Wordsworth."³ This suggestion has remained very popular in Blake and Wordsworth comparative studies, recently from Geoffrey Hartman, who explains how this difference affects his reading of both. Claiming that we as readers often feel "surer" of Wordsworth, Hartman says, "Wordsworth, even if wild and queer, pretty crazy in his own way, always starts

³See Mark Reed's discussion in "Blake, Wordsworth, Lamb, Etc.: Further Information from Henry Crabb Robinson," Blake Newsletter 3.4 (May 1970): 76-84.

on this side of the familiar . . . Blake gives me the feeling of methodically starting on the other side ("Envoi" 245). That is, Wordsworth gives his readers a clearer entrance into the poem and perhaps better empowers them to follow him. A useful analogy here is to remember the division of labor planned between Wordsworth and Coleridge for the poetry of Lyrical Ballads. Wordsworth was to start with the natural and infuse it with the supernatural whereas Coleridge was to render the supernatural more natural. Like Coleridge, Blake typically starts on the side of the supernatural imagination, often obscurely. On the other hand, there may be an understanding of Blake that is visceral, as in Hartman's case: "Most of the time I understand Blake, yet I do not know what is going on" ("Envoi" 245). What we need is to examine how Blake and Wordsworth manage to get to the same point through different affective measures. Opposite to Hartman's implication that Blake is less effective in general because of the complexity and obscurity of much of his poetry is the suggestion that complexity makes Blake a superior poet, and thus Wordsworth's "simplicity" is a detriment to his verse. These kinds of contrasts get us nowhere in an important task of considering two contemporary poets--both influenced by revolutionary fervor, interested in

innovative poetics, and having succeeded in both lyric and epic genres--as equals and partners in at least the goal of arousing and fostering creative perception. As Simpson asserts, we must avoid the reified contrasts: "It is not enough to say that Blake is radical because his text is so, while Wordsworth is somehow reactionary because he writes a language more nearly approximating that of ordinary social intercourse When Blake is the stick with which we beat Wordsworth, we do neither poet much of a service" ("Reading" 23).

Robinson himself makes some keen observations about similarities between Blake and Wordsworth, one of which echoes Landor's observation. In a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth, dated February 19, 1826, Robinson writes: "I gave your brother some poems in MS by him [Blake] and they interested him--as well they might, for there is an affinity between them as there is between the regulated imagination of a wise poet and the incoherent dreams of a poet" (Bentley 324). His choice of the word "affinity" is an apt one, I believe, for Blake and Wordsworth share a similar spirit even though their methods are perhaps very different. Blake's mixed admiration/disapproval of Wordsworth is clear, as Robinson continues, "Mr. Wordsworth will not be flattered by knowing that Blake deems him the only poet of the age nor much alarmed by

hearing that . . . Blake thinks that he is often in his works an atheist . . . worshipping the natural world which same natural world . . . is nothing real" (Bentley 324). Thus, while Blake does often attack Wordsworth, he does respect him. This was a given to the contemporaries who heard Blake's vituperations, but has been omitted by critics who prefer emphasizing the animosity between them. Robinson ends the letter with a plea for acceptance of Blake or, at the least, an attempt to stimulate curiosity:

It is since then that I have lent Blake all the works which he but imperfectly knew.⁴ I doubt whether what I have written will excite your and Mr. Wordsworth's curiosity--but there is something so delightful about the man . . . that I have not scrupled promising introducing him and Mr. Wordsworth.⁵ He expressed his thanks strongly--saying 'You do me honor. Mr. Wordsworth is a great man--Besides he may convince me I am wrong about him. I have been wrong before now. (Bentley 325)

⁴Blake is known to have read The Excursion (1814) and the two volume Poems including Lyrical Ballads and Miscellaneous (1815). The suggestion that Blake but "imperfectly" knew Wordsworth before this time (1826) is, of course, only Robinson's view.

⁵There is no record of Blake and Wordsworth ever meeting.

Of Wordsworth's opinions of Blake, we can really only speculate as the poet left little commentary on Blake or his works. Blake's early biographer Gilchrist reported that Wordsworth "spoke in private of the Songs of Innocence and Experience" as "undoubtedly the product of an insane genius but more significant than the works of many a famous poet" (1: 1-2). In Robinson's Reminiscences (a revised version of the Diary published in 1852), Wordsworth is reported to have said after reading Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience, "There is no doubt that this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me, more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott" (Bentley 536). Wordsworth's belief that there was "something in the madness" also must have stimulated him to copy in his commonplace book sometime between 1806 and 1808 four of Blake's poems: "Holy Thursday," "Laughing Song," "The Tyger," and "I Love the Jocund Dance" (Moorman 401). However, primarily it is in the spirit, not the letter, that we find a connection; in this spirit that causes Wordsworth to admire Blake's madness and Blake to claim that with all his many flaws Wordsworth was still the poet of the age, we may find a vital connection between the two.

Both Blake and Wordsworth chose to use the lyric

genre, to redefine that genre radically. More importantly, for each, the act of creative perception is a crucial issue because it enables one to see the world aright and becomes man's salvation. Each poet encourages individual imaginative vision that frees one from what Wordsworth, in The Prelude, called the tyranny of the eye, the "most despotic of our senses" (XI.173). Similarly, each sought through affective strategies in his poetry to awaken this capacity in what they saw as an unresponsive, dormant audience. Through Blake's letters and scattered notes and through Wordsworth's prose tracts and letters, we can see how these issues recur and influence the very poetic methods that they use. Thus, to understand the link between Blake and Wordsworth, we should examine their views on the human need for imaginative vision, the poet's essentially divine task, and their choice of effective strategies to reach and to mold the contemporary audience.

Discussing the author's views about the nature and purpose of his poetry is, of course, a much more formidable task for Blake than it is for Wordsworth. After all, critics are "fortunate" enough to have Wordsworth's "Advertisement" and "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads (even though Frye says that no one would give the essays, as essays, much more than B plus) as well as numerous specific essays about the poet's purpose and

strategy. For Blake, we do not have such direct prose statements. We do, however, have the corpus of Blake's work, which is fairly consistent in the exposition of Blake's vision. That is, my reading of Blake's purpose and method in the Songs is enriched by the prophecies, early and late, the notebook entries, and the letters. While Frye's still pervasive and persuasive mythology of Blake's system must not inhibit new investigations, I, as many others, accept the validity of using Blake's other works to provide a context for understanding the lyrics. As Damrosch suggests, "Myth is not an arbitrary way of manipulating symbols, but the conceptual framework in which they make sense. If symbolism is indeed a grammar, it functions as a mode of organizing experience rather than as a code for describing it" (81). In suggesting consistency among Blake's early and late work, I believe that Blake did have "myths" or "truths" to live by, and thus his fundamental "mode of organizing experience" is consistent.

Blake's letters demonstrate a clear sense that he knew his was an original style and would be alien in many ways to the reading public. Indeed, he believed indirection to be an admirable technique, for it would stimulate creative perception in a society of readers who had lost the ability to think for themselves. In a letter

to Dr. Trussler dated August 16, 1799, Blake resolves "to shew an independence which I know will please an Author better than slavishly following the track of another, however admirable that track might be" (Letters 28). Dr. Trussler, an eccentric clergyman who was also a bookseller and patron of art, was not himself open to Blake's ideas, and we often hear Blake in the letters trying to convince Dr. Trussler of a spiritual reality. Indeed, Blake writes him again on August 23, 1799, and the opening line of this letter makes clear Blake's sense of the immediacy of his own prophetic spiritual vision: "I really am sorry that you have fall'n out with the Spiritual World" (Letters 29). And Blake goes on in to defend himself against Trussler's criticisms (of Blake's obscurity), and in so doing he begins to define the kind of audience that he wishes to reach, indeed to create:

You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that what is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients consider'd what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction, because it rouzes the faculties to act. (Letters 29)

At least two very important concepts for understanding Blake and his relationship with his audience are present in this kernel sentence. First, Blake defends his obscurity, an obscurity that still is attacked today, for instance when comparing Wordsworth to Blake.⁶ He doesn't invite an audience that can read his poems superficially and digest them. On the other hand, he does not mean at all that only intellectuals can read him; on the contrary, he says in a later letter to Dr. Trussler, the unbeliever, that he does indeed have a core group of sympathetic readers: "But I am happy to find a Great Majority of Fellow Mortals who can Elucidate my Visions, & Particularly they have been Elucidated by Children" (Letters 30). So what he looks for, that he finds in children, is a receptiveness, a willingness to suspend disbelief, to use Coleridge's term. Such a willingness is the central characteristic of Blake's target audience, and this necessarily implies that the poem will not be explicit but rather will make the reader an active participant in the creative process. Thus, the second point he makes here is that the "fittest Instruction" is

⁶Cf. Geoffrey Hartman's final comment in "Envoi" on how Blake's obscurity may finally be the reason some readers reject him: "If we don't find it [the poetical logic in Blake], if we don't perceive how Blake sees through visionary formulas, then we have to go with Wordsworth, or with Wallace Stevens, and say, regretfully, 'The solar chariot is junk'--and leave it" (248).

that which "rouzes the faculties to act." The reader must be an active agent, (which comes from willing receptiveness), aroused by the author's text. This claim positions Blake in the phenomenological camp, with affinities to response theories like those of Wolfgang Iser. Nicolas Warner has, however, suggested general benefits this kind of comparison might yield, suggesting that Iser's theory could provide a useful theoretical framework for studying the "notoriously recalcitrant work of William Blake" (18). Chiefly, Iser's ideas of the reader's expectations throughout the reading process and what he calls the "negation of the familiar" which "tests the reader's own capabilities" (Implied 41) are strikingly similar to Blake. Blake's plan to rouse the faculties to act occurs frequently through a process of defamiliarization of reality in order to see it anew. This defamiliarization links Blake not only with Iser but also with the early twentieth century practitioners of Russian Formalism. The concept of ostranenie, literally "making strange," implies that one strips conventional elements to avoid the automatization of perception. As Formalist critic Victor Shklovsky claims, "We have lost our awareness of the world; we are like a violinist who has ceased to feel the bow and the strings; we have ceased to be artists in everyday life . . . Only the creation of

new forms of art can restore to man sensation of the world, can resurrect things and kill pessimism" (Shklovsky 46).⁷ What Blake sought was an audience willing to receive this resurrection.

Finding that fit audience is, however, not an easy task as Blake is aware of. He complains of the intellectual sloth of the age and claims that humans need to be awakened and challenged through verse even though this may not be popular. In late 1799, he writes, "I despair of ever pleasing one class of men. Unfortunately, our Authors of books are among this Class; how soon we Shall have a change for the better I cannot Prophecy" (Letters 31). This sense that the public did not respond to his challenge never really improved. In a letter, dated August 12, 1827, to George Cumberland, (who as Geoffrey Keynes tells us, was the one man whom Blake remained friends with for over thirty years and who supported all of Blake's endeavors, perhaps even giving him the suggestion for copper-plate etching) Blake rails against the sluggish and inactive readers of his day who too often denied their own individuality and preferred rather to fit in:

⁷For a detailed discussion of some techniques of defamiliarization, see James L. Kugel's The Techniques of Strangeness In Symbolist Poetry. New Haven: Yale UP, 1971.

I know too well that a great majority of Englishmen are fond of the Indefinite which they Measure by Newton's Doctrine of the Fluxions of the Atom . . . Since the French Revolution Englishmen are all Intermeasurable One by Another, certainly a happy state of Agreement to which I for One do not Agree. God keep me from the Divinity of Yes & No too, the Yea Nay Creeping Jesus, from supposing Up & Down to be the same thing. (Letters 162)

Here Blake continues his complaint by rebelling against those who wish to be, as he says, "Intermeasurable One by Another." In cautioning against the "Yea Nay Creeping Jesus," Blake is in fact urging individual assertion and interpretation.

The poet's task in this age, according to Blake, must be to awaken the public to imaginative life. Thus the poet's is a divine mission, and often we hear Blake comparing his role to that of Jesus. Understandably, this belief was often seen as intellectual arrogance and sometimes causes Blake to appear even more egotistical than what Keats termed Wordsworth's egotistical sublime. Crabb Robinson's Diary gives us glimpses of this behavior through accounts of various meetings with Blake. For example, Robinson reports that Blake discussed his visions

in an "ordinary unemphatic tone in which we speak of trivial matters," saying "The Spirit told me" in quite sincere and simple terms (Bentley 210). Robinson baits Blake by noting that his Spirit is perhaps like the one that spoke to Socrates and asking Blake if there is a resemblance between the two spirits. Blake unremarkably asserts, "I was Socrates" and then adds to clarify, "A sort of brother. I must have had conversations with him-- So I had with Jesus Christ--I have an obscure recollection of having been with both of them" (Bentley 210). When pressed about the divinity of Jesus, Blake responds, "He is the only God. And so am I and so are you" (Bentley 210).⁸ And in late August 1799, Blake complains to George Cumberland of the lack of a real audience and in the same letter, perhaps out of frustration which expressed itself in intellectual arrogance, sets himself up as the equal of Jesus, whose words were also unheeded. In this letter, Blake is responding to Trussler's comment that Blake seemed to be living in a world of spirits and that he, Trussler, prefers the physical world: "I could not help smiling at the difference between the doctrines of Dr.

⁸Cf. Blake's early anti-empiricist treatise All Religions Are One, "All men are alike (tho' infinitely various). So all Religions & as all similars have one source / The true Man is the source he being the Poetic Genius" (E2) and also "All deities reside in the human breast" from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (E38).

Trussler & those of Christ" (Letters 31). Later, in 1804, in the "Preface" to Milton, Blake makes these same connections, that the sloth of the age keeps humans from living to their fullest, keeps his writings from being realized, and again that Jesus' call to imaginative life is what he himself is all about. In this preface (which appropriately ends with "Jerusalem", Blake, like his Bard in the "Introduction" to Songs of Experience, calls to awaken his audience to life, to warn against the corporeal concerns of the day, and to suggest Jesus as a model:

Rouze up O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University: who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War. . . . Suffer not the fashionable Fools to depress your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertising boasts that they make of such works; believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord. (E95)

Writing poetry is, then, a religious call for Blake, as it is for Wordsworth. Blake describes his calling in a letter to Thomas Butts, dated January 10, 1802: "I am not ashamed, afraid, or averse to tell you what Ought to be told: That I am under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily & Nightly . . . But if we fear to do the dictates of our Angels, & tremble at the Tasks set before us; If you . . . Refuse, & bury your Talents in the Earth, [they] pursue you thro' life" (Letters 56). Art is therefore divine, leading men to perceive their mortal world as fused, or as Hopkins would say, "charged" with energy and imagination and spirit. The poet is divine indeed as he calls readers to a kind of worship: "O What Wonders are the Children of Men! Would to God that they would Consider it. That they would consider their Spiritual Life, regardless of that Faint Shadow call'd Natural Life . . . The Mockers of Art is the Mockers of Jesus" (Letters 121).

What we, as readers, are being called to is imaginative vision, seeing the world creatively and thus endowing it with significance beyond its natural existence. Blake explains through his letters how individual creative perception is man's salvation in the world. As he exhorts, it is interesting to note that he does so repeatedly with reference to this world, not with

a mystic consciousness that denies the possibility of fulfillment in the natural world. This is a crucial point because Blake is too easily seen as rejecting nature totally. He himself says that he does on many occasions, mainly in his diatribes against Wordsworth, but, as other comments and poetic practices of Blake confirm, the poet's plan of creative perception is to renew one's life in this world, to make the world appear new and vital. With this perception humans can be happy, as Blake explains here:

I feel that a Man may be happy in This World.
 And I know that This World is a World of
 Imagination & Vision. I see every thing I paint
 In This World, but Everybody does not see alike.
 To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more
 beautiful than the Sun. The tree which moves
 some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others
 only a Green thing that stands in the way . . .
 But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination,
 Nature is Imagination itself. As a man sees, so
 he is. As the Eye is formed, such are its
 Powers. You certainly mistake when you say that
 the Visions of Fancy are not to be found in This
 World. To Me This World is all one
 continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination.

(Letters 30)

Here is Blake's central focus: "As a man sees, so he is. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers." Man literally makes his own world. This is a constant in all of the Blake's work. He says in the Proverbs of Hell from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "A fool sees not the same tree as a wise man" and in "The Mental Traveler," "The Eye Altering alters all." Stimulating and nurturing individual vision (i.e. imagination) is then of profound significance for Blake. He envisions his books as avenues into an imaginative life and compares his strategy with those of the Biblical writers: "Why is the Bible more Entertaining & Instructive than any other book? Is it not because they are addressed to the Imagination, which is Spiritual Sensation, & but immediately to the Understanding or Reason?" (Letters 30). Blake's memorable oxymoronic definition of Imagination as "Spiritual Sensation" suggests that one partakes of this world but by and through a spiritual consciousness. According to Blake, we are capable of accessing this imaginative and spiritual realm and, further, imaginative vision is our reality, more than the natural world.

Blake's claims to have visited with spirits, with Biblical prophets, and on a more human level, his own dead brother have, of course, contributed to his reputation as a mad man, but as Wordsworth implied, there was a method

in the madness. In a letter to William Hayley, dated May 6, 1800, Blake sends regrets over the death of Hayley's son Thomas Alphonso and offers Hayley a copper engraving of the likeness of the boy. However, with that literal, tangible representation of the boy, Blake also sends the following advice: "I know that our deceased friends are more really with us than when they were apparent to our mortal part. Thirteen years ago I lost a brother & with his spirit I converse daily & hourly in the Spirit and See him in my remembrance in the regions of my Imagination. I hear his advice & even now write from his Dictate"

(Letters 35-6). Like Wordsworth in such poems as "We are Seven," Blake here claims that this imaginative, spiritual realm is real. Wordsworth's little maid tenaciously claims, "Nay, we are seven" about her dead or distant siblings, and like Blake's consolatory letter to Hayley, the poem is not simply a sentimental story but rather a model for creative perception, as we shall see in chapter three. Perception, then, must be with the Spiritual or Imaginative eye, not with what Blake sometimes calls the corporeal eye or elsewhere the "mortal vegetated Eyes" (Letters 42). Rather we must obey the ministers of the spirit or of imagination, which come to us if we are open to their presence.

Finally, Blake as poet believes that he best serves

his readers by arousing their own intuitive and creative capacities. In fact, his verse may be compared to parables, an affective structure used as a means of stimulating the active participation of readers. Blake declared in 1803 to Butts that his chosen life was to "See Visions, Dream Dreams, & Prophecy & speak Parables" (Letters 67). From the Greek, parabole, meaning "to throw beside" the word implies that one thing is set, or more creatively, thrown beside another in order to reveal a truth when the reader/listener allows the comparison to exist. The parable as form is very much like Blake's and Wordsworth's lyric form. Reading studies of the parables of Jesus, one sees similarities in aim and structure, so that when Blake says that he speaks in parables, we should be sure that he not only knows the parables of Jesus but sees the connection to his own. A parable is more than a simple utterance or mode of communication; the teller wants to affect or influence the listener in a particular direction. Thus it is that the parables of Jesus are used to overcome resistance to the ideas implicit in them. Telling a story allows for effective instruction, overcoming the difficulties of comprehension by "explaining what is unknown or hard to grasp through what is familiar and easy to grasp" (Linneman 19). Wordsworth, of course, carried out this aim in his contributions to

Lyrical Ballads, and Blake, even if obscure at times, follows a narrative pattern and a familiar stanzaic form. Parables of Jesus furthermore were used to offer a new way of thinking to the listeners. By the end of the parable, the attention of the listener would not be on the characters of the narrative but on the focus for which the parable is created: "The narrator with his parable throws a bridge over the chasm of opposition. Whether the listener steps on to this bridge and finds his way over to him is, however, not under his control. He must be content to have made it possible" (Linneman 22). The parables in general have many formal qualities that Blake and Wordsworth follow: use of a simple narrative "thrown beside" a truth to be expressed, concise storytelling, few subsidiary characters, direct speech, and frequent repetition. Most of all, however, we should heed the theoretical aim behind the parable, which is clear from Erik Routley's definition of parable as a truth that is "trajectory". The parable attempts to present its truth in an indirect way, in the same manner that Blake and Wordsworth believe is necessary to awaken their audience.

Whether it is Blake's diction, imagery, syntax, mythological characters, or narrative, there is something in Blake's poetry that refuses simple interpretation. As Donald Ault asserts, Blake's language or the visionary

nature of his poems "turns the commonsense world of naive sense-data inside out; it radically and uncompromisingly opposes the way we normally experience language and the world" (xii) and makes us "re-evaluate, in light of our present experience, the experience we have just had in his poetry" (xiii). Ault's study Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton explores the relationship between the worlds of Blake and Newton and suggests that Blake's poetry transforms the Newtonian world "so that the reader can achieve the correct perspective on it and the last Judgment can take place within the reader" (42). That is, the reader is an active participant of the poem, and by entering into the spirit of the poem, the reader has the potential to change. Ault emphasizes Blake's belief that an individual has moments of intense perception, what Wordsworth would call a spot of time or Frost a momentary stay against confusion, in which he sees things clearly and is in harmony with that vision. From the Vision of the Last Judgment, Blake asserts, "Whenever any Individual rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual" (E551). Ideally then, the function of the poetry is to bring each individual to the point of this imaginative vision.

. . . .

Like Blake, Wordsworth sincerely believes in the

poet's mission in the life of the reader yet recognizes that his program of poetry is new and may not be accepted. Through his many prose works, we can recognize his major concern with the habits of the reading public, the need to stimulate imaginative thinking, and his aims to effect a change on the reader through the medium of his poetry. It is surprising, given the availability, knowledge, and scholarship of Wordsworth's prose, that Wordsworth's attention to and relationship with his reader has not received more treatment. Stephen Parrish's The Art of the Lyrical Ballads (1973) clearly articulates this argument in the suggestion that "concern with the reader's response, and hence with the artful means by which the poet plays upon it, was . . . Wordsworth's central concern through all his critical writings" (8). Parrish then suggests that the purpose of the poet's creative activity is not "to give his feelings expression under the dictates of Nature, but to shape them with the control of Art so as to evoke responsive feelings in the reader" (32); thus, Parrish validates an essentially rhetorical (versus expressive) poetic theory for Wordsworth. Yet, little critical interpretation of poems with this rhetorical purpose in mind has been done until the publication of Susan Meisenhelder's 1988 study, Wordsworth's Informed

Reader.⁹ Meisenhelder focuses on the way Wordsworth's careful attention to poetic structure recreates his own imaginative development for the audience. Meisenhelder is interested in how Wordsworth recreates in his poetry, through affective structures, crucial experiences in his own development that he felt would change and edify readers, thus furthering their own development.¹⁰ Even more significantly, however, Wordsworth infuses even his narrative lyrical ballads with this call for creative perception on the part of the reader. Both the subject matter and the form of the lyric teach about and/or invoke this imaginative capability.

Wordsworth's "Advertisement" to the 1798 Lyrical Ballads asserts that his poems are experiments, and he

⁹General arguments about Wordsworth's affective structure are made in Herbert Lindenberger's On Wordsworth's Prelude (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963) and Kenneth R. Johnston's "The Idiom of Vision," New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (NY: Columbia UP, 1972.) General acknowledgement that Wordsworth's poetry invites a reader-based approach have been made in Clifford Siskin's "Wordsworth's Gothic Endeavor: From Esthwaite to the Great Decade," Wordsworth Circle 10 (1979): 161-73 and in Gene W. Ruoff's "Wordsworth on Language: Toward a Radical Poetics for English Romanticism," Wordsworth Circle 3 (1972): 204-11.

¹⁰Meisenhelder looks at the relationship between Wordsworth and his reader in scattered lyrics, the 1815 classification of his poems, The Excursion, and The Prelude. Her analysis of the lyrics offers a very valuable discussion of three related techniques by which Wordsworth affects his reader by presenting objects in an unusual manner: contrast, novelty, and surprise.

directly comments on the nature of what he saw as an inactive, unthinking reading public and how his poems would confront readers in an aggressive manner:

Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title.

(1: 116)

Wordsworth here, like Blake, acknowledges that readers will find his poems to be challenging; he wants them to "struggle" with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness. Ironically, Wordsworth's early readers did not "struggle" but rather found the poems too "simple." Wordsworth's "Advertisement" cautions us against a too-lightly-won interpretation of these "simple" poems. As Hazlitt reminds us, "Fools have laughed at, wise men scarcely understood the Lyrical Ballads." John Danby's The Simple Wordsworth discusses this kind of subtle critical denigration of Wordsworth and contends that the "simplicity is an invitation to a new intimacy, a new discipline, and a new complexity" (26). Further, Danby suggests that a general

misunderstanding of Wordsworth continues, and Wordsworth's targeted reading public has yet to be a reality:

The Wordsworth that has been accepted, and thereafter rejected, is a ghost: a Wordsworth praised or condemned for his bucolicism, stoicism, naive naturism, and lack of interest in sex. The charges against Wordsworth reflect the inadequacies of the reading public he has had to contend with ever since 1798. (151)

Danby's approach to the poems is opposite to Parrish's rhetorical approach and my own in that Danby claims Wordsworth was "profoundly uninterested in poetry as words" (16), and this is a limitation in his analyses, but he exerts a powerful force since he confronts us with our Blakean "mind-forg'd manacles" and calls for a re-initiation in Wordsworth studies.

Wordsworth goes on in the "Advertisement" to assert that the poems require a new method of reading, that we must not let previous experiences of poetry determine our reactions but rather allow the poems to speak to us "in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision" (1: 116). Like Blake in his heuristic, parabolic voice, Wordsworth suggests that he as a poet must not dictate the response but stimulate the reader's own faculties. In the 1800

"Preface," Wordsworth explains that he knew his poems would not be easily accepted, saying he hoped for "more than common pleasure" but expected "more than common dislike" (1: 118), and he is aware that his language can not always affect the reader in the way that he himself is affected: "Hence I have no doubt that in some instances feelings even of the ludicrous may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic" (1: 152). Yet Wordsworth refuses to write a fullscale "systematic defense" of his poems because rational thought is not the subject of the poems, and therefore the reader should not be reasoned into an understanding of them and would "look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of reasoning him into an approbation of these particular Poems" (1: 120). Hoping to change the audience indirectly through his poetry, Wordsworth believes, like Blake, that readers need to be aroused from complacent reading of traditional texts. His first request of the readers is that they judge "by [their] own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what would be the judgment of others" (1: 154). That is, the reader must not judge by the verse that is in vogue at the time or, more specifically, by the reader's own fondness for such verse. In the 1802 "Preface,"

Wordsworth suggests that changing the reading habits of the eighteenth-century public is clearly one of his missions and is the undergirding of his whole poetic program:

For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its [the mind's] beauty & dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another in proportion as he possesses this capability.

(1: 128)

That is, the capability to feel the influence of the imaginative or spiritual realm is what elevates one above another. And sounding much like Blake in his "Preface" to Milton ("Suffer not the Fashionable Fools to depress your powers") Wordsworth clearly urges his readers to be alert to what they read: "For a multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating power of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor" (1: 128). What Wordsworth's poetic program seeks to do is to refit the mind for "voluntary exertion" and thus combat the blunt "torpor" of the contemporary mind.

With these conditions and such a purpose in mind, the poet sees his mission to be reclaiming reading as a sacred activity that vitalizes, not deadens, and he speaks of his role as a serious, and like Blake, holy one: "It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavor to produce or enlarge this capacity is one of the best services in which, at any Period, a Writer can be engaged" (1: 128). Similarly, he asserts, in a letter to John Wilson, that a poet must do more than just reflect human feelings; a great poet ought "to a certain degree to rectify men's feelings, to render their feelings more sane and pure and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things" (Letters 355). Even though Blake would not assent to Wordsworth's aim to make readers more "consonant to nature," as Wordsworth goes on to say, he means "eternal nature," and the poet must rectify, make right, man's perception of that reality. Similar to Blake, Wordsworth notes the affinities between religion and poetry. Particularly in the "Essay Supplementary to the Preface" of 1815, Wordsworth explains that the ideas that both religion and poetry seek to embed in the individual are "aetherial and transcendent" and "incapable to sustain [their] existence without sensuous incarnation" (3: 65). In poetry, the incarnation occurs as the poet creates a

physical text to embody the truths he wishes to express. The religious person and the student of poetry should ideally have the same attitude--to value what one sees with the physical eye chiefly as a kind of Platonic "imperfect shadowing forth" of what one is incapable of physically seeing. For Wordsworth asserts that in both poetry and scripture/ritual, "much is represented in little" and the "infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity" (3: 65). That is, the incarnation of the spiritual truth, the "infinite Being," occurs in the little, finite world of the poem. Again as in Blake, the poem is parable, teaching without explicitly teaching, forcing the reader to make the connections that are relevant.

Also, like Blake, Wordsworth believes that a significant part of a fulfilling life is recognition that one's own creative perception shapes and changes the world. Wordsworth tells us that this is his primary interest, his topic, in Lyrical Ballads. In the 1802 "Preface" (which follows the 1800 version closely but contains the important changes regarding language that Coleridge disagreed with), Wordsworth's well-known statement of purpose clearly emphasizes this point, and it is necessary to look at these words closely:

The principal object of the Poems was to chuse incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them . . . the primary laws of nature, chiefly as regards our ideas in a state of excitement.

(3: 123)

Wordsworth's image of a "certain colouring of imagination," used to express ordinary things in an unusual way, is a deliberate invocation of a standard metaphor used in debates about the value of poetic language, that is, language as garment. Wordsworth's "colouring" is the medium of language through which truths are expressed, in the sense that figurative language or poetic devices are known as the colors of rhetoric. This trope is a commonplace in late seventeenth and eighteenth century discussions about the nature of and uses for poetic language. Many Enlightenment philosophers and Neoclassical writers cautioned against poetic language,

the "dress," as opposed to the substance of thought. In Book III of his Essay on Human Understanding, Locke, for example, warns that words, and more specifically, figurative language, are "cheats" and will seduce the writer who is not careful: "I confess where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from [figurative language] can scarce pass as faults all the arts of rhetoric . . . move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats" (III.7). His image of language as "ornament" emphasizes a division between word and thing, rhetoric being an extraneous addition to substance or truth. Similarly, Berkeley invokes the language as garment metaphor when he warns readers not to get caught up in the "dress of words." This trope dominates Neoclassical poetics as well. In the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, Dryden points to the excessive reliance on the colors of rhetoric. More explicitly, Pope's Essay on Criticism perpetuates both Lockean and Berkeleyan terminology, criticizing the ornament and dress of poetic language. Poets, like painters, "With gold and jewels cover every part / And hide with ornaments their want of art" (2.294-5). Consistent with Neoclassical principles, Pope offers some rules for expression, stressing what is decent and

suitable for society: "Others for language all their care express, / And value books, as women men, for dress . . . Expression is the dress of thought, and still / Appears more decent as more suitable" (2.305-6, 318-9).

Wordsworth's use of the language as garment metaphor, by contrast, neither condemns a conscious use of language, nor offers rational regulations. Although Wordsworth denounces artificial, poetic diction, especially in the 1802 Appendix, he argues that the guiding principle must not be the opinions of society or an empirical adherence to fact; rather, a poet must engage in a language of passion, a language that embodies what it attempts to express. Thus, Wordsworth's language is incarnational, as he makes clear in the third Essay Upon Epitaphs:

If words be not (recurring to a metaphor before used)¹¹ an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift, such a one as those poisoned vestments . . . which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who puts them on. (3: 84)

¹¹The metaphor "before used" is the language as garment trope. Just prior to this passage, Wordsworth asserts that he encourages those thoughts which have "the infinitude of truth, and those expressions which are not what the garb is to the body but what the body is to the soul" (III.84).

Furthermore, Wordsworth's assumption of the importance of this "certain colouring of imagination" applies to individual lives, not only poets'. In "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth immortalizes his ideas about the shaping powers of the imagination, the Kantian precept that the mind has a significant role in perception, in the lines celebrating the "mighty world / Of eye and ear, both what they half create / And what perceive" (LB 106-8). The mind perceives nature and with the colouring of imagination creates it as well. The poet then is one who has a "disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present" (l: 138), as if a poet can conjure up passions which, though not real, are essentially more "real" than actual ones. This assumption underlies all of Wordsworth's poetry, and he even assumes that one's "real" (creative) perceptions can change physical matter. He points to a narrative ballad (which Wordsworth himself says is one of the "rudest" of the collection) as evincing this truth, commanding that we take the story of "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" seriously. In this lyrical ballad, Harry Gill is cursed for keeping Goody Blake cold by refusing to let her utilize branches and limbs from his land to build a fire for warmth. Goody Blake curses him, "O may he never be warm," and the poem asks the reader to believe in the curse as Harry is seen

shivering, literally as well as metaphorically cold. The poem emphasizes the power of the mind to produce even physical changes, and as Wordsworth explains, it shows that "the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous" (3: 150). Knowing the importance of these beliefs to Wordsworth, we should be able to appreciate anew the well-known, almost clichéd, definition of poetry that Wordsworth offers in the "Preface":

I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origins from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced and does itself actually exist in the mind. (1: 148)

Critics have noted the importance of the second clause in conjunction with the first, for good poetry is not simply a spontaneous overflow; it must be recollected, thought out, and carefully worked at. Yet the third sentence is often neglected but is just as valid as the former two, as it argues for the validity of creative

perception. One contemplates the powerful emotion, until "by a species of reaction," the imaginative process that is both ultimately ineffable and irresistible, the mind "produces" or creates that passion which does itself "actually exist in the mind." Wordsworth wants both to offer a representation of the emotion that readers can recollect and have as their own and also to teach the readers, enabling them to create this "kindred" reality.

The lyric itself is chosen as an apt vehicle for presenting Wordsworth's beliefs in creative perception and for stimulating the reader to respond imaginatively. In the 1815 "Preface," in which Wordsworth explains his classification of poems, he also explains the nature of the lyric genre or rather how "lyric" may be considered part of many genres. As Wordsworth explains, a piece may be "essentially lyrical" and require not a harp nor a lyre but rather an "animated or impassioned recitation" (3:29). Wordsworth goes further to compare how one reads poems aloud to how one reads silently and thus argues for the necessity of an impassioned reading process: "Poems, however humble in their kind, if they be good in their kind, cannot read themselves" (3:29). Indeed, the reader whom Wordsworth seeks must be actively participating in the poem, or else the meaning and the purpose will go ungarnered. For Wordsworth, perhaps more than anything,

wanted his words to take root in the heart of the reader. Thus, Wordsworth believes that in reading one must actively engage with a superrational kind of thinking. The receptiveness to poetry is more important to Wordsworth than agreement with or praise of the poem. For example, in a letter to John Wilson, Wordsworth praises Wilson even though Wilson critiques Wordsworth's "The Idiot Boy," stimulating a long response and defense of the poem by Wordsworth. The quality in Wilson that Wordsworth values is on a level above simple opinion of the poems because "you [Wilson] have entered into the spirit of them" (Letters 352). As he writes in the 1802 "Preface," the object of poetry is "truth, not individual or local, but general and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion" (3: 139). Finally, then, it is with deliberate artistry that Wordsworth plans subject matter, diction, and syntax in his lyrics in order to bring the reader to such an expanded awareness.

. . . .

We have seen how Blake and Wordsworth are quite similar in their beliefs about the value of imaginative vision and how each thought the poet's task was to stimulate, awaken, and shape the reader through the poetry. These two concerns are a major part of the

quality of the Blakean and the Wordsworthian lyric. How then does each use the form of the lyric so as to offer the poem as a catalyst for creative perception in the reader? It is not enough to assert again that the lyrics are not "simple" or that they contain a meaning behind the literal, narrative one. These truths are not debatable anymore. Indeed, what is needed is a rhetorical view of how each poet appropriated the lyric, using the idea of imaginative perception both in subject matter and in the form that was to stimulate the reader. I believe this calls for a close analysis of diction, stanzaic form, dialogue, narrative, and syntax. I define syntax following Earl Wasserman in The Subtler Language as "not only grammatical syntax but also the interactive capacities of any of the properties of words . . . including connotation, metaphor, ambiguity, or pun; position and repetition; word order; sound; rhyme; even orthography." With these in mind, we can turn to the poetry of each and see the lyric realizing its full potential at the poets' hands.

Chapter III

Surprised Into a Perception:

Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads

A. C. Bradley remarked in 1909 that the way to Wordsworth must be "through his strangeness and his paradoxes and not round them" (101). Yet critics and readers have frequently preferred to avoid the complex simplicity of the Lyrical Ballads (LB). Bradley's use of the term "strangeness" in describing these lyrics echoes Wordsworth's, for it was "strangeness and awkwardness" that the poet believed his readers would feel. If the history of the reception of LB teaches us anything, it is that it was not what Wordsworth desired. His concern over the "savage torpor" of the reading public seems valid when we sample some of the critical commentary following the 1798 publication. In The Monthly Review of June 1799, Dr. Burney praises only Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and finally concludes that while he was entertained with the "fancy" of the pieces, he "cannot regard them as poetry" (LB 315). Burney's "critique" on "We Are Seven" represents, by synecdoche, most of his commentary; the lyric was, as he called it, "innocent and pretty infantile prattle" (LB 316). More sympathetic critics focused on the realistic description of external nature or of people,

especially of children, and on Wordsworth's expression of human sentiment and affections throughout the document as a whole. For example, a review of February 1801 in the British Critic, probably written by Francis Wrangham, a friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge, emphasizes that the "author has thought for himself; he has deeply studied human nature" as opposed to the "Bards of Science, or their brethren, the Bards of Insipidity" (LB 321). Even today, when Wordsworth has been illuminated by the greatest critical lights available, his lyrical ballads are not read in the way he would have desired. Even though Wordsworth has been inaugurated into the fold, or unfolding, of deconstruction, critically interpreted by Marxism, and championed by neo-historicism, some critics categorize these early lyrics as examples only of Wordsworth's social didacticism or his primitivism or merely a stage of development en route to The Prelude.

Unlike many artists, Blake included, Wordsworth is quite explicit on the subject of how he wishes his poems to be read. Although one should not use Wordsworth's discussions as prescriptions for reading the poems, thus limiting the potential meanings available to the reader, it is just as incorrect to ignore his statements. Recent studies that have dissected Wordsworth from his own text forfeit the possible value of discerning why the poet,

above all, desired to be a "man speaking to men" (1: 138). As he wrote to Sir George Beaumont in 1808, "Every great poet is a Teacher; I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing" (Letters 317). As a teacher, Wordsworth provides copious comments to instruct the reader about not only the purposes of his poems (see the previous chapter), but, more specifically, his choices of subjects, diction, and meter. As readers, we should pursue a critical exploration of Wordsworth's lyrics in light of his stated purposes for educating his audience. A rhetorical analysis of the ways in which these poems work dynamically to affect the reader, informed by a recognition of Wordsworth's guiding principles from the prose, enables us not only to answer Wordsworth's call for readers but also to be educated by the transformative quality of the texts.

On choice of subject matter, Wordsworth says he sought to choose "incidents or situations from common life" that were then "infused with a certain colouring of imagination" (1: 123) and expressed by a "selection of language really used by men in a state of vivid sensation" (1: 123). The "state of vivid sensation" that he focuses upon and the "colouring of imagination" through which he renders these subjects emphatically suggest that Wordsworth's primary interest was the imaginative and

emotional states of humans, not their external, social existence. This focus is employed not only in the great romantic odes and The Prelude but also in the lyrics; although social criticism is manifestly an issue in many of these poems, their primary gesture toward the reader is both to represent and to affect the human imagination and emotion. Imagination is, of course, not free from social influence, but we can see that in poems like "The Idiot Boy," "Anecdote For Fathers," and "Strange Fits of Passion," external plot or social commentary is relatively unimportant; rather, the characters' modes of perception are the real subject. Thus, when Wordsworth claims that he "endeavored to look steadily at [his] subject" (l: 133), we can assume that often his subject is the intangible, imaginative perceptions made by his characters.

This interest in man's "ideas in a state of excitement" (l: 122) involves following the "fluxes and refluxes of the mind" (l: 126) and, as such, often dictates the initial form of the poem as well as the content. Wordsworth attempts to evoke a particular response from the reader who, if the poet's art is effective, experiences something like what the character is experiencing. Wordsworth most often accomplishes this reader participation by directly or indirectly

confronting/addressing the reader or perplexing the reader by shifting emphases and frustrating the culmination of the simple narrative. He uses the former technique most often at the beginning or middle of the poem and the latter almost always at the end. First, Wordsworth occasionally uses direct and indirect addresses, which break the verisimilitude of the narrative and invite reader interaction and interpretation. Some examples include the direct address, common to eighteenth century novels, ("My gentle Reader"), that Wordsworth uses in "Simon Lee," or the indirect address, for example in "Lines Written With a Slate Pencil," to the traveler ("Stranger!") whose role the reader assumes. A more sophisticated method than the address is Wordsworth's use of an enigmatic conclusion that transforms the reader's perception of the poem. Reading a Wordsworth lyric may begin with a sense of its simplicity and an attention to narrative meaning, but often ends with a perplexing view of the last stanza or couplet. In poems like "The Idiot Boy," "Anecdote for Fathers," and "Strange Fits of Passion," as well as "We Are Seven," "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," and "There Was a Boy," the reader who, in Wordsworth's language, "looks round" for a conventional, or rational, narrative ending may, instead, be hopelessly confused by the final stanza. The reader commits the same

kind of "false" rational thinking in her expectations of closure that Wordsworth's poem clearly condemns.¹

Wordsworth, in this way, actually has the reader in a position to learn what the characters learn--the value of imaginative interpretation. Each of these methods has the effect of leading a reader to a renewed and expanded perception.

Wordsworth's dedication to this task is evident in his stringent requirements for an active reader. In his statement that "poems . . . cannot read themselves" (3: 29), Wordsworth implicitly nudges his readers to accept their responsibility in the reading process. More importantly, as Meisenhelder points out, Wordsworth's statement suggests that "the operations involved in reading parallel those of perception" (231); that is, things that are external to us, that we take in through our senses, are not passively perceived. The mind must "half-create" what it perceives, adopting an active role not just for physical seeing but also for the kind of imaginative perception required in the Wordsworthian model

¹This kind of reader participation is similar to C. S. Lewis' theory about Paradise Lost, as well as Fish's reception theory as applied to Milton's Paradise Lost; i.e., that readers are seduced by the narrative (beguiled by Satan's rhetoric) into false perceptions which Milton finally rectifies through the course of the poem. See Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost. London and New York: St. Martin's P, 1967.

of reading. A poem thus experienced should be, to use DeQuincey's terms, a literature of power, not just a literature of knowledge. Wordsworth specifically uses these phrases of DeQuincey in the 1815 "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" as he explains that the communication of knowledge is an easy task, whereas the difficult, but essential, task is one in which the poet will "call forth and bestow power of which knowledge is the effect" (3: 82). This dichotomy of knowledge/power should guide the reader as well as the poet; it is not the plot, or externals, that are important but rather the emotion represented: "The feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling" (1: 129). Lyric is, in fact, often defined this way as opposed to narrative, which Wordsworth, in "Hart-Leap Well" calls the "moving accident." His lyrical ballads, in their particularly "rhetorical" dimension, to use Parrish's term, challenge a reader who may expect only a "moving accident."² What Wordsworth is arguing against in this line is not story or

²As Wolfson notes, Wordsworth's line evokes Shakespeare's great tale-teller Othello, who explains that he won Desdemona's heart by telling her the story of his life: "I spake of most disastrous chances / Of moving accidents by flood and field. . ." (1.3.134-5). Although Wordsworth's narratives might have the purpose of winning hearts, just as Othello's, the poet's allusion appears as a disclaimer: "The moving accident is not (emphasis added) my trade."

narrative in itself, but rather the reading habits of the eighteenth-century public in their "craving for extraordinary incident" and their fondness for "outrageous stimulation" (1:128, 130).

As well as paying careful attention to larger rhetorical form, or to the subversion of such form, Wordsworth also shapes syntactical/grammatical elements to encourage reader responsibility. Diction is one of the most important since language is the "colouring of imagination," the garment, that the poet applies to the subject. One of Wordsworth's most famous statements about the affective uses of language in poetry (and thus one of the most interesting defenses of a close analysis of the lyric) occurs in his "Note" to "The Thorn."³ In order to exemplify his character's perceptions, Wordsworth deliberately chose words to "convey Passion to the Readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner or using such language" (LB 282). In this note, Wordsworth defends the language, specifically short words and repetitious diction, used by the persona of "The Thorn," again also defending his own craft. Of

³Published in the 1800 Lyrical Ballads, the note addresses criticism of that poem from the 1798 publication, most notoriously from Robert Southey who cautioned Wordsworth with the following: "The author should have recollected that he who personates tiresome loquacity becomes tiresome himself" (LB 313).

short words, he avows that expressive diction, and not artificial diction, should be the only rule: "Words, a poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling and not measured by the space which they occupy on paper," for "the Reader can not be too often reminded that Poetry is passion; it is the history or science of feeling" (LB 283). Finally, defending against the attacks of tautology, he proclaims that "virtual tautology is much oftener produced by using different words when the meaning is the same" (LB 283). Wordsworth believes his use of repetition to be consonant with the character and the feelings he seeks to portray and, more universally, to be illustrative of the truth about the way man's mind uses language. The words themselves are vehicles of the emotions, and the clinging to words is not only appropriate for this poem and its main character but for many poems:

Now every man must know that an attempt is
rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings
without something of an accompanying
consciousness of the inadequateness of our own
powers, or the deficiencies of language. During
such efforts there will be a craving in the
mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the
speaker will cling to the same words . . .

[therefore tautologies are] beauties of the highest kind [due to the] interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as things, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion. (LB 283)

He further defends tautology by comparing it to Biblical language, in this instance Judges V, a "tumultuous and wonderful Poem" (LB 283). Though Wordsworth points to the whole chapter as a beautiful poem, he surely means such specific lines as the following that bear resemblance in tone and use of balanced repetition to much of Wordsworth's practice: "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise" (5:12) or "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead" (5:27). The repetition is functional and affective, and like Blake, Wordsworth validates his own writing by comparison to Biblical scriptures, prime examples of words that are, as he says, carried alive into the heart by passion.

Wordsworth, moreover, explains his choices of diction and meter, denouncing artificial, poetic diction both in the 1800 "Preface" and the "Appendix to the Preface" (1802). He sets aside poetic diction, much to Coleridge's

disapproval, of course, and promises to keep his reader "in the company of flesh and blood" (1: 131). He rejects a "mechanical adoption" for a "language of passion." Thus, while careful attention to form is characteristic of Wordsworth, he dismisses, as non-imaginative, the "motley masquerade of tricks," that characterizes artificial diction. Yet, while Wordsworth denounces the conscious use of poetic diction, he defends his use of regular meter in the poems. To "superadd the charm" (1: 144) of metrical language is beneficial for both poet and reader. Specifically, while successful poetry produces excitement for the reader, Wordsworth explains that "excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not in that state succeed each other in accustomed order" (1: 147). Therefore, it is desirable to have the "copresence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state" (1: 147). Thus, echoing the idea of Blake's "fearful symmetry," or Coleridge's "reconciliation of opposites," Wordsworth claims that meter's regularity works by "tempering" the passion and allowing a "perception of similitude in dissimilitude" (1: 149). For the strangeness and awkwardness of the subject matter will be balanced by the natural, regular rhythm. In sum, Wordsworth believes that all elements of form can be

functional in bringing the reader to an expanded perception that is the aim of his poetic program. The lyrical ballads, in their variety of structure and content, may be seen as heuristics for creative perception.

* * *

For Wordsworth, the pattern of the creative perceptual process consists of rendering the familiar unfamiliar, so that the perceiver can see the object anew. Like the Russian formalist technique of ostranenie, Wordsworth's goal is "making strange." This is his stated obligation to Lyrical Ballads: Coleridge was to make the unfamiliar familiar, Wordsworth to make the familiar unfamiliar. According to Wordsworth, the way one achieves this goal in poetry parallels one's daily experience. Usually, moments of vital and creative perception occur after one has been suspended in concentration. Upon the breaking of that suspension, which may be focused observation, meditation, or reading, one may, like Wordsworth's Boy of Winander, be "surprised into a perception" (LB 293) that is at once new and affective. The suspension is a necessary step in the creative perceptual process, for it allows the mind to be receptive to new perceptions. This metaphor is common in Romantic theory; Coleridge, for instance, asserted that a reader

must effect a "willing suspension of disbelief" in reading and describes this suspension in the following terms:

[It is a] state of mind more strictly appropriate to the imagination than any other, when it is, as it were, hovering between images. As soon as it is fixed on one image, it becomes understanding, but while it is unfixed and wavering between them . . . it is imagination . . . still offering what is still repelled, and again creating what is again rejected. (qtd. in Raysor 2: 103-4)⁴

This pattern of experience in which suspension creates a capability for being "surprised" into a new perception occurs to Wordsworth as a most natural event. The poet's autobiographical epic The Prelude is full of such moments in concert with Nature; for example, in Book I, Wordsworth recalls a time when as a boy, he was suspended on a "steady" lake in the small boat which he had stolen, and he then became terrified by the new perception of the mountains which appeared to him as alive

⁴Cf. also Keats' explanation of "Negative Capability": "that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (Letters 1: 194).

and threatening because of his "crime."⁵ A famous story about Wordsworth is DeQuincey's account of an instance in which he and Wordsworth were awaiting the mail coach. As Wordsworth was "suspended," in waiting, he put his ear to the road to hear approaching wheels. As he arose, he was struck by an appreciation of a bright star on the horizon. DeQuincey tells how Wordsworth analyzed the event:

. . . [if] the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object . . . falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances. Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound . . . at that very instant when I raised my head from the ground . . . when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star hanging in the air above those

⁵Note how the boy's suspension is manifested structurally by balanced syntax and repetition in lines like the following: "I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again / In cadence" (I.385-6). The intensity of this experience is broken when his imagination actually animates the natural world around him: " . . . the huge cliff / Rose up between me and the atrs, and still / With measured motion, like a living thing / Strode after me" (409-12).

outlines of massy blackness fell suddenly upon my eye and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the Infinite, that could not have arrested me under other circumstances (308-9).

Wordsworth emphasizes an "intense condition of vigilance"; he is "hanging" suspended just as the bright star is hanging. Upon the breaking of that suspension, which he terms as being "arrested," he experiences a new capacity for the "Infinite."

This pattern of suspension, or "hanging," which is crucial for creative perception is the dominant pattern of experience in reading a Wordsworth poem as well. That is, the reader is often halted in order to allow for a new and vitalized perception to arrest the judgment. In Wolfgang Iser's terms, a "hiatus" in the reading process may serve not to complicate our response so much as to "make us aware of the nature of our own capacity for providing links" (55). The majority of the LB, in fact, use this pattern of suspension as an affective structure. Most poems dramatize or create some kind of suspension during the reading process, but the method by which Wordsworth involves the reader varies. As stated earlier, the most direct and obvious technique is his occasional use of the direct address for various purposes. Common to eighteenth

century novels, the direct address to a "Gentle Reader" literally imposes upon the reader to involve herself in the story. This suspension may be simply to build suspense in the events of the narrative, or it may test the reader's judgment in some way.⁶ Other than the address, there are three very different manifestations of this pattern, and it is fruitful to evaluate a sampling of the LB with an eye toward how they attempt to transform the reader through these structures.

First, "There Was a Boy," as the seminal poem in the collection in many ways, is a personal lyric which explains a moment of sudden perception, both for the boy and the narrator, and recreates this experience, through its rhetorical features, for the reader. Second, Wordsworth's Lucy poems as a group create a space wherein the reader is suspended within and between poems. Considered intertextually, "Strange Fits of Passion" and "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" position the reader between them in such a way that each poem is affected retrogressively and progressively by the other, and meaning becomes interdependent. Finally, and most

⁶Cf. for instance, Andrew Griffin's discussion of Wordsworth's "gentle reader" address in "Simon Lee," a poem which he suggests is "devoted in a direct and immediate way to the amendment or chastisement" of the deficient reader (396). See "Wordsworth and the Problem of Imaginative Story," PMLA 92 (1977): 392-409.

effectively, Wordsworth presents the reader with a dramatic confrontation between two characters, usually a child and an adult, providing an essentially interrogative narrative in which the reader becomes entrapped between the characters' dialogue and is pulled dialectically between rational and creative thought processes. All three of these structures are ways by which Wordsworth effects reader participation and education.

Any analysis of "There Was a Boy" must at least recognize, if not clarify, the poem's confusing textual history; the text itself is, in fact, suspended between versions. Originally written in Germany during 1798-9, it appears in an early manuscript of The Prelude (in which it becomes Book V.389-413, of the 1805 version). Although scholars believe it was originally intended to be part of the 1799 Two-Part Prelude, it was first published in the 1800 Lyrical Ballads. This history implies that Wordsworth considered the poem seminal, for it becomes, in the 1815 classification edition, the first and exemplary poem under the heading "Poems of the Imagination." A host of critics, including Hartman, remind us that the manuscript version is an autobiographical poem, using the word "I" where all printed versions use "he." Although Wordsworth certainly drew from his own experience, his deliberate choice was to make it universal in the life of

a "boy." The poem is valuable in documenting the growth of a poet's mind, but its real importance transcends Wordsworth or the poet. For as Wordsworth explains in the 1815 headnote, the poem exemplifies the co-operation (Wordsworth's hyphenation) of the mind with some external "accident" to nurture imaginative vision:

The Boy, there introduced, is listening, with something of a feverish and restless anxiety, for the recurrence of the riotous sounds which he had previously excited; and, at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquilizing images which the Poem describes. (LB 293)

"There Was a Boy" exemplifies the pattern of creative perception not only in its literal illustration of one boy's experience, but also--if the poem is successful by Wordsworth's terms--by the mirroring of that experience within the text itself; in so doing, the poem assures the reader's acknowledgment of and encourages the reader's belief in the potential of imaginative perception.

In this poem, imaginative perception is exemplified on one level through the boy's literal activity. After calling to the owls, the boy listens "feverishly" for a response as the lines themselves suggest or enact the

event:

Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents, or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, receiv'd
Into the bosom of the steady lake. (18-25)

Wordsworth's diction and syntax both parallel and emphasize the boy's suspension. The boy's imaginative perception occurs after he is suspended ("hung") in attention, and with a shock of "surprise," the scene before him is "carried far into his heart." The boy then experiences this flash of insight. That he receives this vision "unawares" does not mean that he is a passive receptacle of sensory data, as Lockean epistemology would suggest. The boy's perception is, rather, a creative moment which he achieves through a "wise passiveness" ("Expostulation and Reply" 24). The first section of the poem, then, describes the boy's expanded perception after a period of suspension.

The boy's experience is also not a passive one for the reader, whose creative reading abilities are tested by Wordsworth's functional rhetoric. In the passage quoted

above, the reader is made to "hang" attentively along with the boy, as the phrase "hung / Listening" is separated by the line ending.⁷ The boy's flash of insight is rendered by affective diction, Wordsworth's "shock of mild surprise." The third and fourth lines each end with sensory images that the boy perceives: the "voice" and the "visible scene" both enter his mind. The fifth line ends with the word "mind," thus completing the cycle of imaginative perception. The "voice" and the "visible scene" are received by the "mind" for active perception. The mind accepts this material from what is called in "Tintern Abbey" the "mighty world/ Of eye and ear" (106-7) and will then actively shape it, as Wordsworth's theory of perception validates. Wordsworth then describes the scene that is entered into his mind--the rocks, trees, and sky all reflected in the steady lake. The language of these lines is very significant for the boy, the poet, and the reader: " . . . its rocks, / Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, receiv'd / Into the bosom of the steady lake" (25). This final line is frequently quoted as a typically Wordsworthian line, for it brings together

⁷Even before the statement that the boy "hung" listening, the reader is suspended within the text by Wordsworth's doublings and repetitions within the narrative: "rising or setting," "beneath the tree or by the glimmering lake," "palm to palm," "echoes loud / Redoubled and redoubled."

literal and metaphorical, nature and imagination with a tone of inevitability. Coleridge's well-known comment on these lines is particularly appropriate: "Had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should instantly have screamed out 'Wordsworth'" (Letters 1: 36). On a literal level, the rocks, woods, and sky are simply reflected in the lake. However, that the boy's perception is a creative one, not mere sensory perception, is evident from the poet's suggestive language. The metaphorical language suggests the "colouring of imagination" that transforms simply visual experience to visionary perception. The reception of the "uncertain heaven" into the "bosom" of the lake suggests, as Meisenhelder argues, a unity of earth/sky that is "extended to a unity of perceiver and perceived" (31). That the perceiver is analogous to the lake is rhetorically evident in that the "bosom" of the lake receives the images just as the boy perceives the voice and visible scene. More significantly, the lake is "steady," suspended, in a position to receive just as the boy was. Thus, the boy's experience of suspension precedes a realization that is "carried far into his heart" just as the sky or heaven is carried into the "bosom" of a steady lake.

If the first section were all of the poem, then it

would serve as a description and example of a moment of vitalized perception. The second section, however, actually echoes the first by recreating for the reader the elements of the boy's experience. Most traditional readings of the poem stress the sense of loss and finality in the second section, which recounts how the narrator was struck by the boy's early death as he stood by the grave. Hartman, for instance, argues that the poem exhibits Wordsworth's failure to cross the gulf between the natural and transcendent realms and that the narrator stands over the grave of his own childhood. This perceived gulf between the boy's vitality and the adult's sobriety has led to much disparagement of the poem; W. J. B. Owen claims that the poem is about imagination but is not imaginative itself, and a contemporary of Wordsworth, Francis Jeffrey exclaimed that the boy's action in the poem, hooting to the owls, is not sufficiently interesting to make us care about his death: ". . . for the sake of this one accomplishment, we are told, that the author has frequently stood mute, and gazed on his grave for half-an-hour together" (Bateson 21). Jeffrey here responds out of his craving for "incident" rather than feeling. It is not the boy's actions that are important, but simply, as the opening line states, that "there was a boy." In fact, this kind of simple declaration is one of the distinctive

features of the lyrical ballads that is crucial to understanding how they affect the reader. Parabolic, they often simply introduce the subject or character by stating a fact of existence, ("There was a boy," "I have a boy," "There is a thorn"), and Wordsworth defends this practice as clearly expressing his purpose of writing.⁸

The poem as a whole actually provides a cycle of perception. First, the boy is suspended, attentively listening, then is "surprised into a perception" of his imaginative unity with the world around him. At the end of this section, Wordsworth's sonorous tone and the monosyllabic final words lull the reader into a state of suspension or hanging. As J. P. Ward suggests, the use of monosyllables is utterance at its simplest level and offers a "sort of lake or sea of language" (149). This state is solidified by the space which appears in the text between the first and second sections. That is, the break in reading that follows line twenty-five prepares the readers for their own "shock of mild surprise" that occurs

⁸In a letter to Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth emphasizes his conscious use of the word "was" in "Resolution and Independence," explaining that mere "being" is oftentimes what he means. About the Leechgatherer, Wordsworth declares that he meant "was" to be filled with significance: "Not 'stood,' not 'sat,' but 'was'--the figure presented in the most naked simplicity possible." Thus, Wordsworth's reliance on the "to be" verbs, is, as Ferguson asserts, an intensity rather a poverty of language.

in the final stanza, which announces the boy's death:

Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
The vale where he was born: the Church-yard
hangs

Upon a slope above the village school,
And there along that bank when I have pass'd
At evening, I believe, that near his grave
A full half-hour together I have stood,
Mute -- for he died when he was ten years old.

(26-32)⁹

Realization of the boy's death, which was implied in the initial statement (there was a boy) but subsumed in the present tense of the first stanza, comes as a surprise for the reader, just as the boy's initial perceptions of the visible world entered into his mind "unawares" after his suspension. But just as the boy grows imaginatively from that perception and finally intuits a unity of earth/sky, mind/object, so the reader's continued experience with the text offers a higher mode of perception. For Wordsworth, as narrator, describes the churchyard and his own vigil at the grave in the same terms as the boy's experience. Even the diction recalls the incident as the churchyard "hangs

⁹In the 1805 version of The Prelude, as well as publications subsequent to the 1815 edition, the stanza begins even more abruptly with the insertion of the following: "This Boy was taken from his Mates, and died / In childhood, ere he was ten years old."

/ Upon a slope," like the boy who "hung / Listening." The boy's steady view of the lake is echoed in the narrator's watch over the grave, as he stands mute. The pause of the hypens after "Mute" enact the suspension, as does the entirely monosyllabic final line. This final section, as an echo of the former, engenders creative perception both for the narrator, whose experience at the grave has led him to write the poem and for the reader, whose understanding of the relationship between the two sections requires an active role of interpretation. One can argue, as Meisenhelder and Hartman do, over whether the boy's grave reveals a unity of life and death or the nostalgia of a buried childhood, but rhetorically, the poem serves as a good introduction to Wordsworth's method of affective structure which enables the poem to be "carried alive into the heart by passion" (3: 139).

A second way in which a suspension or hiatus in the reading process becomes a heuristic device can be seen in an intertextual reading of "Strange Fits of Passion" and its sequel "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways."¹⁰ The first poem itself involves its readers in its hypnotic narrative, suspending them in time and space just as the persona is suspended in deep reverie. Much like the

¹⁰Riffaterre calls the relationship among units of a larger sequence "intratextual intertextuality" to make a distinction to intertextuality proper.

experience of "There Was A Boy," readers may find themselves "hung" within the poem through its content and its rhetoric. Furthermore, this poem and its traditional sequel "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" serve, in intertextual reading, to suspend the reader between them. The gap between the two poems is a hiatus filled with significance that forces the second poem back upon the first. In these poems Wordsworth describes in dramatic terms how imaginative perception can constitute one's reality.

Strange fits of passion have I known
And I will dare to tell
But in the Lover's ear alone
What once to me befell. (1-4)

From the beginning connotations of "Lover's" and "fits of passion," the reader may expect a narrative of passionate love. The fit of passion, however, turns out to be strange indeed as the narrator recounts not a romantic passion but an intuition of the imminence of death. Recognition of that intuition requires a "Lover's ear," for only an active, creative reader will sympathize with the narrator's perception. "What once to me befell," with its traditional ballad inverted syntax, suggests that a narrative proper will follow, but a truly lyrical ballad ensues.

The journey itself, which takes place under the light of the moon, a proverbial symbol of creative inspiration, is recounted in present tense, so as the narrator relates the events, the reader experiences every stage. The narrator's singleness of purposes, to see Lucy, is revealed as the narrator says he "bent [his] way." Yet, the narrator is suspended during the ride (as is the reader), as he becomes hypnotized by the moon:

Upon the moon I fix'd my eye,
All oer the wide lea;
My horse trudg'd on, and we drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me. (9-12)

Actually, he is "fixed" upon the moon more with his consciousness than with his physical eyes. Within a broad expanse of seeing, he is riveted to one vision. Wordsworth's personae often fix their eyes upon one single focal point, and this singularity of focus influences the course of the poem. Such seeing is more than ocular vision; rather, the persona's "vision" becomes riveted to one spot, through which meaning breaks forth. One of the most interesting examples of this truth is the fourth stanza of the "Immortality Ode," which Blake admired as among the best in Wordsworth. As the persona in the Ode describes his joy in the May morning, he begins to feel an absence, a loss, which he learns, through the poem, is the

human loss of immortality from whence we came, "trailing clouds of glory." The sudden, fixed attention to one spot stimulates the persona's sense of loss: "I hear, I hear, with joy I hear! / --But there's a Tree, of many, one, / A single Field which I have looked upon / Both of them speak of something that is gone" (51-53). The fixed attention to one spot reveals what will be the subject and purpose of the poem. Instead of a spot of time, this is simply a spot, from which one's imagination can be expanded. In the lyrical ballad, the moon, upon which the narrator fixes his eye, induces a trance-like state, and, as he continues to think of Lucy as the telos of the ride, the moon becomes associated with Lucy herself. Indeed, the fact that "Lucy," in its etymological derivation meaning "light," should be associated with the moon is linguistically appropriate.

The narrator's trance-like suspension as he rides is mirrored by the readers' own experience in the narrative, waiting for the denouement. As the horse quickens the pace, so the lines quicken, and the syntax and rhythm effectively build suspense as they make the identification of Lucy with the moon very clear:

And now we reach'd the orchard plot,
And, as we climb'd the hill,
Towards the roof of Lucy's cot,

The moon descended still. (13-16)¹¹

Finally, as Wolfson points out, the connective "ands" serve to evoke an "and then?" from the readers, who find themselves at this point firmly enmeshed in the realm of plot.

The fifth and sixth stanzas set up the event of surprise that follows such intense meditation, the pattern of the creative perceptual process. First, the narrator suspends the narrative as he reports falling into a hypnotic state controlled by the moon: "In one of those sweet dreams I slept" (17). Hereafter, his imagination rules his perception of the visible world. Although in a "sweet dream," he makes the following claim "my eyes I kept/ On the descending moon" (19-20). While it is seemingly illogical that he kept his eyes upon the moon and that he was dreaming as well, these dual claims underscore again that seeing is more than ocular vision. As Blake says, in Vision of the Last Judgment, one must see not with the eye but through it: "I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it" (E566). The moon now is clearly described as "descending."

¹¹ Later versions of this stanza use more deliberately obscured syntax and repetition for the last two lines, making the identification of Lucy and the moon more complex and yet more functional: "The sinking moon to Lucy's cot/ Came near and nearer still."

That is, the persona's optical illusion that the moon was sinking is now a fact in his visionary experience. And it is the moon that provides, in the sixth stanza, the climactic action that stimulates the narrator's revealing perception in the final stanza. The suspense is built to a crescendo with the rhythmic repetition of the horse's movements, a persistent plodding that creates for the reader a backdrop of tension: "The horse mov'd on; hoof after hoof / He rais'd and never stopp'd" (21-2). At the moment of climax, however, the rhythmic syntactical pattern is broken with deliberately obscured syntax (prepositional phrases placed before subjects and verbs) and startling monosyllabic effects: "When down behind the cottage roof / At once the planet dropp'd" (23-4). The placement of "At once" at the beginning of the line provokes the desired surprise from the reader.

Critics have often found it hard to defend the notion that the ending of the poem seems to be the mistaken illusion of the narrator, as he regards the moon's dropping as an omen of Lucy's death. If the poem does no more than offer an example of one who is caught up by his imaginative visions, then it provokes little participation from the reader, and one might be tempted to believe, as Glen does, that the character is "caught up in his own perceptual egocentricity" (47). Yet, the final stanza

entraps the reader who must decide how to interpret the narrator's cursory summary of the incident. In terms of narrative itself, the "yearning for closure and resolution of these elements is . . . deliberately thwarted by Wordsworth" (Meisenhelder 39). For the narrator, who is now back in the frame of time and frame of mind of the opening stanza, summarizes the prophecy that arose from the moon's "descent" behind the cottage roof; that is, the death of Lucy, whose identification with the moon had been made throughout the poem:

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
 Into a Lover's head--
 "O mercy!" to myself I cried,
 "If Lucy should be dead!" (25-8)

This final stanza, upon first reading, may make the reader believe that the narrator, looking back on his imaginative frenzy, seeks to explain logically his "strange fits." If we read it so, then the narrator, in retrospect, believes his thoughts to be "fond and wayward" (since Lucy is, presumably, alive when he gets there, although she is dead by the beginning of the next poem) and, like the adult in "We Are Seven," rejects any further exploration of the mystery. Yet, the narrator's involvement with his story and his almost reverent, hushed tone in the prefatory stanza suggest that there is an

overriding perspective available here. Rather than return to world of the time, space, and common sense that would make that summary a rationalization for the incident, the reader can choose to remain within the experience that has arisen out of the poem, the intuitive experience that is, in fact, what survives after reading the poem and, for the narrator, what has prompted the passionate narrative. That is, the spontaneous thought "That Lucy should be dead!" is the thought that the reader most vitally remembers, not the final disclaimer that it was a "fond and wayward" thought. Close reading of the text's diction validates this perspective. "Fond" and "wayward" are not to be taken as derogatory or dismissive; in fact, "fond," in the way Wordsworth uses it here, is often associated with the word "silly," which in its oldest form, "sely," means "blessed." Wordsworth's great reverence for idiot boys and mad mothers is proverbial; he associates madness with a kind of hidden knowledge, so the value of a fond and wayward thought must not be trivialized by the reader. "Wayward" is, similarly, very fitting for Wordsworth's own strategy in creating a strange and awkward narrative and infusing it with feeling and mystery, a wayward path indeed.¹² The poem represents dramatically an experience

¹²Compare, in the following chapter, how Blake's use of the word "wander" in his lyric "London" is an equally appropriate metaphor for that poet's lyric strategy.

in imaginative expansion: the narrator's perception of Lucy's death as he views the moon's disappearance is truth for him, real and vital, at that moment. Who is to say that creative perceptions do not constitute more of a reality than the life of the senses?¹³ For the reader who interprets the final stanza to be the adult narrator's embarrassed admission of a "fond" thought, the burden would be to prove why Wordsworth would spend seven stanzas narrating an event which will be discounted as mean or trivial. For many of the poet's detractors, this is the question with which they hang Wordsworth; Heather Glen, for instance, in condemning the narrator's "perceptual egocentricity" (47), suggests that Wordsworth is parodying the lover's vulnerable and "fond" thoughts. Yet, to miss the lesson of the final stanza, the conscious use of ambiguous diction, is to miss the poem. As in "We Are Seven," "Anecdote for Fathers," and "The Idiot Boy," the reader must guard against reading from a "traditional" sense of values and allow the poem to stand as it is, without squaring it with rational judgments. Wordsworth's

Similar to "wayward," the word "wander" beckons the reader into a labyrinthine reading of the lyrics.

¹³Cf. Wordsworth's discussion, in Essay Upon Epitaphs, on epitaph writers as those who "feel" and see their beloved as through a "haze": "Shall we say then that this is not truth, not a faithful image . . . It is truth and of the highest order" (PW 2: 84-5).

poem presents a powerful manifestation of the curious and strange powers of human creative perception.

Another way to read the poem is to place it in the context of the group of five Lucy poems in the order in which they were most likely intended. It was a traditional question in early Wordsworth studies whether the poems should be treated as a group; critical anthologies follow this pattern, defended by Carl Woodring, who suggests the following order: "Strange Fits of Passion," "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal," "Three Years She Grew," and "I Travelled Among Unknown Men" (not published in Lyrical Ballads). If we choose to read the poems together, they do constitute a process of learning, through the event of Lucy's death, about the strange but consoling effects of the imagination. Seen thus, the first poem serves as an introductory one, moving the reader's awareness from literal perception to creative vision as the narrator himself makes such a journey. As an example of the potential reward in reading intertextually, we can see that "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" works with and affects retroactively its precursor, "Strange Fits of Passion." First, if we accept that the narrator's "fond and wayward" sense of Lucy's imminent death is valuable in its creative energy, then our respect for the narrator's

premonition is validated by the fact that Lucy is, in fact, dead by the first line of the second poem. At some point between the narrator's intuition and his beginning the eulogy in the next poem, she has indeed "ceased to be."¹⁴

She dwelt among th' untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love. (1-4)

From the beginning, the poem induces paradoxes, implicit contradictions that create a sense of suspension about the poem, keeping interpretation unfixed and allowing the final truth of the seemingly simplistic final line to resonate with significance. A powerful contradiction arrests the reader in the first line: She dwelt among untrodden ways. How can this be? Bateson is correct to point out the "confusion of common-sense criteria" (31) that the reader experiences, for how can "ways" be "untrodden"? And if she dwells there, the ways must not be totally untrodden. Thus, through the paradox,

¹⁴An early manuscript version of "Strange Fits Of Passion" included the following summary stanza, which implied that Lucy's death had taken place by the time the persona is telling his story, although not by the end of the episode the poem describes: "I told her this: her laughter light/ Is ringing in my ears;/ And when I think upon that night/ My eyes are dim with tears."

or verbal contradiction, the reader senses that "untrodden" carries with it more of a moral implication; the ways are unstained, unknown to most in the Blakean world of Experience. Also, critical readers question the logic of the last two lines. If there are none to praise, then how "very few" to love? The paradoxes and balanced syntax set up a fluid, unfixed pattern of interpretation, whereby the reader must consider the metaphorical and connotative meanings of the words and syntax rather than just the literal.

The next stanza's direct comparisons of Lucy to a violet and star again emphasize "untrodden ways":

A Violet by a mossy stone
 Half hidden from the eye!
 --Fair, as a star when only one
 Is shining in the sky. (4-8)

Like the violet, Lucy is half-hidden in that she dwells in a remote area, but, more importantly, she is "hidden from the eye," that is, hidden from those with just ordinary sight. This metaphor introduces the conflicting poles of perception (private/public) that the poem adumbrates. One must see, as Blake says, not with but through the corporeal eye, which only sees the public surface, in order to see Lucy's value. Also, the narrator uses a proverbial simile to compliment her--"fair as a star"--but

modifies it to emphasize the effect of Lucy upon him. That is, the narrator encourages the reader's traditional ways of thinking by using the cliché, but then displaces that by saying she is as fair as a star when none other is in the sky. Although this may, as Hartman quips, sound like a stingy compliment, it is meant as highest praise, for Wordsworth emphasizes that her beauty is as affective as one distinct star in the sky--like the tree ("But there's a tree, of many, one") in the Immortality Ode, or the moon in "Strange Fits of Passion," or the star on which Wordsworth fixes his gaze while upon the road with DeQuincey.

As is most often the case with Wordsworth's lyrics, the final stanza undermines and, in some way, distorts what came before, and here Wordsworth underscores the final duality with which the poem culminates:

She liv'd unknown, and few could know

When Lucy ceas'd to be;

But she is in her grave, and Oh!

The difference to me. (9-12)

The illogical first line--"She lived unknown and few could know" --continues the dual perceptions available; in its doubling and repetition, it points to the discrepancy that the poem implicitly makes between public and private realms of perception. To the world, she is unknown, a

partially disclosed violet, but invested with the love and emotion of the persona, she is a presence felt at all times, most especially at the moment in which she "ceased to be." Wordsworth's use of the same words, variants of the word "know," undermines any fixed interpretation and underscores that we cannot "know" Lucy in the way that the narrator does. The final statement of Lucy's death and its effects works beautifully in its understated, symbolic qualities to express the power of Lucy's presence in her absence: "But she is in her grave / And oh the difference to me!" Like the source of inspiration for the little maid in "We Are Seven" and the narrator of "There Was a Boy," Lucy's grave does, in a way, make all the difference. The narrator means, of course, that her death makes all the difference in the world to his existence. But, also, it is her death, her grave, that enables the reader to perceive another "difference" in the poem, the different poles, public and private, that have been employed in the description of her. The final exclamation, in all its understated emotion, sums up for the reader the dual perceptions that are at work in the poem through unfixed or nondeterminate interpretations. What Lucy actually does mean, and what her death means for the narrator, can not be known, but the reader can recognize the significant "difference" between the

speaker's private perceptions and the public world's perceptions, and in that recognition, be more aware of differing modes of perception in her interpretation of the world. That is, the private difference that Lucy's death makes is known by the narrator, in the sense that all private experiences are just that, but poem goes further to represent the universal experience of individual relationships. Those who allow themselves to be affected imaginatively can internalize and acknowledge the power of individual perception. This fact is why Wordsworth's persona addresses the poem to an audience whom he hopes will willingly suspend disbelief, the "Lover's ear alone."

Finally, the most effective technique for stimulating the reader's creative perception is Wordsworth's use of dramatic confrontations, interrogative narratives in which the reader becomes suspended within or between the dialogue and, in that state, is pulled between rational and creative thought processes. In the final stanza or couplet, which Wordsworth frequently avows to be the foundation of his poems, this perplexing dialectic is resolved as the poem rejects rational or empirical thinking for imaginative perception. Wordsworth's protagonist is often a child who lives within her primary

imagination¹⁵ and, thus, is misunderstood by well-meaning but misguided adults, who are yoked by their empirical modes of perception, their own Blakean "mind-forg'd manacles." Wordsworth's emphasis runs much deeper than a pious admiration for the innocence of children; the child is "father of the man" not only in his purity but in his poetry. That is, the poet-child senses the transcendent reality that words attempt to make incarnate. Knowing the difficulty of representing the "infinite in the finite," these little protagonists deflect adult rational language and adult experience of space/time/causality. Their language is characterized, instead, by a creative perception that is revealed to the reader through Wordsworth's diction.

In these lyrics, the child is the poet, of whom the adult asks rational questions which are discordant to the child's imaginative perceptions. The use of questions allows for the participation of the reader. Wolfson, who

¹⁵That is, perception is creative in what Coleridge distinguishes as the primary imagination: "The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary IMAGINATION I consider as an echo of the former . . . It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" (*Biographia Literaria* 1:202). Coleridge's primary imagination may be considered analogous, in spirit at least, to Blake's belief that "Knowledge is not by Deduction, but Immediate by Perception" (*Annotations to Berkeley* E664).

suggests that the major poems of Romanticism are fundamentally interrogative, concludes that these poems are "critically implicated in perceptions that provoke inquiry, experiences that elude or thwart stable organization, events that challenge previous certainties and require new terms of interpretation" (18). The poems consistently show the need for a creative perception that allows for mystery and transcendence and actually enact that belief in their engagement with reader. In "We Are Seven," "Anecdote For Fathers," and "The Idiot Boy," Wordsworth depicts three different ways in which a child teaches an adult about the life of the primary imagination.

Wordsworth's "We Are Seven" dramatically represents two conflicting modes of experience. A rational adult query is met with an illogical, intuitive child's response; the two contrary perceptual poles are similar to Blake's contrary states of awareness, Innocence and Experience, in that the child intuitively grasps what the adult has to learn. The experience of the poem enacts for the reader the confrontation between creative and empirical perception. In "We Are Seven," Wordsworth's little maid insists upon the omnipresence of her dead and distant siblings, surely an illogical claim that any adult questioner might rectify. The dramatic confrontation

between the girl and the adult narrator thwarts the reader's expectations as she teaches the narrator, who by the end of the poem appears to be little more than a tourist in her landscape, about unity in death as in life. More importantly, the maid teaches the reader, through her rhetorical structures, about the life of creative interpretation.

We know from Wordsworth's notebook that the poem was written in 1798, beginning with the last stanza first; indeed, Wordsworth says he wrote the last line first. Thus, the little girl's proclaiming boldly, "Nay, we are seven!" was the *donnee* or germinal idea for the poem. In her insistence, Wordsworth instinctively perceived an illustration of a belief in the certainty of a reality beyond our five senses. The girl's faith that she is connected to her dead/distant siblings represents a view of death not as an absence but a continuing presence. More significantly, the maid is also a representative poet in Wordsworth's own definition. Indeed, Wordsworth maintained that a Poet is one "more likely to be affected by absent things as if they were present" (1: 138). From the beginning of "We Are Seven," the inquisitive narrator finds this definition to be true:

A simple child, dear brother Jem,
 That lightly draws its breath,
 And feels its life in every limb,
 What should it know of death? (104)

This prefatory stanza was Coleridge's suggestion and contribution to the poem, even though Wordsworth significantly changed it for his own purposes. The more well-known version of this poem, the one now anthologized, simply begins "A simple child / That lightly draws its breath," but that version was not adopted until the 1815 edition in which Wordsworth classified the poems.

Wordsworth did alter Coleridge's first idea which was "A little child" to "A simple child," a much more affective word that from the first conveys an ironic undertone, for our little poet is both simple and complex. Wordsworth, however, went along with the subtle address to "dear brother Jem" as a reference to James Tobin, a friend of the Wordsworth circle (even though Wordsworth wrote that he thought the rhyme [Jem/limb] ludicrous, and we, as readers familiar with the other version of the poem, usually think so as well). The address works well, however, to posit a listener who is enjoined to respond to the question of the first stanza, "What should it know of death?" Thus, in this original version for all editions of LB, the reader is in the place of Jim throughout and is

invited into the poem through him. In subsequent publications in which Wordsworth deleted the "dear brother Jem," the reader is simply addressed directly through the question.

Wordsworth's own plans to begin the narrative with the second stanza, beginning "I met a little cottage girl," were much more characteristic of his parabolic, dramatic openings. However, Coleridge's prefatory stanza works ironically to capture the dissonance, that the poem as a whole discloses, between childhood and adult perception. The question, "What should it know of death?"--a question whose tone is a "blend of marvel and annoyance"--(Meisenhelder 45), presupposes that adults would all answer in the same way. That is, a simple child should know nothing of death. Yet, the poem introduces one who has quite a depth of knowledge about the meaning of death and life. On the other hand, reading the second and third lines as restrictive clauses, a simple child who "feels its life in every limb" is the most appropriate one to know of death; it is because of her "feeling" that she possesses knowledge. So from the outset, Wordsworth posits an ambiguous question. Like Blake's contrary perspectives in *Innocence/Experience*, two perspectives are available here, one of a rational adult who sees a child in her limited knowledge, another of a creative

interpreter who sees the child as a representative of mystery and logical impossibilities. The fact that the child "feels its life in every limb" is the first alliance of the child to a poet, for poetry is the "history or science of feeling" (LB 283), where science equals knowledge, and thus knowledge is based on feeling.

The simple statement that begins the narrative proper ("I met a little cottage girl)" implies that a simple story is about to follow, but, of course, like parables, what follows is anything but simple. Wordsworth describes the girl's physical appearance, and as he does, the lines are informed by the feelings of the narrator: "Her eyes were fair, and very fair." The repetition, far from being simplistic, indicates how the narrator is struck by the appearance of the girl; he wants the reader to feel the strangeness of the girl before the actual conversation he plans to describe. Furthermore, this repetition is one of those instances where the "clinging after words" betrays the speaker's own "inadequacies of language" to describe what he sees.¹⁶ As Wordsworth asserts in defense of tautology, repetition is oftentimes exactly what the author needs to follow the workings of the mind, whereas

¹⁶The child's persistent repetition of "We are seven" occurs, in some variant, no less than five times: "seven in all," "Seven are we," "Seven boys and girls are we," "O master? we are seven," and "Nay, we are seven."

saying another word of description other than "fair" would itself be virtual tautology since the speaker would not be saying what he meant, but rather offering another word simply to avoid repetition.

The girl's first answer to the adult's interrogation is the bold proclamation, "We are Seven." The number seven is, of course, associated with apocalypse, with ultimate mysteries. Reading intertextually, it is interesting that Blake's use of seven as an ordering principle is well known, and in Blake's Lyca poems ("The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found"), lyrics that most resemble Wordsworth's lyrical ballads, the female protagonist is also seven. Finally, in Wordsworth's poem, seven also allows for a more interesting countdown, as we see later. After her answer, there is a pause in which she "wondering looked at [the narrator]." As Wolfson suggests, this pause is the representation of the gap that exists between their modes of awareness. Instead of answering the second question, however, in such a logical manner, she begins the evasiveness that will lead to her attempt to teach him her beliefs. To the narrator's question about where the siblings live, she responds "Seven are we." Instead of giving him a place, she again repeats the number, confounding the logic of the conversation. When she finally does answer and tells him where they are, she uses

the present tense even for those who are dead, implying that all are with her, appropriate since she feels her life in every limb: two at Conway dwell, two are gone to sea, and two lie in the churchyard. The sixth stanza is interesting syntactically as the placement of words expresses the relationship that she feels for her dead siblings:

Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother,
And in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother. (21-4)

The syntactic parallel of "two of us in the church-yard lie" and "in the church-yard cottage I" and the repetitious use of "church-yard" in describing where both she and the dead siblings dwell intensify her explanation of the bond between them. They are in the church-yard, she in the church-yard cottage, not much difference at all. Thus, the functional rhetoric of the stanza promotes the seminal idea of the poem.

The next two stanzas, taken together, continue to promote an understanding of the nature of the girl's link with all her siblings. The sense that she is part of a unified family organism is revealed through an alliance of the children with a symbol of nature itself, the church-yard tree:

Then did the little Maid reply,
 'Seven boys and girls are we;
 Two of us in the church-yard lie,
 Beneath the church-yard tree.'
 'You run about, my little maid,
 Your limbs, they are alive;
 If two are in the church-yard laid,
 Then ye are only five.' (29-36)

Again, the repetitious parallel between the two who in the "church-yard lie" and the "church-yard tree" intensifies the palpable sense that, in spirit, the siblings are alive, part of the same nature that she is a part of, even though they are beneath the tree.

Further, this linguistic link between her and them is validated by the specific reference to her "limbs" in describing her. The narrator says, "Your limbs, they are alive," hoping to prove logically the contrast between the living and the dead. The narrator's emotional involvement in this attempt at instruction is revealed in his syntax here. The line "Your limbs, they are alive" is an example of a syntactical peculiarity that Wordsworth uses often to display the effect of emotion ("the language of passion") on one's discourse. As Marjorie Greenbie points out about these syntactical forms, "the mind, in its interest in the subject, tends to lose sight of the predicate, and to

cling to the image suggested by the substantive" (153). Another example of Wordsworth's efforts to create a "language of passion," this structure is similar to the effects of functional tautology. The emotional tone is also evident in this line; the reader can hear the implicit emphasis on "you" and your" as the narrator tries to make a distinction between living and dead. Instead, the adult's language betrays a connection that he, as speaker, doesn't see. Her limbs, like the tree limbs, are connected to the ones in the grave. Thus, the maid whom we are told in the first stanza "feels her life in every limb" is linked rhetorically to the tree and therefore, through the tree, to her siblings. The narrator is unaware of the connections of his own rhetoric and ends his instruction, what Albert Gerard termed a "lesson in counting" with this definitive statement: "Then ye are only five." Besides missing the connections found through his own language, the narrator at this point appears locked into the world of the senses. We, as readers, are right there with him; empirically speaking, the girl has made a mistake. Wordsworth, however, argues against defining knowledge as that based on sensory experience. Throughout his prose, Wordsworth says that poetry, like religion, should seek to represent the infinite in the finite, so the infinite, the transcendent, appears with

the help of the senses but not because of them. Sensations can be either ministers to the spirit or culprits, to use Wordsworth's terms, and the narrator's insistence of "ye are only five" resonates with the implication that he sees only with his five senses, limiting his experience in the world. Similarly, Blake's work, as the following chapter explores, is inundated with references to the tyranny of the five senses,¹⁷ and this narrator's overt insistence on "five" intensifies his empiricist stance; seven children minus two equals five. The adult perceives death "as division and subtraction" whereas the maid "sees it as (at worst) displacement" (Wolfson 45).

Through the next six stanzas, the girl replies, and, on one level, tries to appeal to his empiricist perspective by logically explaining what she means; however, her language and syntax are richly symbolic and allusive. There is something of a Blakean dual perspective in her first words: "Their graves are green, they may be seen." To the experienced narrator and the reader at this point, the "seeing" of the graves would

¹⁷ Cf. most notably "Five windows light the cavern'd man" (E60) from the opening to Europe and the pertinent question asked in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "How do you know but ev'ry bird that cuts the airy way / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (E35)

indicate that the narrator is right after all; they are only five. Yet she uses this line to effect a completely opposite conclusion. She means that "seeing" the green of the graves would change the adult's perspective. From this point on, she is the teacher. The intentional internal rhyme of green/seen is crucial, for it, by synecdoche, represents Wordsworth's structure throughout the poem. Seeing is not sensory perception only; perception is not only of the senses five. Rather there is a mode of seeing, what Kenneth Johnston might distinguish as visionary versus vision, to which the symbolic import of green graves is not lost. If graves are "seen" creatively, then "green" means much more than an external description. The grave then is a place of life, of renewal, of all that green connotes. And if Hilton's analysis of the word "grave"--with its implicit potential meaning of "engrave"--in Blake's poetry can be applied to Wordsworth's lyrics as well, then "grave" itself is the ultimate symbol of creativity and rebirth. The word unfolds a plethora of meanings available to the reader, each with what Nelson Hilton has called "multiple possibilities."¹⁸ This is certainly how the girl-poet

¹⁸Hilton's Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words is based on the belief that one of Blake's major contributions is his use of plurisignificant words. Hilton's discussions of words as "multivalent" suggest a richer mode of reading that applies to Wordsworth as well.

means the word, for she goes on to imply not only that her life in many ways is wound up with these graves, but also that being near the graves engenders her own creativity. In addition to carrying her normal activities there, (e.g. eating her porridge), she also knits, hems, and sings. All of these activities are symbols of creativity. Singing is, of course, the very essence of poetic, especially lyric, activity. Knitting is just as creative, not only in its literal sense of making or crafting an item but also in its mythological associations--knitting/weaving as symbolic of artistic life, from Homer's Penelope to Tennyson's Lady of Shalott.

The narrator makes a last effort to teach the girl, "How many are you then . . . If they two are in heaven?" to which the girl quickly and plainly reiterates her first answer, "Oh Master! we are seven." The standoff is mirrored in Wordsworth's rhyme: the rational fact that the siblings are in "heaven" is countered by her intuitive sense that they are all "seven." Later revisions in the 1815 version, the one anthologized, make her characterization even more nearly complete, as the narrator comments, "Quick was the little maid's reply," with the significant double meaning of quick as "hasty" and, in its older sense, as "alive," a meaning that has been emphasized throughout the poem. The narrator ends

the session by iterating once more, "But they are dead, those two are dead!" The adult's final protest resembles a dead end, as "the word dead knocks against itself in a singular internal rhyme" (Wolfson 46). The narrator ends his story to Jem, or the reader, by saying that he "was throwing words away" for she "would have her will" in protesting decisively "Nay, we are seven."

Although the narrator may not understand the little girl's faith, a careful reading empowers the reader to do so. To see the child as wise, as the real teacher in the interchange, and as the poet, one must be open to the functional rhetorical value of the words and syntax. While the affective structure of the poem is such that readers commit the narrator's errors of logical expectations as they begin to read, the result is not the same. The reader moves from identification with the limited narrator to new possibilities of thought. Critics who assume that readers remain in the world of the adult narrator, whether they like it or not, are not true to the enabling spirit of the poem. Wolfson's rhetorical analysis, for instance, points to the contradictory modes of perception in the poem, but ends rationally asserting that the maid's denial of death is something "the most forgiving of adult readers knows is doomed to revision as

she matures" (46).¹⁹ This summary overtly denies the creative interpretation that the poem seeks to stimulate in the reader. Wordsworth's poem, as Wordsworth himself, points to the possibility of retaining this kind of faith, or, at least, seeing its value to revive one's own empirical perceptions even if it seems logically false or fabricated to adults. And for some readers, it may well be that, as Iser suggests, the reading of the poem "entails the possibility that we may formulate ourselves" (294). As much more than a fable about how life continues even after death, this poem provokes its reader's participation and challenges their own certainties about life, death, and more importantly, their own role in imaginative interpretation.

Like "We Are Seven," the short lyric "Anecdote for Fathers" depicts a dramatic confrontation between child and adult which offers two very different poles of interpretation. In this poem, the child does not confidently, directly assert his "knowledge" based on feelings as does the maid in "We Are Seven," but he does

¹⁹Wolfson here concurs with DeQuincey, who suggests that the girl "is yet (for the effect upon the reader) brought into connection with the reflex shadow of the grave: and if she herself has not, the reader has, and through this very child, the gloom of that contemplation obliquely irradiated, as raised in relief upon his imagination, even by her." See John Jordan's DeQuincey as Critic, London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1973: 404-5.

respond out of the realm of the primary imagination in which he lives. His evasion of logical questions and his irrational reply serve to counter the adult reasoning and are parallel to the maid's more overt action in "We Are Seven." The child's answers seem nonsensical, even obstinate, but actually teach the reader as well as the adult in the poem about the inadequacy of logic to explain matters of feeling.

The title "Anecdote for Fathers" implicitly credits the child's knowledge and ability to teach the father, just as the maid's insistence gives "We Are Seven" its title. Clearly, then, this poem aims to teach the rational adult through its representation of an encounter with a child. The subtitle, which has caused more confusion than clarification, suggests that the father's actions are not only misguided, but, in fact, very harmful to the child: "Anecdote for Fathers, shewing how the art of lying may be taught." Recognizing the lack of understanding of the subtitle and the poem in general, Wordsworth remained skeptical about the poem's reception, and, in 1845, he added a headnote which was to make the adult's mistake in the poem much clearer to readers: "Retinue vim istam, falsa enim dicem, si coges" or "Restrain that force, for I will speak falsely, if you persist." (If the Latin headnote seems ironic in a

document to "simple" men, one must remember that by 1845 Wordsworth had revised much of his work to reflect more conservative views.) Chosen because it was Apollo's warning to those trying to coerce the oracle, this statement cautions those who try to force logical answers to illogical, emotional questions; the headnote has the effect of associating the child with a divine oracle. This belief that a child's knowledge is divine and should not be controlled is consistent with Romantic arguments from other sources, notably Blake and John Horne Tooke. Wordsworth himself complained in Book Five of The Prelude, which includes "There Was a Boy," that parents and teachers are too often "Sages, who in their prescience would controul / All accidents, and to the very road / Which they have fashioned would confine us down / Like engines" (5.380-3). Similarly, one of John Horne Tooke's statements about false pedagogical activities sounds like the inspiration for Wordsworth's poem: "Children ought not be disturbed or bewildered with a reason for everything; which reason they would not understand, even if the Teacher was always able to give it" (608-9). Finally, Blake shares Wordsworth's disdain of those who try to force reasonable explanations for matters of feeling. In his Notebook, for example, Blake pithily sums up this view in a satiric epigram: "Hes [sic] a Blockhead

who wants proof of what he Can't Perceive / And hes a Fool who tries to make such a Blockhead believe" (E507). More directly parallel to Wordsworth's, Blake's lines from the "Auguries of Innocence" echo the sentiment of "Anecdote For Fathers" and could serve as a headnote to the poem: "A Riddle or the Crickets Cry / Is to Doubt a Fit Reply" (E494) and, more specifically, "He who shall teach the Child to Doubt / The rotting grave shall neer get out" (E494). Doubt is truly the opposite of Faith for Blake, and this epigram implies that there is no logical explanation that will satisfy doubt; thus, one might as well answer with a cricket's cry or, as the boy in Wordsworth's poem does, with a riddle. From Wordsworth, Blake, and Tooke, the impetus is to recognize the mysterious, creative potentiality as opposed to rational explanations.

As with so many of Wordsworth's poems, the opening line of "Anecdote for Fathers" sounds like the introduction of a parable or a fairy tale; it simply states a fact of existence: "I have a boy of five years old." As the adult narrator sets the scene of their morning walk together, the adult openly admits that he was nostalgic for "former pleasures" and, specifically, the place where they used to live, "Kilve's delightful shore." The adult also is in a mood to "think, and think, and

think again," rather than spontaneously perceive as the child. Like the adult narrator of "We Are Seven," the father seems obsessed with absences. The "simple" question comes in stanza seven:

 'My little boy, which like you more,
 I said and took him by the arm,
 Our home by Kilve's delightful shore,
 Or here at Liswyn farm? (25-8)

This is not a simple question even for the narrator; as he implied earlier, he is in a mood of nostalgia and reflection. The child cannot answer logically such a question that revolves around his feelings. Yet, the more the child evades the question, the more insistent the adult becomes. In the next two stanzas, the father repeats the question more adamantly and, importantly, with the gesture of holding him by the arm: "I said and held him by the arm," (30) and "While still I held him by the arm" (34). The narrator, now obsessed with weighing this question, becomes more insistent that the child should as well. As Wolfson suggests, the child perhaps senses the father's nostalgic mood and, hoping to satisfy him, says he prefers their former home, Kilve. When asked the inevitable, vexing "why," Edward tries again to evade the question, and like the narrator of "The Thorn," who denies any understanding of the tales about Martha Ray, the child

honestly states, "I cannot tell, I do not know" (39). Wordsworth, at this point, alerts the reader to the significance of the boy's response, as he has the narrator say, "Why, this is strange." "Strange" is, of course, one of Wordsworth's favorite words; his readers are supposed to struggle with feelings of "strangeness," and his personas experience "strange fits of passion" or, in the case of the Idiot Boy, "strange adventures." The narrator, however, is naive to the meaning of his own statement, failing to comprehend the boy's reliance on mystery and emotion rather than logic.

In the middle of the poem, the father tries to coerce the child to explain his feelings. Surprised that the child cannot tell which place he prefers best, the adult, who brought up Kilve's "former pleasures" in the first place, demands why the boy could possibly prefer Kilve: "For, here are woods and green-hills warm; / There surely must some reason be / Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm / For Kilve by the green sea" (41-4). Having changed his mind, the adult now seems more perplexing than ever to the child as well as to the reader, who may be wondering how to answer satisfactorily the adult's questions. Edward's evasion (he "hung down his head") invites further harassment, and the adult, acting out of his empirical view, asks the boy five times, "Why?" Like the adult

narrator's insistence that the maid and her siblings were "only five," this father's five questions are appropriate for one locked in the world of sensory knowledge, Blake's world of experience. The boy must finally attempt to appease his father's query:

His head he raised--there was in sight
It caught his eye, he saw it plain--
Upon the house-top, glittering being,
A broad and gilded vane.
Then did the boy his tongue unlock,
And thus to me he made reply;
'At Kilve there was no weathercock,
And that's the reason why.' (49-56)

The boy's spontaneous, illogical answer baffles the father but makes him realize that the child is more honest to his feelings than the father is to his. Wordsworth's rendering of the boy's answer does not explain it; rather, appropriately, the reader does not understand the connection any more than the father does. In the first stanza quoted above, however, Wordsworth does describe the boy's search for an answer. Its parenthetical syntax imitates the patterns of informal conversation; instead of employing subordinate clauses and modifying phrases, the details are inserted into the midst of other statements, just as they occur to the mind, each as a complete

sentence. As Greenbie points out, this is a good example of Wordsworth's avoidance of artificial diction for a truer "language of passion." The answer seems to have no logical basis at all. Wolfson suggests that it may "betray a deeper emotional logic in its preference for something absent" (47), but, more likely, it is just an irrational response, borne out of the boy's fervent searching for some cause out of the world of logic and empiricism that will satisfy the father. For the boy, any answer would be a lie, and thus the sub-title ("shewing how the art of lying may be taught") recognizes the effect of the father's action upon the child.

Finally, the last stanza, describing the father's reaction to his son's "logic," reveals the father's apparent recognition that the boy has a deeper knowledge than the father can fathom. Even if the boy's existence in a realm of mystery that is outside logical cause and effect is impossible to maintain as an adult, the adult yearns to learn all he can from the boy: "Could I but teach the hundredth part / Of what from thee I learn" (59-60). His recognition, if not full understanding, of the boy's "wisdom" places the burden directly on the reader to re-interpret the poem with this in mind, not sympathizing with the father, as the poem's narrative may evoke upon first reading. Much more than simply pointing out the

"irritating insistence of a rationalizing adult" (Glen 43), the poem again dramatizes a debate between two modes of perception.

In "The Idiot Boy," the last of the three poems that can be considered interrogative dramas, the child persona lacks rational language entirely; Wordsworth, in fact, delights in representing Johnny's "burr" as his only real language. From the overt verbal claims of the maid in "We Are Seven" to the evasive and illogical answers of the boy in "Anecdote For fathers," Wordsworth now dramatizes a child's divine knowledge and teaching capacity through an idiot boy, divorced from reason altogether. Johnny's "burr" comes to represent a metalinguistic understanding of and expression of the world. All of the adult's repetitious, extraneous wonderings are set against the idiot boy's simple, primitive language.

Perhaps the most criticized of Wordsworth's lyrical ballads, "The Idiot Boy" bothers many scholars and readers, even ones who are comfortable with Wordsworth's mad mothers and aging shepherds. Some scholars redeem the poem by analyzing it as a comic piece, and, in fact, the poem has been hailed by some as a mock-epic triumph for Wordsworth. For these critics, Wordsworth's professed delight in the poem is made respectable by their claims

that the poem's value lies in its humorous nature.²⁰

Yet, Wordsworth's faithful defense of the poem as one of his favorites surely stems from more than a delight in the mock-heroic form, especially considering the Neo-classical associations of the mock-epic. Wordsworth sincerely believes the poem represents truth about the necessity of child-like faith that rational adults too often lose. The poem, Wordsworth explains in an 1802 letter of defense to John Wilson, depicts a divine quality in the idiot boy, Johnny. As the poet states, "I have often applied to Idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of scripture that their life is hidden with God."²¹ In order to evoke this belief in the reader as well, Wordsworth directly addresses readers' perceptions, leading them through a narrative which stimulates more questions than it resolves. Explicitly rhetorical, the poem challenges readers' logical expectations of subject matter and of narrative itself.

²⁰ John Danby and Stephen Parrish concur that the poem is to, a great degree, mock-heroic. For example, the poem opens in medias res, Johnny goes through an arming of the hero ritual, and Wordsworth more than once uses comic feminine rhyme. For a thorough analysis, see John Jordan, "Wordsworth's Humor," PMLA 73 (1958): 81-93.

²¹ In this letter Wordsworth also asserts that "the loathing of some people at the sight of an Idiot betrays, if I may say it without rudeness, a certain want of comprehensiveness of thinking and feeling" and that a great poet ought "to a certain degree to rectify men's feelings" (Letters 357).

From the opening, Johnny, Betty Foy, his mother, and the humble pony make quite an interesting trio. Johnny's "burr" and unadorned delight in the journey he prepares to make are all the reader glimpses of him. Betty Foy's primary characteristics are the "faith" that her name ("foy") symbolizes (and that readers will be encouraged to adopt) and her love of Johnny; in fact, references to the idiot boy are always prefaced by the appositive "him whom she loves." Her love for this son functions pedagogically for the reader, both socially and psychologically. Wordsworth's apparent social didacticism in showing how outcasts need appreciation and respect should not be overlooked, for as Wordsworth explains in the letter to Wilson, people who look just like us are not "fair representatives of the vast mass of human existence" (Letters 357). More important than this social message, however, is the representation of Betty's faith in her imaginative insights. As the mother moves from despair to belief when Johnny gets lost and fails to return, the reader learns a valuable lesson. The pony, the third family member, typifies loyalty and is somehow associated with the divine. Johnny's life is "hidden with God," and it is the pony, the beast of burden, who is most connected with Johnny. The pony is described, like Blake's lamb, as "mild," "meek," and "good"; he serves Johnny loyally in

both happiness and pain; he is seemingly immune to both time and place; he carries Johnny's burdens literally; and it is the pony to whom the mother prays for Johnny's safe return. This unusual trinity makes up the cast of characters in a lyrical ballad about the beauty of imagination and faith.

Wordsworth's poem, rife with questions, challenges the reader's expectations of narrative or the "moving accident." As Wolfson's analysis of the interrogative quality of the poem suggests, there are certain gaps in the story and between its questions and answers which "directly confront the reader with the inadequacy of narrative logic to pre- or alogical modes of perception" (50). For instance, the narrator questions Betty ("Why are you fretting?"), but more often addresses the reader: "What will betide?" or "What must be done?" These questions imply that the narrator is telling a conventional narrative, inducing the reader's traditional expectations. He also represents the opinion of the world, or of most skeptical adult readers, in his near contempt for Johnny's taking on the duty of going to fetch the doctor for the ailing neighbor, Susan Gale. When the narrator exclaims, "The like was never heard of yet," he betrays his belief that an idiot boy is of little use. Ironically, Johnny's sustained journey, in fact, causes

all the characters to exert an act of faith and creative perception that is life-saving.

Wordsworth's syntax and meter in the poem reflect the skeptical opinion of the narrator and the expectations of the reader. As Johnny sets out, the narrator maps out the route of the boy's journey. His repetition and use of parallel prepositional phrases affectively stress what a "normal" journey would be like:

And he must post without delay
 Across the bridge that's in the dale,
 And by the church, and o'er the down,
 To bring a doctor from the town. (52-5)

Betty Foy also tells Johnny what to expect, and again the form echoes its content in its parallelism:

And Betty o'er and o'er has told
 The boy who is her best delight,
 Both what to follow, what to shun,
 What do, and what to leave undone,
 How turn to left and how to right. (62-6)

Johnny's recognition of these instructions is unintelligible -- "And then! his words were not a few, / Which Betty well could understand" (75-6). Like the boy in "Anecdote For Fathers," he listens to rational explanations and answers best he can. However, from the very limited sections of the narrative that are devoted to

Johnny's journey comes the suggestion that Johnny will be protected by his harmonic relationship with Nature, as syntactic parallels associate Johnny with natural world: "The owlets hoot, the owlets curr, / And Johnny's lips, they burr, burr, burr" (114-5).²²

The process of creative perception is again structurally rendered by suspension within a narrative, which also recreates that experience for the reader. The suspension occurs in the middle of the poem as Betty, Susan, the narrator, and the reader wait for Johnny's return with the doctor. During this stasis, Wordsworth's diction is characterized by repetition. For example, the line "And Betty, now at Susan's side" is repeated almost exactly only five lines later ("And Betty's still at Susan's side"), and the line "Poor Susan groans, poor Susan moans" is repeated within a space of five lines. Furthermore, "And Betty's in a sad quandary" is repeated as "--She's in a sad quandary," a conscious rhyming of identical words that manifests structurally the suspension in this part of the poem.

After this temporary suspension of all activity, the

²²Cf. the reciprocity with Nature of the Boy of Winander. Like Johnny, the boy in "There Was a Boy" communicates with the sounds of the owls: "[he] Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls / That they might answer him. And they would shout / Across the watr'y vale and shout again / Responsive to his call . . ." (10-13).

narrative begins its denouement, which will illustrate how creative perception can enrich and even heal one's life.

As the women and the narrator progress from joy in Johnny's journey to anxiety and despair, it is their imaginations that rule. All of Susan Gale's worries about the boy's "sad mischances" are prefaced by "Perhaps."

Betty's worry is stimulated by Susan's, so much so that she sets off into the dark woods to find Johnny.²³

With her mind so focused on Johnny's whereabouts, she begins to "see" the boy everywhere. In this fixed stage, focusing on trying to see him, she imagines what he must be doing, and this activity takes her from mild surmise, to doubt of the pony whom she now calls "wicked," to a total loss of faith. This despair even brings her thoughts of suicide as she kneels by the creek. Yet, as she contemplates killing herself, she finds herself weeping and praying to the Christ-like pony, "Oh carry back my idiot boy! / And we will ne'er o'erload thee more." Because of this act of belief, she arises: "Then up she springs as if on wings." The placement of "then" suggests that the prior event, the leap of faith, makes her hope

²³ Betty's journey into the unfamiliar forest recalls Blake's "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found." As later discussion of those poems suggests, adults must wander in unfamiliar territory when they try to regain the imaginative vision that their children possess. Johnny's mother, like Lyca's must follow her child into the dark forest to find herself.

possible. After this act, her perception is renewed, and she is now open to the belief that "Perhaps" all is well. From this point on, even the narrator suggests that Johnny's journey is somehow successful, perhaps visionary. In the narrator's one moment of insight (of which he is not really conscious), he imagines:

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought!

He with his pony now doth roam

The cliffs and peaks so high that are,

To lay his hands upon a star,

And in his pocket bring it home. (327-31)

Even for the narrator, an unlikely thought--that Johnny could lay his hands upon a star and in his pocket bring it home--becomes "no unlikely thought!" What the idiot boy has actually done, the reader never knows, and the narrator begs in vain to his muses: " . . . let me tell / But half of what to him befel / For sure he met with strange adventures." Like the father's perception, in "Anecdote For Fathers," that his son's answer is "strange" and like the "strange fits of passion" in the poem of that title, the reader must trust that Johnny's "strange" adventures were "hidden with God." What is certain is the redemptive process that has taken place in the characters. Johnny returns (minus the doctor, of course) to find Susan Gale completely recovered, through her love and concern

over Betty's idiot boy. As her mind grows "worse and worse" with worry, "Her body it grew better" (425-6). Finally, she imagines herself strong enough to go rescue Johnny and at this moment of determination, she is healed: "I'll to the wood." -- The word scarce said, / Did Susan rise up from her bed, / As if by magic cured" (434-6). Perhaps it is true that, as Blake said, the "most sublime act is to set another before you" (E36).

Wordsworth's final stanza perplexes those readers who expect a rational ending to the "story." The poet declared the conclusion to be the foundation of the whole poem; it is certainly the key section in terms of the reader's response. When Betty asks "him whom she loves" to tell what he has experienced, his response fits the question in syntax only:

And thus to Betty's questions, he
 Made answer, like a traveller bold,
 (His very words I give to you,)
 "The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
 And the sun did shine so cold."
 --Thus answered Johnny in his glory,
 And that was all his travel's story. (457-63)

The boy's strange reply, which not only does not answer the question but is, at its literal level, illogical (for Johnny, the moon is the sun and the night

owls are morning cocks), does not, however, solidify the "fact " of Johnny's idiocy; rather, it stimulates an expansion in the reader's awareness, an expansion that the poem has been building all along through its illustrations of the divine, redemptive power of imaginative perception. In Johnny's answer, Wordsworth allows the summary of the poem to remain enshrouded in an essentially mysterious rationale that is appropriate since the idiot boy's life is "hidden with God." Perhaps readers are left wondering at and consigned to the answer's "tantalizing periphery" (Wolfson 52), but, nevertheless, they are enabled to perceive the benevolent mystery behind Johnny's illogical answer. To understand Johnny's two line tale demands that readers restrain their adult, rational preconceptions. Even the narrator sums up the incident with no explanation at all: "--Thus answered Johnny in his glory, / And that was all his travel's story." Johnny's "story" must be left as the last word, as opposed to the imposition of critical rationalizations. Meisenhelder, for example, explains that Johnny's hearing the "owls" and seeing the moon are the basis for his answer and become transformed into the cock's "to-whoo" and the "sun." But, to explain in rational terms is a reduction of the essentially creative perception that the poem effects. Thus, Wordsworth's "The Idiot Boy," the third poem in the group

of dramatic child/adult confrontations we have examined, causes the reader to re-examine his views about idiots, about narrative, and about imaginative faith.

By holding the readers suspended in the narrative through use of questions and functional syntax, repetition, and rhyme, as we have seen in exemplary Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth enables them to experience not only the characters' transformations, but also the creative perception that is potentially available to those who will seek to "lay [their] hands upon a star" and bring it home.

Chapter IV

Staining the Water Clear:

Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience

One of Wordsworth's most memorable observations about Blake's talent was expressed in these direct, simple terms: "There is something in the madness of this man that interests me" (Bentley 536). In this simple sentence, referring to Blake's genius as "madness," Wordsworth anticipates a popular response to Blake's work. Yet Wordsworth's words, characteristically, seem more simple than they are. In highlighting the "madness" as the central point that "interests" him, Wordsworth perhaps betrays his own proclivity for madness and reveals an alliance between Blake and himself. Modern readers interested in the madness have long turned to Blake's prophecies. An early fear of the obscurity of the prophetic poems has been replaced by an almost insatiable desire to "figure them out," and while recent criticism of the Songs of Innocence and Experience has stimulated new interest in the lyrics, it was not so long ago, as Frye notes, that Blake was thought to be the author of "a number of lyrical poems of the most transparent simplicity and of a number of 'prophecies' of the most impenetrable complexity" ("Blake's Introduction" 58). In pondering

Blake's "madness," Wordsworth and his contemporaries were responding not to the prophecies, but to the "transparent" Songs of Innocence and Experience. This apparent confusion created by Blake's lyrics parallels a similar reception of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads. The two anthologies are similar in their aims to dramatize the role of imaginative perception through the poems' content and to stimulate the reader's capacities for imaginative interpretation through the form. While recent criticism has initiated a renewed interest in these lyrics, the relationship between the two anthologies calls for further attention. Blake's Songs, like Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, beckon us to "rouze [our] faculties to act."

As earlier chapters suggest, Blake, like Wordsworth, emphasized the individual's need for imaginative perception and the potential effects that his poetry could have upon a complacent reading audience; thus, a review of the lyrics should recognize how Blake employs patterns which, like Wordsworth's strategy in Lyrical Ballads, call upon an active reader for interpretation.¹

¹The idea that Blake uses deliberate patterns to stimulate readers is implicit in much recent criticism. DeLuca has analyzed the "wall of words" that Blake builds in the prophecies and that invokes reader interpretation; Nelson Hilton has, more generally, catalogued the "multiple possibilities" evoked by Blake's most frequent and most significant words. Also, see Damrosch for a suggestion that Blake's patterns are consciously veiled, that his art is "anacalyptic" rather than apocalyptic.

Blake achieves these effects through a defamiliarization of the subject that must take place to avoid the "automatization of perception" (Warner 27). In the sense of the Russian Formalist term ostranenie, "making strange," Blake does characteristically create poems which begin, as Hartman says, on "the other side of the familiar" as opposed to Wordsworth (whose defamiliarization takes a more realistic form) or to Coleridge, who sees himself in the "very mire of commonplace common-sense compared to Mr. Blake" (Bentley 251). Blake creates unfamiliar settings and action, by which the reader is freed from normal, mundane perception in order to see anew. This defamiliarization finds analogy in Blake's technique as an artist. As Bloom explains, "Even as he creates his plates by melting surfaces away, so the function of his art will be to display the hidden infinite, hid in the phenomenal world" (Blake's Apocalypse 88). Like Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads, Blake's Songs appear deceptively simple in ballad form, diction, and rhyme, but evoke a sense of "strangeness" from a reader accustomed to an emphasis on conventional narrative and plot, what Wordsworth termed the "moving accident." The easy ballad stanza and meter, which, as Ostriker notes, resemble nothing so much as a jingle, bely the syntactical complexities that the

perceptive reader confronts. Likewise, the simple, child-like diction may lull the reader into believing that the lyrics themselves are simple. Ostriker's list of the most frequently used words in the Songs reveals a roll call of monosyllabic diction--lamb, cloud, child, pipe, weep, joy--but Blake's use of them is anything but simple. The aim of this chapter is to explore the patterns by which Blake's poems assure reader participation, evoking, through form, the same creative perception that the content emphasizes.

As Donald Ault emphasizes, Blake's narrative wages war on what he calls "Single vision and Newtons sleep" (E722). Blake sees Newton, along with Locke, as one who attempts to render human imagination captive through the senses.² Blakean narrative opposes traditional or, in Ault's terms, "Newtonian narrative" ("Re-Visioning" 106). Ault suggests, using the Four Zoas as illustration, that Blake "works to develop narrative structures that would rehabilitate imaginations damaged by single vision" (106). Unlike Newtonian narrative which affirms readers' expectations, Blake's goal is a transformation of readers' perceptions. The Blakean narrative "turns the common-sense world of naive sense data inside out; it radically

²In The Song of Los (1795), a "Philosophy of Five Senses" is given into the "hands of Newton & Locke" (E68).

and uncompromisingly opposes the way we normally experience language and the world" (Ault, Visionary Physics xii). Blake's Songs, which like Wordsworth's "lyrical" ballads might be considered narrative lyrics, engage in the kind of transformation that Ault has noted. The lyrics work by refusing to offer a single unified experience; instead, they insist upon a multiplicity of perspectives through which readers are asked to acknowledge diverse ways of seeing and learn to recognize their own.

Diction, as well as narrative elements, stimulates the reader's capacity for interpretation. As the Romantic language-as-garment metaphor implies, words are chosen for their "expressive possibilities," to use Murray Cohen's term. For Blake, "Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant" (E560) and "Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place" (E146). Analogous to his belief that transcendent divinity is expressed in human form, with Jesus as the supreme example, Blake seeks to offer "Divine Revelation in the Litteral Expression" (E143). Like Wordsworth, who describes poetry as an act in which the "Infinite being accomodates himself to a finite capacity" (PW 3:65), Blake engages in what Essick terms an incarnational poetics. That is, Blake uses language, with what Dr. Johnson denounces as an

"exuberance of signification," that is richly polysemous, allusive, and connotative, reflecting the diversity of creation and stimulating a reader's participation in the Infinite.³

The idea that Blake engages in an incarnational poetics may include not only giving "Litteral Expression" to divine truth through the word, but also re-forming the readers through their participation in the texts. For Blake, as for Wordsworth, the transformation of the reader is a sacred act, actually more like a transubstantiation. Wordsworth dramatizes moments in which one is suspended from normal activity in space and time and gains awareness of the infinite in the finite. These moments, what he terms in The Prelude "spots of time," are regenerative as they nurture imaginative perception. Similarly, Blake believes that there is a moment in which one is, to use Wordsworth's term, "suspended" from normal perception and, with heightened awareness, can intuit the reality of divinity within, with a possibility of regenerating imaginative perception: "There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find / Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but . . . when once it is found / It renovates every

³The multireferential powers of language demand an active, participating reader. For a reader, like Nelson Hilton, to discover multiple meanings inherent in language continues into the process of interpretation the vital

Moment of the day if rightly placed" (Milton E136). This epiphany is holy, a fulfillment of the Last Judgment, for whenever "any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual" (A Vision of the Last Judgment E562). Blake is even more explicit about the necessary responsiveness of an audience to his illustrations:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images
in his Imagination approaching them on the fiery
Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could
enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or
could make a Friend & Companion of one of
these Images of wonder which always intreats him
to leave mortal things . . . then would he arise
from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in
the Air & then he would be happy (E560).

Through expressive diction and syntax, Blake creates a world outside space and time wherein one's imaginative perception can supersede sensory or rational thought processes.

* * *

Before turning to the poems, I should first note the complex history of criticism of the Songs and acknowledge the difficulty of making claims about Blake's methods. The Blake industry perhaps began with study of how each

anthology depicted states of Innocence/Experience. Such clear cut interpretations emphasized that the Songs of Innocence recorded an idyllic existence which possesses, if not a blissful ignorance of the world's problems, at least an indifference to its demands whereas the Songs of Experience provided the countering of that innocent vision with realities of social injustice, child abuse, poverty, religious hyprocrisy, paternal tyranny, and selfish love. Frye and Gleckner added a needed complication of this dichotomy in their studies of the dramatic irony which informs the Songs of Innocence. The notion that the shadow of Experience lurks in the margins of Innocence has resulted in two strands of interpretation. One suggests that the reader, in his adult state of Experience, perceives the naivety of the speakers of Innocence, anticipating the oppositions represented in the Songs of Experience. Not surprisingly, many critics have followed this line of argument, typically showing how the rhetoric of the songs in Innocence betrays a knowledge of experience and how the poems in Experience rewrite their innocent companions. However, rather than reduce the lyrics of Innocence to ironic portrayals modified by the poems of Experience, we should acknowledge the multiple perspectives that the poems of both Innocence and Experience dramatize. To recognize this multiplicity

requires that we are alive to the second interpretation of dramatic irony: how irony is embedded in language.

Criticism has shown how a reader encounters ambiguous diction/syntax in *Innocence* that recalls the state of *Experience*. The most well-known example is the interpretation of the final stanza of the "Introduction" to *Innocence*. In the reciprocal dialogue in which the child commands the speaker to sing, pipe, and finally write his songs, the speaker says:

And I made a rural pen

And I stain'd the water clear

And I wrote my happy songs

Every child may joy to hear.

The connotations of "stain'd" imply that the speaker's human activity partakes of his position in the world of *Experience*; that is, as he stains the water, to make ink for his "rural pen," he necessarily introduces adult experience into the world of *Innocence*. The grammar of the line provokes various interpretations: that the image is a metaphor for writing (ink), a plausible suggestion since the speaker then writes his "happy songs"; that the speaker himself actually stains the clear water simply by his belonging to the world of *Experience*, a suggestion based upon viewing the anthologies as strict opposites; or

that the speaker makes the water clear by staining it.⁴

As this chapter contends, the last interpretation is the most telling and the most promising for studying Blake's methods in the Songs. Critics of the Songs of Experience have often failed to take Frye's discovery of Experience embedded in Innocence to its logical conclusion and see the illuminating powers of innocence within the world of Experience. Although Gleckner, Leader and others have pursued the influence of Innocence upon Experience, one may see the regenerative powers common to the world of Innocence without recourse to reading across the anthologies. That is, if we "rouze the faculties" and read the Songs of Experience diabolically, as Blake reads the Proverbs in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, we find seeds of potential redemption inherent in these lyrics, although some of the speakers and many critics following them, caught up within the vortex of that world, refuse to acknowledge. Thus, my study focuses much more on the Songs of Experience, rather than traditional cross-readings, illuminating how these lyrics dramatize a

⁴See Hazard Adams on the discussion this word has initiated. Howard Justin, for example, first suggested that "clear" may describe the water before or after the act of staining. Justin concludes that the speaker stains the clear water, thus resulting in a loss of ideal Innocence. Adams counters that "stained" is not negative at all, but rather implies the "creation of the materials of Blake's art" (21).

potential for regeneration through an imaginative perception necessary to reclaim Innocence. Thus, staining the water clear is a good metaphor for the poet's imaginative activity within the Songs of Experience; Blake's songs dramatize how one can regenerate imaginative perception, even in a stained world.

Before moving to rhetorical analysis of the specific ways in which Blake attempts to transform his readers in Experience, we should note the difficulty of making universal claims about Blake's method. Unlike Wordsworth, whose prefaces are almost as well-known as his poetry, Blake left no formal prose statements on the nature of his choices in subject matter or form. What we do have is the relationship among the works in Blake's canon, along with letters, marginalia, the notebook, and direct statements in the poetry itself. While Morton Paley is right to warn against seeing Blake's system evolving "with teleological certainty from his early lyrics to his later period" (vii), there is an evolution one can trace. Like Paley, Hirsch cautions that "Every time Blake mentions a star or a fiery forge, he does not necessarily mean the same thing" and that critics must avoid "facile equations between one work and another" (5). However, even if one wants to see the development of Blake's "system" in definable phases, Blake's myth is such that it is not

arbitrary as he moves from poem to poem but, rather, consistent in its development throughout the canon. Hazard Adams, one of the clearest critics of Blake's shorter poems, defends intertextual analyses, saying, "Blake's readers are in the odd position of discovering that his later long poems often throw light upon earlier poems, for they are presentations of a symbolic world, phases and fragments of which are described in the lyrics" (x). Offering a more theoretical justification for such readings, Damrosch asserts, "Myth is not an arbitrary way of manipulating symbols, but the conceptual framework in which they make sense. If symbolism is indeed a grammar, it functions as a mode of organizing experience rather than as a code for describing it" (81). For a poet who consistently lived his beliefs and enacted his faith through his poetry, intertextual analysis is not only appropriate but illuminating; the emphasis on perception and imaginative redemption that characterize Jerusalem and The Four Zoas exists, embryonically, in the early lyrics as well.⁵

⁵ Intertextual interpretation suggests that perception remained consistently the most significant issue for Blake. In the early anti-Lockean treatises, (written around 1788) There Is No Natural Religion and All Religions Are One, Blake uses the empiricists' logic against them to conclude that "Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" (E2). The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (written between 1790-3)

Like Wordsworth in the Lyrical Ballads, Blake exemplifies conflicting modes of perception throughout the Songs. As we have seen, Wordsworth's representation of these varying modes can be seen both in his companion (Lucy) poems, in poems which dramatize interrogative discussions, and within the rhetorical dimension of the poem itself. An analysis of Blake's Songs reveals a similar range of method. As he persistently emphasizes the role of creative perception--"A fool sees not the same tree as the wise man sees," "The Eye Altering alters all," "As a man is so he Sees"--Blake encourages readers, through multiple perspectives, to recognize these diverse ways of seeing and to acknowledge their own. Blake's presentation of these lyrics is, then, dialogic, in the sense that the texts exist in ongoing dialogue, stimulating multiple responses both to the poems themselves and the issues which they address. Similar to the ways in which Wordsworth's intended readers find themselves "hanging" within and between poems, readers of Blake's Songs find themselves not only invited into but also suspended between texts which represent distinctly different ways of seeing.

challenges the reader's limiting reliance on his five senses, with such Oothoonian questions as, "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (E35).

It is fruitful to explore this dialogue by looking at how the lyrics insist upon a multiplicity of perspective at three different levels. First, between the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, there are poems which complement each other when read together. The criticism of this relationship is already very rich, especially concerning "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" and poems of the same title in both anthologies ("The Chimney Sweeper," "Nurse's Song," "Holy Thursday," and "Infant Joy"/"Infant Sorrow"). My discussion focuses on the complementarity between Innocence/Experience through an intertextual reading of "A Dream" and "The Angel," poems which Hazard Adams has suggested, but not discussed, as a pair. Second, we should recognize the companion poems printed within the single anthology Songs of Experience. "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer," as well as "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found," serve as symbolic representations of the dialectic of perception that the document as a whole presents.⁶ Finally, from reading between the two versions of the Songs to reading companion poems within one of the diptych, we can see

⁶Although Blake includes a set of companion poems in Songs of Innocence, "The Little Boy Lost" and "The Little Boy Found," my readings will be limited in order to emphasize how the Songs of Experience betray hints of redemption as they insist upon the active interpretation of the reader.

Blake's dialogism at work within the boundaries of a single poem. Such a focus on one poem does not imply that it is a self-enclosed artifact; on the contrary, understanding the rhetoric of the poem often requires an acknowledgment of intertextual connections, and, more specifically, attention to verbal and syntactical ambiguities which allow multiple readings within the poem itself. Rhetorical and intertextual analyses of the lyrics unveil this multiplicity and strengthen the reader's ability to cleanse the doors of perception.

* * *

The most obvious method by which Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience presents conflicting modes of perception is the division of his lyric anthology into Songs of Innocence (1789) and Songs of Experience, published together as Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794). It has been traditional for critics to read the poems as a whole, as they were printed in 1794, with Songs of Experience serving as counterpoints, modifications, or companions to the earlier lyrics. Blake, of course, deliberately invites this method of analysis in the subtitle, "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Soul," and in his doubling of titles from one document to the other, including an "Introduction" which serves as a guide to the ensuing sequence. In addition to these poems

written under the same title, critics agree on certain poems from each anthology that are meant to be read together, often in direct opposition, such as "Infant Joy"/"Infant Sorrow" and "The Lamb"/"The Tyger." Two such poems that have been neglected in contrast to the other pairs and which deserve comparative analysis are "A Dream" from Songs of Innocence and "The Angel" from Songs of Experience. Both depict dreamers who accept or reject the potential of their respective states.

Verbal echoes provide the initial link between these two poems, for, in both, the first stanza introduces a dream and an angel:

Once a dream did weave a shade,

O'er my Angel-guarded bed . . . ("A Dream")

I Dreamt a Dream! What can it mean?

And that I was a maiden Queen:

Guarded by an Angel mild . . . ("The Angel")

In the song of Innocence, a natural, protective world saves the character from disaster; in the song of Experience, the character must learn to guide herself. The difference in outcome is a matter of perspective, for the speaker, as well as the reader perhaps, in "A Dream" accepts and learns from his Angel a commitment to energy and compassion that the story of the emmet illustrates. The speaker of "The Angel," on the other hand, perceives

her Angel as a threat and finally separates herself from him, forcing him to become an abstract, absent sky-god and forsaking her own potential redemption.⁷

The speaker's differing responses to the Angel can be placed in the context of Blake's development of the theory of contraries. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, contemporaneous with Songs of Experience, Blake's theory of the necessity of contraries--"Without Contraries is no progression" (E34)--becomes embodied in the characters of Angel/Devil. Blake inverts the traditional meanings of these labels, such that the "good" qualities of energy, desire, and human compassion are exemplified by the Devil, the "bad" qualities of repression, hypocrisy, and abstraction by the Angel. Blakean Angels are often Urizenic tyrants, while the Devils are models to live by (Jesus Christ is the most notorious example).⁸ In the fifth "Memorable Fancy," Blake's Devil converts the Angel, who previously had been characterized as one having a

⁷Blake's idea of the abstract sky god he will call Nobodaddy, emphasizing the lack of divine incarnation in the human form, is consistent throughout the canon. As early as the the anti-empirical treatists and the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake denounces the separation of the deity from the human, for "All deities reside in the human breast" (E38).

⁸This theory explains Blake's famous comment that Milton, in writing Paradise Lost, was "of the Devils party without knowing it" (E35); that is, Milton's grandest, most resonant poetry is not that describing God, Adam, and angels, but rather Satan and his exploits.

"confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning" (E43). By arguing that Jesus Christ is a manifestation of energy, not rules, the Devil transforms the Angel and watches as the Angel is consumed with fire and transposed into a Devil himself. Blake then asserts that this Angel "who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend" and that they read the Bible together "in its infernal or diabolical sense" (E44). This myth of Angel/Devil emphasizes the difference between imaginative perception, which expands comprehension of the Infinite, and sensory or rational perception, which produces only the "same dull round." Whether one is Angel or Devil depends upon one's perception of the human condition: "As a man is So he Sees" (E702). This dichotomy applies as well to how one views the Other, as Angel or Devil. The fact that Blake was developing these ideas in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell while composing the Songs of Experience suggests that the perception of the Angel, in "A Dream" and in "The Angel," characterizes the speaker. Through this kind of dialogic, or in Blake's term "diabolical," reading, we may see how modes of perception define human life.

The first stanza of "A Dream" introduces the Angel and the apparently passive nature of the speaker:

Once a dream did weave a shade,
 O'er my Angel-guarded bed,
 That an emmet lost its way
 Where on grass methought I lay.

Above an "Angel-guarded" bed, the dream or shade depicts the plight of a lost ant, or emmet, who will be saved by the forces of Innocence. The lyric, characteristically, opens with a surreal setting, deliberately defamiliarized. For the syntax not only implies that a dream creates a dream ("shade"), but also places the speaker suggestively within the world of the dream, fully able to communicate with the lost emmet. The fourth line, furthermore, suggests that the speaker projects himself lying "on grass," rather than in bed. The speaker is further implicated in the emmet's plight in the second stanza, whose syntax offers an unclear referent:

Troubled wilder and folorn
 Dark benighted travel-worn,
 Over many a tangled spray
 All heart-broke I heard her say.

Although the lost emmet is clearly "heart-broke," the word also refers to the speaker, who participates in her loss through this ambiguity. As the emmet imagines her children and husband weeping for her, the speaker finds

himself crying in the dream: "Pitying I drop'd a tear."⁹
 This kind of shared compassion, reciprocal sympathy, characterizes the speaker's Innocent world and is, in fact, what members of Experience must acknowledge for redemption. The conjunction of the first two lines of stanza four suggests that the speaker's pity is implicated in, and in fact may generate, the arrival of the saviors:

Pitying I drop'd a tear:
 But I saw a glow-worm near:
 Who replied. What wailing wight
 Calls the watchman of the night.
 I am set to light the ground,
 While the beetle goes his round,
 Follow now the beetles hum,
 Little wanderer hie thee home.

In an angel-guarded bed that symbolizes Innocence, help comes to those who call. The nature of this help remains ambiguous, for in the speaker's dream, compassion for the lost emmet may cause him to see a glowworm near. Thinking and dreaming are, after all, active, participatory

⁹The entire third stanza, in which the emmet imagines the family weeping for her return, is reminiscent in tone and diction to Lyca's similar musing in "The Little Girl Lost." In this poem, however, the emmet will be saved by the light of the glowworm whereas Lyca must become her own light, as her name suggests.

activities; whether dream or reality, the compassion of the speaker may be a creative act of salvation for the emmet. The reader's perceptions are challenged, as well, as one senses something of the speaker in the glowworm's rescue and connects the speaker's role to that of the watchman as the "I" of the speaker is replaced by the "I" of the glowworm. The glowworm's designation as a "watchman of the night" allies him to Isaiah's watchman, whose explanations of the natural cycle of morning following night parallels the glowworm's function as a representative of the harmonic natural world.¹⁰ The glowworm, significantly, "light[s] the ground" for a lost emmet who was described in the second stanza as "benighted." Darkness effortlessly becomes light, and in the world of Innocence, the lost are found. The poem, thus, depicts a protective natural world that portrays, as Adams says, a kind of "cosmic, maternal love" (255), a world in harmony. The Angel whose protection engendered the dream in the first place is surely a positive force. Adams argues that Blake is "consistent in making his angels in experience jailers, while in innocence maintaining their protective powers" (232). Actually, it

¹⁰In Isaiah 21:11-12, having had a "grievous vision," Isaiah commands a watchman: "He calleth to me . . . Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, 'The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will enquire ye; return, come.'"

is not Blake who ensures such an interpretation of the angels, but the individual experiences of the speaker and the reader; it is only through eyes of experience, through "normal" adult perception, that the Angel becomes something to fear.

The equivocal interpretation of the Angel forms the basis of the companion poem in Experience. "The Angel" presents a speaker within the world of adult experience. From the initial stanza, it is clear that this is no utopia. The speaker's deliberate choices, and thus her life's course, are informed by the mode in which she perceives her Angel. Rather than participate in a vision spun over an angel-guarded bed, this speaker dreams her own dream and rejects the Angel. Blake emphasizes the necessity, or dizzying freedom, in Experience, to achieve a redemptive world, rather than to expect it as a given. This poem plots the speaker's failure to accept that responsibility, a theme which becomes the primary condition of those in Experience.

I Dreamt a Dream! What can it mean?

And that I was a maiden Queen:

Guarded by an Angel mild:

Witless woe was ne'er beguiled.

As the speaker questions her vision, the reader, as well, is questioned, for it is difficult to understand the dream

even on the simplest level. Opening with a coordinating conjunction, the second line implies something left out, an incomplete vision that is the defining principle of the state of experience: "And that I was a maiden Queen." While the speaker (like the lost emmet) weeps for her human situation, the Angel (like the Angel's emissary, the glowworm) comes to share her state. The second stanza demonstrates the speaker's rejection of that reciprocity, and as such exemplifies the failure of most in Experience:

And I wept both night and day
 And he wip'd my tears away
 And I wept both day and night
 And hid from him my hearts delight.

The parallel syntax and consonance employed in the description of the actions of the speaker and the Angel emphasize the reciprocal act that one's embrace of the Angel should be: "And I wept," "And he wip'd," "And I wept." The interchange of "night and day" to "day and night" in the first and third lines of this stanza also expresses this harmony. In line four, however, as the reader anticipates another "And he wip'd," from the syntactical pattern established thus far, the speaker instead flees from the Angel and, committing the worst of all Blakean acts, hides her "hearts delight." In place of the emmet's acceptance of the glowworm's help, Blake

dramatizes the speaker's hiding from the Angel and from herself.¹¹ Rejecting the Infinite energy that the Angel, in its best "diabolic" sense offers, the speaker, in hiding from the Angel, hides from her own desires, and thus separates the divinity of the Angel from her human self. That the Angel now separates and flies upward is made clear in the third stanza:

So he took his wings and fled:

Then the morn blushed rosy red:

I dried my tears & arm'd my fears

With ten thousand shields and spears.

Armed against desire, energy, and the divinity of the Angel, the speaker has rejected any potential redemption of her human situation. As the rest of this lyric makes clear, once this pattern of rejection and abstraction has been established, it is almost impossible to break. One becomes the powerless figure of "Earth's Answer" as soon as one forgets that "All deities reside in the human breast" (E38). This human responsibility is not, of course, the solution to all the problems of Experience;

¹¹Because of this secrecy, Bloom groups this poem with "The Sick Rose," "My Pretty Rose Tree," and "The Lilly" because it exemplifies the "frustrating theme of natural modesty of female concealment" (Blake's Apocalypse 137). Since Blake's rose is sick also because of a hidden, "dark secret," the theme of sexual repression is suggested in "The Angel." But the ill effects of hidden sexuality are not Blake's sole focus.

The effects of institutionalized religion, for instance, are criticized by Blake again and again. This lyric does point out however, that the individual's perception of the Angel has much to do with the presence/absence of energy in life. This speaker loses that redemptive possibility forever:

Soon my Angel came again;
I was arm'd, he came in vain:
For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head.

In rejecting the energy (which may be sexual or simply the "exuberance" that is "beauty," according to Blake) that the Angel potentially represents, the speaker wastes her youth. Just as imaginative perception may occur in the "pulsation of the artery" (El26), so may the rejection of imagination, for by the fourth stanza, the "time of youth was fled."

As "The Angel" suggests, the individual's role in achieving redemption is one of the primary lessons of Blake's Songs of Experience as a document. The Songs of Innocence, generally, dramatize a state of consciousness in which it is possible for the lost to be found, as in "The Dream." Even though the world is consistently darkening, the voices from the pastoral green can still be heard; although the chimney sweeper's dreamy "vision" of a

joyful and carefree childhood is false and clearly ironic to adult readers, the child's belief, even if completely false, is redemptive in its creative quality.¹² The Songs of Experience, on the other hand, challenge a reader to find the tools of redemption. While some of these poems offer graphic depictions of social injustice, most of them, in keeping with Blake's interest in perception, portray a different consciousness of the issues present in *Innocence*. Both chimney sweepers experience the same conditions, both nurses call the children in from play, but those in the state of experience are aware of the imprisonment of their state. While the chimney sweeper of *Innocence* is allowed temporary regeneration in his vision, the child in *Experience* is blatantly aware of the evils done him by his parents who epitomize conformity to "Priest and King." A reader of these songs is challenged to find the potential redemption available to all in *Experience*. These lyrics insist upon imaginative thinking, essential to achieve a regenerative vision. As we turn, then, to the second level of dialogue, the interplay between companion poems in the Songs of Experience, we can see the illustration and evocation of active interpretation.

¹²Blake may be glossing the redemptive possibilities of the boy's vision when he himself writes that ". . . nothing is necessary to me but to do my Duty & to rejoice in the exceeding joy that is always poured out on my Spirit" (Letters 78).

The first set of paired poems, "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer," shapes the reader's response to the sequence that is to follow by offering a dialogic view of Earth's, by extension the human, potential for redemption. Unlike the "Introduction" to the Songs of Innocence which exists without an external "answer," this preface poem provokes another poem. That earth must answer implicates the first poem as a question, but what kind of question is it? Blake does not explicitly use the interrogative mode; the poem is more than anything an apostrophe which stimulates Earth's response. These two poems, which Ackland has called touchstones to the world of experience, are difficult to interpret due to complex syntax and imagery. Yet they typify the dialogic nature of the Songs as a whole. The "Introduction" is more than anything an introduction to the multiplicity of perspectives that will be encouraged by all the lyrics, and as such it functions as a wake-up call:

Hear the voice of the Bard!
 Who Present, Past, and Future sees
 Whose ears have heard,
 The holy Word,
 That walk'd among the ancient trees.

The first line, a sonorous, monosyllabic imperative, sounds an emphatic and certain call. Less certain are the

identity and purpose of the speaking Bard, whose relationship to the rest of the poem remains confusing to interpreters. The association of bard and poet is proverbial, the identification of the Bard with Blake inevitable, since Blake is the Bard who speaks truths throughout the ensuing sequence of Experience. Here, the relationship of the Bard/Holy Word to the "lapsed soul" is difficult to define, ambiguous at best, due to Blake's syntax. Through the first stanza, the referents have been clear. The modifying clause in line three ("Whose ears have heard") refers to the Bard himself, whereas line five ("That walked among the ancient trees") modifies the Holy Word, a voice that becomes incarnate in the poem through the voice of this ancient bard. What follows is an interpretive vortex in which many critics have plunged, spinning in what has been called Blake's "cosmic syntaxes."

Calling the lapsed Soul
 And weeping in the evening dew:
 That might controll,
 The starry pole;
 And fallen, fallen light renew!

Assuming that it is the Holy Word who does the calling, the poem serves as a medium for a divine call for redemption, and as such, the Bard can easily be considered

one with the Holy Word, whom we can consider Jesus: "For Blake there is no god but Jesus, who is also man and who exists . . . now in a real present in which the real past and the real future are contained" (Frye, "Blake's Introduction" 59). The imaginative human Bard (the refinement of the "lapsed soul") and Jesus are one, for the "mockers of Art is the mockers of Jesus."¹³ The subject of the subordinate clause in line eight ("That might controll,/The starry pole;/And fallen fallen light renew!") could be interpreted at this point as the Bard/Holy Word, who is able to renew "fallen light"; however, a closer reading of the rest of the poem suggests that it is the "lapsed Soul" who "might control" all if perception were renewed. That is, the burden of renewing fallen light is not upon the Holy Word but upon the lapsed soul.¹⁴ It is the Bard's task in this poem, as in all of Experience, to make the adult, lapsed soul aware of its job. Without accepting the responsibility of control, the

¹³Essick concludes that the Bard, like Blake, engages in incarnational poetics; similar to the Holy Word that brings divinity into contact with the human, the Bard makes it available to human consciousness.

¹⁴Bloom's approval of Earth's rejection of her duty is based on Blake's distrust of nature. Interpreting Earth as nature, not mankind, Bloom asserts, "The Bard sought to put the burden upon nature, urging Earth to turn away no more. Earth gives it back to whom it belongs, the Bard and all men" (Blake's Apocalypse 133). In my reading, the Earth is mankind, and the bard places the burden exactly where it belongs.

soul may fall prey to Urizenic or Newtonian forces that seek to control Earth. That is, the soul's participation in this Holy Word's call can be redemptive:

O Earth O Earth return!
 Arise from out the dewy grass;
 Night is worn,
 And the morn
 Rises from the slumberous mass.
 Turn away no more;
 Why wilt thou turn away
 The starry floor
 The watery shore
 Is giv'n thee till the break of day.

Stressing the potential for redemption in the here and now, not just at some future moment in the apocalypse, the Bard/Holy Word employs the analogy of night's turning into morning as a stimulant for earth's own renewal. One does not have to wait for the ultimate "break of day" prophesied in the final line; rather, all of this regeneration can occur now, as the voice urges the soul not to turn away from the present.¹⁵ The images of the

¹⁵Cf. Blake's 1799 letter to Dr. Trussler, in which the poet asserts that his imaginative life does regenerate the fallen world. Note that Blake does not defer gratification of the spiritual for the "break of day": "I feel that a Man may be happy in This World. And I know that This World is a World of Imagination & Vision" (E702).

"starry floor" and the "watery shore" displace normal images of the sky as ceiling, not floor, and of the shore as solid, not watery, in order to dissolve boundaries.¹⁶ That is, a starry sky, normally perceived as a ceiling over the earth, is better considered a floor to some realm unknown, perhaps even one that is, like Blake insists in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "an immense world of delight/Clos'd to your senses five" (E35). Calling the sky a floor and emphasizing a "watery shore," dissolves that imaginary boundary that humans perceive and better enables not only belief but participation in an Infinite.¹⁷ In sum, the Bard/Holy Word calls Earth not to anticipation of a redemption in the future, but a renewed perception in the here and now.

"Earth's Answer" depicts the plight of those in the world of Experience without this revitalized perception. Earth, the physical embodiment of the lapsed soul, answers the call only in that she responds to the dialogue; she rejects any possibility for redemption. Placing the

¹⁶ Adams noted that the the stars, which appear to be hanging in the sky, actually "compose the floor of the fallen world, holding things back from utter chaos at the same time that they enclose man in a prison" (41-2). I suggest that the stars may not be the floor of the fallen world, but of one unknown.

¹⁷ Cf. from There Is No Natural Religion: "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only" (E3).

burden squarely on the shoulders of the Holy Word whom she perceives as a Nobodaddy sky-god, a "Selfish father of men," Earth refuses to accept her responsibility in redemption. Instead of arising to renew "fallen light," Earth raises her head, with "her light fled" and her "locks cover'd with grey despair." She deliberately inverts the syntax of the Bard/Holy Word, as she refuses to read his phrases imaginatively, interpreting the "starry floor," and the "watery shore" as limiting margins, exactly opposite the Bard's intentions: "Prison'd on watery shore/Starry Jealousy does keep my den." Before her final demand for freedom from imprisonment, a freedom that cannot be given, only gained, as the songs in Experience demonstrate, Earth engages in questions, reminiscent of Oothoon in Visions of the Daughters of Albion or the "Motto" to Thel:

Does spring hide its joy
 When buds and blossoms grow?
 Does the sower?
 Sow by night?
 Or the plowman in darkness plow?

These rhetorical questions highlight significant axes of Blake's critique; Earth is right to rebel against her

sexual, social oppression.¹⁸ But, more importantly, "The Eye altering alters all," and rather than the dark, grey world around her, it is, as Hopkins might say, Earth that she mourns for. Her closing command to "Break this heavy chain" will be realized only when she first will acknowledge her potential and, indeed, responsibility, for individual, creative perception.

"Earth's Answer" dramatizes the central truth around which the Songs of Experience revolve: although the world of adult experience is, in fact, made captive by social injustice, religious hypocrisy, political and sexual repression, it is the "mind-forg'd manacles" that humans must first reject. The Songs of Experience, with all their vivid social critiques, exemplify Blake's commitment to redeem individual perception by rousing the faculties to act. That Earth's answer is spun out of a web of rhetoric characterized by chains and darkness (e.g. "Prison'd on watry shore," "Chain'd in night,") reveals the limitations of her imaginative perception, not simply the evils of the experienced world. Further, to read her answer as Blake's true vision of the state of Experience is to perpetuate her error and, consequently, refuse the

¹⁸The sexual overtones indict the secretive attitude toward human sexuality and the society which ensures the perpetuation of that. The creative dimension of sexuality parallels the need for individual, creative perception.

offerings of the ensuing sequence.

Such a refusal characterizes Ackland's interpretation of these poems. Suggesting an entirely different reading, Ackland charts the course of an analysis based on a belief that the Bard's view is opposed to the Holy Word's. Acknowledging the difficult syntax and punctuation leads this critic to see the poem as a recasting of the Fall ("lapsed soul") in terms of a malicious God, a characterization which Ackland supports by references to verbal comparisons between the Holy Word and Jehovah of the Old Testament, a god who, in Genesis, also called out to a "lapsed Soul".¹⁹ Critics who identify the Bard with the Holy Word generally assume that the allusion to Genesis is the inevitable corroboration of man's present fallen state of experience. God calls to Adam and Eve just before they are expelled from the Garden of Eden forever; the Bard and the Holy Word call out to an Earth that is fallen and needs redemption. Ackland, however, suggests that Blake's Holy Word, like his Urizenic sky-god, taunts Earth, refusing to give her comfort and simply

¹⁹Blake scholars agree that the descriptions of the Holy Word, walking among ancient trees, calling a lapsed soul, are intentional echoes of Genesis 3:8-9: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, saying unto him, Where art thou?"

admonishing her to "return" to a former state that is now out of reach. Assuming a fallen state, Earth's perception of the Bard as Nobodaddy is perhaps inevitable, but Blake urges the recognition that Nobodaddy is a god of our own making. Ackland's interpretation depends upon knowledge of "Earth's Answer," which responds to a "Selfish father of men," and assumes that the earth's circumstances are the helpless state of mankind that has been imposed by a tyrannic deity of the first poem. Reading this pair of poems in this way places the blame upon the Holy Word and implies that the poems of Experience only function to depict what the Earth, mankind, must continually fight against. Ackland goes so far as to suggest an entire reading for the Songs, identifying the Holy Word with a "'God of Love' whose Chapel and thorny 'Thou shalt nots' have restricted and bound the 'Echoing Green' of Innocence" (10). Such pessimism is antithetical to my readings of the Songs of Experience. The Bard/Holy Word is opposed to the Urizenic God, for the Word is Christ, the divine in the literal expression. Through these poems, the reader is enabled to achieve an imaginative perception that itself is the way through the cruel world of adulthood.

Another set of companion poems in Songs of Experience depict a fulfillment of the rebirth to which the Bard and

the Holy Word call Earth. Originally planned to be published in Songs of Innocence, "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" were moved to Experience before publication. The poems actually enact the kind of revelation that the "Introduction" calls for and that "Earth's Answer" refuses. "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found," known together as the Lyca poems, are traditionally viewed as a depiction of Lyca's progression from innocence to experience, whether it be in Adams' humanistic terms of a fall into consciousness of mortality; Kathleen Raines' Neoplatonic terms of a soul's descent into flesh and return to Eternity; Irene Chayes' mythological terms of a Persephone figure's move to realms of Eternity; or Norma Greco's cultural terms of a virgin's initiation into sexuality. Such archetypal readings are valuable in suggesting broad patterns of experience that the poems suggest, but oftentimes these readings are too dogmatically reductionist. In their assumptions that Blake's poems do dramatize the archetypal experience of their choice, these scholars may ignore the poem altogether. For instance, every instance of sleep becomes symbolic of death because, for Raines, "Death and sleep are in the symbolic language of Neoplatonism as they are for Blake virtually synonymous" (30). Such an adherence to myth leads Raines to dismiss details which contradict

her reading, or more boldly, even to assert that Blake must have erred (not misread in a Bloomian sense) in his readings of the sources.

The Lyca poems may profitably be read as companion poems that exercise the reader's creative perception as much as they provide an illustration of potentially revitalizing perception for the characters in the poem. Even though the Preludium of "The Little Girl Lost" is spoken with prophetic assertion that the earth will "rise" and become regenerated, the poems themselves place an interpretative burden upon the reader who must, as Ackland asserts, "grapple with exegetical cruxes resulting from the problematic relationship of a set of brief gnomic propositions with a mythic narrative" (11). That is, the bold prophetic strain of the Bard's preludium is not explicit at all in the Lyca poems. These lyrics have, on the contrary, been interpreted as showing a descent or fall into experience that is not regenerative, but regretful. Reading the poems rhetorically as companion poems that illustrate the possibilities for "Organiz'd Innocence," what Gleckner first termed a "higher innocence," in the adult world of Experience offers a view of Blake's contrary states as working within each other, in a dialectic, rather than opposing each other.

Opening with a prophecy of a restored Golden Age,

"The Little Girl Lost" resembles the "Introduction" to Songs of Experience. The prophetic rhetoric and the call to awaken sleeping earth ally this speaker with the Bard:

In futurity
I prophetic see,
That the earth from sleep,
(Grave the sentence deep)
Shall arise and seek
For her maker meek:
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

This speaker, like the Bard, "Past, Present, and Future sees," prophesies a time wherein the earth will answer his call. From this initial stanza, however, we can glean that this regeneration can be achieved not only by the Bard but by anyone. The speaker who claims, "I prophetic see" suggests one's mode of perception can be the means of redemption. The poems dramatize the significance of new modes of perception, and the text itself beckons to the reader to see it differently. The third and fourth lines, for example, promote multiple readings, as the parenthetical "Grave the sentence deep" is richly suggestive. As Hilton's analysis of the word "grave" points out, the fourth line implies at least three different meanings: one, the sentence of the sleeping

earth, or the curse of the human condition after the fall, is a deep grave, difficult to arise from; more significantly, the term "grave" carries with it connotations of "engrave" with specific resonance to Blake the engraver of the illustrated Songs. Thus, "grave the sentence deep" reveals Blake's command that the line be deeply etched; implicit in this meaning is the imperative that the reader participate in the "sentence" or meaning of the poem. The rhetorical density of the word challenges the reader's expectations and interpretation, an appropriate emphasis since the prophetic change that is to come is largely perceptual, as indicated in lines seven and eight: "And the desert wild/Become a garden mild." The difference between seeing a desert and a garden is much less than most believe, manifested rhetorically in the slight change necessary to change the "wild" to the "mild." The prelude, consisting of the first two stanzas, is, then, a recapitulation of the Bard's song in the "Introduction"; the two poems that follow suggest an alternative to Earth's answer.

Lyca, introduced as "living in the southern clime," has been subject to much speculation, especially in that her name provides a rich etymology. In its connection to the Greek root for "light," the name "Lyca" is an apt appellation for one about to be enlightened about her

powers of perception.²⁰ Within the literal world of the poem, Lyca is a little girl lost. She imagines, in two stanzas of ambiguous syntax, her parents' weeping and wondering where she is. Lyca imagines her mother saying, "Where can Lyca sleep" and then affirms that she can not sleep if her mother is weeping: "How can Lyca sleep,/If her mother weep." Yet she claims that, "If my mother sleep,/Lyca will not weep." This confusing passage serves two useful functions: First, by interchanging the weeping/sleeping subjects, Blake places the emphasis not on who does what, but rather on the effects of the sleeper's and weeper's perception of the other's action. Similar to Betty Foy's suicidal/redemptive thought processes as she waits for the Idiot Boy's return, Lyca's perceptions control her actions; that is, if Lyca thinks her mother weeps, then she will not sleep, but if Lyca thinks her mother sleeps, then she will not weep. The passage also serves as an introduction to sleep, a transition to Lyca's invocation of a dream-like state in the next stanza.

²⁰ According to Blake's later prophecies, Lyca's location in the "southern clime" has significance with regard to perception. The South is associated with the sense of sight. In Jerusalem we find "Los's Furnaces in the South" (E209) and in the fourfold division of man: "the eyes are the South, and the Nostrils are the East, / And the Tongue is the West, and the Ear is the North" (E208).

Like the journeys of Wordsworth's idiot boy and the persona of "Strange Fits of Passion," Lyca's journey takes place under the moon, which she invokes as soon as she closes her eyes; like Wordsworth's dreamer, Lyca is about to enter one of those "sweet dreams." As Lyca steps into the moonlight, her own strange fit of passion begins as "beasts of prey/Come from caverns deep." The lion recalls the lions and wolves of "Night," in Innocence. In that poem, the beasts of prey devour the innocent children but only to transport them to a land where the lion's wrath is changed to pity: "But if they [beasts of prey] rush dreadful;/ The angels most heedful,/Receive each mild spirit,/New worlds to inherit" (El4). In Innocence the children are taken to a place where the lion's eyes flow with tears of gold; and the lion literally lies down with the lamb. Those redemptive beasts of the Innocence are caretakers, not so these beasts of experience. That Blake moved these poems from Innocence to Experience tells us that something more is being dramatized than a merciful transportation to a heaven of innocence.

The "kingly lion," associated with the king of kings, is the chief guide for Lyca's journey, fully manifesting his Blakean role because for those who see with the creative perception of the imagination, "The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God" (MHH 8:24). The lion is a

prototype of Jesus, the King of Kings and "Lion of Judah." Like Jesus, he serves in the poem as a redemptive agent; like Blake's Jesus, he is exemplary of imagination and, thus, also associated with Los.²¹ The "caverns deep" are not, as we shall see, caverns of the Urizenic man, as in the opening of Europe ("Five windows light the cavernd man") but rather metaphors for the depths of Los's workshop, Los being almost always portrayed as a blacksmith.²² In Blake's myth, Los is associated with the underground workshop of the imagination; in a fallen world, it is, as Frye says, only in these dens "that an imaginative power can operate" (292). The lion will be proven to be an emissary from Los's creative furnace who has come to enable Lyca to share in an imaginative perception that will allow her to live more richly within a fallen world. The associations of Los/lion are also validated by a passage near the end of The Four Zoas, which describes the resolution of perception and the

²¹Blake's myth of the fourfold division of man is developing by this point in the canon. By 1789 in Thel, Luvah is a character, and Los is implied in the furnaces in "The Tyger" and informs Blake's ideas of metal engraving in Marriage of Heaven and Hell. See Paley on how Los' implication in the hammer/anvil/furnace images of "The Tyger" serves to "reinforce and corroborate our sense of what the poem means."

²²Many interpretations of "Los" are possible, but the most consistently agreed upon are that Los is connected with Logos, the son (Jesus = Imagination) or is a homonym for sun or sol, Los spelled backwards.

unification of all the zoas. The scene resembles the environment Lyca is taken to: "The hammer of Urthona sounds/In the deep caves beneath his limbs renewed, his Lions roar/Around the furnace and in Evening sport upon the plains" (E138).

The lion's role in Lyca's regenerative vision is manifested by Blake's careful structuring of stanza ten. The lion knows that seeing is believing, and the poet stresses the effects of the act of perception:

The kingly lion stood
And the virgin view'd
Then he gamboled round
O'er the hallow'd ground.

The word "view'd" is the pivotal point of the stanza, both in its placement at the end of the second line and its association with the theme of the poems. The syntactical relationship of the first two lines being ambiguous, one can see the viewing from two different perspectives. Whether one reads the lines as implying that the lion is the subject of both verbs or that the virgin does the viewing, the syntax implies that after the viewing, then signifying a directly temporal chain of events, the lion plays around the hallowed ground. In either event the hallowed ground that was just ten lines before a "desert" has been transformed by the viewing. The

ambiguity forces the reader to re-view the stanza herself, noting the emphasis on seeing. The fact that the desert is transformed by this act of perception into a "hallow'd ground" dramatizes the imaginative power. The word "hallowed" may, in fact, connote or recall "hollowed" to fit the cave images already established. Also, like the "hollow reed" of the speaker in "Introduction" to Songs of Innocence, this "hollowed ground" suggests the creative act of engraving or writing: "The engraved line is hollow until filled with the body of ink" (Hilton 22). These associations validate the idea of cave as the locus of the imaginative artist Los. Even if one does not allow that Los was a developing character at this point in the canon, the relationship of grave/engrave, the connotations of both life and rebirth that are inherent in the grave image (the tomb is also the womb) inform the hollowed cavern of the lion's home. After Lyca's moment of perception, whether it be in the seeing or being seen, she is loosed from her dress (an action which has been interpreted by Raines as the soul "naked without its mortal body, entering the realms of the dead" [1: 141] but which may be the shedding of her fallen vision) and taken to the cavern home of the beasts.

The space between "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" actually serves as a transition back to

the fallen world from which Lyca started her journey. As she is taken to the underground cave, the parents remain in fallen vision, among "shadows deep." The poet says that they "trac'd the desert ways," connoting with "trac'd" that they followed established patterns. Tracing is a desert way, not an act of fecundity and creativity, a method that will not lead them to Lyca, but will leave them circling chartered streets like those in "London." Imagining her in "pathless ways," they are unaware that it is they who are lost. They see her as "fancied image," in a kind of reverse parallel to the parental vapor in "The Little Boy Lost," as Adams points out. The mother is absolutely halted by this vision of their child and claims she can go no farther. Like the mother Betty Foy's suicidal thoughts as she imagines her idiot boy lost in the woods, this mother's vision leaves her in despair. The parents, locked into the world of Experience, must learn from the "innocent" Lyca in order to transcend their fallen perceptions.

The lion reappears as a guide, seen as a dangerous beast to the parents who are locked into the world of their five senses. However, when the lion licks them and allows them to see him, they look into his eyes and attain a new vision:

Turning back was vain,
Soon his heavy mane,
Bore them to the ground;
Then he stalked around,
Smelling to his prey.
But their fears allay,
When he licks their hands;
And silent by them stands.
They look upon his eyes
Filld with deep surprise
And wondering behold
A spirit arm'd in gold.

When the narrator says the lion bore them to the ground, implicit within the word "Bore" is its connotation of giving birth. One both bears a burden and delivers oneself of it. The lion then may be implicated in giving birth to life. The result of his action is their completely transformed vision. They "look upon his eyes" and "wondering behold / A spirit arm'd in gold." The parents then join Lyca in restored, imaginative vision, seeing the lion as a "spirit" and live in the lion's "palace deep," which has become transformed from the "caverns." The final stanza bothers many critics, as it summarizes that Lyca and her parents reside in a "lonely dell." Gardner assumes this image to carry with it hints

of a Urizenic enclosure. The poem, however, has illustrated the transformative powers of perception. Lyca, as her name implies, has been the light for her parents to leave their "desert ways," recalling the Bard's premonition that the "desert wild" would become a "garden mild." If the place where they dwell is lonely, then as Adams argues, the dell's remoteness should be seen as a "reminder to the reader of how any achieved vision may look to [the eyes of limited] Experience" (217). The little girl lost is found, not so much restored to social harmony as to individual vision, a renovated vision that lives within a fallen world and yet sees it with cleansed eyes. Unlike the emmet in "A Dream," a poem quite similar in tone and imagery, Lyca is not rescued by an external watchman, but experiences the effects of a new perception. It is clear why Blake transferred these poems from Innocence. They dramatize moments in which one acknowledges that the "Eye Altering alters all."

Finally, from companion poems between and within the Songs, we can now see the third manifestation of Blake's dialogue of voices--the rhetorical effects within the single poem. The texture and language of the lyrics may stimulate a dialogic reading that stimulates awareness of distinctive mode of perception which challenge the reader's expectations. This awareness of multiplicity is

usually stimulated by verbal and syntactical ambiguities in the text or by rhetoric which invites intertextual connections, as we shall see in "London"; however, Blake, in one poem, depicts two voices in debate. Immediately following the dialogue between the Bard/Holy Word and Earth, represented in the pairing of "Introduction" to Songs of Experience and "Earth's Answer," is the short lyric "The Clod and the Pebble." Offering contrary perceptions, the two voices in the poem argue the definition of Love. The voices are deliberately similar in tone and diction, such that the Pebble's overt modifications of the Clod's assertions are rhetorical feats that illustrate Blake's belief in the necessity of contraries.

The title "The Clod and the Pebble" is a simple declaration of the pair in the world of experience. Appropriate to such a world, the clod and the pebble are subjects which both bear the burden of others' weight upon them.²³ Like all in the world of Experience, they are "trodden"; like Earth, in her Answer, they are unable to ascend. Yet, in that position, the forms of the clod and the pebble determine the interpretations of their lot.

²³The context of the clod and the pebble is made clear by the illustration of the plate, representing cattle drinking at a brook. Blake critics agree that the clod and pebble are both within the stream, variously supporting the weight of the cattle.

The clod of clay is a malleable form under the strain of others' weight; through its flexibility, it gives itself for others. The pebble, on the contrary, is rigid, keeping its own form, or identity, intact at all costs. In the setting of the poem, both characters are singing; thus, the emphasis is on the varying voices within the one poem.

Love seeketh not Itself to please
 Nor for itself hath any care;
 But for another gives its ease,
 And builds a Heaven in Hells despair.

Beginning with a definition of Love, the clod's declaration is a gloss on I Corinthians 13. The clod, in fact, suggests that Pauline definition as it argues for unselfish love wherein giving is the greatest reward. The balanced, parallel syntax of the second and third lines betrays the absolute clarity of the clod's vision: not "for itself" but "for another" does the clod live. The final line, however, is most definitive about the clod's perception. A love which "builds a Heaven in Hells despair" is one which is as naive as the chimney's sweeper's faith that if all do their duty, they may not fear harm. To convert a despair into a heaven may simply be an act of mind, like Satan's bold assertion in Paradise Lost: "The mind is its own place / And can make a heaven

of hell, a hell of heaven." Is the clod's a fully realized act of creative perception of the kind that Blake urges? The allusion to Milton suggests not, for Satan's heroic vision does not sustain him, and the chimney sweeper's essential, naive vision works only to get him through the next day. A mind which escapes the despair of its lot only through a mental construction of Heaven is one which rejects the world and, more importantly for Blake, rejects the self. We can conclude that the clod's song is one of innocence, from which we can learn but not be satisfied. The clod of clay is, after all, the substance of humans, but not human. In Blake's view, it is in the dialectic with the pebble that we are capable of the kind of creative perception that transforms the world of experience in a positive way. In the mediating stanza, the poet simply announces the two speakers, without preference of either:

So sang a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattles feet:
But a Pebble of the brook,
Warbled out these metres meet.

The pebble's song is one that displaces the naivety of the clod's vision in that it sees only self-gratification and the imposition of restraint upon the other if necessary:

Love seeketh only Self to please,
 To bind another to Its delight:
 Joys in anothers loss of ease,
 And builds a Hell in Heavens despite.

The pebble's love, which pleases only "self," seeks "To bind another to Its delight." The imagery of captivity is, again, the dominant one for the world of experience. The pebble's use of this image makes him parallel to the restrictive religious hypocrites, who also joy in "another's loss of ease" and who appear later in the Songs of Experience, in "The Garden of Love," as priests, "binding with briars, my joys and desires" (E26). As Hazard Adams points out, it is not merely the "similarity of a phrase in the pebble's speech to lines in 'The Mental Traveler' which suggests that there is something cyclical in all of this" (252). In that poem in the Pickering Manuscript, Blake's Babe, who is bound by an Old Woman who "grows young as he grows old" (E484), finally becomes what he beholds in that he soon "binds her down for his delight" (E484). Similarly, the pebble, who says Love does "bind another to its delight," asserts that one must be master of the other.

The poem's rhetoric, on the other hand, suggests the necessity of contraries, the fragile difference between love and selfishness, the thin line between giving and

taking. It is important that the pebble echoes the clod's words exactly in rhythm, syntax, and diction, adding only one word. The clod's "Love seeketh not Itself to please" becomes the pebble's "Love seeketh only Self to please." The issue of Love's relationship to self is expressed by the clod in simple negation; Love does "not" serve self; the pebble, on the other hand, not only deletes the negation "not" but stridently asserts that "Self" is the "only" consideration. The clod has given up selfhood, as evidenced by the objectification in the third person pronoun "Itself," which is then repeated ("itself" and "its") twice. The pebble, by contrast, is in full participation of its selfhood, and Blake's substitution, in the pebble's speech, of "Self" for "Itself" ("Love seeketh only Self to please") functions as more than just a necessary fulfillment of "metres meet." The interplay of rhetoric of the two voices urges the reader to seek for a joining of these views in the form of contraries rather than negations. The pebble, seen as a sadist to the clod as masochist, is not entirely negative; like Blake's equivocal angel/devil, it can teach us. For example, building a state of perception "despite" another contrary state is much more valuable than building out of despair. The one is escapism; the other hints at the possibility of achieving "Organiz'd Innocence," in which a person,

totally aware of the ills of the world of experience, builds a Jerusalem "despite" that world. The clod could learn a lot from the pebble as the readers learn from their juxtaposition.

"London" is Blake's "mightiest brief poem," according to Erdman, and is arguably the most affective of all the Songs of Experience. Its depiction of a London characterized by political, religious, social and sexual repression is phantasmagoric, a vortex of sight and, more especially, sound that presents a bleak picture of human experience in society. The lyric's political or social bearings have often been the central focus of interpretation, with Brenkman and Ferber recently asserting that Blake assuredly "did not abandon social or political meanings in favor of timeless metaphysical ones" (Ferber 321). In debate with that political dimension, or to use Ferber's term, the "social vision," of the poem is the emphasis on the individual responsibility of humans implied by such proverbial phrases as "mind-forg'd manacles."²⁴ "London" acknowledges the importance of the modes of perception, such that the "mind forg'd manacles"

²⁴Textual analysis reveals that Blake initially wrote "german forg'd manacles," alluding to contemporary concerns about the Hanoverian yoke of George in 1792. The change from external to internal cause of imprisonment, "german" to "mind," reveals a deliberate emphasis on the burden of human perception; man is free or manacled in the way he views the world.

are in many ways the center of the poem. More significantly, the poem emphasizes potentially creative perception and its effects. Although the poem's final images are bleak, there is reason to conclude that the poem is not. Even stronger than the other poems in *Experience*, this lyric depicts faithful acts of creativity that are models for our own regenerative vision.

Unlike the clod and the pebble, in which two distinct voices compete and are recorded by the narrator, "London" is spoken by one narrator who records all that he hears. As Brenkman suggests, readers must be cognizant of the poem's "essentially auditory aspect" (124); it is a veritable repository of voices. Although the speaker sees, "marks," the sights of London in the first stanza, the emphasis is on the voices he hears. These voices actually create visible scenes of their own; thus, seeing in the poem is literally created by the voicing. Language or voice becomes the origin of the visible scene, suggesting that creative perception can indeed be stimulated by writing/reading, the incarnation of the Logos into words. First, we might try to chart a path, or rather wander through, the poem with careful attention to the multiple meanings that implicate this poem in social, political, sexual, and psychological themes. Within the structure of the poem, we can see how the voices of the victims become

tangible weapons against the institutions that caused the repression, and in such imaginative transformations comes the call for regeneration from the speaker and the means for creative perception in the reader. Furthermore, within the single poem, which is built upon multiple voicing and its effects, the words often engage in dialogue with other texts. This intertextuality may be overt, as the reference to the chimney sweeper in third stanza carries with it, perforce, the weight of the two chimney sweeper poems in the sequence; or implicit, based upon cognate passages in other works. Blake's "London" may be seen to have been embryonically inscribed in his early prophecy The French Revolution.

Such a reading involves reviewing the poem at three levels. First, at the level of the word, the lyric is a semiotician's dream and/or nightmare, for many of the words resonate with at least two, usually multiple, meanings. Rather than being simply ambiguous (although, as Empson has shown, there is little simple about ambiguity), the diction is best conceived as polysemous; that is, more than one meaning is not only allowable but desirable and valid to the poem as a whole.²⁵ Further,

²⁵For Blake's lyrics, polysemy rather than ambiguity is usually more appropriate since Blake's concerns with the "Litteral Expression," with "Minute Particulars" led him to assert that not a letter admits of insignificance. To attempt to limit the meanings or choose a "correct" one

at the structural level, the poem divides clearly in halves. The first eight lines set the speaker in the city and describe his actions of observation and reciprocity with all citizens. The poem's second half, often summarized as a catalogue of three instances of repression (religious, political, and social/sexual), offers an imaginative dramatization of how victims of repression not only respond to but also counter, in a visibly affective way, the institutional engines of their despair. Each of the victims, chimney sweeper, soldier, and harlot, voices a response to his or her repression, an utterance that enacts what it conveys, altering the object of repression. That is, their utterances re-mark the institutions that have branded them with "marks of weakness, marks of woe" in the first stanza. Finally, in terms of the reader's engagement, an analysis that acknowledges the power of utterance against repression can transform the reader; the reader's perception is broadened by the perlocutionary utterance of the victims against their oppressors, and the speaker's "mark"-ing of those voices in the text of the

is to repeat the Urizenic limitation of human perception that this poem, as almost every poem of Experience, counters. Such limitation is certainly the root cause of the repression in the poem. Thus, what Hilton has called the "multiple possibilities" inherent in such words as "charter'd," "mark," "ban," "blackning," and so on must be acknowledged. The polysemous nature of words, in fact, parallels the changing language in politics in England. See Olivia Smith.

poem. The reader's re-marking or remaking of the scene of the lyric through imaginative reading offers awareness of the regenerative power of language, not only to affect political and social networks, but, more importantly, to enable an imaginative perception that will remake all.

The first eight lines of the poem, comprising the first half, introduce the speaker's role as observer of the sights and sounds of London. His own polysemous diction and use of repetition reveal his imaginative perception of the scene and suggest a reciprocity with all he surveys:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

Some critics see the speaker as limited, unable to see beyond his own mind-forged manacles, thus setting up another example of dramatic irony in the Songs. The word "wander," for instance, leads some critics to the conclusion that the speaker is in error, in the sense of its etymology ("errare" to wander). Both Bloom and Glen

emphasize the speaker's deficiencies, a characterization that is necessary for their respective readings. Bloom's speaker, whom he identifies as Blake, the poet, undergoing anxiety of influence, is a would-be prophet struggling with his "precursor-text," the book of Ezekiel. Bloom then characterizes the speaker as projecting his own insecurities, his weakness and his woes, upon those he meets. Glen, who characterizes Experience as a realm of isolation and fragmentation, goes even further to claim that the speaker is complicit in the crimes he witnesses and is "at a remove from any positive human reciprocity, yet imprinting his own damning stamp upon everything" (63). These kinds of readings rely on limiting the meaning of certain words ("wander" and "mark") and of allusions to other texts. To follow Blake is, however, to follow a winding path of multiple perspectives.

The first stanza provides several possible readings, all valid to one who is attempting to assess the possibility of redemption for the city and for oneself. Wandering may not imply error at all, although even if one recognizes that meaning, the speaker himself is not necessarily implicated as cause of that circumstance but rather participant in the human condition. Rather, the force of "wander" is most realized in juxtaposition with the objects he perceives. Against a chartered Thames and

a chartered street, the speaker's wandering appears liberated, at least of free will. For the chartered street and river are symbols of the most despotic relationship. In chartered, one hears the similar "charted," bound and systematized and thoroughly unBlakean. The word, however, is also richly interwoven with historical contexts. As discussed by Erdman and E. P. Thompson, the notion of charter was one of the major focuses of the pamphlet wars between Paine and Burke. A charter grants certain rights and liberties, but one man's charter is another man's chains, and it is the exclusivity of charters that Paine fought against.²⁶ Furthermore, as Ferber points out, the pejorative sense of the adjective meant "hired" or "leased" and "combines with the political nuance to suggest the monopolistic and exploitive practices of England's commercial empire" (312). Thus, the chartered nature of the scene suggests the imprisonment of the political and social order. Blake's repetition of "chartered" not only emphasizes the repressiveness of the scene but also provides a sound

²⁶"Charter'd," according to Erdman, mocks Thomson's boast that the "charter of the land" keeps Britons free. Paine also condemns charters in Rights of Man, and arguing against the mind-forged manacles of language, warns about becoming "immured in the Bastille of a word." See Erdman 55ff.

effect of initial "ch" sounds that embody the chains that the speaker envisions.

The speaker's action, or lack of it, in response to what he sees is a much debated issue, centering upon the interpretation of the third and fourth lines: "And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe." The meaning of "mark" is questionable, but one's definition determines in many ways the reading of the rest of the poem. Bloom and Glen build a case against the speaker with this word. For Bloom, the speaker, who is necessarily the poet Blake, struggles with his own inadequacy against his precursor text of Ezekiel. Bloom, in 1970, interprets "mark" as meaning to "set a mark upon"; thus, it is the poet who is marking the faces of those he meets. In 1976, swerving away from his earlier opinion, Bloom suggests the more commonly assumed meaning of "mark" as "to observe or notice"; in either case, for Bloom, the poet has become a wanderer and attempts, in vain, to be a prophet.²⁷ Glen's case against the speaker depends upon her interpretation of "mark" as "to imprint, or set a mark upon," a meaning which she uses to indict

²⁷ Blake's precursor text is supposed to be Ezekiel 9:3-4, in which God tells a man with an "inkhorn by his side" to mark the forehead of those who are to be spared destruction. See "Blake's Jerusalem: The Bard of Sensibility and the Form of Prophecy" in The Ringers in the Tower (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971) and Poetry and Repression (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976).

the speaker for his isolation and lack of reciprocity with mankind. Blake's use of "mark" as both verb and noun leads Glen to suggest that a speaker who can only "mark" will perceive only "marks," fragments of society. As her thesis about Blake's Songs of Experience insists, Glen emphasizes the alienation of the speakers in Experience.

Both of these definitions of "mark" are valuable to interpretation. Clearly, we should see him as an observer; the whole poem is predicated upon his recording of sights and sounds that he experiences. Furthermore, to take "mark" as a performative verb is valid as well, especially as regards the association between Blake and his speakers in Experience. Marking is not solely a negative activity; it is, on the contrary, suggestive of the most positive of human activities, creative action. As Gavin Edwards speculates, "since the practice in which the poet is actually engaged involves inscription on paper and the subsequent biting of the copper plate by acid to reveal the letters in relief, then surely there is a reference in "I . . . mark" to itself."²⁸ The speaker, especially if we allow for the positive implication of

²⁸See Gavin Edwards, "Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A Contribution to the Discussion of Blake's 'London'," Literature and History, 5 (1979), 87-105. Hazard Adams suggested in 1963 that the speaker is a representative of imagination--"Los and Blake and the speaker of 'London' are the same" (280).

"wander" in opposition to "charterd," may then be a representative of the bard who calls people to the potential redemption inherent in creative perception. Blake's repetition of "mark" ("And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weaknes, marks of woe") provides the reader with at least a semantic reciprocity and suggests some kinship between him and the faces he meets. The fact that the speaker "marks" marks of weakness and woe allies him to them (rather than alienates him, as Glen accuses), in more than a hint of reciprocity between subject and object.

The second stanza continues the repetition and further suggests the implication that humans have potential for creative activity through imaginative perception :

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

The repetition of "every" five times within the confines of this stanza points not only to the universality of weakness and woe from the previous stanza but also to the shared nature of the human condition. There is a strength in this and a reinforcement of faith that leads Blake to believe that even the "bans" imposed

by repressive church, state, and social order can not destroy a mind that will believe that "everything that lives is holy."²⁹ This belief, perforce, involves a recognition of one's own responsibility in the human experience. The grammar of the second stanza suggests that the mind-forg'd manacles are "in" every instance of political repression that exists. In all the cries of fear and in the bans themselves, the speaker notes the individual perception that allows that repression to go unheeded and unmarked. Thus, the mental bondage must not be ignored. Yet that is exactly what many readers do in the second half of the poem, viewing the three illustrations of repression as Blake's graphic accusations against church, state, and social order. But to forget that institutions are created by individuals is to leave unmarked the speaker's hints of the potential for creative activity and to miss the significant last lines:

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh

²⁹Previous discussions have exhausted the plurisignificant meanings of the word "ban" and its application to all three orders. Ban may refer to the restrictive laws of the church and state, a summons to arms, or a proclamation of marriage. These three meanings apply broadly to all the forms of repression the poem counters, but more specifically relate, respectively, to the chimney sweeper, soldier, and harlot, the victims of the proceeding stanzas.

Runs in blood down Palace walls
 But most thro' midnight streets I hear
 How the youthful Harlots curse
 Blasts the newborn Infants tear
 And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

A speaker who is in direct opposition to the chartered world he sees and whose rhetoric implies a kind of kinship between himself and the world suggests that there is, represented in the poem, more potential for meaningful, creative human activity than most critics have allowed. It is undeniable that the depictions of repression in the last stanzas are bleak; the images of the blackening church, the blood-stained palace, and the explosive harlot's curse which blasts and blights the social institution of marriage are evidence of a cruel world, a roll call of tribulation that Earth could have used as examples in her "Earth's Answer" to the Bard of Experience. But just as the Bard suggests in the Introduction to the sequence, regeneration is possible only through imaginative human activity.

The three images of repression are increasingly metaphorical. The diction is suggestive and allusive, and the images offer instances where, as Glen and others have pointed out, a sound becomes a visible sight. The three images of repression are actually countered by the

constructive human activity of each of the victims. As Brenkman notes, "Blake first hears 'mind-forg'd manacles' as sounds of enslavement and submission, then as sounds of rebellion and uprising" (133). Each victim engages in an imaginative utterance that serves as a counter to the forces of repression. That is, the chimney-sweeper's "cry," the soldier's "sigh," and the harlot's "curse" are, in their very essence as utterance, an attempt to follow the speaker in marking the world around him. Marking is both noticing, setting a mark upon, and inscribing. Each of these (cry, sigh, and curse) both literally puts a mark upon the world around it and serves as an inscription of imaginative, constructive activity.

The chimney's sweeper's cry is said to appall every blackning church, an image alive with color and activity. The church is "blackning" in at least three ways. First, it is "blackning" in the sense of being made symbolically "black" by the accusing cries ("weep, weep") of the chimney sweeper; there is also the suggestion that it is being blackened literally by the sooty bodies of the chimney sweeper orphans who find refuge there. Furthermore, the church is engaging in the act of blackening itself. It literally blackens the lives of the chimney sweeper who feels his darkness inside and out, as it metaphorically blackens all lives by being a force of

negation instead of affirmation. Even more significant is the odd sense that the intangible cry of the child is actually blackening the church, strengthened by the word "appalls." As Hilton's analysis informs, the word "appall" means not only "to horrify or shock" but also "to cast a pall," or, in the terms of the poem, to blacken.³⁰ An enormously powerful image, this conflation of language with action contains an implicit belief that constructive acts, creative perception, do have an effect in the world. As Adams notes, the "cries of children are black cries, but they illuminate more than do the pompous bright utterances of moral churchgoers. . . ." (283).

The second victim of the repression, the soldier exposes the state as an instrument of tyranny. His "sigh" is the last utterance he can achieve, but its effects are portentous. Presumably fallen in battle, the soldier blatantly accuses the "palace" that put him there. Metaphorically, the palace has blood on its hands for "issuing the bans that have forced young men by the

³⁰ See Hilton's discussion in Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words. Hazard Adams has suggested that the sweeper is the "blackener of the church" (282), and Bloom has rightly pointed out that "appall" may also mean "to make pale"; thus, with every cry of the blackening chimney sweepers, the church gets whiter and whiter, a show of hypocrisy that aims to symbolize goodness. Thus, the words "blackning" and "appalls" are genuinely polysemous, and the evocation of both black and white demands active interpretation of a reader who is alive to expressive possibilities.

thousands into war" (Ferber 325). More significantly, the speaker's assertion that the "hapless Solders sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls" implies that the soldier's utterance, like the chimney sweeper's, actually makes a visible change in the system of oppression. Like the speaker in the first stanza, these victims "mark" their defiance of the system. The visible marks are associated with their particular oppression; thus the sweeper's cry assaults the church that supports the sweeper's condition, and the soldier's spilled blood returns to the state palace that called him into war.

The final image of the trio in the last stanza has been the focus of so much speculation that it is in danger of losing its primary meaning. Suggestive and metaphoric, the stanza accomodates so many different interpretations that it is often taken out of its context as third in the trilogy of victims' voices. Following the cry and the sigh of the preceding victims, the harlot's curse should be interpreted as utterance. In her curse, the youthful harlot indicts the repressive social order that results from the first two institutions of repression, the church and state. As Blake asserts in the "Proverbs of Hell," "Prisons are built by with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion" (E36). The condition of the harlot is ultimately derived from what Blake saw as hypocritical

sexual codes of respectability, and the poet rejects the division between passionate love and marital love that characterizes "correct" London society which the church and state condone and which consigns passionate men and women to brothels. A woman of desire, such as Oothoon, in A Vision of the Daughters of Albion, is termed a harlot whether she turns one or not. Men are, likewise, consigned to a hypocritical show of marital love, which may have no sexual dimension at all, and thus they support the brothels and continue the cycle of division. Repression of male/female sexual desire was an aberration to Blake, caused by the imposition of external regulations about the body, ultimately derived from the dualism of soul/body which Blake vehemently denounced.³¹ Blake critiques the misguided division between harlot and wife in such aphorisms as these, from the Notebook: "In a wife I would desire / What in whores is always found/ The lineaments of Gratified desire" (E470), and being no less fair to female desire, Blake also writes, "What is it women do in men require / The lineaments of Gratified desire" (E475). Within the society of Hanoverian England, however, marriages were often passionless because

³¹See, for instance, plate four in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (E34).

arranged for financial or social benefit, divorce was "nearly impossible, and prostitution flourished" (Ferber 331). The harlot's cry is then a symbol of the ways in which the church and state of the two previous stanzas destroy the natural love between men and women.

Blake had earlier written the prefatory words, "But most" in the ninth line, but moved this phrase to emphasize the final image. As an image, it does not need amplifying. It resounds with every reading -- the midnight streets pulsating with the harlot's curse, which blights and blasts the natural social order of marriage and children. In some way, however, this point does need the added emphasis. For the corruptions of the church and state with regard to child labor of the chimney sweepers and the forced conscription of the hapless soldier were noted issues. Poets and reformers alike championed the poor and the forsaken, but repression of sexual desires, an insidious problem, blighting the citizens of London as it does the sick rose, was for the most part ignored. Blake then guides readers to observe this "most" of all.

Interpreting the harlot's curse, which "blasts the newborn Infants tear / And blights with plagues the marriage hearse," as venereal disease has been a traditional way of explaining the complexities of the last two lines. That venereal disease of one sort or another

caused blindness in newborn infants was well known in Blake's day. The "harlot's curse" of syphilis is then, one level, what ravages the infant's tear, by causing blindness, and what blights the "marriage hearse." This interpretation does underscore the plight of the hypocritical social order. But, more importantly, like the chimney sweeper and the soldier, Blake gives the harlot a voice; her curse is not a simple declarative one that she screams out when the marriage procession rolls by. It is, on the contrary, a word with perlocutionary force; like the sooty sweeper's cry that blackens and "appalls, and the bloody soldier's sigh that runs in blood down palace walls, the victimized harlot's curse invokes diseases on the social order which keeps her blasted and blighted. The final image of the blasted infant's tear and the "marriage hearse" conjoins, paradoxically, the beginning of life and the end of life. The "marriage hearse," like the "frozen marriage bed" that Oothoon denounces in her acclamations of free love, is thus the cause and the effect of the harlot's curse, in a continuing cycle of division and hypocrisy. "Out of the dynamics of the harlot's voice Blake hears that marriage, in its morality and its restraint on desire, is a hearse" (Brenkman 129).

With the poem's terrifyingly bleak last image, it is not surprising that critics point to "London" as evincing the harshest social criticism of the Songs. But as it contains so many themes Blake develops throughout the canon, many have searched the poem for signals of redemption. Adams can claim that the poem's graphic delineation of social disorder is itself an affirmative act, by forcing acknowledgement of the issue: "'London', through the fierce delineation of its vision, becomes an affirmative poem," for "to see error in its completed form is to vitiate its power" (285). A critical search for apocalyptic imagery reveals the bloody handwriting on the wall, an omen that surely suggests some revolution is coming, and the fact that the action occurs at "midnight," which is both the nadir of darkness and the dawn of light. The poem, however, offers a much more significant inscription of redemption. Like most of the poems in the Songs of Experience, which respond either affirmatively or negatively to the call of the bard/Holy Word in the "Introduction," the rhetoric and syntactical patterning of "London" dramatize that human creative perception is the only real answer to living through the obstacles of Experience. The poem resonates with the voices of the victims; each cry, sigh, and curse has, as stated, a perlocutionary force that actually effects what it utters.

The power of voicing is doubly emphasized by the fact that in all of the poem, it is either the victim's cries or the speaker's actions that govern all the verbs: I wander, [I] mark, I hear, the chimney sweeper's cry appalls, the hapless soldier's sigh runs in blood, and the harlot's curse blasts and blights. The speaker is himself engaging in creative activity, wandering throughout a chartered city, hearing a shared human condition, and most of all marking in all its meanings. From his voice, we hear the voices of the victims, not hopeless cries of despair but forceful utterances that change the visible world.

Although we are a long way from the new dawn Blake prophesies in The French Revolution (written 1791, roughly contemporary with some of the Songs), "London" contains several distinct echoes from that poem. The rhetoric recalls the earlier prophecy so vividly that an intertextual exploration contributes to understanding the force of the lyric. Like the lyric, The French Revolution inscribes the world of political, religious, and social tyranny, but hints at redemption. The prophetic poem is a medium for debating voices, and like the utterances by the victims of London, the voices not only cry out for reform but actually effect it. The Archbishop bemoans the leveling process of the French revolution and prophesies that if completed, the crown will vanish and the bars of

Chaos will burst. His prophecy uses the same image of social disorder as the last stanza of London: "And the sound of the bell, and voice of the sabbath and singing of the holy choir / Is turn'd into the songs of the harlot in day and cries of the virgin in night" (E). While the Archbishop reviles the songs of the harlot, his rhetoric betrays that it is his institution that causes it; it is the voice of the "sabbath" and the singing of the "holy choir" that is turned into the harlot's "song." Within its context, the prophecy of the harlot's and the virgin's "cry" will occur as the peaceful revolution is effected. Redemption occurs because of the victory of the revolutionary voices. A more pointed similarity is Blake's use of the soldier image in The French Revolution to symbolize the moment of peaceful revolution. The debate of voices ends with the call to regeneration from the Abbe de Sieyes, the Bard/Holy Word of this poem. His call for an imaginative expansion, for man to awaken from the "caves of night" that are his senses, is a proclamation that creative perception is the medium of revolutionary change. Where there is now a "curse," there will be a "bless[ing]"; where nature is "blasted" there will be a "harvest." These images are connected rhetorically with the curse of the harlot in "London." Following the Abbe's holy prophecy, the "blasted" and

blighted vacuity of marriage and children can once again become fertile, a "harvest." After the Abbe's mere voicing of these truths, the revolution begins visibly. As the low voices of the laboring men are heard in victory, "blood ran down the ancient pillars." These lines are a powerful precursor to the lines in "London" in which the soldier's sight "runs in blood down Palace walls." In both, word and deed are linked, with the implication that word effects the deed. Although the speaker never tells us explicitly that the voices of the victims are signals of creative regeneration, the reader can mark on his own that it is the voices that provide the pattern for the poem. Because the prophetic poem which contains many cognate passages to "London" forecasts peaceful, redemptive revolution, the reader of "London" is further enabled to read those utterances as creative acts, inscribed for us to follow.

Like the other poems in *Experience*, "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer," "The Clod and the Pebble," the *Lyca* poems, this poem stimulates belief in potential redemption, enabling the reader to work toward creative interpretation that can revitalize. That seeing in the poem is literally created by the voicing dramatizes the Blakean belief that acts of creativity can reform perception. It takes an act of belief, a leap of faith,

to break free from Urizenic modes of perception (empirical and rational), to stain the water clear. Blake underscores this necessity of belief: "He who Doubts from what he sees / Will neer Believe do what you please / If the Sun & moon should Doubt / Theyd immediately Go out" (E412). If the poem dramatizes the freedom inherent in acts of creative perception, the reader must see through the poem's structure and polysemous rhetoric. Although the cries, sighs, and curse of the victims make London a cacophonous nightmarish scene, a reader, wandering through the lyric with the aid of these utterances, hears quite a different tune.

Chapter V

"I give you the end of a golden string"

Geoffrey Hartman's acute comparison of his responses to Blake and Wordsworth bears repeating:

There is an understanding of Blake that is visceral Most of the time I understand Blake, yet do not know what is going on I can make a good guess here and there, but I can't be sure [whereas Wordsworth, even if] wild and queer, pretty crazy in his own way, always starts on this side of the familiar . . . where he ends I'm not sure, but Blake gives me the feeling of methodically starting on the other side. ("Envoi" 245)

Hartman's gnomic assessment invites us to the task of marking the space wherein Blake and Wordsworth meet, and it is precisely this space that my study has sought to delineate. Indeed, the interpenetration of the strange and the familiar may serve as a definition of the lyric quality Blake and Wordsworth share. It is, after all, the "strangeness and awkwardness," which Wordsworth warns his audience about in the "Advertisement" to Lyrical Ballads, that characterizes those lyrics' perplexing conclusions about and dramatizations of imaginative perception. My

study is based upon the assumptions that Blake and Wordsworth considered imaginative perception a defining feature of their work; that they emphasized its significance for living one's life fully; and that they used their lyric structures as catalysts for developing their readers' creative perceptions. My intentions have been to argue the validity of these assumptions and to trace the ways in which the lyrics work to effect the poets' goals, thereby introducing a new and important link between the two most important and prolific poets of the early Romantic period. This kind of similarity, based on what might be called (disparagingly, by some) a humanistic criticism, has been overlooked in a critical age that has acknowledged the limitations of intentional criticism (Wimsatt's intentional fallacy). An age that is half in love with discontinuity, furthermore, reminds us that authorial "control" may be a function of ideology, politics, history, psychology, and language itself. Such cautions are certainly to be acknowledged. My intertextual study, however, provides an important link between Blake and Wordsworth, a link which enables the reader to see both authors in a new relationship. Having wandered through (as Blake might have us do) exemplary lyrics of each poet, as well as investigated the flexible boundaries of their historical and philosophical contexts,

we are now in a position to see both the advantages and disadvantages of such a comparison and its implications. The general aims of this conclusion, then, are to re-emphasize the powerful similarity between Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads and Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience--in heuristic intention, affective form, and rhetorical effect; to clarify the difference between influence and intertextuality, thus explaining my own assumptions here; and, finally, to situate this study in the contemporary critical atmosphere and to suggest in what ways it accomplishes a progressive goal.

One of the most striking similarities between the two poets is their heuristic intentions for their poetry. One major assumption of this study is that Blake and Wordsworth share a powerful purpose for these lyrics, not only to educate their readers about the potential powers of creative perception but also to transform them by fostering those powers through the text. This goal can be understood in the context of the poets' contemporary audience, in that both authors felt a need to disrupt or otherwise thwart normal expectations of traditional narrative (for their lyrics appropriate narrative in what we might call lyricized ballads and narrative songs) to ensure active, thereby, imaginative interpretation. By their own admission, the poets gestured at times toward

what they characterized as a complacent eighteenth-century reading public. In the "Preface" to Milton, Blake warns against "ignorant Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, and the University . . . the fashionable fools" (E95), and Wordsworth rails, in the "Advertisement" to Lyrical Ballads, against "the gaudiness and inane phraseology" (7) of some of his contemporaries. The fact of this historical impetus does not, however, preclude the relevance of that gesture to modern readers. On the contrary, contemporary readers and critics of Blake and Wordsworth profit from seeing the lyrics as they stimulate imaginative perception, whether these readers actually respond to the poets' call or simply adopt the role of intended reader in order to see how this participatory rhetoric might work.

A second assumption of this study is that these aims and beliefs are exemplified in the lyric strategies (affective structures of form, diction, syntax) that each poet uses. As Kenneth Johnston has assertively summarized about Wordsworth's "visionary" poetry, these lyrics are "the enactment or creation of a faith, not simply the embodiment of it" (7). This study of the specific methods by which Blake and Wordsworth employ affective lyric structures continues a recent host of revisionary studies of these individual texts. For Wordsworth, at least, two

critics have given attention to his purposefully rhetorical style. Meisenhelder and Wolfson explore the ways in which Wordsworth's poetry directly engages the reader in strategies of surprise and of interrogation. Wordsworth is certainly no longer seen merely as the author of the cliched definition of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (PW I:148), but rather, as Parrish initially argued in The Art of the Lyrical Ballads, as one who intended to express beliefs "with the control of Art . . . to evoke responsive feelings in the reader" (Parrish 32). My study of Wordsworth furthers an understanding of affective lyric structure as it examines strategies characterized by suspensions (a proverbial Wordsworthian metaphor) which occur in the texts on three levels: between his companion or Lucy poems, within the dialogue of characters, and within the rhetorical dimension of the lyric itself. In these moments of suspension, the text engages its readers in imaginative interpretations that the poem not only encourages through its content but also embodies in its form or representation. Like Wordsworth, Blake encourages his "Spectator[s]" to "Enter" (E560) the lyric texts which can nurture their imaginative perceptions. As earlier chapters have shown, Blake's poems often thwart readers' expectations of what Ault called "Newtonian narrative,"

offering instead what may be seen as unconventional and illogical plots, imagery, and structures. Blake's readers are encouraged to acknowledge dialectical meanings in order to become more acutely aware of their own perceptions. Like Wordsworth, Blake may be said to employ patterns of suspension on three levels: companion poems between the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, poems of dialogue within the Songs of Experience, and rhetorically dialogic forces at work within the single lyric, typified by "London." In Blake's suspensions lie possibilities for vital and imaginative perceptions, a re-viewing of the poems leading to a re-forming of the readers. Similar to Wordsworth's spots of time, Blake's "pulsation of the artery" (E127) and the "Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find" (E136) suggest that renewed, revitalized perception is immediately available to humans, through a variety of channels. As Ault has charged, the "explicit goal of Blake's narrative is an intense awakening . . . to hitherto buried possibilities of the human imagination" (107). The lyrics of both poets invite their readers to enter and participate in the "irrational," imaginative truths of the poems. Other than the particular strategies of suspension that chapters three and four suggest, one might generally characterize the poets' lyric form as taking

seriously Wordsworth's description of the imaginative moment as that in which the "light of sense goes out." The persistent aim of these lyrics is, as Hartman says, to "modify the matter-of-factness of the event" (Wordsworth's Poetry 8). This modification of the logical order of things is effected by a lack of realistic character and narrative and an avoidance of the "moving accident" plot (as in Blake's "A Dream" and "The Angel"); perplexing conclusions which deliberately resist logical interpretation (as in Wordsworth's trilogy "We are Seven," "Anecdote for Fathers," and "The Idiot Boy"); use of dialogue within the anthologies wherein poems refer to, continue, or modify one another (as in Blake's Lyca poems and Wordsworth's Lucy poems); syntactical ambiguity, enjambment, repetition, and what Hilton calls "multidimensional" (polysemous, plurisignificant, affective) diction (especially as in Blake's "London" and Wordsworth's "There was a Boy"). As Essick notes, such a "semantic surplus" parallels the poems' "escape from logical paradigms" (134). All of these strategies, which not only allow for but also encourage imaginative interpretation, suggest that readers' perceptions are intended to be activated through the poems. As Hilton posits about Blake: "The reader's perception must educate itself through the multiple possibilities of a context

that continually attempts to raise the reader to its expanding field of reference" (10).

The third assumption regarding the poets' basic similarities is that, given their heuristic intention and affective structure, these lyrics call for an active audience that will respond to the surmises of the text. Otherwise, in what Erdman has termed today's "semiotically permissive society" ("The Future of Blake Studies" 394), Blake's words may be seen to mean nothing or everything. Thus, my attention to the Lyrical Ballads and the Songs of Innocence and Experience has embraced what Blake and Wordsworth sought to stimulate in their intended readers. As Hartman suggested, in Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814, the lyric might profitably be considered as a form of surmise, in that it "revive[s] in us the capacity for the virtual, a trembling of the imagined on the brink on the real, a sustained inner freedom in the face of death, disbelief, and fact" (11). The structures of these poems engage the reader in surmise as they explore the potential for an imaginative apprehension of human life, and they likewise open the reader to surmise. If Blake's speaker in "London" is said to "wander" through the streets and "mark" his environment, then it is the reader who must remark. It is the reader who must follow the poet into the maze of the poem. In a four-line fragment from Blake's

Notebook, which is included in Book Three of Jerusalem, the poet adopts an interesting metaphor for his own method as an artist: "I give you the end of a golden string, / Only wind it into a ball: / It will lead you in at Heavens gate, / Built in Jerusalems wall" (E231). Following the ends of the string, made visible in Blake's lines of poetry, readers can "wind" their way with imaginative interpretation. Similarly, as Miller has noted about Wordsworth's more "strange" lyrical ballads, to "enter a Wordsworth poem is to open the gate into a place of ceaseless labyrinthine wandering" (53). A reader willing to surmise can find through the lyrics of Blake and Wordsworth an opening to the possibility of reformulating not only their conceptions about human potential but their imaginative powers of perception as well.

A second, equally important, goal of this study has been to introduce an intertextual analysis of Blake and Wordsworth that moves beyond the proverbial comparisons of the past and avoids the evaluative ones of the more recent Blake industry, typified by Glen's book-length study of the lyrics. Instead of focusing on differences, as almost all analyses have, this comparative analysis recognizes broader similarities in aim, attitude toward audience, appropriation of the lyric, and rhetorical strategies, and offers specific readings that exemplify these

similarities. I mark these similarities not to evaluate the poets in terms of their commitment to society or politics, or their artistic achievement, but as an initiatory study suggesting that intertextuality can foster richer appreciation, in individual or comparative reading, of the poets who are often defined in contradistinction to each other. The past two years have witnessed new interest in intertextual studies of Romantic texts, for example, in the Wordsworth/Coleridge connection, a traditional subject of comparison that has obvious biographical and historical validity in the poets' collaboration. Paul Magnuson's 1988 Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue and Gene Ruoff's 1989 Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Making of the Major Lyrics, as well as Frances Austin's 1989 The Language of Wordsworth and Coleridge exemplify a new interest in comparative studies and new methods that supersede a dependence upon the "pure" categories available in contemporary critical theory. Ruoff admits, "I suspect that the critical demands of intertextual study point finally to the inadequacy of theory" (16). Since my intertextual study combines an attention to rhetorical features with a recognition and discussion of the poets' intentions and sociopolitical contexts, with what guidelines in hand or what assumptions about influence do

we accompany our Blakean "fiery Chariot of Contemplative Thought" (E560) as we read? Two major issues of concern deserve clear expression here: first, the question of influence (direct or indirect) and, second, the implications of such influence to relevant critical theories.

Unlike Ruoff and Magnuson, who contend that Coleridge and Wordsworth were responding to and rewriting each other's poems during and after their collaboration on Lyrical Ballads, I view Blake and Wordsworth's influence upon each other in a much broader way, more like, to use Miller's term, an "influenza." Like Hazlitt's quintessentially romantic identification of a "spirit of the age" or the more contemporary (and qualitatively different) view of authorial identity as a function of prevailing ideology, influence is not simply a "matter of conscious borrowing, but something that, like a disease, in fact like influenza, insinuates itself into the air that the poet breathes" (Miller 57). There does not have to be a conscious collaboration, as there is between Wordsworth and Coleridge, or a Bloomian, psychological anxiety of influence, as there is between, for example, Blake and Milton; rather, a poet's contemporaries can be present in many ways. One cannot deny the vital similarities in the ways in which Blake and Wordsworth

sought to transform their reading public, or in their professed and practiced aims to engage the reader's imaginative interpretive abilities. These two poets are speaking virtually simultaneously upon similar issues (political, social, and aesthetic) and employing similar lyric forms, lyricized ballads and narrative songs. In sum, Blake and Wordsworth deserve a critical investigation that takes into consideration the levels at which they are so similar, and although there is certainly a place for evaluating the two--i.e. there are things that Blake does better, or that Wordsworth achieves more fully--there is also a place for comparison without judging their relative levels of success or commitment.

A second concern regarding comparative analysis involves the question of whether intertextual study falls into a category of its own in terms of critical methodology. Ruoff suggests that the bounds of theory may be dissolved in his study of Coleridge and Wordsworth because of the nature of the relationship he is analyzing. Intertextual study must encompass many kinds of criticism (historical, biographical, rhetorical, reader-response), as many, in fact, as the comparison requires, and defining how any one of these methods contributes to the effectiveness of the comparison is difficult. Part of this difficulty derives from the innate problems of

confronting essential works of Romanticism. As Ruoff points out, critical studies on major figures like these do not have to argue for significance, but they do have the encumbrance of "centuries of cultural encoding" (17), most of which seems to demand rigorous critical methodology. Therefore, we can identify the parameters of my own concern as follows. It is not a source study, for rather than being a study of influence, it is a study of confluence (as John Beer has noted about Wordsworth and Coleridge). It is, furthermore, beyond the bounds of formalism or New Criticism, for it includes the historical, social, and political implications that the very language of the poets carries.¹ That is, an interrogation and appreciation of the late eighteenth-century changes in the philosophy of perception, the shift to a more audience-oriented linguistics, and the political empowering of the middle class all contribute to a fuller understanding of how Blake and Wordsworth evoke their readers' imaginative perceptions. Furthermore, the concern has been neither purely expressive nor reader-response, for it examines the path between the poet's expressed

¹In fact, the importance of examining companion poems dialogically almost explicitly indicates the limits of a pure formalism. See Armstrong's "The Conflict of Interpretation and the Limits of Pluralism," PMLA 98.3 (1983): 341-52, on the advantages of adopting a limited pluralism so as to avoid theory that is merely "a machine for cranking out readings" (342).

beliefs and the poem's intended and potential effect upon the reader. Because all of these connections are relevant to the most basic aims of the comparison, one must finally allow for a pluralistic intertextual method, for it embraces the language and the form of both texts and examines both sides of that medium, in this case, the authors' almost evangelical aims toward their readers and the ways in which readers may consequently participate in the texts' interpretation.

Since the most important assumption of this study is that these lyric texts demand an active responsive reader, some clarification of the extent to which reader-response criticism is fruitful is needed. It is not my claim that all readers necessarily respond in the ways that I have suggested or that the lyrics specify only one response. In fact, Blake would as vehemently denounce any critic who limited interpretation by a single systematic form as he did poetry that could be encapsulated in a moral like "a Sting in the Tail" (E269). However, recognizing the fact that Wordsworth and Blake did wholeheartedly believe in the power of their readers to be active interpreters of the text, my readings suggest an attentiveness to diction, syntax, and the dialogic nature of the narrative that would enable such response. Like New Historicism, which combines traditional historical criticism with new

rhetorical and linguistic methods to see how history is inscribed, modified, or eluded in the texts, reader-response criticism may be "interested" in the contexts of the author and of society. As Jane Tompkins concludes in her anthology Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism, the assertion that all discourse is "interested" amounts to a reinsertion of literature into the stream of discourse from which the formalists removed it. Yet, even though reader-response critics claim a radical departure from New Criticism, in its emphasis on poem as object, these critics have actually just "transposed formalism into a new key" (201), a key in which each side of the rhetorical experience--author, text, and reader--is relevant, while the focus remains on close analysis of the text with these agents in mind. No matter what form a reader's active engagement takes, and it is not limited to the patterns I have exposed, it must take up this challenge. When Wordsworth said that he was a "man speaking to men" (PW), he did not mean solely to emphasize his genuine efforts at communication or his belief in the use of a "real" language of "speaking"; rather he implies in this phrase the necessity for receptivity, a willingness to be spoken to, even to be misunderstood. It is not necessary, or perhaps even possible, for modern readers to share the poets' beliefs,

but readers of these texts, critically sophisticated readers, must not deprive the poets of their belief or its effects in what they wrote.

As a final question, then, where do we place this kind of intertextual study in terms of critical theory? Is it too "simple" or too "traditional" to assume that it is valid to recognize an author's avowed purposes for his work and to explore how the poetry may attempt to engage its readers in recognizing such purposes? Recent forays into intertextual study and recent Blake criticism suggest that what we might call "humanistic" criticism is not simply to be discarded in favor of "pure" theoretical studies. David Aers, calling for non-evaluative comparative analyses of Blake and Wordsworth, asks that critics attempt "humbler goals" of historical contextualism before continuing to apply a litmus test of recent critical fashion to Blake and Wordsworth. Lore Metzger, in arguing for the influence of Schiller upon Blake's ideas of pastoral, reminds us that poetry can still be thought of as a "value-laden, meaning-oriented human activity" (43). In a recent review in *BIQ*, Anne K. Mellor voices her encouragement to "put the Blake back in Blake studies" (100) and contends that "the time has come for contemporary literary criticism to move beyond deconstructive theory . . . in an effort to recuperate

more engaged, less elitist, practices of reading and teaching" (100). Similarly, Paul Youngquist, in Madness and Blake's Myth (1989) regrets that contemporary criticism is in danger of losing sight of the individual as creator. As Youngquist argues, one should no longer assume that the individual is free of sociopolitical and literary influences, but too many critics now see politics or history as the "great demiurge, fabricating poems and paintings" (ix) instead of seeing how the artist engaged those issues through the texts.

In a 1982 special issue of BIQ, devoted to responses about the future of Blake studies, a majority of critics engage this question about the connection between poet and reader and the validity of reading Blake in this way. In briefly surveying their observations, I suggest that they are applicable to Wordsworth as well. Robert Essick highlights the rhetorical functions of the poem as one of the most interesting and neglected areas for future Blake studies. He suggests that exploration into how Blake's participatory rhetoric works or fails should combine new linguistic theories and reader-response assumptions with traditional historical, biographical, and contextual scholarship. Hazard Adams points to the need for more intertextual studies so that the idea of Blake as a great Albion figure, isolated from the rest of the Romantic

community through his madness, eccentricity, prophecies, radicalism, and so on, can be supplemented by seeing him in his intellectual climate and among others of similar views. Admitting that he is deserting the ranks of "detached" critics, Adams asks for readings which are heuristic efforts of communication and which stress Blake's own desire to transform:

In the end, though, there is a message or there are messages in Blake, and Blake scholarship and criticism ought to be involved in making these messages available to a needy world. Its end is teaching Blake. Blake's messages are mainly ones of enthusiasm and good news, and there is no reason for our sense of our various tasks with Blake not to be enthusiastic, too.

(402-3)

Finally, Nelson Hilton asserts that Blake's faith in his writing should be the power that drives our critical writing. Hilton acknowledges that "criticism is uncomfortable with [Blakean] terms like 'infinite' and 'holy'" but bluntly reminds us that "as long as we avoid belief, and the infinite and the holy and the sensual, Blake's text does not exist" ("Becoming" 422).

What these critics argue for (and the assumptions upon which my study is based) is a willingness to allow a

humanistic, pluralistic method of criticism that responds to the challenge of the questions at hand. To recognize the similarity between Wordsworth and Blake in their desire to stimulate and to educate their audience, one must allow for the relevance of the historical documents in which these aims are presented. Furthermore, to see how the authors attempted to effect this goal, one must allow that it is possible to read the lyrics as experiments in which the authors sought to engage the reader's imaginative interpretative abilities. Finally, to make any conclusion about how and in what ways readers may actually participate in the poem's enactment of such belief in creative perception, one must see the texts in their rhetorical dimensions and suggest how those affective structures may lead readers toward certain recognitions. It is, of course, foolish to claim that all readers do experience this engagement. Readers may not make the leaps of faith that are necessary to identify with, much less participate in, the author's meaning; in fact, as Harold Bloom has argued, modern readers resist those leaps of faith as defensive strategies, masking their own anxiety of influence. Likewise, there are certain texts in which poets simply do not meet their professed goals, and we have to say at that point, as Hartman suggests, that what we thought of as a "solar

chariot" may indeed be "junk" ("Envoi" 248). With all these stipulations, however, a reader of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads and Blake's Songs of Innocence is rewarded by acknowledging the desires and aims of the poets, and in their admission that they attempt to transform their readers' perceptions, a reader may re-view the lyrics, seeing them as affective texts that evince a meaning-oriented human activity.

Just as the subjects of the poems argue for the value of creative perception--dramatizing, for example, that there is a unity in life and death, that the innocence of a neighborhood idiot boy can save us from ourselves, or that the cries of London's outcasts are, themselves, visible and effective imaginative acts--so the particular lyric form invokes the reader's participation in such scenarios. The imaginative perception that the poets bring to their subjects and which we encounter in reading these texts is not a rejection of the natural world, but an infusion of "vision" upon the sensory life, a life that is assumed by empiricism to be the finite limits of our experience. If we, as readers, can give something back to Blake and Wordsworth, not necessarily a belief but a momentary participation in their belief, we can more fully appreciate their lyrics and find an essential avenue

between Blake and Wordsworth. If we can do this, then we will not be, as Wordsworth warns in The Prelude, like the false steward "who hath much received / And renders nothing back" (I:270-1).

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