

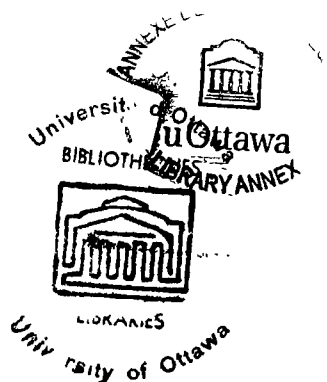
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THE NOTION OF THE CHILD IN THE POETRY
OF WORDSWORTH: CORRESPONDENCES IN
BLAKE AND ROUSSEAU

by

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Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies of the University of Ottawa in
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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

M. Magdalena Gelbert was born March 8, 1951, in Wroclaw, Poland. She completed her undergraduate studies in English Literature in Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland, in 1972.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Critical approaches to Wordsworth may be distinguished generally as following one of two main streams. There is the approach which examines Wordsworth as a great inventive pioneer who reacted against outmoded literary conventions, who established new bearings, who brought poetry back to its true source of vitality - the experience of ordinary human beings.¹

This approach centers on Wordsworth's doctrine of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"², his poetry of poetic diction, his views on the subject-matter of poetry as drawn from the ordinary and the commonplace experience of the common man, and the new significance which Wordsworth attached to the roles of Imagination, Fancy

¹ F.R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, A Study of the Contemporary Situation, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1959).

² Preface to "Lyrical Ballads" (1798), Wordsworth: Poetical Works, Introductions and Notes, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) p. 735.

and Memory³ in the process of poetic creation.

A second approach focuses on the various phases and stages of Wordsworth's creative development as these provide insights into the whys and wherefores of the key recurring motifs in his poetry. This biographically-oriented approach to the study of Wordsworth's life, character and attitudes has been in vogue⁴ since the early work of Wordsworth's nephew Christopher Wordsworth who compiled (1850-1851) the Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet-Laureate, D.C.L.⁵

3 Scholarly works of this kind include, James Scoggins, Imagination and Fancy, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966); Lionel Trilling, "The Immortality Ode", The Liberal Imagination: Essays in Literature and Society (New York, Viking Press, 1950), pp. 145-6; Cleanth Brooks, "Wordsworth and the Paradox of Imagination", The Well Wrought Urn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1947).pp. 114-138; C.M. Bowra, "Ode an Intimations of Immortality", The Romantic Imagination, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 76-102; Harold Bloom, "William Wordsworth", The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971); Enid Welsford, Salisbury Plain; A Study of the Development of Wordsworth's Mind and Art, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966); Marian Mead, Four Studies in Wordsworth (New York: Haskell House, Publishers of Scholarly Books, 1964); Salomon Francis Gingerich, Essays in the Romantic Poets, (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1924).

4 William Knight, The Life of William Wordsworth, (Edinburgh, 1899); E. Hershey Smeath, Wordsworth, Poet of Nature and Poet of Man, (Boston and London: Ginn and Company, Publishers, 1912); The Later Wordsworth; ed. C. Beatho (New York: Russel & Russel, 1966); Catherine MacDonald MacLean, Dorothy and William Wordsworth, (New York: Octagon Books, 1972).

5 Christopher Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet-Laureate, D.C.L., ed. Henry Reed, (Boston: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, MDCCCLI, New York: AMS Press Inc., 1966).

Mary Moorman's⁶ study of Wordsworth is a good example of the second critical approach. In the Preface to her first volume of William Wordsworth; a Biography Early Years 1770-1803, she states, in defense of her approach, that Wordsworth's poetry:

is itself the chief justification for a biography: it is of the mind and soul of the author of Lyrical Ballads and Poems in Two Volumes and The Excursion that his biographer must write and that those who care for him will wish to read.

/p. vii/

Other excellent critical works of the kind are: The Early Life of William Wordsworth and William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon by Emile Legouis, Wordsworth by H.W. Garrod, William Wordsworth, His Life, Work and Influence by M. Harper⁷ and the critical editions of Wordsworth's poetry edited by

⁶ Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: A Biography; Early Years 1770-1803, Vol. I, (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1969).

-----, William Wordsworth; A Biography, Later Years, Vol. II, (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1969).

⁷ Emile Hyacinthe Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, tr. J.W. Matthews, (New York, 1897), William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon, (New York: Archon Book: 1967); H.W. Garrod, Wordsworth, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923); George McLean Harper, William Wordsworth, His Life, Work and Influence, Vol. I and II (New York: Russel and Russel, 1960).

Ernest De Selincourt.⁸

Relatively few critics however, have concentrated on a minute analysis of the various child images and child figures present in Wordsworth's poetry.

Foremost among the works treating this subject is an early study by the English scholar A. Charles Babenroth,⁹ English Childhood; Wordsworth's Treatment of Childhood in the Light of English Poetry from Prior to Crabbe, first published in 1922. In the Preface, Babenroth declares the aim of his study: "to present Wordsworth's rather extensive body of poetry on childhood in its true perspective against the background of eighteenth-century poetry".¹⁰

8 The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth; The Early Years 1787-1805, Ernest De Selincourt, rev. by C.L. Shaver (Oxford: At Clarendon Press, 1967); The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth; The Middle Years, 1806-1811, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, rev. by Mary Moorman (Oxford: At Clarendon Press, 1969); The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 1812-1820, Ernest De Selincourt, rev. by Mary Moorman (Oxford: At Clarendon Press, 1970); The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind by William Wordsworth (text of 1805), ed. from the manuscripts with Introduction and Notes, by Ernest De Selincourt (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1953).

9 A. Charles Babenroth, English Childhood; Wordsworth's Treatment of Childhood in the light of English Poetry from Prior to Crabbe, (New York: Octagon Books, 1973).

10 Ibid., p. vii.

Babenroth devotes the seventh chapter of this work to Wordsworth himself, describing some of the influences of the eighteenth-century poets upon Wordsworth's poetry on childhood to prove his contention that Wordsworth's treatment of the child, deeply influenced by the thought of poets from Prior to Crabbe, makes Wordsworth "more than any other eminent English man of letters [...] the poet of childhood".¹¹

In the third chapter of his study, The Quest for Permanence; the Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, David Perkins traces what he refers to as 'one "of the most obvious features of Wordsworth's poetry", i.e. the extent to which "children appear as protagonists".¹² He limits his study to the close textual examination of one poem only, since, as he explains, "In speaking of Wordsworth's child symbolism, one must inevitably point to the great ode on "Intimations of Immortality", which is, of course, central to almost any discussion of Wordsworth".¹³

11 Ibid., p. 299.

12 David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence; the Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 63.

13 Ibid.

Another scholarly critic, Cornelius Howard Patton, also describes Wordsworth's interest in, and affection for children as:

a matter of life-time record, embracing poems both grave and gay, as conspicuous in The Prelude and The Excursion as in short pieces like "The Pet Lamb" and "We are Seven"¹⁴.

Patton devotes the seventh chapter entitled "The Child is Father of the Man" mainly to a discussion of the child's psychology in the broadest sense of the word, as presented by Wordsworth in his poetry.

Wordsworth's views on the psychology of the child constitute a point of interest in the recent analysis presented by John Douglas Howard, Jr.¹⁵ Howard devotes two chapters, the sixth and seventh ("Wordsworth: The Prelude" and "Wordsworth: Poems other than The Prelude") to a discussion of "the child-hero paradigm" which he conceives "more pervasive in Wordsworth than in any other Romantic". This paradigm, he states, not only receives "full poetic expression, but it also underlines and gives direction to Wordsworth's theory of psychological growth".

¹⁴ Cornelius Howard Patton, The Rediscovery of Wordsworth, (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966) p. 138.

¹⁵ John Douglas, Howard, Jr., The Child-Hero in the poetry of Blake, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge and Wordsworth, University of Maryland, Ph.D., 1967.

"In effect", Howard concludes, "his [Wordsworth's] philosophy is given shape by the paradigm".¹⁶ Howard examines the various motifs as they appear in The Prelude, and attempts to detect how Wordsworth's conceptions of his own life and growth are shaped by the child-hero paradigm.

The approach of still another critic, Richard J. Onorato,¹⁷ is also oriented in this direction. In the fifth chapter of The Character of the Poet; Wordsworth in the Prelude, Onorato studies some versions of the child and mother relationship and the role of the truest memory of early childhood. Limiting his analysis mainly to The Prelude, Onorato attempts to explain Wordsworth's behaviour as a child brought up in close contact with Nature, in truly Freudian terms. His study is focused on the search for a significant connection between the child, the mother, death, poetry and Nature.

A more mystical view of the child's presence in Wordsworth's poetry is presented by David Ferry¹⁸ in The Limits of Mortality: An Essay on Wordsworth's Major Poems.

16 Ibid., p. 109.

17 Richard J. Onorato, The Character of the Poet; Wordsworth in the Prelude, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971).

18 David Ferry, The Limits of Mortality; An Essay on Wordsworth's Major Poems, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959).

In his discussion of Wordsworth's poetry, Ferry studies the awareness of man's mortality and Nature's eternal quality, mystically revealed in children who, unconscious of their immortality, are perfectly attuned to Nature.

Although the above-mentioned critics acknowledge the importance of the image of the child revealed in Wordsworth's poetry, and provide a very useful review of the main motifs present in this, theme they do not, with one exception,¹⁹ examine sources which had initiated and influenced Wordsworth's interest in and views of the child. Wordsworth's dependence on his real predecessors, Blake and Rousseau, is but casually noted by the majority of critics.

Among those who consider the relationship between Wordsworth and Rousseau, the most widely known are Emile Legouis, Irving Babbitt and Arthur Beatty,²⁰ all of whom

19 Babenroth, English Childhood.

20 Emile Legouis, "William Wordsworth", The Cambridge History of English Literature, XI, ed. Sir A.W. Ward and A.P. Waller, (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1932) p.93-128; Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company: the Riberside Press Cambridge, 1947), p. 74, 83, 247-250, 277, 279, 284-286, 302-303, 328, 393; Arthur Beatty, William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relations, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1927), p. 17-19, 133-137, 146-149, 243.)

outline the basic similarities and dissimilarities in the ideas of Wordsworth and Rousseau. Most often, however, the discussion of Rousseau and Wordsworth is limited to the comparison between Wordsworth's The Prelude and Rousseau's Confessions, both autobiographical documents.²¹ Consequently, the study of the presence of the child-image in Rousseau and Wordsworth respectively, is nowhere carefully examined.

Similarly, the study of the relationship between the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth is very limited, with merely incidental²² references to, and comparisons between their poetry. Only John F. Danby²³ (The Simple Wordsworth;

21 Herbert Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's Prelude, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 80-81, 138-143, 186-187; David Perkins, Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964) p. 145.

22 Richard Onorato, The Character of the Poet: Wordsworth in the Prelude, p. 202; Martin Price, "The Vision of Innocence", Critics on Blake, ed. Judith O'Neill (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), p. 98; Frederick Pottle, "The Eye and the Object", Wordsworth: Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton University, ed. Gilbert T. Dunklin, (Hamden, London: Archon Books, 1963) pp. 40-41.

23 John F. Danby, The Simple Wordsworth: Studies in the Poems 1797-1807, (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1961), pp. 20-22, 25-30, 33n.

Studies in the Poems 1797-1807) and Harold Bloom²⁴ ("William Wordsworth", The Visionary Company: A Reading in English Poetry), make frequent comparisons between Wordsworth's and Blake's poetry of simplicity and the poet's attitude towards naturalistic humanism. Despite the fact that these studies touch upon the theme of the child powerfully exhibited in the poetry of both Blake and Wordsworth, they do not attempt to establish and state explicitly the influence wielded by Blake over Wordsworth's notions on the child.

The present study will attempt to examine the image of the child and childhood in Wordsworth's poetry, from the aspect of how Wordsworth accepted, rejected or modified the corresponding notions of Blake and Rousseau. The Wordsworth poems which provide the basis for such a comparison are taken from the 1969 edition of Wordsworth's Poetical Works²⁵ which include The Prelude (1850), The Excursion, Notes and Prefaces.

24 Harold Bloom, "William Wordsworth", The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry, (Garden City, Doubleday 1961; London: Faber, 1962), pp. 120-193.

25 Wordsworth: Poetical Works, Introductions and Notes, ed. Thomas Hutchison, rev. Ernest De Selincourt, (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

Chapter II will outline the basic notions on the child held by Blake and Rousseau. Blake's basic ideas as stated in his Songs of Innocence and Experience²⁶ will be reviewed, with particular reference to those ideas which were to influence Wordsworth.²⁷ A similar approach to the basic ideas of Rousseau as outlined in his Emile ou de l'éducation²⁸ will be followed.

26 The Complete Writings of William Blake with Various Readings, ed. S. Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). Richard Ward in Introduction to the Study of William Blake, (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1967) considers the themes that have been derived from Songs of Innocence and Experience as sufficiently illustrating Blake's vision on childhood; S.F. Bolt in "The Songs of Innocence" (1947) states that: "It is only these Songs that Blake has communicated in an unsophisticated form, the 'Divine Vision' which is central to all his work", William Blake; Songs of Innocence and Experience, A Casebook ed; ed. by Margaret Bottrall (Great Britain, Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1970) p. 115.

27 Wordsworth, fascinated by Blake's Song of Innocence and Experience, declared: "There is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott" - quoted by A. Ch. Babenroth, English Childhood, p. 300.

28 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile ou de l'éducation, (Chronologie et introduction par Michel Launay, agrégé de l'université, (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966); William H. Blanchard, Rousseau and the Spirit of Revolt, (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1967), considers Emile as sufficiently illustrating Rousseau's views on the child.

The Chapter II outline summaries of the basic ideas on childhood held by Blake and Rousseau provide the basis for noting the extent to which Wordsworth accepted, rejected or modified the notions of his predecessors. This is the purpose of Chapter III, in which the order of ideas as presented in Chapter II will be followed, viewed from the aspect of their influence upon Wordsworth.

Chapter IV will outline those ideas on childhood which are peculiar to Wordsworth, those ideas which reflect his originality and distinctiveness, his particular contribution to the topic.

Since summaries of the central ideas outlined in Chapters II, III and IV will be presented within these chapters, a brief statement of Conclusion will be adequate to complete this inquiry into the topic.

While in some instances throughout the thesis the influence of Blake and Rousseau upon Wordsworth is assumed or implied, it must be clearly understood from the outset, that it is not the purpose of this inquiry to offer a definitive statement of these influences, complete with evidence to support this contention. References to influences as stated may be subjected to serious reservations.

The study of influences would be a scholarly task beyond the scope of this work and beyond the competency of the author at this time.

It is the fundamental aim of this work rather to establish categories of correspondence and to show their existence.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILD IN ROMANTICISM

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. After a brief introductory note outlining the background of XVIIIth and early XIXth Century thought on childhood, the chapter will present a summary of the basic ideas on childhood held by Blake, as reflected in his Songs of Innocence and Experience. Blake's vision of childhood is not simple, for his mysticism adds several dimensions to his poetry. For this reason it is very difficult to present, in a study of this kind, an exhaustive statement of Blake's notions, analysing them from every aspect.

This chapter will deal only with those themes which are reflected in the poetry of Wordsworth. The second part of the chapter is devoted to a summary of Rousseau's main ideas referring to the child, as presented in the Emile ou de l'éducation. A brief summary and conclusion will complete each section.

1. Introduction - Confusion of the Age:
Child Worship and Lack of Faith in
Childhood Innocence.

Late XVIIIth and early XIXth Century thought regarding childhood was, to say the least, ambiguous and inconsistent. The literary criticism of the period

reflected bizarre and contradictory notions. The critic could in one article classify children together with "fools, cattle [...] and madmen" and then refer to a child's "innocent seraph smiles".¹ Innocence was given lip service, nothing more; truly, the age did not believe in childhood innocence. It had produced and read The Fairchild Family (1818) which asserts that no child "can be said to have a good heart,"² as well as Wordsworth's poetry in which the child possesses almost a sparkle of divinity. The age had created an atmosphere in which only the meek and obedient child, "not the conceited, unteachable, wicked"³ one, was given sympathetic attention. The word "innocence" had been a mere "sentimental cliché" devoid of significance in religious belief and practice, only stylishly accepted in the ideal domains of poetry.⁴ To write a sweet eulogy on a dead

1 Cited by Barbara Garlitz, "The Baby's Debut: the Contemporary Reaction to Wordsworth's Poetry of Childhood", Boston University Studies in English, IV (1960), 85-94, p. 90-91.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 For example, standard anthologies of children's poetry, such as Jane and Ann Taylor, Original Poems, for Infant Minds, (Exeter, 1808, originally published 1804), or The Children's Friend, tr. from the French by M. Berquin (Newburyport, n.d.; originally published 1783).

child or a conventional lament for the lost joy of childhood was considered pleasing and proper, but to take the child or childhood seriously provoked only the critic's astonishment and laughter.⁵

However, this confused philosophical and social climate formed a background against which the works of Blake and Rousseau introduced a new interpretation of childhood, interest which culminated and flourished in the poetry of Wordsworth.

2. Blake.

William Blake can be credited with having rediscovered childhood in its fullest mystical and visionary reality. The vision of childhood underlying his poetry consists of several highly symbolic themes: the child's innocence and divinity, the drastic contrast between the child's world of primary Innocence and the state of Experience,⁶ the notion of the ideal state of Higher Innocence, the role of memories of

5 "Nineteen out of twenty of those, who were asked what they thought of Wordsworth, would answer you with laugh and a sneer. Think of Wordsworth! What should they think of him, but that he was puling nursery rhymester, a rival of Mother Goose". - Quoted by Barbara Garlitz, p. 88.

6 The term taken from the study of Blake by R.T. Gleckner, A Study of William Blake with Various Readings, ed. S. Keynes, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

childhood, the relationship between the mother and the child, and the treatment of death in Blake's vision of Eternity.

It is the purpose of this chapter to list and illustrate these ideas as presented by Blake in Songs of Innocence and Experience, since the majority of these poems contain the most direct and explicit statement of his ideas on the child. The subtitle of Songs of Innocence and Experience indicates the subject of Blake's poetical study. The full title is even more explicit: Songs of Innocence and Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.⁷

It is most practical for the purpose of this study to divide Blake's ideas concerning childhood into two groups: Innocence and Experience (thus following the pattern of Songs of Innocence and Experience). The first part of the present analysis will then be devoted to Blake's concept of Innocence

7 "Blake's theme was the soul of man. From the "Song of Innocence" to "The Ghost of Abel", his aim was to reveal the nature of soul. This is ultimately the concern of every poet. Blake differs from others in that it was his whole concern. For him the soul of man was the epitome of all things. Not only did he see all things reflected in it, but he believed the soul to be the dynamic life of the world, and the world itself to be a reflection, a shadow, of the reality which had its true existence in the soul". Richard Ward, An Introduction to the Study of William Blake, with a new introduction by Richard Ward, Max Plowman (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1967)

(i.e. the child's natural attributes: innocence, joy and divinity, Blake's treatment of the state of being lost and death, and the relation between the mother and the child.) The second part will deal with Blake's understanding of Experience (i.e. the contrasting state of "Experience", and the role of Imagination and memories of childhood). Both states are reflected in Blake's supreme symbol, the child. The third and the fourth part will deal consequently with Blake's criticism of the position of the child in the contemporary social system and Blake's views on child education.

a) The State of Innocence.

(i) The Natural Attributes of the Child: his Innocence, Joy and Divinity.

Blake considered childhood as being the state of happiness, innocence and self-enjoyment, a sunrise, which enables us to see the glory and wisdom of God in Innocence, the original state of the soul.⁸ In Innocence, the child symbolises instinctive, thoughtless life; his joyous innocence is naturally expressed as a spontaneous happiness and

⁸ "Unorganized Innocence An Impossibility. Innocence dwells with Wisdom but never with Ignorance". - A Note on one of the pages of "The Four Zoas". Richard Ward, p.67.

love of life. In the "Divine Image" of Blake's innocence:

(...) Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God, our father dear:
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.⁹

Blake sees all temporal things in the light of Eternity. To him reality is merely a symbol, a faint image, the clear and shining outline of that which he sees through Imagination. From reality only the child comes forth as the privileged symbol of what is eternal.

For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.¹⁰

Thus, in Blake's vision, the child, the lamb and Christ (the source of Imagination and inspiration) become one. It is in the child that Innocence and Joy take their origin and significance.

The child then, possesses "holy" attributes; there is Heaven on his face, his smiles are God's. The child reconciles Heaven and earth. In "A Cradle Song" Blake says:

9 "The Divine Image", Quotations of Blake's poems in my text are from The Complete Writings of William Blake with Various Readings, ed. G. Keynes, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966,) p. 117.

10 "The Lamb", p. 115.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe, once like thee,
Thy maker lay and wept for me,

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee,

Smiles on thee, on me, on all;
Who became an infant small.
Infant smiles are his own smiles;¹¹
Heaven & earth to peace beguiles.

The essence and symbol of infant innocence and joy
is illustrated in the "Infant Joy" poem:

"I have no name:
"I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee?
"I happy am,
"Joy is my name".
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old,
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!¹²

"I am, I exist," says the infant joy, "and I am happy, Happiness
or Joy must be my name". The Piper to whom these words are
addressed, speaks in the final lines the supreme prayer of
the state of Innocence possessed by the child: "Sweet joy

11 "A Cradle Song", p. 120.

12 "Infant Joy", p. 118.

(Christ, Imagination, wisdom) befall thee!". In "Holy Thursday" children led by "grey-headed beadles" "into the high dome of Paul's" cathedral possess "radiance of their own". "Thousands of little boys and girls", compared to "multitudes of lambs",¹³ raise their innocent voices to Heaven. They sing to their Maker whose divinity and innocence is enclosed in themselves.

ii) Blake's Treatment of the State of Being Lost and Death.

Innocence is the state of happiness and joy. In innocence the child cannot really be lost, neither can it find physical death. "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" illustrate this point.¹⁴ In the first of these, Lyca, a little girl of seven, wanders somehow into the sleep of Experience, which is also a desert. The lion, protector of the Lamb, as well as the Angel of Death, removes the little girl to his own land, after divesting her of her slender dress, or, her body of flesh. The parents, alarmed by her disappearance,

13 "Holy Thursday", p. 121.

14 Though these two poems are now included to the Songs of Experience they were first included by Blake to the Songs of Innocence where they complete Blake's vision of Innocence.

wander in anguish over the desert, till they, too, meet the lion. But suddenly the great terror, who has removed their child, appears as "a spirit arm'd in gold"; for they, too, are now dead, and can see that terror is really a blessing. The awful moment passed without their noticing it. They follow the lion, find their daughter unharmed, and live in eternal delight. Thus the girl, being innocent, did not really die; she was only released into the better world of Eternity.

There is no real sorrow or pain in the state of Innocence. The Little Boy in Songs of Innocence lost his father. The night has come, the child "wet with dew" started to cry . But suddenly there appeared "God, ever nigh"; "He kissed the child and by the hand led,/And to his mother brought"¹⁵. In Innocence the child will never be left alone and helpless. This is the time for gaiety and happiness.

iii) The Relation Between the Mother and the Child.

In Songs of Innocence Blake introduces the figure of the mother. The image of the mother as the selfless protector, teacher and refuge of the innocent infant and child is a recurring theme in Blake's poetry. "Nurse's Song", "Infant

¹⁵ "The Little Boy Lost" and "The Little Boy Found", p. 120-121.

Sorrow" and "The Little Black Boy" provide the best evidence of this. The Helpless, naked, piping loud" baby, in the "Infant Sorrow" poem, struggling in his "father's hand's", "stirring against" the swaddling bands, "Bound and weary" finds protection and comfort upon his "mother's breast". The "Little Black Boy" learns from his mother the truths of life:

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east, began to say:

"Look on the rising sun; there God does live,
"And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
"And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
"Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday."¹⁶

The children in "Nurse's Song", spiritually weakened, seek the last refuge in maternal love, care and protection when the long night of Experience slowly but inevitably approaches the sunshine of Innocence.¹⁷ Joyful and merry, the children

16 "The Little Black Boy", p. 125.

17 The nurse cries out to the children laughing on the hill in "Nurse's Song":

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring & your day are wasted in play,
And your Winter and night in disguise.

Home symbolises mother, her warmth, love and care.

developing towards maturity must leave the state of this primary Innocence and face the frightening and painful phase, the state of Experience.

b) The State of Experience

(i) The Contrasting State of Experience.

Experience, for Blake, is a statement of disillusionment. "Corruption lies at the roots of life; cruelty is universal. The innocent lamb is the prey of the lion. Hunger, pain and deceit follow continuously every living creature. Jealousy shadows love; faith appears as man's pathetic refusal to face facts; hope, the illusion pursued when flying in terror from fear."¹⁸ "The Little Boy Lost" in the state of Experience is actually "seiz'd" "in trembling zeal" by the Priest who heard the child wondering how he can love God more than he loves any of his brothers. Standing "on the altar high" the priest punished "a fiend" who dared to "judge/Of our most Holy Mystery":

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain;
They strip'ed him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain;

18 Richard Ward, p. 71.

And burn'd him a holy place,
 Where many had been burn'd before:
 The weeping parents wept in vain.
 Are such thing done in Albion's shore?¹⁹

Experience can destroy even love and affection.

What can be more horrible? In the state of Experience jealousy, cruelty, and hypocrisy stiffen the natural play of affections and turn the child's joy into sadness.²⁰

In "The Chimney Sweeper" a little black thing cries:

"Because I was happy upon the heath,
 "And smil'd among the winter's snow,
 "They clothed me in the clothes of death,
 And taught me to sing the notes of woe.
 /p. 212/

(ii) The Function of Imagination and the Memories of Childhood.

The state of Experience appears to be the crucial test of the child's soul. Once the child has reached this stage, the soul may go forward to Imagination²¹ progressing to Higher Innocence, or it may go back to the memory of childhood. The return to primary Innocence destroys the value

19 "A Little BOY Lost, p. 218.

20 William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience, ed. M. Botrall, (Bristol, MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1970, p.151.

21 "The world of imagination is the world of eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall go after death of the vegetated body. The world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation is finite and temporal". -- "Identity, Prose Fragments", Poems of William Blake, ed., W.B. Yeats (Massachusetts, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 251.

of the individual and impedes further development. One has to mature to achieve Higher Innocence, that is, happiness resulting from the sympathetic acceptance of Experience, the true wisdom, the final cause of man's existence. Retreat to childhood, resulting from the refusal to accept reality, passivity deepened by visions regained through memory, destroys man's value.

This process is particularly striking in the poems "Echoing Green" and "Nurse's Song". The character Old John pictured in the second stanza of "Echoing Green" contrasts drastically with the previously described spiritual innocence and gaiety of children playing in the brilliant sun. Instead of accepting and sublimating Experience, moving thus toward the state of mature Higher Innocence, Old John dwells helplessly on past memories. In Blake's mind, Old John exemplifies man's greatest tragedy, lack of vision, i.e. imaginative creativity. Likewise, the nurse in Songs of Experience confesses: "the days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,/my face turns green and pale". Locked in her own being, always lamenting the passage of time, she finds no joy in a rediscovered past nor does she attain the bliss of Higher Innocence.

Experience, though always encountered with pain and loss of original childish happiness may, through Imagination, bear a new happiness, a happiness purified of instinct and ignorance, the joy of mature understanding and conscious

acceptance of reality, the wisdom of Higher Innocence. This is the way out of Experience, the state which transforms the joy and happiness of childhood into jealousy, cruelty and deceit, engendering the state of misery.

c) Blake's Criticism of the Position of the Child in the Contemporary Social System.

Blake's tragic vision of the manacles imprisoning and destroying Innocence was not only a personal matter. It was a criticism of contemporary society.²² In "Holy Thursday" for instance, Blake paints the pathetic picture of children in a rich and fruitful land, who, "Fed with cold and usurious hand", live in utter misery:

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak & bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns;
It is eternal winter there.

/p.212/

With a deep compassion and revolt, Blake describes the chartered streets of London, where:

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

/"London" p. 216/

In this London of Experience, the "home" of the children of "The Chimney Sweeper", "Holy Thursday", and "The School Boy",

22 William Blake: Songs of Innocence, p. 151.

"The Youthful Harlots Curse";

Blasts the new born Infant tear,
And blights with plagues the
Marriage hearse.

The little Chimney Sweeper is bound to this shackled society; his mother has died and left him in the care of the father who incarnates the reality of the state of Experience. So the child, deprived of all security, is thrown beyond his years into a traumatic experience with which he is not prepared to cope. The child chimney-sweeper, the soldier, and the harlot represent the most cruelly oppressed; they are the victims of a "system based on fear and hatred instead of brotherhood and love".²³ Each of them, in his own way, illustrates the pharisaic benevolence of society. "The chimney-sweeper's condemned life is supported by the churches";²⁴ the soldier's death is the result of the politics of the court; and the fate of the harlot provoked by the laws. Society, such as Blake saw it, is a direct product of the widespread attempt to perpetuate the state of primary childish Innocence.

d) Blake's Attitude Towards the Education of the Child.

Blake believed that "unless man passed out of Innocence through Experience to Imagination, society could be nothing but a congregation of disparate units, each warring

23 Ibid., p. 152.

24 Ibid.

in defense of its own life"²⁵. That is why Blake completely disregarded the opinions of the Deists as fatal, and also the views of Natural Religionists who argued that the state of Experience and its effects could be avoided by rational education. The rationalists wanted to preserve the childish innocence in adolescence and maturity. This theory would work on condition that the various facts of life, particularly sex, were not kept in mystery. Thus, ignorance, the basic cause of painful self-consciousness, could be eliminated.²⁶

Blake, himself entirely self-educated, certainly was not advocating ignorance. He simply felt that self-development ought to be placed above the mental bondage to which school-children submit. In "The School-Boy" Blake describes a joyful summer morning "when birds sing in every tree", "And the skylark sings" with the boy playing outside.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
Oh! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.²⁷

The children, "born for joy", should rather learn from "tender plants" and "springing day"; they should not be kept in "sorrow

25 R. Ward, p. 72.

26 Ibid., p. 71.

27 "The Schoolboy", p. 124.

and care's dismay", spending "an anxious hour" in the classroom with books forcing them to reason. Self-development among the beauty of external Nature helps, in the development towards maturity, to accept Experience and achieve the ideal state of friendship and wisdom, the stage of Higher Innocence.

Seeing more clearly than others, Blake perceived that "if the grown individual could persist beyond childhood without self-consciousness, all his actions would be rapacious; or to express the matter in his own phraseology, that the self, instead of becoming emanative, would be shut up in selfhood unable to know friendship or brotherhood, without which [...] "Man is not"²⁸.

Summary and Conclusions

Although the foregoing is but a partial examination of Blake's major ideas on childhood, the poems examined show that the image of the child, unified with God, occupied a distinctive place in the poet's mystical thought. The child, in Blake's vision, possesses highly universal qualities, since all human beings, according to Blake, are in some ways children of the Divine Father. In the child this union with God is intensified to the extent where the child itself becomes the

28 R. Ward, p. 72.

supreme symbol of his Creator. The child, the lamb, and Christ, all embody true innocence and joy. Thus the child transcends into Eternity, of which it becomes the part and symbol.

In his vision, Blake divides the cycle of human life into two consecutive stages of growth: Innocence and Experience. Innocence is the time of pure spontaneous happiness, joy and love of life. This state reveals the original soul of the child reflecting God's glory and love. It is because of its close union with Christ that the child possesses these holy attributes; the child actually reconciles Heaven and earth. When in Innocence, the child cannot really be lost, neither can it die. When lost, it will always find its heavenly Father. Death is not destructive; it only releases the child into the better world of Eternity. In the state of Innocence the child is continually loved and protected by God and the child's mother, its first selfless teacher, refuge and friend.

Experience is the next stage which every child must encounter in its development toward maturity. This stage sharply contrasts with bright and joyful Innocence. Here pain, deceit and cruelty ruin the natural play of affections, of love, hope and happiness. Experience becomes the crucial test of the child, of each individual. The child can either

accept this painful reality and, through Imagination, achieve the ideal state of Higher Innocence; or it can retreat from reality into the memories of childhood. In this case, the child is completely lost to itself and to society.

Society, according to Blake, is a direct product of the widespread attempt to prolong the state of primary childish Innocence. Blake's criticism of the contemporary social system and its pharisaic benevolence focusses on child labour and the child's miserable living conditions.

Blake's attitude towards the child's education is marked by revolt against abstract rational knowledge gained from books. Self-development amidst Nature is what Blake recommends.

These are Blake's main ideas regarding childhood and the child. As was noted previously, there are other interpretations of Blake which take into consideration the different aspects and works. The present study has been limited to those aspects and poems which find their reflection in Wordsworth's poetry on childhood.²⁹

²⁹ Richard Ward outlines the listed themes: spontaneous happiness of the child (p. 40); threefold image of Innocence: the lamb, the child and the Saviour of the World (p. 43); the presence of the child in the painful state of Experience (p.70-73); and the role Imagination and Memory play in the child's development (p. 74).

3. Rousseau.

Child education was carefully studied and pioneered by another figure who influenced Wordsworth's youthful mind, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In Emile ou de l'éducation, Rousseau approached education in the broadest sense of the term, expressing the inadequacy of his contemporary society. Since France was then passing through the Neo-Classical era, Rousseau's prescription for the remaking of French society called for the abolition of social formalism, so clearly manifested in the attitude towards the child. "There is perhaps no better illustration of this conviction than his various attacks on formality, custom, and dogma in Emile."³⁰

Rousseau believed that the child is naturally good, and that only the artificiality of the world and worldly conventions can corrupt him. The child's education is an inner development dictated by his nature; that is why formal education should be eliminated. The child must not be destroyed in an effort to make him a man of the world because the child's values supersede the values of the world's artificiality. These are Rousseau's basic assumptions clearly and powerfully stated in Emile. Stating his views on the natural education and the qualities of the child, he expresses a

³⁰ William H. Blanchard, Rousseau and the Spirit of Revolt, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 152.

philosophy characterized by totally radical, revolutionary tendencies.

a) Rousseau's Views on the Nature of Man.

There are in Rousseau many different definitions of "nature" and what he considers to be "natural". In the first chapter of Emile, when discussing general educational principles, Rousseau arrives at the final basic definition of "nature". He compares the child's education with plant culture. The child is born weak, helpless. As the delicate plant needs the care of the gardener, so the child needs education which overcomes his initial limitations.

The plant possesses its own "tendencies", laws of growth, and ways of reacting to its environment, and these may be modified by the skillful gardener. So the child has a distinctive nature. His inclinations, habits, instincts form the raw material for the educator. These "dispositions", as Rousseau calls them, are the constituent elements in the child's "nature". The nature of the child is shown by what he wants or is disposed to do. His nature does not consist of a set of characteristics fixed permanently, but rather of a potential capable of development. Consequently, by "natural" Rousseau means that which follows original nature, the inborn impulses.

- b) The Natural Attributes of the Child:
His Instinct, Intuition and Goodness.

The child represented for Rousseau the best example of the precivilized natural man; thus what he most strongly emphasized were the natural gifts of the child, his instincts, intuition and goodness. These are most precious attributes and must be safe-guarded at all costs, for they are always right. There is no original sin in the child's heart; the child can become good or bad depending on how he is directed. Of his central doctrine and deep-rooted beliefs Rousseau wrote:

Posons pour maxime incontestable que les premiers mouvements de la nature sont toujours droits: il n'y a point de perversité originelle dans le coeur humain; il n'y se trouve pas un seul vice dont on ne puisse dire comment et par où il y est entré. La seule passion naturelle et l'homme et l'amour de soi-même, ou l'amour-propre en soi ou relativement à nous est bon et utile; et, comme il n'y a point de rapport nécessaire à autrui, il est à cet égard naturellement indifférent; il ne devient bon ou mauvais que par l'application qu'on en fait et les relations qu'on lui donne. Jusqu'à ce que le guide de l'amour-propre, qui est la raison, puisse naître, il importe donc qu'un enfant, rien en un mot par rapport aux autres, mais seulement ce que la nature³¹ lui demande; et alors il ne fera rien que le bien.

Rousseau's philosophy conflicted directly with the Eighteenth Century Calvinistic and Puritan doctrines on the child, which maintained that the child is depraved by nature, and can be

31 "Livre Second", Emile ou l'éducation, p. 111.

saved by education. Rousseau, on the contrary, put the greatest stress on the inherent goodness of the child. This goodness when developed according to the simple principle of primitive nature, makes the perfect man out of a child, the man of reason, naturalness and individuality. The simple laws of nature and how they influence and build up the character of the child are the main questions discussed in Emile.

c) Natural Education of the Child.

Rousseau distinguishes two basic elements which determine the development of the child to maturity. First, is "the education of nature", the instinctive impulse of growth of body and mind. Second, is "the education of man", the guidance which aims at developing the faculties prompted by impulse, the faculties which enable the child to find his place in society. According to Rousseau, as long as these two factors co-operate, education results in the harmonious development of the child's nature. Thus, a natural education is an education which forms the child by developing to the utmost all the faculties which enable him to employ effectively the basic impulses of his nature, in order to adjust himself to a complex social environment.

- d) "The Education of Man" - The Role of the Tutor.

The tutor plays a very important role in Rousseau's theory of child education. He becomes the child's father, mother, educator, moral mentor, a friend who guides the development of the child's natural faculties. The tutor helps the child to find truth and inspires him to seek it. He should encourage the child to exercise his body and senses, but to keep his mind idle as long as possible. A flood of words which infiltrates the child's mind when studying history or geography only depresses him. In the early years, the child is totally receptive, ready to learn. His brain can be likened to soft clay in which to imprint the essential principles necessary for his journey through life.

Rousseau objected to the custom of teaching children to reason as if they were small adults. He recognized that the child has his own way of thinking or perceiving things; he will not absorb abstract ideas. The child needs practical examples³² which appeal more to his senses. In Rousseau's view, the senses are original to man, and reason is secondary.

32 Rousseau, when teaching Emile to think and reason about nature, applies the Socratic idea that the teacher's role is to raise questions, not to give answers, as well as the Baconian idea of the importance of observation and discovery.

Nature would have children be children before they are men. If we insist on perverting the order of things, we will bear fruit which will be neither ripe nor flavoured, destined to decay.

Indeed, the most dangerous period in human life lies between birth and the age of twelve. It is the time when errors and vices spring up, while as yet there is no means of destroying them. When the means of destruction are ready, the roots have gone too deep to be pulled out. If the infant sprang at one bound from its mother's breast to the age of reason, explains Rousseau,

... l'éducation qu'on leur donne pourrait leur convenir; mais, selon le progrès naturel, il leur en fait une tante contraire. Il faudrait qu'ils ne fissent rien de leur âme jusqu'à ce qu'elle eût toutes ses facultés; car il est impossible qu'elle aperçoive le flambeau que vous lui présentez tandis qu'elle est aveugle, et qu'elle suive, dans l'immense plaine des idées, une route que la raison trace encore si légèrement pour les meilleurs yeux. La première éducation doit donc être purement négative.³³

Primary education should consist not in teaching virtue or truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and from the spirit of error. Free from prejudice and habit, there would be nothing in the child to counteract the effect of the tutor's labours.

33 "Livre second", Emile, p. 112-113.

Rousseau goes on to say that even if the child does not study books "l'espèce de mémoire que peut avoir un enfant ne reste pour cela oisive; tout ce qu'il voit, tout ce qu'il entend le frappe, et il s'en souvient; il tient registre en lui-même des actions, des discours des hommes; et tout ce qui l'environne et le livre dans lequel, sans y songer, il enrichit continuellement sa mémoire en attendant que son jugement puisse en profiter."³⁴ Rousseau protests against book-learning. He attacks, as especially dangerous, mystery stories and fairy tales, since the excitement they evoke is unhealthy and unnatural; the child may easily be led astray. Thus, according to Rousseau, early education should be totally negative as far as the abstract knowledge obtained from books is concerned.

e) The Beneficial Influence of Rustic Surroundings.

The child finds the richest and enduring source of meaningful expressions in close contact with external Nature, in rustic surroundings. There, society's artificiality, formalism and rigidity are forgotten. Active life, merriment and hard work take their place. The child may fully enjoy his freedom when playing on green fields, under the cluster

34 Ibid., p. 138-139.

of trees near a fresh spring.³⁵ Rousseau strongly advocates early ramblings in the countryside which, together with undisciplined reading, evoke an active curiosity in the child.

At the height of the Age of Reason, Rousseau recognized that the education of the child is, above all, an emotional experience, a romance with discovery, without which education becomes as dry and cold as a marriage of convenience.³⁶ Indeed, so great was the influence of Rousseau's educational doctrine on his times and future generations, that it brought the focus of public attention to the child and his problems, treating them thenceforth with an attention and seriousness unknown until then.

Summary and Conclusions.

The foregoing brief presentation of Rousseau's main ideas on the child and his education shows that Rousseau's treatment of this subject was very radical compared to the notions and ideas of the preceding century. Rousseau recognized and emphasized the natural attributes of the child: his instincts, intuition and goodness. Rousseau believed that these can be corrupted only by the artificiality and hypocrisy

35 William H. Blanchard, p. 152.

36 Ibid.

of the world. Education, thus, should be natural, not formal and scholastic. It should develop the natural instinctive needs of the child, forming him into an individual perfectly adapted to society.

During the early phase of education, the tutor, the child's first guide and friend, should keep the child's mind idle. The child cannot absorb abstract ideas; he should therefore be offered practical examples. Consequently, knowledge obtained from books, especially those affecting the child's imagination, should be eliminated. Rustic surroundings have a beneficial influence since the child finds there freedom and friendship with the beauty of external Nature.

These are Rousseau's central ideas on the child and his education.³⁷ The subsequent analysis of Wordsworth's poetry on childhood will attempt to determine to what extent the poet accepted, rejected or modified the notions of his predecessors as outlined in this chapter.

37 W.H. Blanchard considers the aspects which have been treated herein as sufficient to illustrate Rousseau's views on the child and his education.

CHAPTER III

NATURE AND THE CHILD

This chapter has two main purposes: to state and illustrate Wordsworth's ideas on the child and to outline the extent to which Wordsworth accepted, rejected or modified the notions on childhood put forth by Blake and Rousseau. The similarity of Wordsworth's ideas to those of his predecessors will be noted, but it must be emphasized that similarity does not necessarily indicate imitation. The order of sequence of the preceding chapter which outlines the ideas of Blake and Rousseau will be followed.

After an introduction, the chapter will deal with Wordsworth's notions on the natural attributes of the child: his divinity, spontaneous wisdom, innocence, joy, and goodness, the notions based on both Rousseau's and Blake's fundamental assumptions. First, it will present Wordsworth's concept of Nature; it will then outline Wordsworth's ideas on the child's innocence, divinity, wisdom and joy. Finally, the chapter will be devoted to a study of Wordsworth's notion of the natural education of the child. This notion includes the study of the "education of Nature", the "education of man", as well as the relationship between the mother and the child and the criticism of the premature usage of books. All these themes are essentially developed from

Rousseau's and Blake's main ideas.

The moral function of external Nature, first noted by Rousseau, will explain the beneficial influence Nature has on the child. The study of the contrast between the child's primary innocence and the state of experience, the significant similarity existing between Blake and Wordsworth, will be outlined in the latter part of the chapter. Closely connected with the thesis of this chapter is Wordsworth's criticism of the position of the child in the contemporary social system; the theme which makes his approach significantly similar to that of Blake. This chapter will end with a statement of summary and conclusions.

1. Introduction.

"Wordsworth's surprise and resentment would surely have been provoked had he been told that, at half a century's distance and from an European point of view, his work would seem, on the whole, though with several omissions and additions to be a continuation of the movement initiated by Rousseau".¹ The world into which Wordsworth was born was deeply influenced by Rousseau; it is understandable that the

¹ Emile Legouis, "William Wordsworth", The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XI, (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1932) p. 93. Legouis goes on to emphasize, however, Wordsworth's originality: "If he thought like others, he always thought by himself. He gives us the impression that, had he lived alone on a bookless earth, he would have reached the same conclusions".

young poet should have been influenced by the French philosopher. This was in addition to another formative influence, the influence of Blake. Wordsworth, however, manifested his own originality and distinctness, not in the simple and naive absorption of current ideas, but in his creative response to these and other influences which had determined his thought and action.

Essentially, Wordsworth was a poet of humanity; his compassion opened his mind and heart to the innate beauty of all men and women, finding no one too weak or too ugly to draw into the scope of his poetic vision. Hence, one encounters in Wordsworth's poetry the simple, long-suffering and lonely figures of shepherds, wronged women, and "joyous irresponsibles".² There was, however, one class of people for whom Wordsworth felt deeper interest: children. His affection for them was sheer passion, a devotion that was to last a lifetime. This is explicitly indicated in the little poem which the poet placed at the head of the group referring to childhood:

² Florence Marsh, "People", Wordsworth's Imagery; A Study of Poetic Vision, (London: Archon Books, 1963), p. 65.

My heart leaps when I behold
 A rainbow in the sky:
 So was it when my life began;
 So it is now I am a man;
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die!
 The Child is father of the Man;
 And I could wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety.³

All the biographers speak of Wordsworth's deep affection for his own children, an affection which is clearly reflected in his poems.⁴ The intimate and understanding experience with actual boys and girls enabled Wordsworth to picture such an image of childhood:

3 "My heart leaps up when I behold", Wordsworth: Poetical Works, With Introduction and Notes, ed. Thomas Hutchison, rev. Ernest de Selincourt, (London, Oxford, New-York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 62.

4 Poems referring to Catherine, an unusually attractive and original girl, whose death during the absence of both parents brought a crushing blow upon the home:

Surprised by joy - impatient as the Wind
 I turned to share the transport - Oh! with
 whom
 But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
 That spot which no vicissitude can find?
 Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my
 mind -
 But how could I forget thee? Through what
 power,
 Even for the least division of an hour,
 Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
 To my grievous loss! - That thought's return
 Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
 Save only, one only, when I stood forlorn,
 Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
 That neither present time, nor years unborn
 Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
 With light upon him from his father's eyes!
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath his heart,
 And unto this he frames his song:
 (...)
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.⁵

In much of Wordsworth's poetry on childhood we can distinguish two main traits: one Rousseauistic, treats the child from the psychological point of view, the other plainly Blakean, is characterized by the presence of highly mystical and metaphysical elements. These two are perfectly blended together and, added to Wordsworth's own original approach to the child, they give a distinctive mark and quality to Wordsworth's poetry on childhood.

2. The Natural Attributes of the Child: His
 Divinity, Spontaneous Wisdom, Innocence,
 Joy and Goodness.

In general, in his views on the child, Wordsworth seems to follow, whether consciously or not, Blake's main

⁵ "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", VII, p. 461.

division between the states of Innocence and Experience. Similar to Blake, Wordsworth gives us two main images of the child: one happy and joyful, the other sorrowful and sad. The "natural" attributes of the child, however, remain in both states the same.

a) Wordsworth's Concept of Nature.

There are in Wordsworth, as in Rousseau, two basic meanings of "Nature".⁶ Wordsworth refers to the nature of man as the expression of his innate tendencies, habits and instincts. However, Wordsworth focusses his attention more on the other meaning of "Nature", the one only briefly noted by Rousseau. This is "Nature" implying the beauty of the external world. Rousseau merely acknowledged the beneficial influence of the rustic surroundings, emphasizing the freedom the child finds in the world of trees and flowers. Wordsworth carries Rousseau's idea of "the return to Nature" into the realm of the religious, finding in external Nature the spiritual presence of the Deity.

Thus, whenever Wordsworth uses the word "Nature", he means all that which is in harmony with the laws of the Universe, the inborn instinctive qualities and urges of man, as well as the unspoilt features of his surroundings.

⁶ See Chapter II, p. 33.

b) The Child's Divinity.

Wordsworth virtually transplants Blake's major metaphorical symbol of the child, the lamb and Christ, all embodying one real truth, joy and innocence, when he asserts that nowhere is the union with God more apparent than in the heart of the child. As the landscape in "Tintern Abbey", by virtue of its unchanging quality, symbolises the living presence of the divine, so the child becomes the spiritual reflection of this divine permanence. In Blake's vision, the child becomes the supreme symbol of the Creator; through his divinity, the child reflects Eternity of which it becomes a part.

Wordsworth develops this idea of the divine quality of the child more explicitly in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", "Lucy Gray", "The Danish Boy", and the sonnet "It is a Beauteus Evening, Calm and Free". The children in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" who "sport upon the shore" (l.170), of the sea, seem to enter into a divine union with it. The grown man, on the contrary, although sometimes he visits the sea "in a season of calm weather" (l.165), most of the time is forced to remain "inland far" (l.166). But the children are always upon the shore, the living embodiments of the same divinity.

Hence in a season of calm weather
 Though inland far we be,
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.
 /Ode. 1.165-170, p. 462/

Because of the presence of God in it, the child possesses that divine quality which enables him to enter and become a part of the divine in Nature.

In "Lucy Gray", Wordsworth spiritualizes the little girl as a permanent mystic presence on the lonesome wild, where

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
 And never looks behind;
 And sings a solitary song
 That whistles in the wind.
 /1.60-64, p. 65/

The girl is described in images of wild and innocent animals - the fawn, the hare, the roe - and is associated with the unconscious growth of natural things; she is the "sweetest thing that ever grew/Beside a human door" (1.7). Being a part of Nature, the vehicle of the divine, the little girl becomes also part and parcel of the same Deity.

In "The Danish Boy", Wordsworth emphasizes the child's deep union and harmony with Nature, with God, by transforming the boy into "A Spirit of noon-day", and by consistently describing him in imagery suggesting objects and processes of Nature. He wears a "vest of fur (...)/ In colour like a raven's wing", which "in the storm 'tis fresh and blue/

As budding pines in spring"; "His helmet has a vernal grace,
/Fresh as the bloom upon his face" (l.27-34, p. 131).

In the sonnet "It is a Beauteus Evening, Calm and
Free", the speaker walks by the sea-shore with the child.

The sea is described as "the mighty Being",

And doth with his eternal motion awake,
A sound like thunder - everlastingly.
/1.6-8/

The child, however, seems to be "untouched by solemn thought"
(l.9), because the moment is not an unusual one for him; the
child is a part of this large, rolling power embodies in the
sea:

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being in thee when we know it not.

In this sonnet the principle of the Deity indwelling in
children, similar to Blake's notion, becomes fully articu-
lated. For Blake, the child and Christ are one. Wordsworth
also believes that the deeper self of the child is made up
of heavenly attributes. Indeed, if one were to look for a
visible reflection of God and His "close touch" in the
world, one would surely find it in the face and heart of
the child. One cannot touch the body of a child without
being made conscious that God is indwelling therein.⁷

⁷ S.F. Gingerich, "Wordsworth", Essays in the
Romantic Poets, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924),
p. 138.

According to Wordsworth, this presence of God in the child finds its immediate and most intense expression in the child's natural innocence, joy, goodness and wisdom.

c) The Child's Spontaneous Wisdom.

Wordsworth plainly asserts that the divine presence in the child, his close contact with Heaven,⁸ makes his intuitions a prime source of all spiritual wisdom. Stating this, Wordsworth conveys and enlarges Rousseau's main belief in the child's innate instinctive insight.

In "Anecdote for Fathers" for instance, a father asks his little boy whether he would rather be on the "smooth shore" of Kilve "by the green sea,/ Or at Liswyn farm?" (1.31-32, p. 67). The boy prefers Kilve, but cannot say why. When pressed for a reason, he happens to catch sight of a weather-cock, and replies: "'At Kilve there was no weather-cock;/And that's the reason why'" (1.53-54). The inconsequence of the boy's reply is instructive. "The child's unhesitating answer, grounded on irrational and inarticulate feelings, here stands as a rebuke to the mental processes of

⁸ The idea of pre-existence which immediately comes to mind is a unique characteristic of Wordsworth himself and as such will be treated separately in the third chapter.

the age, tethered and strained as they are by the restless desire of rational explanation".⁹ The father acknowledges his son's superiority when he says:

O, dearest, dearest boy! My heart
 For better lore would seldom yearn,
 Could I but teach the hundredth part
 Of what from thee I learn.
 /1.57-60/

This is what Wordsworth means when in the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" he calls the child:

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy Soul's immensity;
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal
deep,
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,
 Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
 /VIII, p. 461/

This higher instinctive knowledge possessed by the child, results from his deep union with God whose presence can be "felt" in external Nature.

d) The Child's Innocence, Joy and Goodness.

As stated previously, Wordsworth repeats Blake's affirmation that the child represents the living source

⁹ David Perkins, The Quest for Permanence: the Symbolism of Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 71-72.

of Innocence and Joy. Wordsworth's poem "Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora" almost completely restates the central ideas of Blake's "A Cradle Song". Wordsworth writes of the unconscious smiles of the child:

That smile forbids the thought; for
 on thy face
 Smiles are beginning, like the beams of
 dawn,
 To shoot and circulate; smiles have there
 been seen;
 Tranquil assurances that Heaven supports
 The feeble motions of thy life, and cheers
 Thy loneliness: or shall those smiles be
 called
 Feelers of love, put forth as if to explore
 This untried world, and to prepare thy way
 Through a strait passage intricate and dim?
 Such are they;
 /1.66-75, p. 137/

Wordsworth even adopts Blake's idea of the child reconciling Heaven and earth. Wordsworth explains that notion more clearly in the fifth book of The Prelude where he says:

Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
 That hath more power than all the elements.
 I guess not what this tells of Being past,
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come,
 But so it is ...
 /Prelude V.508-512/

He goes on to describe childhood as "that dubious hour, that twilight", making his meaning finally clear by calling childhood an

(...) isthmus, which our spirits cross
 In progress from their native continent
 To earth and human life,
 /Prelude V. 536-539/

Wordsworth thus following Blake, evidently considers childhood as a bridge between God and man.

Developing further Blake's image of an innocent, joyful child, Wordsworth gives such a description of the little girl in "Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old":

Loving she is, and tractable, though wild;
And Innocence hath privilege in her
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes
And feats of cunning;

/1.1-5, p. 63/

Wordsworth's poem "The Mother's Return" fully illustrates the child's natural, instinctive joy:

Her joy is like an instinct, joy
Of kitten, bird, or summer fly;
She dances, runs without an aim,
She chatters in her ecstasy.

/1.20-25, p. 64/

At this point, Wordsworth reminds one also of Rousseau and his belief in the natural instincts of goodness and joy. When Wordsworth asserts that the child is made up of heavenly attributes, he also follows and repeats Rousseau's conviction that the child is naturally good, free from original sin. The children in "Beggars" are described:

(...) so blithe of heart, seemed fit
For finest tasks of earth or air:
Wings let them have, and they might flit
Precursors to Aurora's car,
Scattering fresh flowers; though happier far
I ween,
To hunt their fluttering game o'er rock and
level green.

/1.31-37, p. 152/

The child's goodness and joy are natural. Wordsworth enlarges Rousseau's thought, stating that goodness and joy result not only from the instinctive impulses of the child's own natural tendencies and instincts, but also from his close and vital harmony with external Nature, the vehicle of the divine.

Thus, instinctive goodness, joy, innocence, divinity and wisdom, says Wordsworth, sharing with Blake and Rousseau their fundamental tenets regarding childhood, form the natural attributes of the child. These attributes are fully displayed in the natural education of the child and the beneficial influence of external Nature on the child.

3. Natural Education of the Child.

Wordsworth's fascination with the ideas of Rousseau is apparent in his approach to the education of the child. With several changes and additions, Wordsworth's theory of natural education is formed of two basic elements: the "education of nature" and the "education of man".¹⁰

¹⁰ "Rousseau distinguishes two basic elements which determine the development of the child to maturity. First is "the education of nature" - the instinctive impulse of growth of body and mind. Second is "the education of man" - the guidance which aims at developing the faculties prompted by impulse, the faculties which enable the child to find his place in society", Chapter II, p. 35.

But when Rousseau focussed all his attention rather on the "education of man", assigning the greatest power of developing the natural, instinctive needs of the child to the tutor, Wordsworth attributes this power to the mother and to Nature alone. By "Nature", he means the innate tendencies governed by the same universal principles as external Nature.

a) The "Education of Nature".

Rousseau recognized the beneficial influence of external Nature.¹¹ According to him, what the child could find among Nature's "silent overgrowings" to use Wordsworth's term, was the peace, harmony, and freedom necessary for the development of the child's natural instincts and impulses, the final cause of his education. Likewise Blake, in his criticism of the traditional approach to education, found the superior values in the outside forms of Nature. What he recommended was the child's self-development among "the tender plants" of Nature.

Wordsworth accepts both Rousseau's and Blake's ideas on the beneficial influence of external Nature, and carries them much further into the realm of the religious.

¹¹ The child [according to Rousseau] finds the richest and most-lasting source of meaningful impressions in close contact with Nature found in rustic surroundings, see Chapter II, p. 38.

Wordsworth finds in Nature the spiritual presence of God¹² which makes external Nature a vital source of higher knowledge, superior to that obtained merely through the medium of books and men. Wordsworth assumes that the influence Nature wields over the child when left to her sole workings, is supreme. Nature responds to the child's natural impulses, furnishes him with the beautiful aspects of life, gives him utmost pleasure, peace and security. One moment spent in the heart of Nature, says the poet in "To My Sister":

(...)now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every
pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will
make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

12 "It is interesting to notice that when Wordsworth began to write The Prelude he still delighted in conceiving of Nature not merely as the expression of one divine spirit, but as in its several parts animated by individual spirits who had, like human beings, an independent life and power of action. This was obviously his firm belief in the primitive paganism of his boyhood (v. II, 329-50, 405-27); and long after he had give up definite belief in it, he cherished it more than poetic fancy. The passages which illustrate this are chiefly found in the readings of an earlier M.S. (c.f.P.app. crit. to I, 351, 490), but it is at least suggested in the text of II, 139)" - see Ernest de Selincourt, 'Notes' to The Prelude", p. 251.

And from the blessed power that
 rolls
 About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our
souls:
They shall be tuned to love.
 /1. 25-35, p. 378/

But primarily, Nature has a great moral influence which shapes the young mind and heart of the child. The all-important function of Nature will now be discussed at length.

i) Moral Function of Nature.

Morality can be learned from books and precepts, but knowledge so gained is merely intellectual. It is not integrated into the personality.¹³ Following the basic assertions of Hartley, Wordsworth poetically illustrates Rousseau's approach to education as the child's emotional discovery and adventure. A child, in contact with Nature, sometimes lives a memorable experience which exerts on him a lingering influence. Wordsworth calls such experiences "vivifying spots of time", the moments of the "visionary gleam" when the child's

¹³ In 1799 David Hartley, a disciple of Locke, published Observations on Man, His Frame, Duty and Expectations, in which he went beyond Locke's theory. He wanted to give a physiological explanation of the power of association in terms of the resonance of sympathetic vibrations within the nervous system and to show how this associative power fosters morality. This latter part of his work was what influenced Wordsworth.

whole being seems somehow transformed and sublimated through the sudden, most intimate contact with Nature.

Rousseau asserted that education was but a romance with adventure, emphasizing most strongly the emotional element. Wordsworth develops further this idea when describing the glorious function of those "spots of time". In the twelfth book of The Prelude, while discussing the powers of Imagination Wordsworth exclaims:

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue,
/Prelude XII 208-210/

He is referring to a virtue which penetrates, enables the individual "to mount/When high, more high, and lifts him (...) when fallen". This imaginative experience, "this efficacious spirit"

(...) chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and
how,
The mind is lord and master - outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such
moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood.
/Prelude 1.219-225/

These "spots" can be hours of stillness reached through a calm and gradual process:¹⁴

¹⁴ Marian Mead, Four Studies in Wordsworth, (Haskell House, New York: Publishers of Scholarly Books, 1964), p. 20.

(...) that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,-
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 /Tintern Abbey l.41-46, p. 164/

Or "this efficacious spirit" descends upon the child with an overwhelming suddenness which Wordsworth compares to a "flash". "I felt", says Wordsworth of his own childhood:

Gleams like the flashing of a shield: - the
 earth
 And common face of Nature spake to me
 Rememberable things;
 /Prelude I.1.586-588/

The glory and greatness of the human spirit are made known to the child in such moments:¹⁵

(...) when the light of sense
 Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
 The invisible world.

The "Low breathings [...] and sounds/Of undistinguishable motion" pursued the young Wordsworth after he had stolen a bird from someone else's snare. From this encounter the boy carried:

(...) 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.
 /Prelude I. 1.392-400/

15 Ibid., p. 21.

Such an experience happened through and in Nature, entered the child's memory where it remained a dormant "idea of reflection",¹⁶ ready to influence his conscious life if called up by the power of association. Such an experience, which Rousseau would advocate because of its emotional impact, an experience which Hartley called original, can, in Wordsworth's view, become a guide in the subsequent life of the child. The association of such an experience with beauty and sublimity necessarily directs the child towards virtue.¹⁷ This is the way by which external Nature imposes her moral influence upon the growing child.

Let us, however, note a significant difference between the kinds of morality Rousseau and Wordsworth had in mind. This difference results from the previously noted disparity between Rousseau's emphasis on the "education of man" and Wordsworth stressing the "education of Nature", meaning particularly external Nature. From Rousseau's point

¹⁶ Locke held that consciousness is a compound of two sets of "ideas": "ideas of sense", or the sensations of the moment, and "ideas of reflection", or memories of former experiences rising again through association with the previous experience.

¹⁷ In fact, according to Empiricist theory, one's character at any moment of life is the whole of one's past experiences, which remain as "the beauteous forms of things" ("Tintern Abbey" l.22, p. 164), and inevitably will inspire one to perfection in life.

of view, the child should be carefully guided by the tutor, who by practical examples, using praise and punishment, would teach the child to distinguish between what is morally good or bad. Wordsworth, in his philosophy, goes much further. Everything that he says about children, childhood, his own childhood, and the moral influence of Nature, indicates that his concern was not with the morality of "doing good", but of "feeling good".¹⁸ The child who does good is, according to Wordsworth, outwardly an image of goodness:

Full early trained to worship seemliness,
This model of the child is never known
 To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
 Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
 As generous as a fountain; selfishness
 May not come near him, nor the little throng
 Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;
 (...)
 For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,
 Pity the tree. Poor human vanity,
 Wert thou extinguished, little would be left
Which he could truly love;
 /Prelude V.1.298-331/

What the child needs, says Wordsworth, is to be fed with life from Nature, not supplied with an armour of rules and regulations. What he needs is a vital perfection of being which is fed from within - something made visible not only

¹⁸ This term is used by Alec King in his discussion of Wordsworth's vision and morality in Wordsworth and the Artist's Vision, (University of London, the Athlone Press, 1966), p. 83.

in the world of Nature, but in all great works of art.¹⁹ This is what Wordsworth means by "feeling good". In short, it has nothing to do with effort and will as emphasized by Rousseau; it is the result of an inner experience of love, the child's communion with and becoming "tuned" to Nature.

Nature's guidance and influence on the child is, according to Wordsworth, so immediate and prominent because most children are but the purest emanations of Nature's spirit. Here again, Wordsworth goes deeper than Rousseau in his semi-mystical vision of the child. Children, for Rousseau, embodied the best available examples of the unspoilt, pre-civilized natural man. For Wordsworth, they embody the finest, almost divine emanations of Nature.

Wordsworth's philosophy was optimistic; he believed that God works through His creation to promote happiness, love and true knowledge. An experience of the beauty of Nature is the best education the child can get; it will engender his feelings of benevolence towards men, and eventually lead to a sense of union with Nature, God and the Universe.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 80-103.

- b) The "Education of Man"; the relation between the mother and the Child.

For Rousseau, the "education of man" meant the careful guidance which aims at developing the innate dispositions of the child which enable him to find his place in society. This guiding role Rousseau attributed to the tutor, the child's greatest friend, teacher and protector. The tutor, in Rousseau's view, was to accomplish the task of both the parental home and scholarly education. Blake, in his vision, endowed the mother of the child with the most powerful abilities to teach the child the vital truths of life. For Blake, it is the mother who performs the role of the child's most faithful unselfish protector, refuge and teacher.

Wordsworth, as stated before, finds the same superior shaping power mainly among the "silent overgrowings" of Nature. Nevertheless, he significantly develops Blake's image of the mother, treating her not only as the child's protector, but as a vital link between the child and Nature.

In The Prelude Wordsworth describes how, at its mother's breast, the infant receives her love and care:

(...) blest the Babe,
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to
 sleep,
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his
 soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
 /Prelude II 1.234-237/

There the child is surrounded, almost engulfed, by its mother. She is the most important influence in its early life.

Wordsworth, continuing Blake's image of the mother says that the child, no "outcast (...) bewildered and depressed" (Prelude II 261), conscious only of a hovering, enveloping love, seems utterly safe and so "sinks to sleep".

In short, the child resting on its mother's lap, in its happiest moments seems to enter the cosmos watched over by the protecting and guiding love of its mother. The mother is "the heart/And hinge of all our learning and our loves", says Wordsworth. She is the first creative influence which, combining the effort of Rousseau's tutor, shapes the young child. Ernest de Selincourt comments that "the praise he [Wordsworth] accords his mother in this respect is an implicit criticism of Rousseau's 'tutor', with his artificial manipulations of nature's lessons".²⁰ The mother's guidance, in Wordsworth's view, follows purely the nature instincts of the child, preparing him for future²¹ education by Nature and Nature alone. In the fifth book of The Prelude, Wordsworth

20 Ernest de Selincourt, 'Notes' to The Prelude, p.267.

21 Occurring, according to Wordsworth, about the age of three. See: "Nature's Education", p. 148.

says of his mother:

Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He,
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent
 milk,
 Doth also for our nobler part provide,
 Under His great correction and control,
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food;
 (...)

This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 From anxious fear of error or mishap
 And evil, overweeningly so called;
Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce; rather loved
 The hours for what they are, than from regard
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
 Such was she -

/Prelude V.1.270-285/

Later, when the child does not necessarily need the immediate care of its mother, external Nature takes over the function of the mother. Now Nature puts forth a loving care; "for all things serve them" (the children) as mother serves her child:

(...) them the morning light
 Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
 And them the silent rocks,

/Prelude VIII 1.63-65/

In a rejected passage of the eighth book of The Prelude^{21A} Wordsworth traces the growth of the child's mind developing first under the mother's and then under Nature's influence.

21A The Prelude, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, pp. 551-59, 159-72.

In the first stage, by the mother's prompting and later by its own accord, the infant learns to take delight in the simplest objects of Nature: the moon, "a little rill/Of water sparkling down a rocky slope/By the wayside". When these become familiar, "things of Nature's rarer workmanship" - the peacock's fan, "the rainbow or the Cuckoo's shout/An echo, or the glow-worm's fiery lamp," "Attend the Child when he can stir about". This may be only when the child has grown three years "in sun and shower".²²

Thus Nature seems to take over from the mother when the infant becomes the child. Then, Nature becomes "both law and impulse"²³ to the child who from now on:

In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.²⁴

When the child is unified with "mute insensate things" Nature offers the little child the same love and creative ability the mother had provided.²⁵ Wordsworth imagines the

22 "Three Years She Grew", 1.1,p. 148.

23 Ibid., 1.8.

24 Ibid., 1.10-13.

25 However, not all children submit to Nature's influence. Those whose response to Nature is deepest are peasant children. The poems "We Are Seven", "Idle Shepherd Boys", "Lucy Gray", "To a Highland Girl", "Alice Fell", "Beggars" refer to those children.

mother as the bridge linking the child with its greatest formative influence, Nature. In so doing, Wordsworth surpasses the significance given to the mother by Blake and to the tutor by Rousseau.

c) Criticism of the Premature Usage of Books .

When expressing his views on the education of the child, Blake placed self-development of the child above the mental bondage to which all school-children submit. He criticized the reasoned knowledge obtained through books, emphasizing the fact that it is the beauty of external Nature which helps the maturing child to accept the state of Experience and achieve the ideal state of friendship and wisdom. Rousseau also conceived the child's education as natural self-development, free from the unnecessary burden of abstract knowledge with which books are filled. Rousseau's protest against book-learning focusses especially on the influence of mystery tales, which in his opinion, only excite and confuse the child producing a highly undesirable effect.

Wordsworth, generally speaking, follows both Blake's and Rousseau's point of view, when placing the child's natural self-development prior to the development of his mind. In recognizing the prime role of natural instincts and of external Nature, Wordsworth accepts and enlarges the ideas of his predecessors. This idea, found in The

Prelude, "Expostulation and Reply", and many other poems, is stated most explicitly in "The Tables Turned". There the poet exclaims:

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

/l. 9-16, p. 377/

The child does not learn about two worlds: one of unchanging abstractions, of mental stuff which books are filled, and the other world of natural objects. He learns about one single world where the triangles are "the stars of heaven", the altitudes "the crag/Which is the eagle's birth-place" and the mountain with a history of violence "inscribed as with the silence of the thought".²⁶ This is Nature, not books, which gives the child essential knowledge, for:

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless -
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
That all the sages can.²⁷

26 John Jones, The Egotistical Sublime; A History of Wordsworth's Imagination, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), p. 80.

27 "The Tables Turned", l.17-24, p. 377.

In his criticism of the knowledge obtained from books, Wordsworth makes, however, one very important exception. Contrary to Rousseau, Wordsworth attributes a significant influence for good to the tales of wonder and magic. In the fifth book of The Prelude, he states:

A gracious Spirit o'er this earth presides,
 And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
 It comes, to works of unreprieved delight,
 And tendency benign, directing those
 Who care not, know not, think not what they
 do.

The tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby, romances; legends, penned
 For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;
 Fiction, for ladies of their love, devised
 By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
 By the dismantled warrior in old age,
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes
In which his youth did first extravagate,
These spread like day, and something in the
 shape
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.
 /Prelude V. 1.491-505/

In contrast to Rousseau, Wordsworth insists that such books form "the firmest ally of Nature in educating the child, stimulating his imagination, saving him from vanity and self-consciousness (354-69), keeping alive his sense of wonder when it tends to lose its hold upon him (...) and softening the effects of Nature's sterner lessons".²⁸

28 Ernest de Selincourt, p. 267.

In short, Wordsworth in his view on child education accepts and significantly develops Rousseau's notion of the "natural education" of the child, when he admits the great moral influence of external Nature. Wordsworth also enlarges Blake's idea of the relationship between the mother and the child so powerfully revealed in the child's educational process, when he considers the mother to be the vital link between the child and Nature. Finally, Wordsworth shares Blake's and Rousseau's resentment of books. He excludes, however, the positive influence of the tales of wonder and magic which, in Wordsworth's view, are beneficial.

4. The Contrast Between the Child's Primary Innocence and the State of Experience.

It has been stated at the beginning of this chapter that Wordsworth's poetry on childhood can be considered in the light of Blake's major division of human life into two states: the states of Innocence and Experience. In general, Wordsworth's image of the child possesses these features characteristic of Blake's treatment of the child. There is a resemblance between the images of the child in the poetry of Wordsworth and Blake. One is the happy, joyful, innocent child, living in harmony with Nature and all her creatures. This is the child in the state of primary Innocence. There is, however, a second picture of the forlorn, unhappy child,

whose tears and pain remain unanswered. This is the child in the state of Experience.

Innocence, for Blake, is the time of purest spontaneous happiness, joy and love of life. Likewise, the majority of children in Wordsworth's poetry are portrayed as happy, thoughtless and joyful creatures. They greatly resemble those in Blake's state of Innocence. The children are happy; their union with Nature being complete, they need not fear any harm or injustice. They can race with butterflies, visit sparrow's nests, listen to the enchanting voice of the cuckoo; well-loved and taken care of, they are but the living embodiments of "mirth and joy". Like the two idle shepherd-boys who, sitting "Beneath a rock, upon the grass", "as happy as the day", "wear the time away", when:

Along the river's stony marge
 The sand-lark chants a joyous song;
 The thrush is busy in the wood,
 And carols loud and strong.
 A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
 All newly born! both earth and sky
 Keep jubilee, and, more than all,
 Those boys ...²⁹

It is natural for the child to be good, innocent and joyful. Virtually repeating Blake, Wordsworth asserts, that these attributes result from the child's close contact with the Divine Presence.

29 "The Idle Shepherd Boys", 1.1,12,21-22, 23-30, p. 66-67.

In the state of Innocence the child is under the loving guidance first of his mother, then of Nature. Wordsworth continues Blake's vision when he asserts that in this state the child is safe, happy and never lost. For Blake, the child lost in Innocence always finds its heavenly Father; death only releases the child into Eternity. Similarly, for Wordsworth the child when lost or dead becomes part of Nature.

This pattern is very plain in "Lucy Gray" which nearly repeats Blake's thought expressed in the "Little Girl Lost" and the "Little Girl Found". Lucy, "the solitary child" (1.4, p.65), was sent by her father to town, to carry a lantern to light her mother's way home through the snow. She never reached town; her parents searched for her in vain. They found only her footprints leading to the middle of a bridge and disappearing there suddenly. She may not after all have "died" in the ordinary sense, but she may have been transformed into a part of immortal Nature. The girl disappeared in a storm,

— Yet some maintain that to this day
She is the living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

/1.57-60/

"The Idiot Boy", the hero of still another poem, sent to town by his mother to bring the doctor, becomes lost. His mother spends a wild night, being constantly torn between the love for her child and the utter despair, anxiety and fear that he might be dead. Finally she finds her son:

(...) near the waterfall,
Which thunders down with headlong force,
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,
As careless as if nothing were,
/1.347-350, p. 103/

Wordsworth states that the child in Innocence cannot really become lost. This is the time of real joy and happiness, not sorrow.

Wordsworth continues to reflect Blake's thought on the state of Experience when in the poem "The Pet-Lamb" he states:

'Alas, the mountain-tops that look so
green and fair!
I've heard of fearful winds and darkness
that come there;
The little brooks that seem all pastime
and all play,
When they are angry, roar like lions for
their prey.
/1.53-56, p. 69/

It is truly the Blakean image of the approaching state of Experience. Though happy and joyful, the child must leave the state of his primary Innocence and encounter another world, that of painful Experience. In Blake's vision, in the state of Experience injustice, deceit and cruelty rule; there the child is lost, sad and miserable.

The same picture of the child prevails in a considerable number of Wordsworth's poems. This can be considered as similar to the Blakean state of Experience.

The poem "Alice Fell or, Poverty" gives a sad picture of the little orphan girl. While driving in a coach in the blowing rain the poet stopped to discover the source of the ceaseless cry he heard:

Forthwith alighting on the ground,
'Whence comes', said I, 'this piteous moan?'
And there a little Girl I found,
Sitting behind the chaise, alone.

'My cloak!' no other word she spake,
But loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her innocent heart would break;
And down from off her seat she leapt.

/l.16-24, p. 64/

The little girl too early entered the painful state of Experience where grief and pain prevail.

Likewise, the little Norman Boy, a ragged homeless creature from "company remote and every playful joy", forced to serve "tending a few sheep and goats"³⁰ was robbed of the pure innocent happiness natural to the child. Ruth, another of Wordsworth's heroines, thoughtless and free, "An infant in the woods" (l.12, p. 153) before her time has come, was dragged into the evil, false world of Experience.

30 "The Norman Boy", l.3-4, p. 72.

Enchanted by an irresponsible and weak youth, she followed him to be left mercilessly in despair. Wordsworth evokes a truly Blakean image when he states:

An innocent life, yet far astray!
And Ruth will, long before her day,
Be broken down and old:
Sore aches she needs must have! but less
Of mind than body's wretchedness,
From damp, and rain, and cold.
/l.229-234, p. 155/

Blake had asserted that Experience is the crucial test of the true value of the child as an individual. He can either accept and sublimate it by using the power of Imagination, or he can retreat into past memories, thus losing his individuality and worth. Wordsworth's approach to the "escape" from the painful state of Experience is also twofold; he apparently accepts and distinctly develops Blake's notion of the supreme function of Imagination, while also considering the power of childhood memories. Wordsworth maintains that the power of Imagination will save the child from the pain of Experience, and in adulthood, will lead him to the creative vision, the highest happiness, equivalent to Blake's notion of "Higher Innocence". The significance Wordsworth attaches to the memories of childhood, however, totally contradicts Blake's idea; Wordsworth treats these memories as leading not to destruction, but as cooperating with Imagination in creating the "vision splendid". As such, this subject will be

entrance into Blake's superior state of Higher Innocence.

For Blake, this state is characterized by utmost happiness, mature understanding, and human sympathy. Wordsworth seems to adopt the idea entirely when he sees the final vision of the mature individual drawing from the progress of Imagination:

Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.
/Prelude XIV l. 203-205/

To summarise briefly, Wordsworth's general presentation of the theme of the child bears a striking similarity to that of Blake. Wordsworth's poetry referring to the child can be considered as reflecting those ideas which characterize Blake's approach: the child's presence in two totally disparate states: one of Innocence, another of Experience. Innocence is the time of heavenly joy and happiness in harmony with God and Nature, whereas Experience presents the painful state of the child's misery and sorrow.

Both Blake and Wordsworth treat the state of Experience as the crucial test of the child's real value; the test in which one can succeed or fail. There are two ways out of Experience: one leading to higher happiness, the other to the destruction of the child's individuality and value. These ways employ two main human faculties: Imagination and memory. It is through the creative power of Imagination that the child achieves the state of greatest

happiness in eternal union with man, God, and the Universe. Because Wordsworth in his approach to the function of memory differs from Blake, this theme will be treated separately in the third Chapter.

5. Criticism of the Position of the Child
in the Contemporary Social System.

Wordsworth's criticism of the evils present in the contemporary economic and social systems and the position of the child, is significantly similar to Blake's protest against the pharisaic benevolence of society and the situation of the child, pitilessly abused and living in total misery.

a) Child Labour.

Criticising the negative influence brought to the country by industrialism, Wordsworth laments the fouling of streams. He is, however, conscious that there is something much worse than the pollution of rivers.³¹ This is the pollution of humanity, especially of youthful humanity. Wordsworth truly shares Blakean pain provoked by the lot

³¹ Enid Welsford, Wordsworth: Salisbury Plain; A Study in the Development of Wordsworth's Mind and Art, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), p. 99.

of the poor London sweeper, when in The Excursion, through the lips of the Wanderer, he speaks of child labour in factories:

(...) Can the mother
 thrive
 By the destruction of her innocent
 sons
 In whom a premature necessity
 Blocks out of the forms of nature,
 preconsumes
 The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up
 The infant Being in itself, and makes
 Its very spring a season of decay!
 /VIII. 1.288-291/

At the summons of the factory bell:

(...) Men, maidens, youths,
 Mother and little children, boys and girls,
 Enter, and each the wonted task resumes
 Within this temple, where is offered up
 To Gain, the master-idol of the realm,
 Perpetual sacrifice.
 /VIII. 1.179-185/

Is there any more severe indictment of child labour than the following?

Quiet and calm. Behold him- in the school
 Of his attainments? no, but with the air
 Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.
 His raiment, whitened o'er with cottonflakes,
 Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.
 Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,
 His respiration quick and audible;
 And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam
 Could break from out those languid eyes, or
 a blush
 Mantle upon his cheek.
 /VIII 1.305-314/

In the poem "London" Blake portrays an unhappy crying infant thrust into the shackled society; similarly Wordsworth

portrays the child who suffers an unjust lot:

A Little-one, subjected to the arts
Of modern ingenuity, and made
The senseless member of a vast machine,
Serving as doth spindle or a wheel;
/IX 1.158-161/

b) Poor Conditions in the Village.

The Solitary in The Excursion shares the Wanderer's just indignation but gets him to admit that it is not only the townsmen who suffer from poor conditions. The over-worked, poverty-stricken, ignorant rustics share the same fate.³² Wordsworth evidently shares Blake's deep compassion and revolt against the pharisaic benevolence of society and the misery of children. Their ways in a rich and fruitful country-village are, in Blake's picture, "fill'd with thorns", since there is the "eternal winter"³³ of poverty there.

The same image prevails in Wordsworth's village, where:

(...) shoals of artisans
From ill-requited labour turned adrift
Sought daily bread from public charity,
They, and their wives and children-happier
far
Could they have lived as do the little birds
That peck along the hedge-rows, or the kite
That makes her dwelling on the mountain rocks!³⁴

32 Ibid.

33 Blake, "Holy Thursday", p. 212.

34 The Excursion, l. 559-565.

There, Wordsworth asserts, where poverty brings on "a petted mood/And a sore temper", it is "a rueful thing to see the looks/Of the poor innocent children". Parents, forced by their miserable poverty, send their children to industrial centers, believing that by this sacrifice both children and country will benefit. Sometimes they succeed, as in the case of Richard Bateman, who

(...) was a parish-boy - at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings,
pence,
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours
bought
A basket,³⁵ which they filled with pedlar's
wares;

With this basket on his arm "the boy went up to London," where he:

(...) found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous
rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel
floored
With marble,³⁶ which he sent from foreign
lands.

Most often, however, the sacrifice was made in vain, since the fate awaiting the poor youngsters was similar to that of Luke, at first a happy Nature child, who also was sent to town:

35 "Michael", 1.258-264, p. 107.

36 Ibid., 1. 266-270, p. 109.

(...) in the dissolute city gave himself
 To evil courses: ignominy and shame
 Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
 To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.³⁷

Wordsworth gives us a most compassionate and moving image of a crying mother who sent away her only child so that misery could bypass him:

Where art thou, my beloved Son,
 Where art thou, worse to me than dead?
 Of find me, prosperous or undone!
 Or, if the grave be now thy bed,
 Why am I ignorant of the same
 That I may rest; and neither blame
 Nor sorrow may attend thy name?³⁸

In short, Wordsworth's indignation directed against the drastic changes brought to the country by industrialism, with child labour robbing the innocent creatures of their natural happiness and the poor conditions in the village where children suffer their miserable lot, all strikingly resemble Blake's criticism of the contemporary social system and the position of the child caught within that system.

Summary and Conclusions

In the light of the above analysis of Wordsworth's concept of Nature and the child, certain conclusions may be

37 Ibid., 1.444-447.

38 "The Affliction of Margaret", I, p. 92.

drawn regarding the extent to which Wordsworth accepted or modified the basic tenets of Blake and Rousseau. The most obvious characteristic of Wordsworth is that he enlarges upon the notions on the child or childhood as stated by his predecessors. Wordsworth responded to their central ideology with reference to childhood, and contributed to the fuller poetical understanding of the child and his organic union with Nature.

Wordsworth shares with Blake and Rousseau their fundamental assumptions about the nature of the child when he considers the child as instinctively good, joyful, innocent, wise and divine. Wordsworth transplants and develops Blake's major symbol of the child, the lamb and Christ, all embodying the harmonious co-existence, and a source of innocence and joy, when he finds the same joyful unity between Nature, the vehicle of the divine, and the child, Nature's pure emanation. Wordsworth totally accepts Blake's vision of the child as reconciling Heaven and earth when he imagines childhood as the isthmus leading from earth to Heaven.

Finding in Nature the spiritual presence of the Deity with whom only the pure-hearted simple child shares the deepest communion, Wordsworth carries Rousseau's doctrine of a "return to Nature" into the realm of the religious. The divine Presence in the child, according to

Wordsworth, makes the child's intuitions a most important source of his superior spiritual wisdom. On this point, Wordsworth enlarges Rousseau's belief in the child's natural instinct, intuition and insight, as well as Blake's conviction that God indwells in the child's heart.

Wordsworth follows the ideas of Blake and Rousseau on the education of the child, treating education as the natural self-development of the child, an emotional adventure, free from scholastic and formal learning. Wordsworth, however, extends Rousseau's thought on the natural education of the child, attributing the greatest shaping power not to the tutor, but to the child's mother and the beneficial influence of external Nature.

Wordsworth enlarges Rousseau's recognition of the beneficial influence of rustic surroundings when he considers Nature to be the vital source of the essential knowledge from which the child can learn the basic truths of life. Wordsworth goes much further than Rousseau into the realm of child psychology when he attributes to Nature a great moral influence. This influence, states Wordsworth, affects the child in such a way that the child feels goodness; Rousseau's tutor was only teaching the child, using the means of praise and punishment, to distinguish between deeds morally good or bad.

The role Wordsworth attributes to the mother surpasses even the significance given her by Blake. Blake considers the mother simply as the protector and teacher of the child, whereas Wordsworth shows her as the vital link between the child and Nature, the real formative influence of the child.

Wordsworth follows and accepts the criticism of the premature usage of books in the child's early education, expressed both by Blake and Rousseau. He makes, however, a significant exception for the tales of magic and wonder which, in Wordsworth's view, stimulate the interest and Imagination of the child.

In general, Wordsworth's views on the child are permeated with Blake's major distinction between the child in the states of Innocence and Experience. This division, though not marked explicitly, persists in Wordsworth's poetry on childhood; it might be, however, independent from Blake's thought. Nevertheless, the similarity is highly significant.

The vast part of Wordsworth's poetry on childhood pictures the happy, innocent, joyful and merry child, strikingly similar to Blake's child in the state of primary Innocence. The child, both in Blake and Wordsworth, when in Innocence, cannot really be lost, nor can it die. The child is always found; when dead, it is only released into

the better world of Eternity.

The child in Blake's state of Experience also finds its counterpart in Wordsworth's poetry. This child is deeply unhappy, lost, forlorn and miserable; its tears and grief remain unanswered. Neither Blake nor Wordsworth leave the child in this terrible state; both of them foretell the brighter future awaiting the child, achieved when using the power of Imagination or memory. Wordsworth admits, following Blake's assumption, that it is through the creative power of Imagination that the child may arrive at the state of full happiness, resulting from human understanding and union with God.

Another significant similarity between the views of Blake and Wordsworth is their ardent protest against the position of the child in the contemporary social and economic systems.

There is considerable value in comparing the main ideas on childhood of Wordsworth, Blake and Rousseau in a study of this kind, for it is in their general characteristics that they are similar. Wordsworth's ideas on the child can be viewed as an extension and refinement of the basic ideas of his predecessors.

Chapter IV will examine those ideas of Wordsworth which are in contrast to those of Blake and Rousseau, peculiar to Wordsworth himself.

CHAPTER IV

WORDSWORTH'S ORIGINALITY

This chapter will first review Wordsworth's notions on the child and childhood which are in marked contrast with the ideas of Blake and Rousseau. These notions are specifically: the attitude towards the function of memories of childhood, and the role of silence and loneliness in the child's contact with Nature. The chapter will then review those ideas on the child which are peculiar to Wordsworth alone and which set him apart from his predecessors. These ideas are: Wordsworth's theory of pre-natal existence and his treatment of the element of fear in the child's imaginative development.

1. The Function of Memories of Childhood.

As previously indicated, both Blake and Wordsworth envisage the way which can lead the child out of the painful state of Experience. They both agree that through the powerful faculty of Imagination, the child is transported into a higher state of superior happiness resulting from sympathetic understanding of life, love of man and God. In Blake's vision, however, there is still another path which tempts the desolate child caught in the state of Experience: the retreat to the memories of childhood. According to Blake,

this path leads to the inner destruction of the child. At this point Wordsworth ignores Blake's idea completely. In contrast with Blake, Wordsworth treats the memories of childhood as another means, in addition to Imagination, of retaining child-like simplicity, innocence and joy, in the world of cruel Experience. These memories prolong the child's sensitivity, perceptiveness, clarity of vision and natural joy.

Wordsworth states his theory explicitly in "To H.C." wherein, musing on the future of the child, he states:

I thought of times when Pain might
 be thy quest,
 Lord of thy house and hospitality;
And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
 But when she sate within the touch of
 thee.
 O too industrious folly!
 O vain and causeless melancholy!
Nature will either end thee quite;
Or lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee, by individual right,
 A young lamb's heart, among the fullgrown
 flocks.

/1.14-24, p. 70/

Evidently Wordsworth, talking about the "times when Pain might be thy quest", "And Grief, uneasy lover", pictures the state of Experience. There, the pure and innocent child will inevitably find its home. Wordsworth foresees two alternatives for the future awaiting each individual; either through the memories of childhood will he lengthen out his "season of delight", retaining "A young lamb's heart", or

nature¹ "will end" him "quite". Without these memories, the child will be vulnerable to the evil forces at work and will finally fall prey to them. These are the memories of childhood which "preserve" all that is precious in the child, "by individual right", because every individual possesses his own particular memories.

Wordsworth's views on the significance of the memories of childhood totally contradict Blake's idea, and, in doing so, contribute to Wordsworth's own originality and distinctiveness. Actually, Wordsworth's concept of the beneficial influence of memory results directly from the deep impression his own childhood made on him. Those memories of childhood² became a most significant factor in Wordsworth's

1 In this context Wordsworth uses the purely Rousseauistic meaning of nature i.e. the instinctive growth in accordance with the laws of the Universe.

2 Herbert Lindenberger in his On Wordsworth Prelude distinguishes several ways in which memory functioned for Wordsworth. It was, he says "an end worthy of itself through vivid and pleasing quality of early memories; a way of apprehending knowledge through its ability to reveal the truth of inward states, an instrument of grace through its ability to shed the influence of an idyllic past upon an impoverished present and future, and a force in the conquest of time through its ability to fuse events from diverse periods with imaginative power, thus reconstructing the conventional order of time", p. 142.

poetry. Wordsworth declares that the poet's function is to reflect upon, and express, what the child merely experiences.³ The whole weight of Wordsworth's theory of poetry rests upon the poetic memory by which the adult relives past experiences:

A tranquillising spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days

Which yet have such self-presence in
my mind,

That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being.

/Prelude II. 27-33/

By means of memory and Imagination, the child can pass safely through the dangers of Experience to adulthood. The loss of sacred childhood vision, the greatest pain and disaster in one's life, may be prevented by the power of memory, especially the poetic memory which derives poetry "from emotion recollected in tranquillity".⁴ In this process, memory becomes highly creative; it unifies diverse images of the past and imposes a new order of time (the present for the past). Memories of childhood experiences release emotional energy which creates a powerful vision profoundly influencing and bettering the individual. The Wordsworthian

³ John Jones, The Egotistical Sublime: A History of Wordsworth's Imagination, p. 90.

⁴ Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.

doctrine is in marked contrast with Blake's vision of the child led by memory to destruction.

2. The Role of Silence and Solitude in the Child's Contact with Nature.

Wordsworth's idea of the role of silence and solitude apparently results from his rejection of Blake's idea that the happiness of the child is greatest when he is surrounded by his playing companions or mother. In Blake's vision, the only case when the child is solitary is when he is lost, miserable and unhappy. Neither did Rousseau advocate solitude for the child; Rousseau professed the beneficial influence of the blessed mood of loneliness only at the end of his life. "Beloved solitude", he sighed, "beloved solitude where I still pass with pleasure the remains of a life given over to suffering".⁵

In contrast with the views of his predecessors, Wordsworth attaches much significance to the silence and solitude of the child. He maintains that solitude, silence

⁵ Fragment de L'Art de jouir, quoted by I. Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, p. 302-303.

and loneliness,⁶ Nature's "three ministering spirits",⁷ give the child the fullest feeling of his holy communion with the divinity resting in Nature.

This concept is reflected in many poems of which the Lucy series is the most convincing. "Lucy Gray", the classical nature-child, solitary, has previously been mentioned. Wordsworth in describing her, states:

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wild moor,
- The sweetest thing that every grew
Beside a human door!
/1.1-8/

6 "It is surprising to find that Wordsworth uses 'alone' in the sense of 'solitary' some one hundred and fifty times in his poetry; 'solitary' (excluding The Solitary in The Excursion), about seventy five times; 'lone', 'lonely', 'lonesome', 'loneliest', 'loneliness', approximately two hundred and fifteen times, but employs 'silent' or 'silence' some three hundred and fifty times." See, Raymond D. Havens, "Solitude, Silence, and Loneliness in the poetry of Wordsworth", Wordsworth and Coleridge, ed. E. Griggs (New York: Russel & Russel Inc., 1962), p. 15.

7 Ibid., p. 12.

There she remained, in the "wild moor" and "lonesome wild", a phantom-girl, singing her "solitary song". Through physical death, the girl who lived in the everlasting presence of Nature, became herself part and parcel of Nature.

The Lucy Poems share this preoccupation with perfect solitude discovered in a complete relationship with environment. "She Dwelt among Untrodden Ways" presents Lucy as a single jewel well set:

A violet by a mossy stone
 Half hidden from the eye.
 - Fair as a star, when only one
 Is shining in the sky.
 /1.5-9, p. 86/

"A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" imagines her as "part of the primary forms of Nature in an eternal cosmic movement":⁸

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
 With rock's, and stones, and trees.
 /1.7-8, p. 149/

"Strange Fits of Passion", implying the child's ethereal remoteness, is also brilliantly and indirectly evocative of solitude.⁹

Strange fits of passion have I known:
 And I will dare to tell,
 But in the Lover's ear alone,
 What once to me befell.

8 John Jones, p. 73.

9 Ibid.

When she I loved looked every day
 Fresh as a rose in June,
 I to her cottage bent my way,
 Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
 All over the wide lea;
 With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
 Those paths so dear to me.

(...)

What fond and wayward thoughts will
 slide

Into a Lover's head!
 'O mercy!' to myself I cried,
 'If Lucy should be dead!'

/1.1-12,24-28, p. 86/

"Three Years She Grew" pictures a profound relationship between the solitary child and the outside world of Nature:

'The floating clouds their state shall
 lend
 To her; for her the willow bend;
 Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motions of the Storm
 Grace that shall mould the Maiden's
 form
 By silent sympathy.

/1.19-24/

The girl in the "Solitary Reaper" is "single", "solitary", "alone"; her "melancholy" song breaks "the silence of the seas" (1.1-8, p.230). The solitary girl, in her perfect communion with Nature, becomes the symbol expressing the whole mystery of human existence.¹⁰

¹⁰ Wordsworth, Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities, ed. Gilbert T. Dunklin (London, Hamden; Archon Book, 1963), p. 40.

Although "The Danish Boy" does not belong to the Lucy Series, it also impressively embodies a spirit of eternal youth and solitude dwelling peacefully:

Between two sister moorland rills
 There is a spot that seems to lie
 Sacred to flowerets of the hills,
 And sacred to the sky.
 And in this smooth and open dell
 There is a tempest-stricken tree;
 A corner-stone by lightning cut,
 The last stone of a lonely hut;
 And in this dell you see
 A thing no storm can e'er destroy
 The shadow of a Danish Boy.
 /I, p. 131/

In this highly stylized Lucy setting:

The Danish Boy walks here alone;
 This lovely dell is all his own.
 /II , l.21-22/

The boy is the maker of music too fine for human ear, the music expressing his perfect sympathy and contact with the life surrounding him:¹¹

A harp is from his shoulder slung;
 Resting the harp upon his knee,
 To words of a forgotten tongue
 He suits its melody.
 Of flocks upon the neighbouring hill
 He is the darling and the joy;
 And often, when no cause appears,
 The mountain-ponies prick their ears,
 - They hear the Danish Boy.
 White in the dell he sings alone
 Beside the tree and corner-stone.
 / IV /

It seems that it was Wordsworth's own sensitivity to silence which led him to the discovery of the significant

¹¹ Jones, p. 71.

role which solitude and loneliness can play, as the mystic roads guiding one to the very heart of the divine in Nature.¹² Wordsworth remembered his own childhood, when, he held an "unconscious intercourse" with the beauty of external Nature, always:

In November days,
When vapours, rolling down the valleys,
 made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
'Twas mine among the fields both day and
 night
And by the waters all summer long.
 /Prelude I. 442-451/

It was only in solitude that he felt strongly the sentiment of being "as the oneness and the joy of life"; only then could he feel the proximity of the "visible" and "invisible" worlds.

Guided by such an experience, Wordsworth discovered that the child and the natural scene form two elements

12 "Wordsworth's love of solitude and lonely places has none of the self-conscious and self-admiring sentimentalism of the eighteenth century graveyard poets, the wistful backward glance of the picturesque travellers, or the introspective exhibitionism of later romantics who nourished their morbid egoism with the untamed wildness and sublimity of mountain solitudes", Raymond D. Havens, p. 21.

mutually complementary; by their silent dialogue they understand each other perfectly. Wordsworth believed that "The silence that is in the starry sky"¹³ is more than mere lack of sound; the "lengthened pause/Of silence" introduces "immortality, conjoined impressions of sound and sight in the celestial soil of Imagination".¹⁴ Wordsworth maintains that, in silence there is "Music of finer tone [that is sound]; a harmony (...) though there be no voice (...) A language not unwelcome to sick hearts".¹⁵

In "Three Years She Grew", Nature's promise to the little girl is that, when she is made Nature's own, "hers shall be (...) the silence and the calm/Of mute insensate things" (l.17-18). Virtually contradicting corresponding views of Blake and Rousseau, Wordsworth maintained that silence was a power, an anchor of permanence, which together with loneliness and solitude, in a world of flux, belong to those "eternal things" wherein the child can find his deepest joy and rest.

13 "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle", l. 163, p. 163.

14 Preface 1815, Prose Works, ed. Knight, (London, 1806, v. II), p. 215.

15 The Excursion, II, l. 710-716, p. 611.

3. Wordsworth's Theory of Pre-Natal Existence.

As stated in the preceding chapter, when characterizing a child poetically, Wordsworth emphasized one feature in particular, the natural attribute of the child: his spontaneous joyfulness.¹⁶ Fascinated by the child, his natural happiness, innate creative power and superb ability to experience a "visionary gleam" when in Nature, Wordsworth found the answer to all these seemingly unexplainable questions in his theory of pre-natal existence.¹⁷

In "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" Wordsworth states his views:

16 "Address to My Infant Daughter, Dora", "The Mother's Return", "Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old" and other poems.

17 "The doctrine of preexistence is as old as the religion of Egypt and the philosophy of the Hindu sages. It is widely prevalent in the Far East today, where it is usually associated with belief in the transmigration of souls (metempsychosis). It was a part of early Pythagorean philosophy of the Greeks, and is reflected in the writings of Plato, who taught, or at least implied, that the intuitive ideas of space, time, cause, substance, sight, God, are learned in a previous state of being, and that human knowledge is only a recollection of some other world". (see the Meno and the Phaedrus). Cornelius Howard Patton, The Rediscovery of Wordsworth, (New York: Gordian Pres, Inc., 1966), p. 157.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar:
 Not in entire forgetfulness
 And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house being to close
 Upon the growing Boy
 But He beholds the light, and whence it
 flows,
He sees it in his joy:

/1.58-70/

Here Wordsworth expresses explicitly his poetic understanding of the pre-natal theory. The child whose "birth is but a sleep" comes to the earth directly from Heaven, the home of God. The child comes "trailing clouds of glory", possessing all the abilities and faculties which will make him so distinctly powerful. Though mortal life on earth does much to make the "Foster-child (...) Forget" his heavenly home, the growing child still possesses some reminiscence of his "former home" and this memory conditions his spontaneous joy and happiness.

Wordsworth goes on in the "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" to state:

The Youth, who daily farther from the
 east
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;

/1. 70-74/

Though the child continually moves ahead from the day when he left his eternal home, the memories of his former life in the light of God provide him sometimes with "the vision splendid", the moments during which the child's soul visits God's mansion. Though those moments are short and rare, the child still remains the only "Nature's Priest"; no other creature can come so close to the heart of God. The heavenly memories are also the source of the child's creative power. Divinely inspired, the child fashions his own little worlds of the mind:¹⁸

See, at his feet, some little plan or
 chart,
 Some fragment from his dream of human
 life,
 Shaped by himself with newly-learned art.
 /1.90-93/

"To H.C., Six years old"¹⁹ contains another statement of Wordsworth's theory. Wordsworth refers to the child as a "faery voyager", "whose fancies from afar are brought". His "fancies", memories of Heaven, can never be directly known; the glory glimpsed in childhood is itself a memory in the child and will fade in time, for as Wordsworth states in his "Ode":

¹⁸ C.M. Bowra, The Romantic Imagination, (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 98.

¹⁹ Hartley, the son of Coleridge, much loved by Wordsworth.

At length the Man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day
 /1.75-77/

This fact was much regretted by Wordsworth.

Apart from its ultimate roots in Plato, Wordsworth found the theory of pre-natal existence in Coleridge and Henry Vaughan. Coleridge "had played with the idea of pre-existence as an explanation of a feeling that we have in a previous existence done something or been somewhere".²⁰ In the sonnet he wrote at his son's birth he states:

Oft O'er my brain does that strange fancy
 roll
 Which makes the present (while the flash
 doth last)
 Seem a mere semblance of some unknown
past,
 Mixed with such feelings, as perplex the
 soul
 Self-questioned in her sleep; and some
have said
We lived, ere yet this robe of flesh we
wore.

In "The Retreat" Henry Vaughan tells "how the vision of celestial things have grown weaker with passing years".²¹ Wordsworth transmutes this idea when lamenting the loss of the child's natural joy, innocence and visionary power. "From Coleridge Wordsworth took the idea of pre-existence and

20 Bowra, p. 97.

21 Ibid.

from Vaughan that of a slow decline in celestial powers, and from this combination formed his own original theory."²²

It would be incorrect, however, to conclude that Wordsworth intended to commit himself to this doctrine. Coleridge was the first to deny that Wordsworth believed in the Platonic theory of pre-natal existence, explaining that he employed the myth only as a symbolic framework.²³ Late in life, Wordsworth made a very similar claim, being alarmed that the myth had given "pain to some good and pious persons".²⁴ He explained:

It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind, though the idea is not advanced in Revelation, [that] there is nothing there to contradict it, and the Fall of Man presents an analogy in its favor (...) I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorising me to make for my purpose the best of it I could as a Poet.²⁵

"This statement has been criticized as not truly reflecting the Wordsworth of 1803-6, since in those days

22 Ibid.

23 Biographia Literaria, ed. Shawcross (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) Ch. II, p. 120-121.

24 Fenwick note to "Ode: Intimations of Immortality", The Poetical Works, ed. de Selincourt and Darbishire, IV, p. 464.

25 Ibid.

he had little faith in Revelation and certainly did not believe in the 'Fall of Man'.²⁶ In spite of those inconsistencies, there remains one crucial message stated in the poems based on the doctrine of pre-natal existence: the message of reassurance. The soul, Wordsworth believes, comes from God, and the high instincts of the heart,

Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing.
/Ode IX, p. 461/

Therefore these feelings should be the first to be glorified.

Wordsworth's theory of pre-natal existence, though denied in later years, made an important contribution to his originality and this theory sets him apart in a distinctive way from Blake and Rousseau.

4. The Significance of the Element of Fear in The Child's Imaginative Development.

Wordsworth always insisted on the fact that fear played a powerful and beneficial role in the development of the child's imaginative powers and in opening up the child's visionary faculties.²⁷ Throughout his life, Wordsworth

26 Cornelius Howard Patton, p. 160-161.

27 Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: A Biography; Early Years 1770-1803, Vol. I (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 8.

continued to emphasize that the child, especially during the first stage of his natural education, should be fed with tales of mystery and heroic legends. Such books, Wordsworth maintained, through their stimulation of wonder and fear, contributed to the child's sensitivity and imaginative power.

In the fifth book of The Prelude, Wordsworth gives an account of the dream he had as a little boy, after having read some Arab legend:

My senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
Close at my side, an uncouth shaped appeared
Upon a dromedary, mounted high,
He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes:
/1.70-77/

The mysterious tale had awakened creative Imagination in the boy. The incidents of his dream, "resplendent" and frightful, were intensified to the degree that, as Wordsworth confesses:

(...) I waked in terror
And saw the sea before me, and the book
In which I had been reading, at my side.
/1.138-140/

In a later passage in The Prelude, Wordsworth pays a debt to those imaginative tales which, working often through the medium of fear, arouse in the child "dumb yearnings, hidden appetites":

(...) Ye dreamers, then,
Forgers of daring tales! we bless you then,
 Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape
 Philosophy will call you: then we feel
 With what, and how great might ye are in
 league,
Who make our wish our power, our thought
a deed,
An empire, a possession, - ye whom time
And seasons serve; all Faculties; - to
 whom
 Earth crouches, the elements are potter's
 clay,
 Space like a heaven filled up with northern
 lights
 Here, nowhere, there and everywhere at once.
 /1.523-532/

According to Wordsworth there are, however, other moments in which the faculty of fear plays a dominant role. These he refers to as "spots of time". During these short glimpses of an "auxiliary light", the child steps beyond mere reality of external Nature into another, more real dimension, outside time into Eternity.²⁸ In Wordsworth's view, it is often the feeling of fear and terror which provides these visionary gleams for the child.

The Prelude, Book twelve, paints a suggestive scene of the memorable event when the six-year old Wordsworth fell into such bewildering "visionary dreariness". He was riding a horse when he found himself unexpectedly alone on the moor. Not knowing where he was, he dismounted and "stumbling on",

28 Bowra, p. 94.

he led his horse downhill until he came to a hollow. There he found an old mouldering wooden post on which was carved "T.P.M.". The post was a gibbet, and the initials probably stood for "Thomas Parker Murdered".²⁹ Wordsworth was at the scene of a murder committed long ago and commemorated by the gibbeting of the victim at the scene of the crime. Soon the boy realized where he was and fled up the hill, weak with terror:³⁰

A casual glance had shown them and I fled
Faltering and faint and ignorant of the road.
/Prelude XII, l.246-248/

The fear had lit up the whole landscape into "something rich and strange". What Wordsworth saw was "visionary", although he saw no objects other than those "naturally" presented to his eye. Child as he was, he seemed to have entered the world where every object took on a mysterious light. He never forgot, nor wanted to forget this experience, in spite of the terror and loneliness which it had evoked.³¹

29 Mary Moorman, p. 11.

30 For the detailed psychological (Freudian) explanation of the boy's fear, see Richard J. Onorato, The Character of the Poet; Wordsworth in the Prelude, p. 207-209.

31 Mary Moorman, p. 12.

This very terror and fear brought about the earliest of the child's "spots of time", the bright moments of revelation.

Later in The Prelude, Wordsworth describes another childish imaginary experience whose image haunted the poet until his later years. Stonehenge, the "Druid" stones in the Cumberland mountains, were regarded as British remains. To an imaginative schoolboy these stones, which, perhaps, served as the place of human sacrifice, had produced a vision of ghost-ridden terror.³² Wordsworth describes how "once among the wilds/Of Sarum's Plain" pacing "the bare white roads" and "Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,/ Time with his retinue of ages fled/Backwards," and the boy saw "Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear". He:

(...) called on Darkness-but before the word
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
All objects from my sight; and lo! again
The Desert visible by dismal flames;
It is the sacrificial altar, fed
With living men - how deep the groans! the voice
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
/Prelude XIII l.327-335/

At first, the boy seemed to enjoy the cold and horror of the midnight landscape. Then, the imagined appearance of

32 Enid Welsford, Salisbury Plain; a Study in the Development of Wordsworth's Mind and Art, p. 7

Druids seeking out the sacrificial victim, changed the initial feeling into terror. The "dismal flames" and groans of dying men, adding to the fear of the midnight darkness, bewildered the boy; still he felt strange peace and harmony which accompanied the vision of these "bearded teachers" of religion and science.³³

It should be noted that death, the deepest passivity, eternal union with Nature, was nearly always present during those visionary moments. Once, Wordsworth as a young boy, wandering along the lake at twilight, saw distinctly "one the opposite shore/A heap of garments, left as I supposed /By one who there was bathing"; but the lake was "snapped by breathless stillness". Next day, when crossing the path near the lake the boy was struck by a horrifying scene:

At last, the dead Man, 'mid that beauteous
 scene
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
 Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape
 Of terror; yet no soul-debasing fear,
 Young as I was, a child not nine years old
 Possessed me;

/Prelude V 1.448-451/

Faced with the terrifying sight of death, Wordsworth felt "no soul-debasing fear", but "ideal grace", a "dignity", and "smoothness". Nature and mystery tales spiritually developed the child by fostering him alike "by beauty and

33 Ibid., p. 11.

Summary and Conclusions

Wordsworth's notions concerning the nature of the child and childhood which have been reviewed in the foregoing, result partially from his opposition to the ideas of his predecessors. They derive also from his original thought and unique insights.

Opposing Blake's belief in the negative and destructive function of the memories of childhood, Wordsworth asserts that these memories profoundly influence and improve the individual, contributing to his emotional and creative energy.

Likewise, Wordsworth believes that silence and solitude, insofar as they reflect eternity of being, become a vital source of the child's deepest joy and rest in his close union with Nature. This view is in marked contrast to Blake's idea of the child's solitude as evoking his unhappiness, and Rousseau's recognition of the beneficial influence of loneliness as operating exclusively in mature adulthood.

Although Wordsworth's theory of pre-natal existence was only temporarily held by him, it did offer an explanation for the child's spontaneous joy, innate creative power, and "visionary gleam". This theory distinguishes Wordsworth from his predecessors, contributing most significantly to his

originality.

Similarly, the elaboration of the significance of the experience of fear in the child's imaginative development, marks Wordsworth as distinctively different from Blake and Rousseau.

CONCLUSION

The particular conclusions on the image of the child present in Wordsworth's poetry, the extent to which he accepted, rejected or modified the notions Blake and Rousseau held on childhood and his distinctive contribution to this subject are contained in the summaries at the end of each chapter. It seems, however, that a few general comments may now provide some useful perspectives on the study as a whole.

Firstly, Wordsworth derived his poetic concepts from many sources; in greater or lesser degree he was influenced by the French Revolution, XVIIIth Century thought in general, by English Empiricism in particular, as well as by individual figures of the time such as Godwin, Blake and Rousseau.

The profound influence of Blake and Rousseau is clearly reflected in Wordsworth's notion of the child and childhood; indeed, so profound was this influence that it undeniably forms the core of his theory. As stated earlier, it is in their general characteristics that Wordsworth, Rousseau and Blake are similar, while Wordsworth's concepts of childhood constitute a significant development and

refinement of the ideas of his predecessors.

This study has attempted to show the extent to which Wordsworth accepted, rejected or modified the ideas of Blake and Rousseau, giving at the same time evidence of Wordsworth's own originality and distinctiveness.

An inquiry into the influence of Blake and Rousseau, as reflected in Wordsworth's poetry on childhood, suggests two major areas for further research. To begin with, an intensive study of the influence of Blake and Rousseau on Wordsworth could be developed; likewise a close analysis of the artistic method used by Wordsworth and Blake in treating the subject of childhood, could highlight the differences in each one's poetic technique. Another possible area for further study would attempt to comprehend and explain Wordsworth's theory on childhood in the light of Jungian psychology which includes the child image as a central archetype in a theory of personality development.¹ Such an analysis would undoubtedly bear interesting and useful results, showing the relevance of Wordsworth's ideas to contemporary thought in psychology.

While these are interesting areas for further research, it has been the aim of this study to give added

¹ Carl Gustav Jung, "Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious", The Collected Works of Carl Gustav Jung, ed. Sir Herbert Reed et al., 17 Vols., New York, 1953.

recognition to the fact that:

The time has come when the author of The Prelude should be recognized by the side of Rousseau and Froebel as pioneer in those educational theories and processes which derive from Nature as the Mother and Master of us all. In no small degree we owe it to him that once more the child is "in the midst", not merely as an object of affection, but as an object of profound study and reverent concern. We owe it to him that the fact that Man's greatness never shines in so divine a light as in the simplicity of childhood days has been expressed in immortal verse. It is the inculcation of this truth, even more than the faithful depiction of childhood scenes, that assigns to Wordsworth the place of preëminence among the poets who deal with child life and thought.

Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands.

/Prelude X11, 272-4/

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to inquire into the notion of the child as it appears in Wordsworth's poetry from the aspect of the extent to which Wordsworth accepted, rejected or modified the ideas of Blake and Rousseau. It also states some of the ways in which Wordsworth made a particular, original contribution to the subject.

Chapter one presents a brief review of critical approaches to Wordsworth, with particular reference to the need for further inquiry into his notions on the child. It also establishes the relevance of considering the specific influence Blake and Rousseau wielded over Wordsworth.

Chapter two outlines the basic notions on the child held by Blake and Rousseau. Blake's basic ideas as stated in his Songs of Innocence and Experience are reviewed, with particular reference to those ideas which were to influence Wordsworth. A similar approach to the basic ideas of Rousseau as outlined in his Emile ou de l'éducation is followed.

The Chapter two outline summaries of the basic ideas on childhood held by Blake and Rousseau provide the basis for noting the extent to which Wordsworth accepted, rejected or modified the notions of his predecessors. This is the purpose of Chapter three.

ABSTRACT

Chapter four outlines those ideas on childhood which are peculiar to Wordsworth, those ideas which reflect his originality and distinctiveness, his particular contributions to the topic.

Since summaries of the central ideas outlined in Chapters two, three and four are presented within these chapters, a brief statement of Conclusion and the indications for further studies complete this inquiry into the topic.