THE STUDY AND CLASSIFICATION
OF WORDSWORTH'S NARRATIVE POETRY

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts

by

Walton
James Rowley, A. B.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Approved by:

James V. Logan
## INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Classification of Wordsworth's Narrative Poetry</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Simple Poems</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Personal</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Impersonal</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Complex Poems</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Personal</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Impersonal</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Study of Wordsworth's Narrative Poetry</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. General Discussion</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Guilt and Sorrow&quot;</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Borderers&quot;</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Thorn&quot;</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Idiot Boy&quot;</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Peter Bell&quot;</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Prelude&quot;</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Brothers&quot;</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Michael&quot;</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The White Doe of Rylstone&quot;</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Excursion&quot;</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Conclusion</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Summary List of Wordsworth's Narrative Poetry</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY
I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to clarify a problem in English literature which has received very meager treatment from scholars. The problem, a classification and study of Wordsworth's narrative poetry, is so broad that an extensive book would scarcely do justice to it. Therefore, a concise, general study has been given to all his narratives written before 1820, and a detailed, analytic study to superior works representing different phases of the Poet's mental and poetic development. The range of works is limited to those written before the year 1820 for obvious reasons: after this date his use of narration was negligible; all highly successful, lasting poems came earlier; and he added nothing of value to narration during his old age.

It is of great importance to the success of this paper for the reader first to understand how I have selected these 95 poems as constituting Wordsworth's narrative poetry. So the remainder of Chapter I is dedicated to a study of the narrative as a form of poetic expression.

Most poetry, ancient and modern, belongs in the realm of narrative. With a beginning now lost in the mists of antiquity, narration has for centuries been gaining in popularity, and with the advent, growth, and wide distribution of radios, motion pictures, and "best-sellers", 
it is today more widespread than ever before.

In general, there are two paths of approaching the method and mood of narration: romance or realism.

Romance is often confused with Romanticism, the great historical movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and probably both arise from the same spirit. A romance is a story which appeals to the sense of the marvelous; it deals with love and adventure, and often reaches extravagant pitches of sentiment. The typical romanticist sees life through his hopes and ideals, and finds it colored to suit his taste.

On the other hand, in narratives of the realistic order the incidents move within the limits of the probable and the characters are actuated by familiar human motives. No matter how interesting or lively the action may be in itself, there is nearly always some interest in the character, and often it is the greatest interest. The realist aims at portraying things as they really exist, even if they are commonplace or ugly. Finally, it must be noted that the distinction between these two approaches is not an absolute one, and we can designate a poem by one of these terms only by deciding in which conception it was composed.

Narrative verse must stand not only the test for the short-story or novel, but also must include characteristics peculiar to verse. The three basic factors
entering into my discussion of requisites are plot, characters, and action, and it is with these that I begin my consideration.

The term narrative itself implies a story or plot around which the poem is constructed. Verse is no excuse for poor plotting, and the more vivid and intriguing the plot, the happier the result. There must be incorporated a set of carefully ordered events which lead, by the inciting force, from a beginning through a climax to the denouement. Conflict of wills, internal psychological agitation, physical struggles, and interweaving of strands in the story all add to the ultimate success of the poem.

If a poem is to have a fully developed plot, characters are necessary, usually appearing in the form of human beings, but in special instances (fables) as animals. It is obvious that little characterization can be accomplished in very brief poems, yet occasionally a poet is able to capture the essential qualities of human nature in a limited space. Good examples of this are Wordsworth's "Simon Lee", Browning's "My Last Duchess", and Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy". In more detailed studies, closer and more accurate investigation into human character is hardly possible than is found in Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon", and in Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde".

Characterization in its most common aspect is the
delineation of the workings of a person's mind and emotions. His basic attributes are revealed by his speech, actions, and sentiments, and illustrations of these must be presented in clear, understandable terms. Yet in short poems a few words or phrases may do what it takes a novelist a thousand pages to accomplish. In "Simon Lee" Wordsworth shows the transition of the man's whole being in a few lines:

No man like him the horn could sound,  
And hill and valley rang with glee  
When Echo bandied, round and round,  
The halloo of Simon Lee.  
In those proud days, he little cared  
For husbandry or tillage;  
To blither tasks did Simon rouse  
The sleepers of the village.  

And he is lean and he is sick;  
His body, dwindled and awry,  
Rests upon ankles swoln and thick;  
His legs are thin and dry.

But a character study alone does not constitute a narrative poem, for there must be a series of events leading up to a climax. It is common to speak of this as the action of the plot. The action may be of secondary importance, and serve merely as an example or illustrative material, such as is found in Wordsworth's "Andrew Jones" and "Resolution and Independence". On the other hand, the action may be the primary source of interest and value. As such may be classified Browning's "How They Brought
the Good News from Ghent to Aix", Whittier's "Skipper Ireson's Ride", and Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott".

Narrative action must take place in time and space, and must have something or someone to initiate it. It differs from purely subjective thinking in that the action is external, the events and characters concrete and not merely abstract. Yet it may take either the form of a single event, such as is found in Wordsworth's "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known", or of a series of complex incidents as in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". These usually are arranged in chronological order, a fact which tends to add both clarity and plausibility to the narrative.

In summary, then, narrative poetry consists of a plot revealing one or more characters involved in external action. The action leads up to a climax, and the whole is conceived in time and space.
II. CLASSIFICATION OF WORDSWORTH'S NARRATIVE POETRY

Generally overlooked by scholars in their work on Wordsworth's poetry is the narrative. Though it is true that the fame of the greatest of all Romantics rests primarily on his odes dealing with Nature and the Mind, it should not be forgotten that he wrote some of the greatest tales in verse of all time. If a lesser poet had composed "Michael", "The White Doe of Rylstone", and "Peter Bell" alone, he would be remembered as a fine narrative poet, and these poems would figure prominently in English literature. But as it is they are overshadowed by "Tintern Abbey" and the "Intimations of Immortality" ode.

Wordsworth's narrative poetry does not easily adapt itself to any type of classification. The construction and purpose of poems representing different phases of the poet's development are so varied that on the surface at least they appear to have been composed by totally different men. But underneath them all is seen the genius of a man unsurpassed in the ability to provoke deep thought by means of simple narration.

It was the desire to clarify a point or to imbed it in the reader's memory that led Wordsworth to use narration as the basis of much of his poetry and as illustrative material for much more. Nothing makes
clear a profound thought quite so well as translating that thought into a concrete story.

Wordsworth grasped the values of narration very soon after he began experimenting with verse, and we find "Guilt and Sorrow", "The Borderers", and the "Lyrical Ballads" all appearing while he was a young man. Through his steady stream of poetry which flowed nearly till his death, he never broke away from the use of narration, though he used it much less in his later poems. It is significant to note that as he dropped lively incidents and stories from his work, it decreased in its power, in its effectiveness, and in its kindly reception by the public. I do not mean to say that the failure of his later poetry was due to the absence of narration, but I do believe that it followed the gradual decadence in his mind, his life, and his works.

In order to keep my method of classification of the narrative works as understandable as possible, I shall begin the discussion by separating the highly complex tales from the single incidents used primarily as illustrations. The complex tales usually contain more than one character delineation, a fairly involved set of instances leading up to a climax, often a sub-plot, and a conception of detail unsurpassed in poetry of equal length. On the other hand, the simple narratives rarely
present more than one or two characters, and these not thoroughly analyzed, contain little detailed information, and deal with one incident only. The complex poems are basically narrative; many of the simple tales are found as illustrations in poems which deal primarily with the abstract.

Under both simple and complex divisions, the poems are further separated as personal or impersonal. The personal tales are those which Wordsworth actually experienced, while the impersonal are those which he relates from sources other than his own life.

I have selected all of Wordsworth's poems till 1820 which show narrative qualities, and have classified them as to structure. Following each is a brief statement giving vital information as to its dates of composition and publishing, its importance as a narrative, and its primary thoughts. The purpose of these poems, and an analysis of them are reserved for a later chapter.¹

A. Simple Narratives
   a. Personal

1. "Descriptive Sketches". Composed, 1791-2; First Published, 1793. A 670-line poem presenting in a narrative manner the author's European trip with his college friend, Robert Jones, in 1790. It is

¹The "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent" and the patriotic poems of 1815 to 1820 are not included here, though some contain marked narrative characteristics, because they are primarily meditative, and are of importance only in revealing the Poet's mental reflections.
of most importance in revealing the young Wordsworth's thinking, and narration is of secondary interest only.

2. "A Night-Piece". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1815. An extemporaneously composed verse, primarily reflective, but narrating a true incident witnessed at night by the poet.

3. "We Are Seven". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. One of the poet's best known stories, this poem is tender and understanding. It was composed from a true incident and shows Wordsworth's faith that great truths can be learned from little children.

4. "Anecdote For Fathers". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. Another anecdote, this based on the son of Basil Montagu, again points out that a grown man can learn from children.

5. "Simon Lee". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. A fine character study, this work shows the great change that time had wrought on an old huntsman, formerly the most active man in the country, but now helpless. A simple moral is pointed up by the deep gratitude which the old
man expressed to Wordsworth for a little aid in his work.

6. "Lines Written in Early Spring". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. A personal experience recorded in a narrative manner. However, its real importance lies in showing the Poet's belief that the Spirit of God is active in Nature.

7. "Expostulation and Reply". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. A record of a conversation with Matthew which protests a mechanical conception of education.

8. "The Tables Turned". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. A further conversation on the same subject as found in the last poem. Both are related as anecdotes.

9. "The Last of the Flock". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. A pathetic tale of a man who had been forced to sell his loved flock of sheep in order to provide for the family. When Wordsworth meets him, he is taking his last, a small lamb, to market. It arouses sympathy immediately because this flock had been the mark of the man's prosperity and happiness, and with the loss of the last sheep, his future appears empty.
10. "The Old Cumberland Beggar". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1800. Having seen an old, infirm beggar, the Poet here sets down his view that this man does good and should be allowed to continue his humble existence. Further, he argues against the placing of these men in poorhouses on the ground that they are more at peace and joy by being free to roam through Nature.

11. "Influence of Natural Objects". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1809. A poem of questionable narrative quality, this work depends primarily on its reflective element for success. It shows how Nature was a constant influence on Wordsworth, even in his playful youth.

12. "There Was A Boy". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. A biographical narrative recounting the Poet's youth, and the loss of one of his youthful playmates.

13. "Nutting". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. Another pleasure of his youth remembered, Wordsworth here brings in his feeling that in damaging Nature he damaged the Spirit pervading her.

14. "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known". Composed,
1799; First Published, 1800. One of the five beautiful love lyrics to Lucy, this recalls the Poet’s unusual thought while riding to visit her.

15. "The Two April Mornings". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. An account by Matthew of the loss of his young daughter. It contains two distinct narratives, Matthew’s account and Wordsworth’s tale of the summer walk which provoked the account.

16. "The Fountain". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. A conversation, again between Wordsworth and Matthew, in which the latter compares the bliss of birds and animals with the pains and evils of man.

17. "Written In Germany". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. A very unusual account of a fly which had sought refuge from the extreme cold at the edge of Wordsworth’s stove. Instead of turning this into a farce, in typical fashion the Poet lends a sympathetic eye toward the ‘gentle creature’.

18. "The Idle Shepherd-Boys". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. A simple, human account of the
Poet's saving a lamb which had strayed from the flock due to the negligence of the shepherd-boys.

19. "The Pet-Lamb". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. During an evening walk, Wordsworth came upon a young girl talking to her lamb. In a fine conversational tone, this is an account of the overheard conversation.

20. "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. In tender thoughts Wordsworth dreams of happiness with Lucy, but this is impossible because she died very early, leaving the Poet alone with the memory.

21. "Poems on the Naming of Places". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. In five beautiful stories Wordsworth relates incidents occurring at various places, and by these incidents he names the places.

22. "Andrew Jones". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. By means of a poignant example, the Poet relates why he hates Andrew. In no other manner could a wicked character be better brought to light than by showing his actions concretely.

23. "The Sparrow's Nest". Composed, 1801; First Published, 1807. A simple tale of the discovery of a
sparrow's nest by the Poet and his sister, to whom he pays tribute. It is tender and lovely, but not important for the secondary narrative quality.

24. "The Sailor's Mother". Composed, 1802; First Published, 1807. A true account of Wordsworth's meeting with a beggar woman. Of her own accord she tells him the sad tale of the death of her son at sea, and how she now prizes a singing-bird, his only remaining possession.

25. "Alice Fell". Composed, 1802; First Published, 1807. This incident happened to a friend of the Poet's, Mr. Graham, but has been translated into such vivid terms that it might well have happened to himself. It is a story of the befriending of the impoverished Alice by the author, and accomplishes vividness by showing the love of Alice for the old, tattered rag she called her coat.

26. "Beggars". Composed, 1802; First Published, 1807. This poem contrasts the levity of the vagrant children with the woeful character of their Mother. Wordsworth has again used narration to portray a social problem of the day.

27. "Among All Lovely Things My Love Had Been". Com-
posed, 1802; First Published, 1807. This and the following poem may well be questioned as narratives, but they are included because they exemplify the use of a simple story to illustrate a point in works primarily meditative. This one honoring "Lucy" is typical of many early works.

28. "It Is No Spirit Who From Heaven Hath Flown". Composed, 1803; First Published, 1807. Here the Poet compares the star's achievement with his own ambition.

29. "The Kitten and the Falling Leaves". Composed, 1804; First Published, 1807. By telling a story of the pleasure derived by an infant at seeing a kitten darting at falling leaves, Wordsworth has illustrated a useful moral—that perhaps we should, "Spite of care, and spite of grief, (To) Gambol with Life's falling Leaf".

30. "The Small Celandine". Composed, 1804; First Published, 1807. Primarily a moralizing poem, this includes just enough narrative characteristics to be included in this study.

31. "Elegiac Verses" (to John Wordsworth). Composed, 1805; First Published, 1845. These next two poems are important for revealing the heartfelt
grief of William caused by the death of his brother, John. The first is a touching yet simple elegy. It recalls the parting of the two, and the heartbreak suffered at the first news of the shipwreck.

32. "To The Daisy". Composed, 1805; First Published, 1815. Another poem in honor of John, this accounts the story of the ill-fated ship on which he sailed.

33. "Stray Pleasures". Composed, 1806; First Published, 1807. This is a poem in which narration is reduced to a minimum, and is used only as an illustration. The Poet proves his contention that "Thus pleasure is spread through the earth In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find;".

34. "Methought I Saw the Footsteps of a Throne". Composed, 1806; First Published, 1807. Important as a meditative poem, this is, however, a good example showing how Wordsworth used narration to deal with a thing so touching as death.

35. "Water-Fowl". Composed, 1812; First Published, 1827. A typical poem exhibiting Wordsworth's love of Nature by means of a simple narrative. This, a tribute to the water-fowl, recalls one of
the many times he enjoyed watching them.

36. "Inscriptions". Composed, 1818; First Published, 1820. Only the second and the fifth of these include brief, personal incidents.

37. "Composed During a Storm". Composed, 1819; First Published, 1819. Undoubtedly of value primarily for their meditative and philosophic views, poems of this type are included here because they contain elemental narrative requisites. Here, while walking on a dark, rainy day, Wordsworth's spiritual faith is strengthened by a sign in Nature of the presence of God.

38. "I Heard" (Alas! 'TWas Only in a Dream). Composed, 1819; First Published, 1819. A short lyric which records in narrative manner a beautiful dream experienced by the Poet.

b. Impersonal

1. "Lines" (Left Upon A Seat In A Yew-Tree). Composed, 1795; First Published, 1798. Wordsworth, at seeing the old Yew-Tree, recalls the happy life of the man who used to roam the nearby woods. The narrative itself occupies only a small portion of the poem, but is of interest due to the early date
of composition.

2. "The Reverie of Poor Susan". Composed, 1797; First Published, 1800. A mournful little tale of a country girl in London who longs to return to the hills and her home.

3. "The Birth of Love". Composed, 1797; First Published, 1842. Translated from French by Francis Wrangham, this poem is told realistically by Wordsworth. It shows the futility of mere earthly joy by illustrating how Love soon died when deprived of Hope and fed only on pleasures.

4. "Goody Blake and Harry Gill". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. In a very vivid fashion, the Poet tells the story from Darwin of the suffering caused to Harry Gill by his cruelty to impoverished Goody Blake. Inescapable is the moral purpose showing the anguish caused by a man's sin to his fellow man.

5. "Her Eyes Are Wild". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. Here is presented a true character delineation of an insane woman deserted by her husband. It is of questionable narrative value, and is important only as a character study.

6. "Lucy Gray". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800.
Full of simplicity and naturalness, this is the story of the death of little Lucy Gray. Toward the end a suggestion of something preternatural is made, yet it does not disturb the marvelous sense of reality.

7. "The Waterfall and the Eglantine". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. The tale of the swollen waterfall which drowned the peaceful eglantine might easily be seen in the conceit of man.

8. "The Oak and the Broom". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. A lively little tale in which the puny broom proves his statement that "Disasters, do the best we can, Will reach both great and small; And he is oft the wisest man, Who is not wise at all".

9. "The Childless Father". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. A pathetic tale of old Timothy who had recently lost his only remaining child.

10. "Rural Architecture". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. A brief narrative describing the structures built by youths at play. Its importance lies in the fact that Wordsworth could create a lovely poem from such a simple theme.

11. "Ellen Irwin". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800.
In a condensed narrative the Poet has told a tale of a deep love which ended in the death of the lady while protecting her lover.

12. "The Two Thieves". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. Poems 12, 14, and 15, though related by narration, are mainly of value as character delineations. Here, human nature is revealed by the character study of old Daniel, the petty thief, and his grandson, partner in crime.

13. "Inscriptions". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. A group of three tales commemorating persons associated with certain locations in the Poet's country.

14. "The Emigrant Mother". Composed, 1802; First Published, 1807. A picture drawn from real life of a Mother and her infant who have taken refuge in England during the French Revolution.

15. "The Matron of Jedborough and Her Husband". Composed, 1803; First Published, 1807. One of the "Memorials of a Tour in Scotland", this poem presents the characters in the title as they were seen by the Poet.

16. "The Blind Highland Boy". Composed, 1803; First
Published, 1807. Another "Memorial", this is a fine narrative of the blind boy who tried to sail the seas in a washing-tub as an imitation of the stories which he heard from passing sailors.

17. "The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale". Composed, 1803; First Published, 1815. Another character study, this reminiscent of "The Reverie of Poor Susan" in that it concerns a city dweller who has great love and longing for the country, his real home.

18. "The Affliction of Margaret". Composed, 1804; First Published, 1807. Only a person who had lived close to the realities of humble people could have composed this sympathetic tale. The purpose of the poem is similar to that of many others, to awaken us to the suffering around us so as to further the culture of the finer feelings.

19. "The Seven Sisters". Composed, 1804; First Published, 1807. The mournful story of seven lovely daughters who died because their father loved the wars better than he loved them.

20. "Repentance". Composed, 1804; First Published, 1820. A sad ballad portraying the misery which the speaker suffered at the loss of all his land.
21. "Fidelity". Composed, 1805; First Published, 1807. This shows the faithfulness of a dog which watched the place constantly where his master had died.

22. "Incident" (Characteristic of a Favourite Dog). Composed, 1805; First Published, 1807. Another poem in praise of dogs, this one records the drowning of Dart and the heroic efforts of little Music to save him.

23. "Power of Music". Composed, 1806; First Published, 1807. Like "Stray Pleasures", this work has barely enough narration to be included here. Taken from life, it shows the power of music over mankind by using an incident as illustrative material.

24. "The Force of Prayer". Composed, 1807; First Published, 1815. An appendage to the "White Doe", this is a tale of the extreme grief caused to a Mother when her only child, a son, perished during a chase.

25. "George and Sarah Green". Composed, 1808; First Published, 1839. Besides merely writing this poem honoring the death of the two parents, Wordsworth and his sister were able to place the six
orphaned children in a good home.

26. "Epitaphs". Composed, 1810; First Published, 1810 to 1837. Of these nine works translated from Chiabrera, three contain narratives, numbers 4, 6, and 8. None, however, are of great importance or interest.

27. "Maternal Grief". Composed, 1810; First Published, 1842. Wordsworth here depicts the deep pain suffered by a Mother at the loss of her daughter. It is the Poet's ability to apprehend this grief so realistically rather than the narrative qualities that lends importance to the poem.


29. "Ode" (When the Soft Hand of Sleep). Composed, 1816; First Published, 1816. It is difficult to capture the feeling of a dream, but in this ode the Poet has done it admirably.

30. "A Fact, and an Imagination". Composed, 1816; First Published, 1820. The Poet here compares what Canute actually said with what Alfred might have said in the same situation.
31. "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots". Composed, 1817; First Published, 1820. Wordsworth has pierced into the mind of Mary in a vivid manner just prior to her execution and while she was in prison.

32. "The Pilgrim's Dream". Composed, 1818; First Published, 1820. This poem tells how a lone pilgrim was comforted by a conversation between a little glow-worm and a magnificent star.

B. Complex Narratives
   a. Personal

1. "The Prelude". Composed, 1799-1805; First Published, 1850. It is significant that Wordsworth used the narrative method so often in "The Prelude" to lay stress on a particular point or to make a profound thought more understandable. The Poet himself calls this comprehensive work "an autobiographical poem" of "the growth of a poet's mind", and it is plainly one of the finest long poems in the English language. Yet without the frequent interspersion of illustrations and stories it is quite possible that it would have been a failure due to dryness, abstractions, and the simple fact that no one could have understood it. Most of the narratives are of the simple type, but Books 9, 10, and 11, dealing with the French Revolution, are complex narrative accounts of that period in the Poet's life.
2. "Resolution and Independence". Composed, 1802; First Published, 1807. Known better by the title "The Leech Gatherer", this poem is one of the finest examples of form perfection composed by Wordsworth. Remembering his love of truth, even in details, we can easily imagine that this was one of his most arduous tasks. Furthermore, here as nowhere else, he gave an outlet to fears of poverty, futility, and madness. Few people could read this without feeling the same reassurance yet also pity that the Poet registered at the sight of the poor old man.

3. "Epistle to Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart". Composed, 1811; First Published, 1842. Dedicated to a friend and benefactor of the Poet, this work has value here only in that it was related in narrative fashion. It recalls Wordsworth's walks, incidents, and the relationship between the two men.

4. "The Excursion". Composed, 1795-1814; First Published, 1814. Wordsworth's projected poem, "The Recluse", was to have appeared in three parts, of which only the second, "The Excursion", was completed. It is the Poet's longest single work and is told entirely in narration. In the main, the first half contains the statement of a philosophical position,
and the second half a number of stories which establish or illustrate it. In this narrative framework, which embraces the entire poem, are found many short tales worthy of mention in a later chapter. Here it should be mentioned, however, that in Book I the Wanderer relates the courageous story of Margaret, which is in many ways distinct from the other eight books. It was composed at Racedown and Alfoxden during the years 1795-1798. Undoubtedly this is one of the finest examples to be found in Wordsworth of true narration. Other pieces of particular interest are found in Book III where the Solitary tells the story of his life, and in Books VI and VII in which the Pastor recalls the lives of many former members of his mountain parish.

b. Impersonal

1. "Guilt and Sorrow". Composed, 1791-4; First Published, 1842. This is the first of Wordsworth's works to make use of narration exclusively as a basis for the construction of a poem. It presents poor and uneducated people speaking and acting in their usual manner. They are victims of social wrong and outcasts of society yet they withstand all disadvantages and preserve their dignity. The
Poet is exhibiting the need of equality and the evils of war, and it is important in this study to note that he chose the narrative poem by which to accomplish this most effectively.

2. "The Borderers". Composed, 1795-6; First Published, 1842. Revealing Wordsworth in the depths of moral despondency, "The Borderers" is his one work in play form. Though it is nearly devoid of artistic merit, it is important in that it reveals the Poet's philosophical development. For the man himself it is also of untold value for it rid him of the vicious rationalism of Godwin and the remorse for Annette Vallon.

3. "The Thorn". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. A good example of what Wordsworth could do by taking a simple object and weaving a tale around it. In this he has caught the misery attendant on a poor woman who has become insane due to the loss of her baby and the unfaithfulness of her lover.

4. "The Idiot Boy". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1798. Often criticized for its triviality, "The Idiot Boy" was composed "almost extempore" in a very gleeful mood. It was intended for pleasurable reading, and this seems to be justification enough
to answer the criticism.

5. "Peter Bell". Composed, 1798; First Published, 1819. Supreme among the pictures which Wordsworth has left us of the influence of Nature on human character is this poem. Peter Bell lived in the face of Nature untouched alike by her terror and charm, but during the course of this poem, he is awestruck by Her and is taught a powerful lesson by an inferior animal. This work, like the previous one, has been severely criticized, but this is mainly due to the fact that people, on the whole, have not understood its purpose. As a character study, and as a narrative, it ranks among the finest.

6. "Ruth". Composed, 1799; First Published, 1800. In ballad form, this is a study of moral evil wherein innocent Ruth is abandoned by her husband, a man of daring and charm. Nature made him indifferent to moral obligation, but to Ruth it offered refuge and comfort in her years of sorrow.

7. "The Brothers". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. This 435-line poem is one of the most dramatic composed by Wordsworth, and it is surprising that it could have been accomplished by so young a man. It is full of beauty and grandeur such as is found in the region around which it
centers. An interesting feature is that there is one fine narrative within another.

8. "Michael". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. This is one of Wordsworth's most realistic and successful narrative poems, as well as being one of the most loved by any author. Its great value lies in the fact that he has painted with such detailed fidelity both the inner and the outward life of a Westmoreland farmer that the reader feels he has actually met the man.

9. "Hart-Leap Well". Composed, 1800; First Published, 1800. Though this is a splendid work, it has usually been overlooked due to the great wealth of Wordsworth's poems which are so well known. It is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the death of the hart and the erection of a pleasure-house on the spot of the death, and the second with the curse of this spot placed upon it by "The Being, that is in the clouds and air" as revenge for the unjust killing of the innocent animal.

10. "The Prioress's Tale". Composed, 1801; First Published, 1820.

11. "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale". Composed, 1801; First Published, 1842.
12. "Troilus and Cresida". Composed, 1801; First Published, 1842. The three previous poems are translations from Chaucer into Modern English. Many defects are to be found, but on the whole the works are faithful to the originals.

13. "Vaudracour and Julia". Composed, 1805; First Published, 1820. This poem takes on added interest due to its possible autobiographical significance. It is a story so reminiscent of Wordsworth's own love affair with Annette Vallon that Professor Harper states "The Poem entitled 'Vaudracour and Julia' is a disguised and curiously inverted account of his love affair". Wordsworth, himself, gives two different sources for the precise story in the poem. In the "Prelude" he ascribes it to Beauapuy, but in the Fenwick Notes to a "French lady, who had been an eye-and-ear witness of all that was done and said". Anyway, it was first intended for the Ninth Book of "The Prelude", but was ultimately struck out due to its length.

The tale is a vivid instance of the bigotry of birth which all France was becoming tired of.


Oddly reminiscent of the immortal "Romeo and Juliet", the conclusion sees the death of the couple's baby, the insanity of the lover, and the placing of the maiden in a convent.

14. "The Waggoner". Composed, 1805; First Published, 1815. Dedicated to Charles Lamb, this poem is divided into four cantos, and is a typical application of Wordsworth's theory of fancy. It is a moving picture of a familiar old highway during a thunderstorm at night when objects and people are transformed, and vague unrealities excite the mind.

15. "The Horn of Egremont Castle". Composed, 1806; First Published, 1807. Based on an old tradition, this poem shows the treachery of one brother in order to gain earthly returns. The injured brother showed forgiveness and was blessed by God for it.

16. "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle". Composed, 1807; First Published, 1807. This "Song" is based upon the restoration of Lord Clifford to his rightful estates. While banished he had become a shepherd, beloved by all who knew him, and when he successfully resorted to war to win back his land, the people held mass celebrations. The poem is not lacking in polish or beauty, and has gained many
readers through these and other assets.

17. "The White Doe of Rylstone". Composed, 1807; First Published, 1815. Composed in seven cantos and nearly 2,000 lines, "The White Doe of Rylstone" represents in many ways the high point in a study of Wordsworth's narrative poetry. Though it certainly is objective and historical, it is also autobiographical. For a detailed study of the purpose, structure, and general nature of this fine poem, note Chapter IV.

18. "Laodamia". Composed, 1814; First Published, 1815. Suggested by the sixth "Aeneid", this is the Poet's "loftiest and most pathetic" work. It required of him a great amount of pain and labor, but the product is exquisite in its beauty, finish, and harmony of theme.

19. "Dion". Composed, 1814; First Published, 1820. Like the preceding poem, "Dion" is a product of Wordsworth's revival of interest in the classics. In the lines where the Poet tells Dion's fate, there seems to arise a greatness of a spirit which makes Death himself a deliverer, and has its strength in the unseen. The poem is truly majestical in the force of its thoughts and structure, and a
reader is immediately seized by its very power.

20. "Artegal and Elidure". Composed, 1815; First Published, 1820. This narrative poem was composed in honor of Milton, from whose History of England the plot was taken. It centers around the love of "pious Elidure" for his brother, Artegal, and the saving of the latter from his sins.

21. "Translation of Part of the First Book of the Aeneid". Composed, 1816; First Published, 1832. In this study, the "Translation" plays a very unimportant part, for I am dealing primarily with narratives of Wordsworth's own conception. However, it should be noted that he has completed the task with spirit and sincerity.
III. STUDY OF WORDSWORTH’S NARRATIVE POETRY

A. General Discussion

The meaning and purpose of Wordsworth’s narrative poetry has generally been understood by both critics and readers, but it would be well to recall to mind the high spots in dealing with these poems. The Preface of 1800 supplies us with an admirable starting point for such a discussion, and from it I quote:

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose 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 aspect; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.¹

This explains what qualities in the life of peasants Wordsworth believed to be worthy of universal imitation—the simplicity and intensity of their emotional life.

Wordsworth believed that poems like "Peter Bell", many of the "Lyrical Ballads", and some tales in "The Excursion", possessed great ethical value, for the upper classes could learn specific lessons of conduct from contemplating the lowly peasant. The common man could teach the more complex, civilized man just because he devoted his life to the simple, primary, universal human experiences. For only in these essentials can any human being find real peace and happiness.

Professor Harper expresses the whole idea when he says that Wordsworth's sad tales show us "patience learned through suffering, humility through defeat, strength from striving, and many another virtue easily overlooked except by the eye of love". And the Poet's belief that the life of the peasant must be sympathetically comprehended by those seeking the durable satisfactions in life has, in general, been understood.

But this alone will not suffice for covering all the narrative poems, for there are those in which neither joy nor hope is to be discovered, but, on the contrary, they are tragedies of a particularly painful and hopeless

---

sort. For example, this is clearly seen in "Ruth", "The White Doe of Rylstone", and in the story of Margaret in "The Excursion". How can these be reconciled to the above theory? Several answers have been given to this problem, and I shall present two outstanding views. The first, that of A. C. Bradley, suggests that these poems represent in a negative way Wordsworth's efforts to exalt Nature. He states:

Wordsworth yields here and there too much to a tendency to contrast the happiness, innocence and harmony of Nature with the unrest, misery and sin of man. How many of his most famous narratives deal with sad or painful subjects; even with subjects that are terrible, sad, or painful.1

And Oscar J. Campbell replies that, though this be beyond question,

It is probably not, however, as Mr. Bradley thinks, an indirect way of exalting Nature or an effort to show that although man's life is dark, in his celestial spirit there is a power that can win glory out of agony and even out of sin. It is rather the result of Wordsworth's complete adoption of the moral doctrines of 18th century humanitarian sentimentalism.2

The basis of this philosophy was that man could be stimulated to morality through awakening his compassion for undeserved suffering,—his pity for virtue in dis-


tress. Wordsworth, it will appear, did not at first give this familiar ethical principle an important place in his system of thought. Much of his first distinctive poetry was written while he was under the influence of the radical rationalism of William Godwin. A kind of humanitarianism, however, was consistent with Godwin's life of reason; and Wordsworth wrote a number of poems to display the sufferings of the humble among mankind under the weight of the irrational social institutions of property and war. The purpose of such poems was to awaken man's ethical indignation by appealing to his sense of justice and to his cool understanding. One of the finest examples of this is "Guilt and Sorrow".

Later Wordsworth rejected Godwin's entire system as destructive of the most elemental and vital human qualities. About the same time he came under the influence of the philosophy of David Hartley, who gave a central place in his moral system to compassion for undeserved human suffering. He regarded it as one of the principal incentives to a life of joyous virtue. Wordsworth found in this theory the highest philosophical sanction for the employment of one of his most characteristic mental qualities. Godwin's contempt for pity which was awakened by human misery served at this time only to commend the more urgently this doctrine of eighteenth century sentimentalism. Wordsworth, there-
fore, began to write a kind of poetry which he had not attempted before. He retained his interest in the common man, but he no longer presented his condition as one to invite the reforms of rational humanitarians. He made him the object of compassion by showing him enduring with fortitude undeserved suffering; he gave the reader authentic instances of the reformation of erring human beings by the sight of virtue in distress. In embodying these ideas in poetic tales he felt that he was not merely indulging his temperament, but softening human hearts into virtue by evoking the tender emotion of pity.

With this information as background material, we can now move on to a separate discussion of the ten works which I deem most important for a clear understanding of the motivation, construction, and result of Wordsworth's narrative poetry. It should be noted that these ten poems illustrate completely the gradual changes of view experienced by the Poet from approximately 1790 to 1815, the truly important, vital era of both his writing and his life.
"Guilt and Sorrow"

The first lengthy narrative that Wordsworth composed, "Guilt and Sorrow", was not a great success during his own day nor is it during ours. But it is of vital importance to students of Wordsworth, and more particularly to those interested in his narrative poetry. For it reveals the unpolished genius at work, and gives us first-hand information concerning his youthful philosophy.

Taken as a narrative alone, "Guilt and Sorrow" shows promise of the Poet's future greatness, uncultivated though it was in 1795. He presents in poignant language the stories of the female vagrant and of the sailor, and his attempts at character delineation are brave though immature.

In this discussion I shall try to point out, first of all, what various critics have said about this work. Then, by means of Wordsworth's own statements, his revisions, and my interpretations, its purpose is revealed. Finally, a summary of the successes and failures in the poem show just how important it is.

Typical of Wordsworth's narrative works which have received inadequate attention from his biographers and critics is "Guilt and Sorrow". However, the cause in this particular case is not hard to find. The poem is at once unpleasant and, on the surface at least, quite
poorly done. Nothing else that the Poet wrote seems at first glance less characteristic, for in it there is found no interpretation of Nature, and very little love and joy. Moreover, a single reading of it is not likely to yield much of importance to anyone interested in Wordsworth's intellectual or artistic development. Judging from this, it might hastily be concluded that the work was merely one of the Poet's youthful mistakes, a kind of 'wild oats' sown when he was as yet immature. Or like Professor Garrod, we might assume that

"Guilt and Sorrow", then, is a distinctively morbid attack upon the whole social order, produced under the influence of Godwinism. It is morbid in its execution; morbid even where real and lively in detail. In its fundamental conception I take it to be, not only unreal, but immoral. It is merely not true. If great crimes and great virtues proceed from one source, if the good man is even more liable than the bad man to act badly, then are we, of all creatures, not only the most miserable, but the most uninteresting. The salt of human drama loses its savour, and what was tragic ceases, in becoming meaningless, to be moving.1

However, if we consider the poem more carefully, it is found that Garrod has not analyzed it precisely, and that he has erred in most of his judgments.

Two fine studies have been made to determine the poem's content, purpose, and its relation to the author's other work and his life. The first was by Professors

Campbell and Mueschke\textsuperscript{1}, and they established beyond question the value of "Guilt and Sorrow" as an experiment in aesthetic, but they did little to destroy the mistaken, conventional belief that it throws no light on the general philosophical development that culminated in "Lyrical Ballads". The other work is by George Wilbur Meyer\textsuperscript{2}, and I have found it to be an authentic, invaluable aid in the final study of this poem.

The beginning of the difficulty as to the meaning of "Guilt and Sorrow" probably is arrived at in a letter from Wordsworth to Francis Wrangham written on November 20, 1795. In it he states that the object was "partly to expose the vices of the penal law and the calamities of war as they affect individuals".\textsuperscript{3} But this description of the purpose has been misleading and actually, there is not a single reference to the penal code, its vices or its virtues, in the only version of the poem Wordsworth published. This naturally led to the idea that he was of the anti-war writers popular in the 1790's, and as a result the meaningful aspects of the work have been overlooked. A more accurate and compre-


hensive account of "Guilt and Sorrow" than Wordsworth sent to Wrangham is the "Advertisement: Prefixed to the First Edition of This Poem, Published in 1842".

The second and third paragraphs of this "Advertisement" describe in some detail the circumstances and reflections that inspired the composition of the poem:

During the latter part of the summer of 1793, having passed a month in the Isle of Wight, in view of the fleet which was then preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war, I left the place with melancholy forebodings. The American war was still fresh in memory. The struggle which was beginning, and which many thought would be brought to a speedy close by the irresistible arms of Great Britain being added to those of the allies, I was assured in my own mind would be of long continuance, and productive of distress and misery beyond all possible calculation. This conviction was pressed upon me by having been a witness, during a long residence in revolutionary France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country. After leaving the Isle of Wight, I spent two days in wandering on foot over Salisbury Plain......

The monuments and traces of antiquity, scattered in abundance over that region, led me unavoidable to compare what we know or guess of those remote times with certain aspects of modern society, and with calamities, principally those consequent upon war, to which, more than other classes of men, the poor are subject. In those reflections, joined with particular facts that had come to my knowledge, the following stanzas originated.

Then, after telling the tale of the female vagrant,

\[\text{[\text{George, Andrew J.}, \text{ed.} \quad \text{The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.} \quad \text{(Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1904), p. 20.]}\]
which he presents as a concrete illustration of the
desperate plight of thousands of his countrymen, Wordsworth repeats with emphasis his gloomy conviction that
a comparison of the barbarous past with the presumably
civilized present serves only to illuminate "the terrors of our day". As far as he can tell, little or no progress in the amelioration of human suffering has been made down through the ages. The features of modern society are described—starvation, extreme economic inequality, domestic injustice, lust for empire, and international hate—and to the Poet they were more dreadful than the worst evils of the ancients.

The version of "Guilt and Sorrow" that Wordsworth published in 1842 bears little external resemblance to the poem that he wrote in 1793. According to his own account, when he revised the poem in 1795 he made "alterations and additions so material as that it may be looked on almost as another work".¹ The only part of the first draft that he thought worth keeping was the narrative of the female vagrant, and this he decided to expand. The revised edition is composed of three narratives which the Poet permitted to stand without the support of authorial exegesis. A close analysis of these tales reveals, however, that despite this more

objective, if less forceful and insistent, mode of presen-
tation finally adopted by Wordsworth, the revised and
published "Guilt and Sorrow", no less than the original,
is a reworking of old material and a stern criticism,
not only of the evils of war, but of those other aspects
of English monarchical society which Wordsworth, for
reasons at least partly personal, found most offensive
in 1793.

In the published work, as in the reply to Richard
Watson, the Poet criticized no single feature of English
society, but the entire social structure of the nation.
He found England an evil place, not only because she
forced her poor to risk or give up their lives in futile
and murderous imperialistic contests, but also because
of the manner in which she dealt with the dependents of
these men—the wives and children who had been left
behind and entrusted to the protection of the infinitely
good and efficacious British Constitution of which Burke
was so inordinately fond. England was wicked, too,
because of the reception she afforded the men themselves
when they returned to the land and government whose honor
they had defended and whose wealth they had increased or
protected at the peril of their lives. In "Guilt and
Sorrow", finally, Wordsworth revealed that England was
an evil land and nation because of the rank injustice
suffered by the poor, not merely in occasional seasons
of war, but in times of peace as well.

Critics have, in the main, agreed that "Guilt and Sorrow" represents the first stage of Wordsworth's allegiance to the philosophy of William Godwin, and that his intention to expose here "the vices of the penal law and the calamities of war as they affect individuals" reveals clearly his debt to Godwin, who had much to say against war and the British penal code in *Political Justice*, published in 1793. But this view, given authority by frequent repetition, rests on little more than sheer assumption on the part of the critics. First of all, the ideas in "Guilt and Sorrow" were well established in the society of Wordsworth by the works of Paine, Mackintosh, Dr. Price, and numerous French writers. It should be evident that the Poet, with a year in revolutionary and republican France behind him, did not have to go to *Political Justice* in order to discover that war was evil, that the poor suffered in times of war as well as in peace, or that the British penal code needed reform. A very close, critical study of the work in the light of what we know of Wordsworth's personal circumstances in 1793 discloses that most of the materials for the poem were mere extensions of his personal experience, that "Guilt and Sorrow", like nearly everything else that he wrote, was basically autobiographical. The study by George William Meyer already
noted contains in pages 135 to 139 enough material to prove this statement beyond much question.

"Guilt and Sorrow" is not great art, although it compares favorably with many poems which the eighteenth century praised. Had Wordsworth in his old age chosen not to publish this creation of his revolutionary youth, his reputation would not have suffered. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to suppose that the only facts about it of interest to the student of Wordsworth's technical progress are that he used the Spenserian stanza—a medium better suited to his narrative purpose than the stiff heroic measure he had employed in "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches"—and that the poem contains a few lines which might have been written by the Wordsworth of 1798. A study of the construction of "Guilt and Sorrow" contributes much to an understanding of the growth of the Poet's artistic power; and a search for the causes of the failure of the poem reveals the elementary problems of composition which he had to solve before he could take his place among the great poets of the English tradition.

"Guilt and Sorrow", despite its many glaring faults, is nevertheless a remarkable anticipation of the poetry Wordsworth was to write after the experience of a few more years. The revolutionary purpose and argument of the poem throw but scant light on his development, for
they represent little or no advance from the ground defended by the young radical in the later lines of "Descriptive Sketches" and in the "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff". But in "Guilt and Sorrow" Wordsworth for the first time created real characters drawn from the world he knew and permitted them to describe in their own words the experiences they had known and the emotions they had felt. These characters, anemic and faltering though they be, are a marked improvement upon the pathetic creatures of "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches". The soldier's widow and her two children of the former and the gypsy of the latter--Wordsworth's first portraits of fellow beings in distress--were conceived in the older style, as mute and static parts of adjuncts of the scenery he was describing. They do not speak for themselves, and their sufferings never seriously engage our sympathies. In "Guilt and Sorrow", on the other hand, the Poet added point and effectiveness to his social criticism by creating real and recognizable victims of society to tell us of their misery in words ostensibly of their own choosing. Particularly is this true of the second or 1795 version of the poem, wherein Wordsworth--attempting to increase its dramatic power--stripped "Guilt and Sorrow" of the original expository introduction and conclusion and gave increased emphasis and attention to
the personal history and psychology of the sailor. By so doing he revealed his rising interest in the subtleties of the individual personality, rid his poetry of much of the quiet monotony and flatness that had spoiled most eighteenth-century verse, and took a long step in the direction of "Lyrical Ballads". It should not be forgotten, after all, that Wordsworth, with the approval of Coleridge, considered the female vagrant and her narrative distinguished enough to be included in the epoch-making publication of 1798.

Thus we find that "Guilt and Sorrow" marks the first important step toward the formation of Wordsworth's great narrative poetry. It is rude, simple, and often unpolished, but on the other hand, it contains a flow of interesting events, has fine elementary characterizations, and in general, meets the requisites for all narratives. It is unpopular due to its unpleasant tales and its lack of beauty, not to its failure as narration.
"The Borderers"

As "The Borderers" was Wordsworth's only attempt at composing a drama, it should first be noted what he considered worthy as a theme for such a work. So here is the story in condensed form:

A perfectly good man, 'the pleasure of all hearts', and enjoying the love of a good woman, took ship to Syria in the reign of Henry III. The crew persuaded him, quite falsely, that the captain was guilty of a plot against his honor. He accordingly lands the captain on a desert shore, leaving him there to starve to death. So far so good. Later, in England, he meets a man the counterpart of himself, a perfectly good man, 'the pleasure of all hearts', enjoying the love of a good woman. He conceives the strange idea of re-creating in this counterpart of himself his own fate. Attaching himself, accordingly, to the company of Borderers commanded by his counterpart, and winning the leader's confidence and affection, he proceeds to poison his mind with suspicions of the father of the girl whom he loves, an old, and blind, and utterly virtuous man. By playing upon his imagination he finally succeeds in persuading him to kill the old man, who is conducted to a desert spot and there left to starve. He is then slain by the other Borderers, and his counterpart, the virtuous chief.
of the Borderers, sets out upon a solitary life of wandering penance.

Wordsworth points out his object in the note prefixed to the edition of 1842, and following is the vital portion from it:

"My care was almost exclusively given to the passions and the characters, and the position in which the persons in the Drama stood relatively to each other, that the reader (for I had then no thought of the stage) might be moved, and to a degree instructed, by lights penetrating somewhat into the depths of our nature. In this endeavour, I cannot think, upon a very late review, that I have failed. As to the scene and period of action, little more was required for my purpose than the absence of established law and government; so that the agents might be at liberty to act on their own impulses."

Next, let us see what the critics have thought about this work. Swinburne spoke of it as a product of moral disease characterized by a 'morbid and monstrous extravagance of horrible impossibility'. But to M. Legouis, the tragedy is the beginning of a revolt against Godwinism. It is the villain who, throughout, talks the language of Political Justice, and this, Wordsworth means, is what Godwinism comes to. Garrod has much to say in tearing down Legouis' theory, and he treats "The Borderers" much as he treated "Guilt and Sorrow". He

---

That M. Legouis' view can scarcely be sustained follows, I think, from what I have already said of the chronology, generally, of Wordsworth's development and of the circumstances out of which the tragedy was born. But, apart from that, M. Legouis fails to meet the real front of Mr. Swinburne's criticism. Whoever it be who talks the Godwinism in the play, or even if there were no Godwinism talked in it at all, what is really significant, and perhaps alone relevant, is that the poem is built out of an essentially Godwinian idea; the morbid tortuosity, the unnatural perversion of its plot, turns upon a ground-conception patently Godwinian, and that is, after all, the head and front of Mr. Swinburne's attack. Moreover, when M. Legouis tells us that it is the villain who talks Godwinism, I am not sure that the term 'villain' does not beg the question. In so far, in any case, as the villain talks Godwinism, he is not a villain, but a good man. He stands for sheer individualism, and if his individualism ends in disaster, yet Godwin never failed to recognize that individualism, undirected by reason, necessarily perishes. Indeed, reason is the crown of his system.

Swinburne, it would seem, was not so far wrong when he spoke of "The Borderers" as the product of mental disease. He is at least in agreement with Wordsworth himself.1

But regardless of this flowery language, I am once more inclined to agree with George Wilbur Meyer in his study of this long narrative poem. This new theory entirely revokes the older ones, and my discussion shall

---

be based to a large degree on it.

Fortunately, Ernest De Selincourt has brought forth new evidence of Wordsworth's poetic efforts in the spring of 1794. This evidence enables us to correct the conventional and mistaken descriptions of his intellectual progress in the two years preceding his settlement at Racedown, and to establish a sounder basis than has been hitherto possible for an understanding of "The Borderers", a work almost devoid of great artistic merit, but certainly of the highest philosophical significance.

Previous to the work of Meyer, only Professor Harper had suggested that the tradition of Wordsworth's "second moral crisis" had no basis in fact. His reading of the correspondence of William and Dorothy relevant to the period in question prompts him to express the unorthodox opinion that the Poet in 1795 and 1796—when his depression is usually supposed to have reached its greatest intensity—was in reality cheerful, industrious, and spiritually undisturbed. Of William's letters, Harper writes:

There is here no trace whatever of that mental depression, that clouding of his spiritual faculties, that moroseness, which we have been so often told worked a crisis in his life and particularly characterized the early months of his residence in Dorsetshire. We see him more cheerful than he was a year before, in
the north, and intellectually more active; we feel in what he writes to Wrangham and Mathews an abounding energy, and, above all, a tone of self-confidence. . . . The causes of his retirement, he gives it to be understood, are poverty and a wish to study.1

Nor is there anything in Dorothy's letters, Professor Harper continues, to contradict the impression given by William that all was well at Racedown; her effusions, on the contrary, paint "a charming and harmonious picture of domestic happiness".2 And anyone who reads these letters undoubtedly will agree with the conclusions of Harper.

After having read the introductory lines of "The Prelude", Meyer states:

If my reading of these lines is sound, it is clear that Wordsworth's spirits were high; that he had already formulated the general artistic objectives for which he strove throughout the rest of his life; that he was already conscious of that mystical and metaphysical interrelationship of his mind and external nature which was at once a consolation to him in moments of stress, the basis of his mature philosophy, and the strength and glory of his finest work; that he was about to articulate that theory of the creative process which yielded him a prominent position in 1795 of composing blank verse that compares favorably with any poetry he ever wrote.3

---


2 Ibid., p. 216.

Rather than constituting a repudiation of William Godwin's philosophy, "The Borderers" represents an unmistakable affirmation of some of Godwin's most prominent ideas. Rather than being an expression of the pessimism which Wordsworth supposedly cultivated at Racedown and later rejected, "The Borderers" is actually a presentation of ideas optimistic in their implications. Instead of forming the inauspicious conclusion to an abortive chapter of Wordsworth's youth, "The Borderers" is a document of extraordinary positive significance in the progressive development of his thought. The play reveals that the Poet's faith in the natural goodness of man is stronger than ever and that his hope for the future now rests, not upon a vague and perhaps ill-founded confidence in the political panaceas of French republicanism, but--as we might expect--upon a new philosophy of Nature and a new theory of human psychology, both of which were later employed successfully in "Lyrical Ballads" and subsequent poems.

It can further be seen that the subject of pride and benevolence was taken for the central theme of "The Borderers", and that it, far from being the record of Wordsworth's rejection of Godwin, is in reality the record of his acceptance and amplification of Godwin's explicit recommendations for the conduct of the enlightened individual in society. When we approach the tragedy from
the point of view afforded by "Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree", we immediately recognize Oswald and Marmaduke as personifications of pride and benevolence; the action of the play we perceive to be a conflict between these two "passions", or modes of life, and the consequences of pride, and the blessings of disinterestedness and benevolence.

The conclusion of "The Borderers" is Wordsworth's answer to Oswald's cynical philosophy and to all those philosophers who follow the head and forget the heart. It is at once his proclamation of the dominant importance of the individual's social responsibilities, his indication of the gravity of the consequences if those responsibilities be shirked or wrongly met, and his formula for the regeneration of any human being whose pride has caused him—either consciously, as in Oswald's case, or unconsciously, as in Marmaduke's—too greatly to presume. As Wordsworth sees it, the primary duty of the individual is to love his fellow man and every other living thing. No man, no matter what the circumstances, may harbor within his breast scorn for another; neither may he pass judgment upon the actions of any but himself.

"The Borderers" records a change in Wordsworth's attitude toward the evils of English society which he castigated in his earlier work. He had not lost sight of these evils, but his point of view had changed. Here
he refrains from underscoring the causes of the reprehensible actions of the beggar woman and Eldred and makes no attempt to account for the glaring inequality in the distribution of wealth between the degenerate nobility and the virtuous peasantry. In the "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" and in "Guilt and Sorrow" he was certain that monarchy was responsible for all such evils and economic discrepancies. In "The Borderers", however, there is scarcely a trace remaining of his hatred of monarchy and his zeal for a democratic form of government. He was content, in his later work, to let the reader believe that Clifford was rich and a villain, Eldred poor but essentially noble, simply because Providence—whose ways are inscrutable—had so decreed. This did not mean that Wordsworth had lost faith in reform or that he was ready to accept things as they were. The fact that he made such a pointed distinction between Eldred and the Baron Clifford, and the fact that he bothered to explain Eldred's inhumane behavior are proof that he had lost neither social consciousness nor social conscience. His shift of emphasis from the evil caused by monarchical institutions to the good that resides in the hearts of men merely reflects his adoption of a new method of reform, a method more likely to succeed than the one he had used in his earlier, more obviously provocative work.
This new method, destined to become fixed and basic in "Lyrical Ballads", points up the fact that Wordsworth's desire to remake the world according to his own ideal continued unabated; it was only his manner of attack that changed.

It should be obvious by now that narration plays a weak second to philosophy in a study of "The Borderers". Yet it is a fully developed narrative containing perhaps too many characters, a few of whom are finely developed, an interesting, vital plot, and a distinct setting. The play is not successful as Wordsworth was not equipped for drama, but the narrative, on the whole, is well done.

In conclusion, then, we see that the chief interest of "The Borderers" is undoubtedly philosophical. It is not a lasting work of art, nor is it particularly interesting for the reader, but it will be studied down through the ages in the grasping for more new material concerning this intriguing period of Wordsworth's life.
"The Thorn"

Wordsworth in the Fenwick note to "The Thorn" gives the following description of its inception: After observing a thorn-tree tossed in a storm, he asked himself, "Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this thorn permanently an impressive object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?"¹ In answering this question affirmatively he attaches to the tree a tragic sentimental tale.

The poem shows very clearly the influence of the eighteenth century tradition of such narratives as the tale of Ellen in "The Excursion". The approved method of such stories was first to establish almost extravagantly the charm and beauty of the girl. Her extraordinary innocence and trust make her betrayal and desertion both particularly easy and pathetic. After the birth of her child her undeserved suffering is displayed at length, usually through the medium of a long, pitious lament.

In "The Thorn" we find a picture of the mad, despairing anguish of Martha Ray. The blithe and gay creature, abandoned by her false lover, Stephen Hill, on her wedding day, sits at the grave of her illegitimate child moaning,

"Oh misery! oh misery!  
Oh woe is me! oh misery!"

Efforts to disinter the child in a search for evidence of murder against poor Martha are met by supernatural protests from Nature:

But instantly the hill the moss,
Before their eyes began to stir!
And, for full fifty yards around,
The grass—it shook upon the ground!

Nature will tolerate only pity for the abandoned girl. It joins with the Poet in bidding us regard Martha Ray not as a criminal, but as a woman overwhelmed with suffering. The poem was written to invoke not justice but compassion.

In "The Thorn" the case is very complex, both because the passion sought to be represented is of a wilder and more abnormal character, being shot through with supernatural suggestions, and also because the narrator is not the Poet himself, but a garrulous old sailor whose peculiarities are supposed to be reflected in the style of the poem. So far as the second point is concerned, it is not of much practical moment; for the long-windedness and garrulity of this poem has nothing peculiar about it, and is quite gratuitously transferred to the old sailor, whose very existence we don't suspect at all in the course of the poem. The dramatic device only served to give Wordsworth a bolder licence in this respect; he expatiates with quite an easy conscience,
confident that the sin can be laid at the door of somebody else. But the first point has important practical consequences: the very fact that the Poet here seeks to deal with a wilder, a more lurid passion imposes a heavier burden upon his language, and taxes its resources to a still greater extent. The question is: does Wordsworth's language come triumphantly out of this ordeal; does it prove its fitness to deal not merely with low-pitched, subdued feelings, but with more lurid and abnormal passions? And the answer is hardly unanimous; there are critics who see in the poem a triumphant vindication of Wordsworth's theory and practice, and who are unable to put away the wild ring of the forlorn cry out of their heads. For others the impression is somewhat different; the contrast with any of the fine supernatural poems of Coleridge will expose quite clearly the crudity of the methods used by Wordsworth in weaving in the supernatural suggestions. And though the Poet has here indeed made a right choice of subject, has really selected a passionate incident from rustic life, he is not enough of a dramatist to tell the story effectively through the speech of a garrulous old man, and the garrulity and long-windedness of the speaker, whether he is the Poet himself or an imaginary narrator, do certainly tend to destroy the impression of passion. The passionate elements have not been sufficiently fused together, so
as to lead up to an impression of impassioned intensity. But the narrative mood and manner are well worked out, and "The Thorn" is a good example of many other "Lyrical Ballads". It is in this group of works that we find Wordsworth exhibiting the value of story-telling in order to make more vivid a point in connection with the humble and rustic peasants of whom he was so fond. This particular poem has long been a popular one, and readers have, unlike most critics, overlooked fallacies in the philosophy expressed, and have enjoyed the story in itself.
"The Idiot Boy"

The problem of "The Idiot Boy" is one of the most confusing which has to be dealt with in a study of Wordsworth's narrative poetry. Stated briefly it is: Why should a composition which to most readers seems to be an absolute failure be so beloved by its maker?

To approach such a question, we must first consider what critics have thought of it. Dorothy Wordsworth records in her Journal (1802): "I worked, and read the "Lyrical Ballads", enchanted by 'The Idiot Boy'".1 The Analytical (Dec., 1798) "warmly commends" the piece, and the British Critic (Oct., 1798) considers it "animated by much interest, and told with singular felicity". But later critics have been almost unanimous in their dislike for the work, as exemplified by Sir Walter Raleigh's statement that "The thing has some of the points of a fine poem, but it curvets and frisks so uncontrollably that it can hardly be recognized for what it is".2 Probably Marian Mead's enlightening chapter in her Four Studies in Wordsworth3 has done more to clarify the problem than any other single study. Her approach is not


merely sympathetic, but also objective, and it provides us with a reasonable explanation of the purpose and meaning of this poem.

An examination of what Wordsworth himself says explains his sentiment concerning the composition:

The last stanza—"The Cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo, And the sun did shine so cold"—was the foundation of the whole. The words were reported to me by my dear friend, Thomas Poole; but I have since heard the same repeated of other Idiots. Let me add that this long poem was composed in the groves of Alfoxden, almost extempore; not a word, I believe, being corrected, though one stanza was omitted. I mention this in gratitude to those happy moments, for, in truth, I never wrote anything with so much glee.1

And we find that afterwards he always read it with much pleasure.

In considering the poetic intentions in the poem, we must recall Wordsworth's firm belief in the integrity of the humble and poor. It was for this class of people that the work was composed, though he appealed also to the sympathy of the more refined. He chose the narrative because he knew people of all types could better understand it, and because it provided a concrete structure on which the idea could rest. We now know that his intentions have suffered failure.

The reasons for this failure are twofold: the subject of the work, and the manner in which it is treated.

First of all, the very word "idiot" is repulsive to the average reader, and for such a person to be the subject of a poem is ridiculous. However, Wordsworth approached it from precisely the opposite attitude and believed that there is something divine and grand in the boy and in the love of the Mother for him. In presenting the hero and the deep maternal love set in a favorite scene—a blue moonlight night—the Poet has found an ideal situation for the development of a great poem. But the more important, the second, reason for the failure here enters the scene.

This concerns the mood in which the composition was written. Judging from the Poet's own statements and from the stanzas in the poem, it is obvious that the narrative is treated in a spirit of broad humor. And it is successfully humorous for Wordsworth alone, because he became so lost in its enjoyment that he does not care if readers echo that joy. We cannot understand how a theme usually so delicate and so serious can be treated in a humorous fashion. Therein lies the failure of the poem as a work of art.

But if we attempt to understand Wordsworth's profound wisdom, "The Idiot Boy" will not be cast off as an
utter failure. Obviously, in the gradual unfolding of a great mind, forces become so enormous as to be unrestrained. This is what happened to the Poet as he wrote this 90-stanza poem. It served a great purpose for him—it gave an untold pleasure, and it released his pent-up energy for creating a piece of verse suitable for the masses.
"Peter Bell"

One of Wordsworth's few narratives in which a character is reclaimed to himself and to virtue by the sight of undeserved human suffering is "Peter Bell". It has long been stated that Peter was reformed by Nature, but an admirable argument presented by O. J. Campbell refuses to follow this idea and to substitute the 'human suffering' view.

The traditional view of the author's purpose in writing the poem, that is, the 'Nature reformation' consideration, has been admirably phrased by Professor Harper as follows:

The original motif was the same as that of the "Ancient Mariner". A hard-hearted, wayward man is arrested by Nature. In the "Ancient Mariner", nature unfolds her extraordinary powers; she shows a face of terror. In "Peter Bell" it is the 'blue and grey and tender green' of the mild night, it is a 'soft and fertile nook' a 'silent stream' that creeps into the soul. In each poem human dulness and cruelty are rebuked by a lesson drawn from the suffering of an inferior animal. In each an effort is made to produce a sense of awe. In each a ballad measure is used, and we also find those unexpected leaps from the trivial to the sublimely impressive which occur in the best ballads. Where the planning of the two poems differs most is that whereas Coleridge meant to make preternatural events seem real by the use of simple language and natural detail, Wordsworth meant to invest natural events with the glamour which usually accompanies accounts of the preternatural.\(^1\)


Legouis has almost the same idea of the poem and he writes:

It is an account of the conversion of a brutal and profligate churl, who is brought to a state of grace by the impressions made upon his sense one fine evening, by a donkey and a landscape.¹

Though it is true that these explanations have much to their credit, if we carefully examine the poem it is found that they are inadequate. Nature, whether by herself, or aided by the fidelity of the ass, had but little to do with Peter's conversion. The extraordinary fact about the reprobate at the beginning of the poem was that in spite of his out-of-door life, he had remained utterly impervious to the influences of Nature. We recall that though roving 'among the vales and streams', he had become debased.

He was the wildest far of all;--
He had a dozen wedded wives.²

And the 'hardness in his cheek' and the 'hardness in his eye' were but indications of the hardness of his heart. His natural sensibility had become covered with an impenetrable casing from which the soft influences of Nature recoiled sharply.


But just what was it that caused the great change in Peter's whole way of life? Here Campbell again comes to the rescue and provides an admirable answer to this quite difficult question. Harper had stated that it was in part due to the 'blue and grey and tender green', but in reality this natural loveliness has no effect on Peter. He sees only a lone ass standing in the midst of it. His first thought being theft, he shouts, "A prize!!!" When the beast refuses to allow himself to be stolen, Peter is aroused to brutal anger. The ass's mild reproachful looks, its three miserable groans, and its sharp, staring bones serve only to increase Peter's mad vexation at the beast's immobility. Finally, something uncanny in the 'dry see-saw of his horrible bray' as it echoes among the rocks, stirs in Peter a vague fear. This feeling becomes a perfect access of horror when he catches sight of the dead man's face in the water, and finally he faints from sheer terror. No gentler force than sheer and primitive physical horror has served to penetrate the hard crust of Peter's nature.

However, after this terrifying experience, Peter Bell's emotions are somewhat more responsive to influences from man and nature. The ass begins to rouse faint stirrings of pity within him, but it is the pathetic helplessness of the animal, not his fidelity, that
seems first to stir the man. Next, we recall that on his journey towards the dead man's cottage, his heart is gradually prepared for the moral transformation which the sight of human suffering is to accomplish. The agents in his preparation are not derived from Nature, but rather are, in the main at least, resonant shocks to his senses. The wood-boy's moan as he searches for his father, the rumbling of an explosion set off by miners underground, and the sound of drunken uproar from a tavern all combine to prepare him for conversion. While in this state of mind, he makes the first step in his actual moral progress under the influence of tragedy evoked from his own past, and we find the story of the innocent highland girl who followed Peter Bell. The final stroke which Wordsworth has provided on the journey to the cottage is that dealing with the fervent Methodist minister. This so aroused Peter that

He melted into tears.¹

Through this series of percussions his hardness has been relaxed until his mind is normally sensitive to influences of tenderness and pity. His true nature has been violently awakened. And finally Peter reaches the door-yard of the dead man and is a witness to the overwhelming grief of innocent human beings. First he sees

the anguish of the wife, and this is followed by the
wailings of the little daughter, Rachel. Under this
great vision of innocent suffering, Peter could stand
it no longer. He realized the evils of his vagrant
life, and we are not in the least surprised that he

Forsook his crimes, renounces his folly,
And, after ten months' melancholy,
Became a good and honest man.¹

Of course the case of Peter Bell was a most extreme
one. Because of this, his mind needed to be brought by
a series of violent shocks to a state nearly as sensi-
tive as that of the normal man before conversion could
be brought about. Pity for undeserved suffering inevit-
ably softened him into virtue by way of tears. When
analyzed in this manner, the poem does not represent the
effect of Nature, but rather the effect of human suffering,
on man.

Before concluding the study of "Peter Bell", it
would be well to mention Raleigh's fine discussion of
the work. He begins by stating that

"Peter Bell", which was finished in the
summer of 1798, is Wordsworth's "Ancient
Mariner".²

Then he draws a series of comparisons between the two

¹George, Andrew J., ed. The Complete Poetical Works
of William Wordsworth. (Boston and New York, Houghton

Arnold, 1918). p. 74.
works, such as: both have committed crimes, (the mariner killed the albatross and Peter had led a very wicked life); the general softening procedure is similar for both of them: behold a sign in the element, and horror follows; both are cast into a trance; though no spirits of the air contend over Peter's fate, the verdict is given him; though Wordsworth used none of the supernatural, he too had spirits within call; and finally the gentle moral of the "Ancient Mariner", which comes at the end of that far flight of the imagination like the settling of a bird into the nest, has its near counterpart in the complete reformation of Peter Bell. So, for all the differences of imagination and expression that separate the two tales, the wicked Potter is saved very much after the fashion of the Mariner, who felt a spring of love gush from his heart at the apparition of the water-snakes.

But even in a paper dealing with Wordsworth, we can find no question as to which is the greater poem. Whereas the "Ancient Mariner" is one of the truly great possessions of English poetry, "Peter Bell" is a deeply interesting experiment. And this is largely due to the superior narrative manner which Coleridge has captured. "Peter Bell" is, however, the most cultivated, convincing character yet to be found in the general unfolding of Wordsworth's works.
Thus we find that "Peter Bell" is another important step not only in dealing with narrative poetry, but also with the life of the man who composed it. Behind it is seen a man with an unflinching determination to see things as they are, without ornament and without sophistocation. For him there was only one right road, and he took it. For willingness to do as he thought right, in spite of the consequences, Wordsworth is to be highly praised.
"The Prelude"

Although this fine long poem is superior to "The Excursion" in almost every manner, it is not so important in a study of Wordsworth's narratives for the obvious reason that it is not entirely based on a narrative structure. But it is important in that it contains many fine short stories which have become famous due to their excellence.

First, I shall present opinions of the work as a whole by famed critics. Professor Harper states:

"The Prelude" is the greatest long poem in our language after "Paradise Lost". One might break it, somewhat rudely, into three consecutive parts: the first describing, in fragmentary fashion, the poet's boyhood and youth, and the scenes amid which he grew up; the second, more compact and continuous, narrating his experiences in France; and the third, speculative and dogmatic, setting forth a theory of the mind and of nature, and of their mutual relations. It is only in the last three books that this third subject entirely predominates. The first eleven books are less abstract.¹

Raleigh adds:

"The Prelude" is the story of the process whereby, out of the ordinary vague stuff of human nature, under the stress of fate, there was moulded a poet.²

And finally Myers states:


"The Prelude" is a book of good augury for human nature. We feel in reading it as if the stock of mankind were sound. The soul seems going on from strength to strength by the mere development of her inborn power. And the scene with which the poem at once opens and concludes—the return to the Lake country as to a permanent and satisfying home—places the poet at last amid his true surroundings, and leaves us to contemplate him as completed by a harmony without him, which he of all men, most needed to evoke the harmony within.\(^1\)

Wordsworth is almost unique among poets in the ability to capture the high points of his childhood in a realistic vein. His belief that the soul of the universe, uttering its august precepts through the clean air and the unsullied earth, speaks an intelligible language to the heart of man, and that this phase of Nature exercises a moralizing influence over man, is illustrated by several poignant recollections in the early Books. Perhaps the best example of this, and also the best-known, occurs in lines 357 to 400 of Book I. I quote the gist of this tale for I consider it the finest in the poem and one of the finest in any poem.

Lustily,
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then

The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge
As if with voluntary power, instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Also in Book I is found the colorful description
of the children ice-skating in winter (lines 479-522).
But Book II becomes deeper and slower in movement,
partially at least, because of the lack of these little
incidents. Then Book III bursts into a rapid narrative,
and streams along with lively interest. He records with
"Chaucerian simplicity" his arrival at Cambridge on the
coach, his fresh sensations, his welcome by old Hawks-
head boys, and his college life.

Although I cannot here quote or discuss fully the
very interesting tales in Books IV through VIII, I shall
note the locations of the superior ones. In IV, lines
386 to 469, the Poet records his experience with the
poor soldier whom he aided in distress; and in V we find Wordsworth's dream by the seashore brought on by the reading of *Don Quixote* (lines 50 to 139), the sad tale of the boy who died in his youth (364 to 425), the story of the drowned man (425 to 459). Then, in VI (142 to 167), is the tale of the shipwrecked geometrician discussed admirably by Havens.¹

Through all the books Wordsworth seems to be consciously leading up to a triumphant proclamation of his own success in obtaining a right view of Nature and of man. However, the passages of real reminiscence are free from it. The Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Books, which relate his experience in France, are more vivid and spontaneous, more fluently written, and more unhampered by 'system', than the other parts of the poem. It is these books that constitute the real climax of the narrative in "The Prelude". It becomes more evident, at every reading, that his spiritual connection with the Revolution made him a thinking, suffering, understanding man. As Harper puts it, "He went to France a susceptible boy; he returned a man, with a philosophy and a purpose."²

These three Books, IX, X and XI, are full of fine narrative, but none hardly so powerful as:


And when we chanced
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
Who crept along fitting her languid gait
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
Its sustenance, while the girl with palled
hands Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
In agitation said, "Tiss against that
That we are fighting;" I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
All institutes for ever blotted out
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power
Whether by edict of the one or few;
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws........

These are lines 509 to 531, and the "friend" will immediately be recognized as Beaupuy. It should be seen that these narratives as such do not compare with "Michael" or the story of Margaret. Rather, their value lies in revealing the Poet's life, and they are well used to illustrate it. The most powerful narratives included are to be found in Books IX, X, and XI, and they constitute the high point in this study of "The Prelude".
"The Brothers"

This is, in essence, a story of undeserved suffering. A sailor comes back from the sea, where he has always felt himself an exile, to spend the rest of his life with his dearly loved brother. He learns from the village clergyman that the boy has died. He has rolled over the edge of a precipice in his sleep and been killed. The last part of the poem describes the grief of the sailor, which drives him to resume his uncongenial life on the sea.

Like "Michael", "The Brothers" is long and detailed enough to give us an idea of rustic manners and the general tenor of rural society; and they show, if not directly, at any rate by implication, what an important influence Nature exerts in fixing and steadying the domestic affections of rustic life, and in lending to them even a kind of solemn sanctity which they scarcely attain in any other sphere of life. In this work the familiar face of the landscape is scrutinized with an anxious trembling love as the record and chronicler of the deepest human feelings: Leonard, returned after his long absence, inquires of the churchyard for an answer to the question he dares not ask of any human interlocutor, and scans the neighboring scenery for a confirmation or dissipation of his worst misgivings.
Never, except in the crazy love-lyrics was a dearer secret consigned to the bosom of Nature; and never were her forms and images charged with a tenderer memory of a fraternal love that left its ineffaceable stamp on every stone that lined the roadside, or every brook that was swollen by a winter's rain. And yet this fusion between Nature and the human feelings is accomplished in an apparently austere and matter-of-fact mood of recital, without any touch of lyrical poignancy or over-excitement. The interruptions of Leonard in the midst of the Vicar's narrative reveal a dramatic power in the Poet not very often brought to the surface.

As for the language, its blank verse runs on with an easy conversational flow, and although it is a matter of opinion as to whether the style has the genuine rustic accent about it and could naturally emanate from the narrow range of the rustic intellect, it studiously avoids all the subtler graces and heightened expressiveness of poetry. Sometimes it is overburdened by a rather too prosaic solicitude for prefatory and explanatory remarks, as witnessed in lines 242-246:

..Yes,

Though from the cradle they had lived with Walter, 
The only kinsman near them, and though he 
Inclined to both by reason of his age, 
With a more fond, familiar tenderness.
Sometimes it creeps on such a low level, that not even the barriers of the blank verse are able to save it from lapsing into prose, and that of the most pedestrian sort, fit only for conveying information. Such a passage Coleridge, in his literary criticism, has pointed out:

The loiter, not unnoticed by his comrades, Lay stretched at ease; but, passing by the place On their return, they found that he was gone. No ill was feared; till one of them by chance, Entering, when evening was far spent, the house Which at that time was James's home, there learned That nobody had seen him all that day.

Language such as this has not even the cheap expedient of an inversion to distinguish it from prose. But in Wordsworth the secrets of strength and weakness are so subtly blended together, that the note of depreciation must be entered upon with the greatest caution, for before long it must be changed into one of awe-struck admiration and praise. This simple, creeping style, shorn of all the usual graces of poetry, not seldom gathers to itself a rare dignity and impressiveness, a tenderness and depth of feeling from some invisible stir and excitement in the Poet's spirit. We feel the power lurking behind this apparently simple enumeration of details, though possibly we may fail to track it to its secret lair:
...a sharp May storm
Will come with loads of January snow,
And in one night send twenty score of sheep
To feed the ravens; or a shepherd dies
By some untoward death among the rocks:
The ice breaks up, and sweeps away a bridge;
A wood is felled; and then for our own homes!
A child is born or christened, a web
The old house-clock is decked with a new face;
And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates
To chronicle the time, we all have here
A pair of diaries.

Besides this powerful passage (lines 151-163), we may refer also to the description of Leonard pining for his mountain-home while among the seas, and seeing the images of Nature in his beloved valley reflected in the bottom of the water, and of the fraternal love of the elder brother carrying the younger on his back to school on a rainy day (lines 44-65 and 251-267). From all this it is clear that when Wordsworth enunciated his famous theory of identity in language between prose and poetry, he had visions of a deeper affinity than are apparent to the ordinary eye, that he had penetrated into a hidden recess of power which works upon the bare language of prose and makes it akin to poetry: his thoughts were not confined merely to that "neutral style" illustrated, as Coleridge suggests, in Chaucer and the eighteenth-century satirists. It should be noted that, along with "Michael", this poem demonstrates Wordsworth's transfusion between Nature and rustic life.

In summarizing the value of "The Brothers" as an
example of Wordsworth's narratives, I should say that it suffers from formality and the dramatic pattern. But it is told quite well, and in a spirit that grasps the reader's attention immediately. The incidents in the clergyman's tale all lead up to the climax, which is far superior to anything heretofore attempted by the Poet. Therefore, a touch at least of suspense enters his narratives, and creates interest in the outcome of the story.
"Michael"

"Michael" is one of the finest and most popular of all narrative poems. In language, power of emotion, and depth of insight into human nature, it is hardly surpassed anywhere. The story itself is tender, simple, and human. It comes straight from the Poet's own heart, for only a man who has grasped the feeling occasioned by such a sad tale could possibly have composed such a masterpiece. It is interesting that Wordsworth chose a direct narrative style to deliver such a stirring thought to his readers.

The theme of the well-known poem appears to have been suggested to the Poet by some actual occurrence. He had now been living long enough among his rustic neighbors to know and appreciate to the full some of their touching domestic tales. The story of "Michael", as it came to him, was connected with a particular spot, hidden in the green bosom of the hills, about two miles from the vale of Grasmere. One fine October day, when the colors of the mountains were "soft and rich with orange fern, the cattle pasturing upon the hilltops, kites sailing in the sky, sheep bleating, and feeding in the watercourses", Dorothy and William "walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold." They found it "in the form of a heart unequally divided", but al-
ready falling away. Yet the stones were still lying, a hundred and twelve years later, in much the same shape, and nothing that had happened, of joy or grief, of improvement or destruction, in all this world, had altered the scene in any respect. Only the sky was visible, and the swelling outline and green slopes of Fairfield, and the dashing, torrent, and a few boulders. The great poem, apparently so simple in construction and so free from artifice in verse, cost Wordsworth immense toil. He began to compose it immediately after visiting the sheepfold, and returned to the task again and again, wearing himself out, as his sister relates, until on December 9 she writes: "Wm. finished his poem today". The great calm of this and other poems was not attained without vast expense of emotion. "He writes", said Dorothy, "with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain".

Wordsworth's qualities of austere and glorified bareness of style are perfectly illustrated in "Michael", which is, in some respects, the best of the entire group of rustic poems. Every line of this work is charged with a simple intensity, an austere depth of feeling that lifts what appears to be the language of bare recital to an immeasurable height and dignity of utterance. It is wonderful to see how the Poet narrows down his own mind to the limits and dimensions of a rustic
intellect, and makes up in intensity what he sacrifices and forgoes in point of breadth. He studiously excludes all wider implications of the subject. The mountains seem to shut in his mind as inexorably as they did the body of old Michael; and yet what an intensity and grandeur of effect waits on this studied circumscription of range! The manners of the dalesmen, the quiet dignity and sturdy independence of their lives, their somewhat grudging and ungracious, yet ever unfailing, recognition of the claims of kinship, the brooding depth and tenderness of parental love among them which hides itself under a rough and undemonstrative exterior and receives a strange heightening and enhancement from the persistence of local attachments and the narrow round of rustic occupations—all this is brought home to us not so much by detailed description as by the very quietness and restraint of the tone of the poet, which suggests more than it describes. The theory that rustic passions are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of Nature, which, when stated in general terms, seems to be but an airy and fanciful emanation from a poetic mind, is endowed with an almost irresistible quality of appeal and certainty of conviction in being applied to an individual case with such convincing realism of touch. The very prosaic and unimpassioned manner of the
Poet forbids the idea of a fanciful dalliance, and suggests an almost prophetic certitude of manner.

And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks
Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts.

Matthew Arnold has nobly praised the "bare, sheer, penetrating power" of the style of the poem; and Emile Legouix finds in it the purest assimilation and suffusion of the genuine mountain-spirit. Praise such as this cannot be improved upon; we can but develop and elaborate what has been said with such admirable brevity and condensation. It cannot be denied that Wordsworth here achieves a new effect of style for which past literature affords no precedents. Each sentence taken by itself impresses as rather low-pitched and commonplace; but a spirit which is not merely a quality of style but seems to emanate from the inmost recesses of the Poet's heart broods over the poem as a whole, and lifts the individual sentences to a much higher level than their independent merit would seem to warrant. In the hands of Wordsworth, style ceases to be a mere literary grace, and becomes the expression of feeling and character, a spiritual quality of rare power and penetration. An effect like this is to be found nowhere out of the poetry of this Poet, and the style impresses us as so perfectly adapted to the matter and the sentiment that we cease
to be troubled by an extraneous consideration as to how far it is congruous with the Poet's special theory. We do not inquire whether it is rustic speech or not: the Poet's narrative is in such admirable harmony with the few speeches directly put into the mouth of Michael, and is so studiously restrained from all high poetic flights, that we are quite ready to credit the old shepherd with the authorship of the poem; there is nothing in it which could not have as well come from his lips. Anyone is quite at liberty to call it prose; but it is prose of that glorified and transfigured kind which puts poetry to shame, and surpasses the highest effects of the latter.

In "Michael", Wordsworth has achieved a complete unity of purpose and philosophy, and has spun both into a very successful narrative pattern—all of which combine to produce a realistic, profound effect on its readers. It should, by now, be rather obvious that this is one of the truly fine and lasting narratives in the English language.
"The White Doe of Rylstone"

In discussing this long poem, it should first be mentioned that it has a just claim as being the highest bit of perfection in narration that Wordsworth composed. This is true for several reasons: the language employed is perfectly suited for the structure and thought of his poem; the action exists on both a physical and a spiritual level; the character study is unsurpassed; and the story itself is beautiful, touching, and profound.

In order to clarify some of the complex problems in connection with "The White Doe of Rylstone", it will be well to see what Wordsworth himself said concerning the poem. The object of the work is simplified somewhat by a conversation with Justice Coleridge:

...The true action of the poem was spiritual—
the subduing of the will, and all inferior passions, to the perfect purifying and spiritualizing of the intellectual nature;... the doe, by connection with Emily, is raised, as it were, from its mere animal nature into something mysterious and saint-like.1

And a letter from Wordsworth to Coleridge dated April 19, 1808, is particularly worthy of a place here, because better than anything else it presents the Poet's own view toward this work, undoubtedly one of his great narratives. The letter is not printed in its entirety,

but all vital references are included.

I also told Lamb that I did not think the poem could ever be popular, first because there was nothing in it to excite curiosity, and next, because the main catastrophe was not a material but an intellectual one. I said to him further that it could not be popular because some of the principal objects and agents—such as the banner and the Doe—produced their influences and effects, not by powers naturally inherent in them, but such as they were endowed with by the imagination of the human minds on whom they operated; further, that the principle of action in all the characters, as in the old man, and his sons, and Francis, when he has the prophetic vision of the overthrow of his family, and the fate of his sister, and takes leave of her as he does, was throughout imaginative, and that all action (save the main traditionary tragedy), i. e., all the action proceeding from the will of the chief agents, was fine-spun and inobtrusive; consonant in this to the principle from which it flowed, and in harmony with the shadowy influence of the Doe, by whom the poem is introduced, and in whom it ends. It suffices that everything tends to account for the weekly pilgrimage of the Doe, which is made interesting by its connection with a human being, a woman, who is intended to be honored and loved for what she endures, and the manner in which she endures it; accomplishing a conquest over her own sorrows (which is the true subject of the poem) by means, partly of the native strength of her character, and partly by the persons and things with whom and which she is connected; and finally, after having exhibited the 'fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom' ascending to pure ethereal spirituality, and forwarded in that ascent of love by communion with a creature not of her own species, but spotless, beautiful, innocent, and loving in that temper of earthly love to which alone she can conform, without violation to the majesty of her losses, or degradation from those heights of heavenly serenity to which she has been raised.
As to the principal characters doing nothing, it is false and too ridiculous to be dwelt on for a moment. When it is considered what has already been executed in poetry, strange that a man cannot perceive, particularly when the present tendencies of society, good and bad, are observed, that this is the time when a man of genius may honorably take a station upon different ground. If he is to be a dramatist, let him crowd his scene with gross and visible; but if a narrative poet—if the poet is to be predominant over the dramatist—then let him see if there are no victories in the world of spirit, no changes, no commotions, no thoughts which may be made interesting by modest combinations with the stiller actions of the bodily frame, or with the gentler movements and milder appearances of society and social intercourse, or the still more mild and gentle solicitations of irrational and inanimate nature. 1

Another letter, this one to Wrangham, January 18, 1816, sheds more light on the conception which the Poet had of his work:

Of "The White Doe" I have little to say, but that I hope it will be acceptable to the intelligent, for whom alone it is written. It starts from a high point of imagination and comes round through various wanderings of that faculty to a still higher; nothing less than the apotheosis of the animal, who gives the first of the two titles to the poem. And as the poem thus begins and ends with pure and lofty imagination, every motive and impulse that actuates the persons introduced is from the same source. A kindred spirit pervades, and is intended to harmonize, the whole. Throughout, objects (the banner, for instance) derive their influence not from properties

inherent in them, not from what they are actually in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects. Thus the poetry, if there be any in the work, proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world.\textsuperscript{1}

And finally, in the Fenwick Notes, Wordsworth points out his purpose, and also compares the work with that of his contemporary, Sir Walter Scott.

Let me here say a few words of this poem in the way of criticism. The subject being taken from feudal times has led to its being compared to some of Walter Scott's poems that belong to the same age and state of society. The comparison is inconsiderate. Sir Walter pursued the customary and very natural course of conducting an action, presenting various turns of fortune, to some outstanding point on which the mind might rest as a termination point or catastrophe. The course I attempted to pursue is entirely different. Everything that is attempted by the principal personages in "The White Doe" fails, so far as its object is external and substantial. So far as it is moral and spiritual it succeeds. The heroine of the poem knows that her duty is not to interfere with the current of events, either to forward or delay them, but To abide

The shock, and finally secure
0'er pain and grief a triumph pure.

This she does in obedience to her brother's injunction, as most suitable to a mind and character that, under previous trials, has been proved to accord with his. She achieves this not without aid from the communication with the inferior creature, which often leads

her thoughts to revolve upon the past with a tender and humanizing influence that exalts rather than depresses her. The anticipated beatification, if I may so say, of her mind, and the apotheosis of the companion of her solitude, are the points at which the poem aims, and constitute its legitimate catastrophe, far too spiritual a one for instant or widely-spread sympathy, but not permanent impression upon that class of minds who think and feel more independently than the many do, of the surfaces of things and interests transitory because belonging more to the outward and social forms of life than to its internal spirit. How insignificant a thing, for example, does personal prowess appear compared with the fortitude of patience and heroic martyrdom: in other words, with struggles for the sake of principle, in preference to victory gloried in for its own sake.1

Judging from the great amount of explanation which Wordsworth deemed necessary for the complete understanding of "The White Doe", it is obvious that it has constantly been abused as to purpose and story. The above letters and quotations directly from the Poet provide the best information on this poem, but some clarification of them is also necessary.

First of all, to answer the critics who have declared that there is a dearth of action in the poem, we find that Emily is not merely passive as opposed to active, but rather contemplative as opposed to active. In the world of spirit, which we saw Wordsworth defended strongly, she achieved a very active victory. This is very fit for a narrative tale and lends something higher

than the mere physical to a story realistic in all its details. And further, when the Poet states that Emily was in a state of 'melancholy', he does not mean what we usually associate with the word, but rather a calm of soul and perfect faith resulting from contemplative effort.

It might be questioned as to what kind of victory Emily did win in the world of spirit. In answering this, we find that where pleasure had been dead it now lives again, in a second, more noble birth. Each day she follows a more divine, loftier path, lifted to God and undisturbed mortality. Her sanction she bears inwardly and stands apart from human cares. We remember her giving willing help and offering her prayers with the Wharfedale peasants, but no more does she return to the world. Surely this proves beyond question that she had been victorious in a way which is far above mere human existence.

On the other hand, we might ask why Emily did not return to society where a faith such as hers might be fulfilled in works. The solution to this is deep-rooted, but when stated bluntly seems fairly obvious. It should first be recalled that Wordsworth considered every great poet a teacher, and that as a teacher aiming to direct attention to a moral sentiment or general
principle of thought or of the intellectual constitution, he spoke of the destiny of his poems at the very period when he was about to write "The White Doe". And the first mission of his poetry is to console the afflicted. Emily's victory, obviously intended for this purpose, is not, as one might expect, accompanied by the rewards of the world. Contrary to what many have thought, Wordsworth believed that the finest manner in which to accomplish this was through inward thought. Therefore, the consolation of the afflicted is best accomplished when it is most completely demonstrated that any afflicted person may achieve, through endeavor, the peace of mind which Emily possessed. In order that Emily be typical of those who are alone and among the worst afflicted, the Poet gives her no human company or human comfort. In brief, then, it could fulfill Wordsworth's major object in the poem only by leaving Emily to peace through her own mind and imagination.

The Poet's own life was a perfect illustration of his mature thought on the proper relation of contemplation to action. Although he led a life primarily or retirement, it was not that he did not appreciate mankind, but rather so he could study it more profoundly. "The White Doe" is of great importance in showing his thought concerning the right relation between the active and the
patient life. Its goal is the consolation of the afflicted, and it stresses the tranquilizing power of the contemplative life even when pursued in solitude apart from human consolation.

A word should be said about the effect caused by the death of beloved John Wordsworth. Undoubtedly this was a great influence on the composition of the poem, but just how great we shall probably never know.

Many similarities have been pointed out between the affliction and consolation of Emily and Wordsworth, and "The White Doe" in many ways represents the autobiography of this phase of the Poet's life. At first Emily shuns the loved, familiar places, just as William did in his bereavement. To Emily, faith is given; and this faith, the evidence of things unseen, represents to her, as to Wordsworth, suffering from kindred sorrows, the triumph of peaceful contemplation. Their release is an active victory accomplished with effort and with exertion, and relief comes as a benign companion to holy melancholy. But there is one major difference between them, which is to be expected. Whereas Emily devotes her remaining days to a peaceful solitude, the Poet returns to the world and to humanity.

Seen from the light of the above material, this poem is no longer confusing, mangled, or even "a lesson of renunciation" as Professor Harper describes
it, but on the contrary a dignified, religious, reassuring answer to the problem of anguish. It is supreme in the field of character study, and its unusual plot, in the hands of the Poet, becomes a beautiful dedication to faith.
'The Excursion'.

It is my purpose in discussing "The Excursion", the longest of Wordsworth's poems, to deal primarily with Book I, the story of Margaret, and with Books VI and VII, which include the Pastor's stories. However, it should be noted that the entire poem is built on a narrative structure, and the distinct stories dealt with are parts of the integrated whole.

In order to recall the complete story to mind, I shall briefly recapitulate the incidents as they happened: the author meets the Wanderer at a ruined cottage, and is told the story of its last inhabitant, Margaret; the two leave to visit a friend of the Wanderer; and they gain a splendid view of the valley in which he lives; after witnessing a funeral procession, they meet the Solitary; the Solitary tells why his mind is so emotionally upset and depressed by giving his history—disappointment in the French Revolution, disgust from a voyage to America, and other things, all of which have tended to bring on this dismal state; next occurs a conversation between the Wanderer and the Solitary in order to correct the latter's despondency; they all leave the valley, and come to the Pastor's dwelling; he presents a series of narratives concerning people who now lie in the churchyard among the mountains; they all leave there and visit the parsonage, and after more con-
I shall discuss separately the stories of Margaret and of the Pastor, but first I shall present the opinion of various critics toward the entire work.

Professor Harper has found that

"The Excursion" is scarcely less autobiographical than "The Prelude". It is the most profound and most sensitive comment literature has made upon the tremendous social upheaval of modern times. And its depth, its truth, its feeling, are due to the fact that it reflects the sympathy and repulsion of a passionate soul who had lived what he wrote. Yet one reason why this great poem has failed, as it undoubtedly has failed, to make an impression on many readers who thoroughly enjoy "The Prelude", is that the poet has been too reticent.

F. W. H. Myers adds that

It was with personages simple and unromantic as these that Wordsworth filled the canvas of his longest poem. Judged by ordinary standards "The Excursion" appears an epic without action, and with two heroes, the Pastor and the Wanderer, whose characters are identical. Its form is cumbrous in the extreme, and large tracts of it have little claim to the name of poetry. Wordsworth compares "The Excursion" to a temple of which his smaller poems form subsidiary shrines; but the reader will more often liken the small poems to gems, and "The Excursion" to the rock from which they were extracted. The long poem contains, indeed, magnificent passages, but as a whole it is a diffused description of scenery which the poet has elsewhere caught in brighter glimpses; a diffused statement of hopes and beliefs which have crystallized more exquisitely elsewhere round moments of inspiring emotion. "The Excursion", in short, has the drawbacks of a

---

didactic poem, it has the advantage of containing teaching of true and permanent value.  

Raleigh states

"The Excursion", great work though it be, is not greater than "The Prelude", and adds to "The Prelude" much less of what is characteristic and vital than its bulk would lead the reader to expect. And with "The Excursion", Wordsworth's work was done.

Regardless of the great amounts of criticism, both just and unjust, "The Excursion" is a masterpiece of poetry. Of Wordsworth's friends, the majority received it favorably, but Coleridge, though slow in passing judgment, showed keen disappointment with the work. Undoubtedly he had expected too much of any one man, and it would have required the combined efforts of both these great artists to have produced what he desired.

Set in the most prominent portion of the poem, Book I, is the story of Margaret, usually termed "The Ruined Cottage". It was not until this narrative appeared that Wordsworth was able to fuse artistically his social sympathy and his philosophical love of nature.

Critics have long recognized the unusual importance of "The Ruined Cottage" in the history of the Poet's

---


development. Legouis, for example, remarks that "Between the poems which betray the effect of his moral crisis on the one hand, and "The Recluse" and the "Lyrical Ballads"...on the other, "The Ruined Cottage" occupies a unique position."¹ Herbert Read observes that the poem marks a great advance over Wordsworth's earlier work "in the direction of simplicity and realism"—so great an advance, in fact, "that it really contains the germ of all his subsequent development."² And Professors Campbell and Mueschke discover in "The Ruined Cottage" the "first indication of a revolution in Wordsworth's aesthetic practice."³ But there is much more to be said than is hereby inferred, due to recent work by De Selincourt and Meyer.

First of all, we may say with a high degree of certainty, regard the poem as the work of late 1797 and early 1798. To the student of Wordsworth's early poetry it is readily apparent that "The Ruined Cottage" is similar in narrative detail to the story of the female vagrant in "Guilt and Sorrow". Margaret and Robert, her husband, were industrious English peasants who

lived happily in a cottage with their two children until
the nation was oppressed with bad harvests, war, and
economic depression. Although rich people were impov-
erished and many of those already poor died, presumably
of starvation, Margaret and Robert struggled hopefully
on until Robert was stricken with a fever. When he had
recovered from his long illness, Robert found that the
family savings were exhausted and that no employment
was available in England. He took temporary pleasure in
performing odd jobs about the house and garden, but
before long his spirit drooped and "poverty brought on
a petted mood And a sore temper". One moment he would
play merrily with his children; the next, "he would
speak lightly of his babes And with a cruel tongue". Then, he was wont to leave his home and wander idly
through the fields and into town. Finally, he disappeared
and for two days was unheard of. On the third day, how-
ever, Margaret discovered a purse of gold inside her
window, and shortly thereafter was told by a messenger
sent by Robert that he had gone to fight with the army
in a distant land. This information Robert had not
dared to deliver himself for fear that Margaret and the
children would follow and be exposed to the horrors of
war.

Nine long years Margaret waited in vain for her
husband's return. For a few months, aided by the purse of gold and what little she could earn by spinning, she kept her family together. But by the end of the first summer she was obliged to let her elder son be "Apprenticed by the parish". Meanwhile, she had fallen into the habit of strolling aimlessly about the countryside, neglecting her cottage, her garden, and her baby. There is a suggestion that she either suffered a psychological collapse like that experienced by Robert, or, like the female vagrant, was driven by need to prostitution. These seem at least to be the most satisfactory explanations of her curious confession to the Pedlar:

I am changed
And to myself...have done much wrong,
And to this helpless infant.

Before the end of autumn, in any case, Margaret's cottage and garden had fallen into complete disorder: her books lay scattered in confusion; her baby was dead. For seven or eight years more; nourished by the futile hope that Robert would return, she continued to exist. At length, however, the decay of the cottage was so extreme that the winter winds would shake her ragged clothes as she huddled before her fire, and "the nightly damp's chill her breast". After nine sad years of widowhood, Margaret--"Last human tenant of these ruined walls"--was dead.
Clearly the suffering of Margaret in "The Ruined Cottage" resembles closely that of the female vagrant in "Guilt and Sorrow". Both women experience the various hardships of war and economic depression. The two poems, nevertheless, are worlds apart. In "Guilt and Sorrow", Wordsworth placed the responsibility for war, for depression—and their attendant ills—upon the monarchical form of government sustained by the British Constitution. But in "The Ruined Cottage" there is no suggestion that monarchy, or any other man-made institution, is to blame for Margaret's tragedy. In 1797 and 1798, in describing how a poor harvest and "the plague of war" combined to destroy the happiness of Margaret and Robert, Wordsworth explained the disasters as acts of God—"It pleased heaven", he wrote, "to add a worse affliction in the plague of war." Since most of the distress that befell Margaret, Robert, and their children was the direct and unmistakable result of war, it is obvious that the Poet in "The Ruined Cottage" chose to regard human suffering as a "chastisement of Providence", rather than as the work of selfish and misguided men.

The fundamental shift in Wordsworth's view of the causes of domestic catastrophe calls attention to the fact that in "The Ruined Cottage", as in "The Borderers", he preferred to stress, not the evil implicit in mon-
archical institutions, but the comfort and joy available to man in Nature and the inexhaustible good emanating from the heart of common humanity. A study of the narrative method used in "The Ruined Cottage" shows that his immediate object here was quite different from that which prompted the composition of "Guilt and Sorrow". In "Guilt and Sorrow" Wordsworth, with his pointed descriptions of social injustice, plainly attempted to arouse his readers to action; in "The Ruined Cottage" he made an obvious effort to cushion them against the full impact of the emotional disquietude and shock likely to result from the tale of undeserved suffering which he invited them to contemplate. Wordsworth wished to plunge the readers of "Guilt and Sorrow" into a state of feverish indignation; the readers of "The Ruined Cottage" he hoped to leave in a lush condition of benevolent tranquility.

Finally, the concluding lines of the poem--the lines first written by Wordsworth, and read to Coleridge at Racedown in June, 1797--focus the reader's attention, not upon the manifold ills which Margaret has experienced, but upon the unusual patience and fortitude, the inexhaustible hope with which she endured the last years of her pathetic existence. Oscar James Campbell, however, denies that Wordsworth intended to exhibit peasant strength
of character in his account of Margaret:

It is hard to see how the wretched woman's actions after the loss of her husband can be considered essentially courageous or in any deep sense admirable. She seems to be unnerved and fairly possessed by her uncertainty and grief. She wanders disconsolately about the country-side; she neglects her infant; she allows her garden to become choked with weeds and to show first 'the sleepy hand of negligence' and then actual decay. After her babe dies, 'she lingers in unquiet widowhood nine tedious years, until she, too, dies in the ruins of her home.' This woman, who allows all her natural duties to be swallowed up in grief, can hardly have been presented as a splendid example of the robust fortitude of the peasants.1

It is true that Margaret neglects her "natural duties" for a year or two following her husband's disappearance. The fact remains, however, that the lines descriptive of her behavior during her last years emphasize the strength and courage with which she meets her fate. There seems to be a clear distinction between the instability which Margaret displays immediately following the initial shock of her bereavement, and the persistent hope which characterizes by far the greater part of her widowhood.

What, then, was the purpose intended in "The Ruined Cottage"? Probably the best answer given to 1935 was that by Professor Campbell, who suggests that Wordsworth, after rejecting Godwin's radical rationalism,

began to write a kind of poetry which he had not attempted before. He retained his interest in the common man, but he no longer presented his condition as one to invite the reforms of rational humanitarians. He made him the object of compassion by showing him enduring with fortitude undeserved suffering; he gave the reader authentic instances of the reformation of erring human beings by the sight of virtue in distress. In embodying these ideas in poetic tales he felt that he was not merely indulging his temperament, but softening human hearts into virtue by evoking the tender emotion of pity.  

This description of the new direction taken by Wordsworth, though sound in its general outline, is nevertheless unsatisfactory in several important points. The real key to the problem is to be found, as is pointed out by Meyer, in a letter from Coleridge. He believes that existing governments are bad, but he does not advocate their overthrow by revolution. Revolution merely changes the form of government, and a government is an immediate, not a fundamental, cause of evil. The disappointing march of events in France, reports of the deterioration of habits and morals in the young American republic, and his consciousness of the presence of evil in the human heart have convinced Coleridge that revolution is good only in so far as it discloses the need for the purification of the individuals who constitute society. These were views which Wordsworth  

himself had endorsed as early as 1793 and 1794.

From this we can find the explanation for Wordsworth's decision in "The Ruined Cottage" to hold heaven responsible for human suffering, and to stress, not the immediate cause of social evil—the existing form of government—but the serenity and benign influence of Nature and the good which resides in the human heart.

In 1798 Wordsworth had come to understand that vehement attacks on government and the champions of government, like his "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", and stark revelation of the consequences of current social imperfections, the chief feature of the original "Guilt and Sorrow", were likely to result in more harm than good. According to the psychology which he now accepted, such attacks and revelations could only irritate the reader, sharpen aversions already formed, and minister to the evil passions. This does not mean, however, that Wordsworth had lost his social consciousness or that he had abandoned his desire to conquer evil and improve society. Convinced that true social reform depended upon the improvement of the individual, Wordsworth was not satisfied to stimulate mere abstract and isolated virtue; in the poetry of his great decade he stressed the lofty moral influence of Nature and told carefully insulated tales of undeserved and unnecessary suffering bravely borne to cultivate in his readers those particular vir-
tues which were certain to produce, in the end, a harmonious society founded on universal love.

The Pastor's stories in the sixth and seventh Books are told for the effect that they will have upon the Solitary. Professor Harper believes that the Pastor's sole method of reformation is the creation in the Solitary of a zest for life as it is. He says:

The mere recital of human stories, with no effort to point a moral, awakens in the Solitary a certain zest for things as they are.

Campbell replies that:

Some of the stories are doubtless intended to restore his respect for men and a desire to share their virtues. But a careful examination of the discussion which provoked the Parson's narrative, will show that some of them, at least, were intended to supply the misanthrope with a more positive moral principle than mere zest for living.

The Solitary and the two other principal characters come to a graveyard. The misanthrope presently expresses the belief that if he could read these graves as volumes,

---


he would find them to be, without exception, tales of anguish and shame. The Pastor of the parish enters in the midst of this discussion and is asked by the Wanderer certain general questions concerning the value of human life. He replies that life, including virtue, cannot be appraised by pure reason. Its character, on the contrary, depends entirely upon the emotional point of view from which it is regarded.

This doctrine is hailed with "complacent animation" by the wise Wanderer, who approves the doctrine that "we see, then, as we feel". He then proceeds to make the following pronouncement about the nature of morality:

Moral truth
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule.
........................but a thing
Subject. You deem, to vital accidents;
And like the water-lily, lives and thrives,
Whose root is fixed in stable earth, whose head
Floats on the tossing waves.

But granted this be true, it still remains necessary to know how to gain the correct point of view. In other words, how is the necessary inward emotional principle, this soul of virtue, to be found? Asks the Wanderer,

How shall man unite
With self-forgetting tenderness of heart
An earth-despising dignity of soul?
Wise in that union, and without it blind!

In his search for a principle which will consummate
this union of sensibility and aspiration, he asks the Pastor to supply the necessary facts from life. Give us an account of the lives of the persons who lie in the churchyard and thus resolve our doubts. The Pastor's tales are told in answer to this request.

He presents his records, therefore, for two purposes. In the first place he will teach the Solitary

"To prize the breath we share with human kind".

To accomplish this, he tells tales which prove that man has qualities of patience, fortitude, and endurance, which give him dignity and nobility in the eyes of those who really know him. Such works as those dealing with the Miner and the Unfortunate Lover are examples of this type, the purpose being

"Stoop from your height, ye proud, and copy these."

In the second place, the Pastor will reveal the essential moral emotion,—that principle which unites tenderness of heart with dignity of soul. To accomplish this he tells tales which arouse compassion for undeserved human misery. This pity, he makes clear, is the principle sought. After enumerating, in true sentimental fashion, those who lie buried in the churchyard before him, the Pastor remarks that tribute of pity has been paid to each
of them.

The principle which the Wanderer has asked the Pastor to reveal is that the birth of pity is proof of the union of tenderness of heart and dignity of soul. By arousing this compassion the Pastor can produce that fusion of spiritual faculties which signalizes the establishment of the highest moral equilibrium. Hence many of the stories are dedicated to this purpose. The first of these, and one of the finest, is the tragic tale of Ellen.

In many respects this narrative follows closely the formula for sentimental tales of seduction. In the first place, our sympathies for the girl are made vividly awake. Her innocent and pathetic charm is insisted upon. Ellen, the daughter of a poor widow, is a paragon of beauty and simple virtue. Trusting naturally, but too easily, to the vows of her lover, she is seduced and then deserted by him. Her grief, though acute, is made patient and meek enough to arouse all our tender pensiveness. When her baby is born, she finds it

A soothing comforter, although forlorn; Like a poor singing-bird from distant lands.

After four months she feels that she can no longer impose her support and that of her infant upon her mother. She therefore takes upon herself a foster-mother's office,
and the parents of the child she nurses forbid her to visit her own baby. During Ellen's absence her child dies. She sees it only once during its illness, but we are given a picture of her at its burial gazing long into the unclosed coffin. Then it becomes her wont to visit her child's grave where she kneels "a rueful Magdalene", bewailing her loss and mourning her transgression. Thereafter she lives devoid of all interest in life, awaiting death with saint-like patience. At last she dies and is buried by the side of her infant. Thus are we brought back to the grave of the "tender lamb", the sight of which prompted this narrative.

This story is clearly told to awaken compassion. The narrative emphasis is such as to accentuate at every point the lovely innocence of the girl, her suffering, and her tears. When the story is finished, Wordsworth is at pains to make the reader realize the beneficent effect of this sentimental tale upon those who have heard it. The fates of Margaret and Ellen, similar in the appeal which the undeserved suffering of the innocent women makes to our pity, produce in the poet the same tenderness,—benign, because it is the soil from which moral impulses spring.

The other listeners are similarly affected, and even the misanthrope's innate goodness is released by
tears. The Wanderer, for his part, illustrates the truth that he imparted when telling the story of Margaret. By means of his compassion he rises above the immediate sadness produced by the tale to the serenity of moral aspiration.

No other tales of the Pastor have their sentimental moral character so clearly attested. Yet a number of the stories told in the seventh book of "The Excursion" have no other reason for existence than that carefully indicated for the story of Ellen. Of such a nature is the tale about the clergyman who lived in a remote dwelling with his family for forty years without suffering from the death of a single member of his immediate circle. Then suddenly his house is swept by death as of a plague. Even "his little smiling grandchild" is taken and he is left alone, still cheerful and unsubdued in aspect but with his inward hoard

Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,

until in one blest moment the sleep of death overcomes him. This story produced calm of mind and "tender sorrow for our mortal state", which the Wanderer, to be sure, relieves by drawing a trite moral of cheerfulness in affliction.

The Pastor then presently tells the story of the peasant parents of seven lusty sons, to whom is born in their older age a daughter. She diffuses gladness
throughout the family until she dies.

Oh! dire stroke
Of desolating anguish for them all!

The tale of Oswald follows. He is a fine athlete and a noble patriot,--as brave as any who marched with righteous Joshua or Gideon. One morning he chases the reindeer and returning from that sport "weakened and relaxed", he plunges "into the chilling flood" to wash "the fleeces of his Father's flock". Convulsions seize him and he dies amid universal mourning. No moral is deduced from this tale; it is dedicated wholly to sentimental pity. The Solitary is properly touched and turns aside either from shame for his past misanthropy or to conceal

Tender emotions spreading from his heart
To his work cheek.

These latter narratives are designed not to bring the Solitary back into the current of life, but to show him that inward emotional principle which forms the animating soul of virtue. They prove that compassion for undeserved human suffering converts human tenderness to moral aspiration.

It is evident that the tales and stories in "The Excursion" are the high points in a study of this work.
It should be mentioned, furthermore, that Book III contains the Solitary's history which is related by narration and is quite well told. "The Ruined Cottage" is, perhaps, the best known part of the poem, and is one of Wordsworth's greatest works. The Pastor's tales anticipate by a hundred years the "Spoon River Anthology" and constitute one of the most unusual groups of tales ever composed. In the light of this evidence, and also of the fact that the work is a narrative in entirety, I consider "The Excursion" to be the culmination work under consideration in this study.
IV. CONCLUSION

In order to clarify the entire problem of William Wordsworth's narrative poetry, I shall attempt to summarize the vital points dealt with in this paper.

Wordsworth is not remembered primarily for his composition of narrative works, because they have been overshadowed by his supreme achievements, "The Prelude", "Tintern Abbey", and "Intimations of Immortality". On the other hand, his narratives are among the finest in the English language in power, structure, and vitality, and have been overlooked quite unjustly by the critics. There is a recent trend toward the examination of these works, but it is a very gradual movement. It is my opinion that the future will witness a more marked path leading toward the widespread study and appreciation of these works, for once read, they will be reread over and over owing to their splendid composition and keen insight into human nature.

Quite early Wordsworth experimented with the narrative, and we find distinct results of this in the "Descriptive Sketches". But it was "Guilt and Sorrow" that culminated this very youthful experimentation and gave rise to a series of narratives, each seemingly more mature and more engaging than the former. By 1800 such famous works as "Peter Bell", "Ruth", "The Borderers", "The Idiot
Boy", "We Are Seven", "The Thorn", "Simon Lee", "Expostulation and Reply", "The Old Cumberland Beggar", "Nutting", "Michael", "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known", and many others, had appeared, all bearing a narrative structure. But this wealth of material was only the beginning to a life of productivity which witnessed such poems as "Resolution and Independence", "Vaudracour and Julia", "The Waggoner", "The White Doe of Rylstone", "The Prelude", and "The Excursion". And it is very difficult to select any five or ten as outstanding in this superabundance of great literature. The longest poem of all, "The Excursion", is basically a narrative, yet it contains numerous stories which, used as illustrations and pictures, give it life and interest. Finally, "The White Doe of Rylstone" marks in many ways the climax of Wordsworth's narratives, and is unequalled in fine selection of language and true presentation of human character.

Wordsworth chose narration as a basis for many of his poems for several quite understandable reasons. First of all, he found that it was natural and easy for him to clarify his subject matter by rendering it concrete in stories containing distinct characters. He realized that most people, and especially the peasant class, could not understand profound philosophical works, but that if they were illustrated by tales dealing with simple, rustic folk, the meaning would be quite obvious. Too, the Poet
realized that readers would remember narratives, whereas they might readily forget abstract ideas. Narratives have had a habit of being very successful if they are done well, and no doubt Wordsworth, in times of financial need, remembered this. It should be noted, furthermore, that he was influenced by classicists who used narration extensively, and by the writers of ballads. It is only natural that he should have imitated them by using tales as the basis for his poetry. Finally, many of his works were written simply for the joy the Poet found in composition, or for no other reason than the story itself. In this category would appear "The Idiot Boy".

In considering the purpose of these works, it should first be noted that Wordsworth himself stated in the Note prefixed to "The White Doe of Rylstone":

The subject being taken from feudal times has led to its being compared to some of Walter Scott's poems that belong to the same age and state of society. The comparison is inconsiderate. Sir Walter pursued the customary and very natural course of conducting an action, presenting various turns of fortune, to some outstanding point on which the mind might rest as a termination or catastrophe. The course I attempted to pursue is entirely different. Everything that is attempted by the principal personages in "The White Doe" fails, so far as its object is external and substantial. So far as it is moral and spiritual it succeeds.....

Scott, similar to Byron, used narrative poetry as

---

an end in itself. That is, the story involved is the important thing. Wordsworth, on the other hand, used the narrative as a framework for expressing philosophical and meditative ideas. He early discovered that people were attracted to poems dealing with the common things in life, and he attempted to create a sense of the supernatural from them.

By means of narration, Wordsworth was able to expound his views on almost every subject. Early he protested against the evils of monarchial institutions, but soon changed his emphasis to the good that resides in the hearts of common men. In "Expostulation and Reply" he shows the evils of a mechanical conception of education; "We Are Seven" provides an excellent example of the truths to be found in children; and in works too numerous to mention he exposes the evils of poverty and war.

It is significant, in arriving at an estimate of the success of Wordsworth's narratives, to note that in an age which has all but forgotten many great poets of the past few centuries, this Poet should loom larger than ever in literature. Today, people are finding Milton "old-fashioned", Coleridge "unreadable", and Scott "too shallow", and it is no wonder. Our age is so fast-developing and so unlike previous ones that only truly great
poets and poems will last. I shall now set forth my reasons why I believe Wordsworth's narrative poetry will be among those works which will continue to be read.

First, his works are realistic; that is, they contain themes which actually occurred in the nineteenth century, but could take place today just as well. They deal with permanent themes, applicable to any century.

The action is twofold: physical and spiritual. The Poet's works, as "The White Doe of Rylstone" and "Resolution and Independence", hold spiritual faith capable of bringing hope to all mankind. On the physical level, "Michael" and "Ruth" are good examples of his ability to hold a reader's attention by the carefully ordered set of events.

In character delineation, Wordsworth reached his peak with Emily in "The White Doe". Others should be mentioned as outstanding, however: Margaret, Simon Lee, Peter Bell, the Solitary, and Benjamin. Much logical criticism has been given stating that the Poet was unable to depict and examine human nature. In his early works, this is undoubtedly true, but if we consider the bulk of his work, we find an ample store of unforgettable persons. Beside those previously mentioned, Michael, Ruth, the Pastor, and Oswald demand our attention. With such a vast number of successful character portrayals, I do not be-
lieve the criticism is deserved or valid.

And lastly, these poems have a distinct purpose, which, of course, varies with the separate works. And with but one or two exceptions it is a moral, genuine thing both for the author and the reader. The lack of a clear-cut, courageous purpose has caused the failure of many otherwise great artists.

It is next to impossible to find in any language an artist who has been so unusually successful in creating narrative poetry. Of course, Wordsworth has drawbacks, and even a few failures, but his great rivals, Shakespeare, Milton, and Chaucer, were also plagued by unsuccessful attempts to create lasting art. And whereas the narrative works of these poets have been very carefully analyzed by untold numbers of scholars and critics, these same critics have not yet even touched the surface in Wordsworth. It is time that these men discover the value and merits of this "unknown" literature of the greatest Romantic, and I feel confident that once it is "discovered", Wordsworth will rise higher than ever before, not only as a poet, but also as a thinker, a prophet, and mainly as a man.
SIMPLE NARRATIVE POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

1. Descriptive Sketches. 1791-2.
2. Lines...Left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree. 1795.
3. The Reverie of Poor Susan. 1797.
4. The Birth of Love. 1797.
5. A Night Piece. 1798.
6. We Are Seven. 1798.
8. The Thorn. 1798.
10. Her Eyes Are Wild. 1798.
12. Lines Written in Early Spring. 1798.
14. The Tables Turned. 1798.
15. The Last of the Flock. 1798.
16. The Old Cumberland Beggar. 1798.
17. Influence of Natural Objects. 1799.
18. There Was A Boy. 1799.
19. Nutting. 1799
20. Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known. 1799.
21. Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower. 1799.
22. The Two April Mornings. 1799.
23. The Fountain. 1799.
24. Lucy Gray. 1799.
25. Written in Germany. 1799.
26. The Idle Shepherd-Boys. 1800.
30. The Oak and the Broom. 1800.
31. The Childless Father. 1800.
32. Rural Architecture. 1800.
33. Ellen Irwin. 1800.
34. Andrew Jones. 1800.
35. The Two Thieves. 1800.
36. Inscriptions. (3). 1800.
37. The Sparrow's Nest. 1801.
38. The Sailor's Mother. 1802.
39. Alice Fell. 1802.
40. Beggars. 1802.
41. Emigrant Mother. 1802.
42. Among All Lovely Things My Love Had Been. 1802.
44. The Matron of Jedborough and Her Husband. 1803.
45. The Blind Highland Boy. 1803.
46. The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale. 1803.
47. The Affliction of Margaret. 1804.
48. Repentance. 1804.
49. The Seven Sisters. 1804.
50. The Kitten and Falling Leaves. 1804.
51. The Small Celandine. 1804.
52. Fidelity. 1805.
54. Elegiac Stanzas. to John Wordsworth. 1805.
55. To the Daisy. 1805.
56. Stray Pleasures. 1806.
58. Methoughts I Saw the Footsteps of a Throne. 1806.
59. The Force of Prayer. 1807.
60. George and Sarah Green. 1808.
61. Epitaphs. (4, 6, 8). 1810.
63. Water-Fowl. 1812.
65. Ode... (When the soft hand of sleep). 1816.
66. A Fact, and an Imagination. 1816.
67. Lament of Mary Queen of Scots. 1817.
68. The Pilgrim's Dream. 1818.
69. Inscriptions... (2 and 5). 1816.
70. Composed During a Storm. 1819.
71. I Heard... (Alas! 'Twas Only in a Dream). 1819.

COMPLEX NARRATIVE POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

2. The Borderers. 1795-6.
3. The Idiot Boy. 1798.
4. Peter Bell. 1798.
5. Ruth. 1799.
7. The Brothers. 1800.
10. The Prioress' Tale. 1801.
11. The Cuckoo and the Nightingale. 1801.
12. Troilus and Cressida. 1801.
15. The Waggoner. 1805.
16. The Horn of Egremont Castle. 1806.
17. Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle. 1807.
20. The Excursion. 1795-1814.
22. Dion. 1814.
23. Artegal and Elidure. 1815.
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES CONSULTED


27. Marsh, G. L. The "Peter Bell" Parodies of 1819. 
   MP, xl (1943), 267-274.

28. Mead, Marian. Four Studies in Wordsworth. Menasha, 
   Wisconsin, George Banta Publishing Company, 1929.

29. Meyer, George Wilbur. Wordsworth's Formative 
   Years. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 
   1943.

   Harper and Brothers, 1902.

31. Pancoast, Henry S. Did Wordsworth Jest with 
   Matthew? MLN, Vol. 37, No. 5, 1922.

   Arnold, 1918.

33. Shackford, Martha H. Wordsworth's "Michael". 

34. Shairp, John C. Aspects of Poetry. Oxford, The 
   Clarendon Press, 1881.

35. Smith, John H. Genesis of "The Borderers". PMLA, 
   xlix (1934), 922-930.

36. Stork, C. W. The Influence of the Popular Ballad 
   on Wordsworth and Coleridge. PMLA, xxix (1914), 
   299-326.

37. Strunk, W. Some Related Poems of Wordsworth and 
   Coleridge. MLN, xxix (1914), 201-205.

38. Swaen, A. E. H. "Peter Bell". Anglia, xlvii, 
   136-184.


40. Untermeyer, Louis and Davidson, Carter. Poetry: 
   Its Appreciation and Enjoyment. New York, 
   Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1934.

41. Watson, H. F. Historic Detail in "The Borderers". 
   MLN, lii (1937), 59-70.


