Wordsworth’s Profession

Form, Class, and
the Logic of Early Romantic
Cultural Production

Thomas Pfau

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Lyric Transport

Beholding Affect and Intelligence in "Tintern Abbey"

It is in the poetry of 1799 and in the Lyric Ballads of 1798 that the production of a conscious and exemplary subjectivity begins to emerge in the lyric intimations of its larger cultural potential, its capacity for reconstituting the objects of contingent empirical sight in the form of a distinctive "style." A transformation is under way whereby the scene, the landscape, and the distant echoes and glimpses of empirical labor fade altogether and are replaced by the rhetorical drama of a self-focused, poetic "composition." As is several of Gainsborough's last paintings, where "landscape per se no longer exists . . . but where figures absorb and reveal its values and meanings" (Birmingham, Landscape and Ideology, 55), the focus of descriptive practice shifts from an objective landscape to the affective transformation wrought in the subject caught up in its contemplation. This reflexive and speculative completion of the Picturesque points up a deeper implication within Marx's argument that value, when understood as a trajectory of formally distinctive appearances, "becomes . . . the subject of a process" and "expands spontaneously" (Selected Writings, 450). A first consequence of reorienting natural description toward an archaeology of subjective affect is the emergence of temporality as a significant condition in the production of lyric meaning. As we will soon explore, by repositioning the formerly naive sight of his "boyhood years," Wordsworth's articulate self-personification in "Tintern Abbey" predicates the possibility of the lyric's significance for others upon the growth in affective depth, stylistic expertise, and cultural "interest" displayed by an articulate subjectivity. In configuring the repetition of subjective diction with a correspondingly anaphoric diction, the poem aligns its intrinsic formal features and its propositional social character around the continuum of time.

Reinforced by its curricular transmission and anthropological circulation as a canon of "strong" poetic voices—Goldsmith, Gray, Cowper, and Bowles, to name but a few—the historical (and as yet unfinished) project of a "middle class" is fueled and mediated by the formal-aesthetic refinement of its cultural capital. Under the respectable aesthetic stewardship of the poet, descriptive poetry introduces "scene" and "prospect" primarily as the empirical repositories for its production of a bathic sensibility; conceived as the concise transcript of that sensibility, the cultural commodification of descriptive verse establishes a more widely marketable bour-geois "truth" known as lyric intensity. The increasingly reflexive character of Wordsworth's poetry after 1799 also reveals that the previously unconscious motivation of the Picturesque is becoming more articulate and self-conscious. Beyond the mediation of "object"/"scene" ratios and the generic affect that we observed in An Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches, Wordsworth's poetry now begins to narrate its origination in the writer's affective psyche. The professional, quintessentially "modern" autonomy of the lyric emerges in the speaker's insistence on sublating all empirical matter from an aspect into the domain of aesthetic interest. Wordsworth's poetry after 1799 thus operates with an implicit Hegelian model avant la lettre, as it turns out, though to say that is to leave unanswered the question concerning the historical significance of this turn toward bourgeois inwardness. For even a poem like "Tintern Abbey" can only raise to greater reflexive awareness, but never actually solve, the antagonism between its descriptive obligations toward an utterly contingent social world and the unconscious motivations underlying its descriptive form to begin with. Wordsworth's "is a poetry that has become aware of the incessant conflict that opposes a self, still engaged in the daylight world of reality, . . . [its imagery] represents objects in nature but is actually taken from purely literary sources" (de Man, Blindness and Insight, 171). The manuscripts surrounding The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar provide copious evidence of the extent to which the lyric paradigm of expressive inwardness correlates with Adam Smith's conception of a ceaselessly enterprising unconscious shaping a new class of productive and professionalized Britons. The motive that produces the artifact of poetic description, in other words, is not an essential sympathy but a deep-seated, often compulsive cultural productivity. Thus Liz has read The Ruined Cottage ("not a poem about humanity . . . [but] a capitalization upon inhumanity," Wordsworth, 32) as revising the generic detachment that had prevailed throughout An Evening Walk. In its place we find a narratè detailing the slow yet steady evolution of communal sympathy and converting the earlier premise of an "objective" landscape (always a cultural fiction) into "an image of landscape projected upon an 'impending' screen of vegetation" (314). Liu emphasizes the poem's reliance on images of organic, vegetative, and wholly unparent productivity, such as that "image of tranquility" of the spear-grass toward the end of The Ruined Cottage. The associative powers of such a delicately wrought symbolism respond to the insight "that any legitimate commerce between culture and poetry requires some medium of exchange, some pricing mechanism based on a
descripTion

Demonstrable, carnal, and commonly held "cash" of human value allowing cultural and poetic premiums to be weighed alike" (313). Liu's reading of the Wordsworthian image and general paradigm of lyric productiviy as the encoding of complex historical, fundamentally economic exigencies and purposes seems compelling because The Ruined Cottage appears close to understanding its relationship, as an aesthetic product, to the macroeconomy of representation in which it is embedded. The poem itself cannot, however, afford a fully self-conscious relationship to its deeply antagonistic macrohistorical moment, one characterized by an extreme disparity between bourgeois productivity and foreclosed political representation. What prevents the poem from specifying the conditions of its emergence is the fact that, as a cultural artifact, it is precisely aimed at granting its audience an imaginative furlough from that disparity. For just like the New Criticism's bourgeois ideal of immanent "textual" values, the self-contained, "organic" aura of Wordsworthian poetry—a kind of secular scripture—aims to objectify and thereby resolve the antagonisms that circumscribe the psyche of its readers.

Meanwhile, the long passage I am about to quote suggests that in the revisions of The Ruined Cottage, manuscript B, Wordsworth moves toward a programmatic articulation of the sociocultural motives informing aesthetic production in general. He focuses on an aesthetic grammar that undergirds all "sight" "(the habit by which sense is made") and on the larger "interest" that connects aesthetic productivity with the inescapable evolution of historically distinctive communities ("a chain of benefits/ Shall link us to our kind"). Much of Wordsworth's poetry between 1797 and 1799 appears to vacillate between a pragmatic implementation of the lyric image and a self-conscious meditation on the programmatic, social interestdness of such poetry. Time and again, Wordsworth shifts between entrusting professional success as a published poet to the unconscious efficacy of the lyric still-life and an explicit theoretical definition of its purposes, elsewhere referred to as the "history or science of feelings" (LB, 351). This characteristic professional indecision also reverberates in the poetry itself, and it produces an especially complex manuscript history in the case of The Ruined Cottage. There Wordsworth's first attempts (in MS B) to offer a detailed accounting of the Pedlar's exemplary cultural productivity extend to the 1803 manuscripts E and M entitled The Pedlar and from here on became a kind of portable aesthetic program variously apportioned to The Prelude, Poems 1815, and The Excursion. The following lines, transcribed into manuscript D by Dorothy Wordsworth from an addendum to manuscript B of The Ruined Cottage, thus constitute the blueprint for the cultural project guiding Wordsworth's authorial practice:

to determine the relationship between "things" and their "inarticulate language" as objects of subjective apperception, and to scrutinize their capacity for stimulating the mind into speculative engagements. Specifically the latter purpose assists us in understanding Wordsworth's concept of an ideal social community, something here reflected by his quasi-Hegelian use of "we" and "us":

Not useless do I deem
These quiet sympathies with things that hold
An inarticulate language for the man
Once taught to love such objects
by contemplating those forms
In the relations which they bear to man
We shall discover what a power is theirs
To stimulate our minds, and multiply
The spiritual presences of absent things
Then weariness will cease—We shall acquire
The habit by which sense is made
Subservient still to moral purposes
A vital essence and a saving power
Nor shall we meet an object but may read
Some sweet and tender lesson to our minds
Of human suffering or of human joy
All things shall speak of man and we shall read
Our duties in all forms, and general laws
And local accidents shall tend alike
To quicken and to rouse, and give the will
Toils and And power which by a chain of good
Shall link us to our kind;

While with a patient interest [Science] shall watch
The processes of things, and serve the cause
Of order and connection, not for this
Shall it forget that its most noble end
Its most illustrious province must be found
In ministering to the exquisite power
Of Intellect and thought: So build we up
The being that we are,

Thus disciplined
All things shall live in us, and we shall live
In all things that surround us. This I deem
Our tendency & shall thus every day
Enlarge our sphere of pleasure & of play.
For thus the senses and the intellect
Shall each to each supply a mutual aid
Invigorate and sharpen and refine
low end high is consummated.
Each other with a power that knows no bound.
Shine & soar with rest & bound.
And forms & feelings act thus, & thus
Reacting they shall each acquire.
A living spirit & a character.
Till then unfelt, & each be multiplied.
With a variety that knows no end.

(RC, MS D pp. 373-75, 67-69; italics mine)

As distinctively “Wordsworthian” a piece of verse as any, this passage commands respect for its skillful blending of doctrine and analysis, its forthright propositions of poetic faith and their cautious, reflexive elaboration. Negotiating his way between the hubris of a purely individual creed (“Not useless do I deem . . . “,”This I deem our tendency . . . ”) and the a posteriori justification of that creed as the transindividual, transhistorical foundation for a spiritual community, Wordsworth here focuses on the speculative social interest served by his proper mode of descriptive cognition. What counts are not “objects” but their capacity to affirm the cognitive distinction of the subject: “contemplating these forms / In the relations which they bear to man / We shall discover what a power is theirs / To stimulate our minds.” Significantly, what might otherwise seem abstract, micromanaging epistemology is here being filtered through the mellowish cadences of a richly descriptive blank verse. That epistemology consists really of two claims: that the composition of object-knowledge and of social communities is structurally cognate, and that the coherence of either composition pivots on its nontransparency to the very producers whose compatibility or sympathy with their Other it affirms. Consequently, it is through the “quiet sympathies” and “inarticulate language” that mind both as individual affect and as collective “sensibility”—conceives of itself as the reflex of a causality that, once “mind” becomes conscious of it, is found to have “always already” circumscribed it. Wordsworth’s analysis of “the habit by which sense is made” exhibits the self-confirming character of description in general and is perhaps best exemplified by the “patient interest” of a Science, provided its purposes are nobler than the analytic evisceration of the empirical world. At their best, scientific descriptions of

“the processes of things” throw into relief the spontaneous and infinitely adaptive nature of intelligence itself. According to Wordsworth, cognition and “interest” are complex manifestations of an indivisible and unself-conscious mode of productivity. His postulate “All things shall speak of man” thus aligns general epistemic with local psychological concerns, and it asserts a deep-structural reciprocity between any individual subject and the architectonics of a collective humanity: “So build we up! / The being that we are.”

In its almost baroque conceptual and syntactic inversions, strongly reminiscent of Kant’s epistemological architecture, Wordsworth’s early Romantic conception of knowledge constitutes, somewhat perversely it would appear, a theory of “un-knowing.” The ornate, often inscrutable affective and material requirements of such epistemic activity prevent its agents from becoming conscious of the sociocultural purposes served by their “exclusive power / Of Intellect and thought.” Indeed, the passage suggests again why it is imperative to set the Wordsworthian version of Romanticism as a growth-of-mind narrative side by side with accounts of growth proffered by Romantic nationalism and commercialism. Thus, Wordsworth’s metaphoric alignment of the body politic’s economic and cultural destiny reveals the continuity of his verse with the productionist imperatives of the later eighteenth century: “the senses and the intellect / Shall each to each supply a mutual aid / Invigorate and sharpen and refine / Each other with a power that knows no bound.” Such an integration of “low and high,” epistemic and social productivity does not function as an allegorical tribute to the Jacobin ideals of égalité et fraternité but instead emphasizes the structural coherence between the prospective and expansionist interests of a middle-class sensibility and the period’s macroeconomic theories of exchange- and interest-based value. In short, the lyric tells no story. Rather, it reinforces its audience’s allegiance (what Hartman calls “the binding of the imagination”) to a set of narratives already in place and operating “Minute & vast with ever growing sway.”

The logic of description, in other words, is that of implicit affirmation; and its rhetorical cure is imagistic, not propositional, because its transfiguration of the empirical seeks less to secure some determinate knowledge than to “invigorate and sharpen and refine” the process of judgment that, in Kant’s phrase, determines “cognition in general” and so conditions all community. In moving through the contiguous stages of empirical object, perceptual scene, cognitive form, and affective reflex, the discrete and progressively more “intensive” (lyric or scientific) figurations of the “object” of description gradually emerge as the actual “value” of the practice of
description. "Value," as Marx notes in his analysis of the functional mutations of capital, "becomes the subject of a process"; or as Wordsworth here puts it: "forms & feelings acting thus, & thus / Reacting they shall each acquire / A living spirit & a character / Till then unfelt, & each be multiplied / With a variety that knows no end." The poetry's repeated slippage from the first-person singular into the first-person plural ("This I deem / Our tendency") and its hortatory syntax ("We shall live / In all things; / "For thus the senses and the intellect / Shall each to each supply / A mutual aid") only reaffirm the extent to which its rhetorical and formal-aesthetic organization partakes of the very logic whose comprehensive social benefits it seeks to articulate.

In concluding this segment with a reading of the poem known by convenient (if suspect) shorthand as "Tintern Abbey," I intend to throw into relief Wordsworth's remarkable skill for fusing the epistemic and stylistic, the cognitive and rhetorical dimension of representation, something so programatically explored in the passage related to The Ruined Cottage but as yet not studied in its concrete implementation as lyric poetry. Arguably the most "lyrical" of all the Lyrical Ballads (1798), the collection's closing piece has unsettled generations of readers with its peculiar rhetorical involutions, finitie transitions, illogical leaps of argument, unexamined premises, and especially its transferential projection of an idiosyncratic faith on a rather enigmatic audience. Not surprisingly, then, the poem's promotion to a degree of canonical authority—which often parallels that of Gray's "Elegy" according to John Guillory's recent discussion of literary canon formation—seems to result from its tendency to keep the reader in a state of anxious receptivity. When reading "Tintern Abbey," one is repeatedly assigned the position of a betrayed, often confused commentator whose sympathy with the poet's meditative psyche is all but obligatory and turns one into an unwitting collaborator with what may well be Romanticism's most famous instance of literary self-invention.38

Even a casual acquaintance with the impact of New Historicism and cultural critique on literary studies, and on Romantic studies in particular, however, will make abundantly clear that for some time now readers have been intent on moving beyond the formal-stylistic, Arnoian paradigm of dedicated excess. It seems no longer sufficient to explicate how the poem establishes a quasi-epistemological covenant between an inspired finite consciousness and its larger professed mission. Marjorie Levinson has sharply contested this axiomatic spiritualization of bourgeois practice by arguing, "ideology is exactly that outside or social, which is invisible as such (that is to say, which is experienced as Nature or the order of things) precisely because it has so perfectly framed what is inside: psyche." Accordingly, she has offered a strident historicist conception of ""Tintern Abbey"" as the stylistically engineered vanishing act of all social and material reference. "The primary poetic action is the suppression of the social," she notes; "the success or failure of the visionary poem turns on its ability to hide its omission of the historical." We have come to the point where the topographical poem becomes a "sort of psychic allegory spatially disposed."39 I will only briefly pay attention to the methodological premises and material claims that undergird the historicist critiques of Wordsworth's meditative idiom and will focus instead primarily on the poem's stylistic organization—not as something exacting sympathetic enrolements but as a highly self-conscious, rhetorical elaboration of a deep-seated and fundamentally social desire. Notwithstanding its apparently self-involved and self-referential character, "Tintern Abbey" ultimately focuses on a semantic vanishing point where the speaker's authorial and vocational projections will merge with the sensibility of his audience. The lyric's form, that is, can neither be reduced to some autonomous aesthetic quality nor be pared down to the unconscious cunning of a given poem's referential evasions. Rather, form encrypts complex and historically specific sociocultural motives and at the same time embodies in its distinctive "design" the cultural labor expended on their realization. Shifting from a historicist to a more pragmatist understanding of Wordsworthian productivity, I will argue that the poem realizes its producer's interest in the virtual sphere of social psychology more than it seeks to elide the material sphere of historical reference. Form may thus be understood as mediating social desire, as constructing an imagined, sympathetic community no less "real" than the domain of material reference allegedly compromised by the lyric's systematic obfuscation. Prima facie, aesthetic form imitates—with all the dissembling, unconfessed preferences and sometimes outrageous projections that such activity inevitably entails. By the same token, however, the aesthetic cannot be reduced to an unself-conscious desire for concealment of social and material reference; for however much such disimulation of the "Real" may be part of the lyric, it remains but a subsidiary aspect of the lyric's inherently pragmatic, constructive motivation. In his brief note on "Tintern Abbey" (appealed to the 1805 text of Lyrical Ballads and to all subsequent editions), Wordsworth outlines precisely such a functional relation between a specific aesthetic form or "style" and those imaginary communities brought to greater self-
awareness as a result of their representation in that style. "I have not ventured to call this Poem an Ode; but it was written with a hope that in the transitions, and the impassioned music of the versification, would be found the principal requisites of that species of composition" (LB, 357). The poem's style is said to embody its cultural motive, and insofar as the structure has not yet yielded the meanings that Wordsworth associates with the ode, the language of "Tintern Abbey" harbors the residual tension between the poem being written and that ultimate poetic form or "sacred sublime" toward which the poem "was written with a hope." With the sublimations of elegiac retrospection, which searches the landscape's "prospects" for materials useful for composing an authoritative and seemingly unmediated sensibility, "Tintern Abbey" raises the lyric paradigm to the higher pitch of a confessional, rhapsodic, and transferential mode of speech. As the poem evolves into a reflexive awareness of its rhetorical form, it exposes its functional composition, its combination of specular and meditative, topographical and confessional devices, toward an ultimately social end. Like any social ambition, of course, the purposes implemented by Wordsworth's rhapsodic style do, to some extent, function "as a barricade to resist the violence of historical change and contradiction" (Levinson, Great-Period Poems, 53). Still, what contemporary cultural and materialist critique frequently refers to as the aesthetic's resistance or blinding to history in the end amounts to the refusal of one interpretive paradigm of history. More accurately, what shapes the lyric's articulatory energy is a desire to displace one paradigm of historical understanding with another. Self-knowledge brought about by the cadences of the lyric does not amount to an utter evasion of history; rather, it proceeds an imagined community of readers into a transferential identification with a deceptively "timeless" condensation of their historical moment.

The fallacy to which "Tintern Abbey" may have given rise concerns more likely the romance of Enlightenment retold in vestigial form by contemporary historicism. Thus, in Levinson's words, a "self-consciously belated criticism ... sees in its necessary ignorance—its expulsion from the heaven of Romantic sympathy—a critical advantage: the capacity to know a work as neither it, nor its original readers, nor its author could know it." In precisely the unreturn epistemological stance of a "self-consciously belated" historicism that tends to forget its own transferential (almost axiomatically Whiggish) politics and its historically contingent disposition. Thus it seems precipitate, to say the least, for the New Historicism to construe our "expulsion from the heaven of Romantic sympathy" as a Fall into an objective form of historical knowing and, therefore, to consider the Present exempt from what are in fact merely different sociocultural transferences. In the end, Historicism's romance of liberating a modern reader from the "mind forg'd manacles" of Romantic signification merely reiterates the transferential logic of Wordsworth's ballads in which, as we shall see, the aesthetic itself is advertised to its prospective audience as the sole refuge from the antagonistic quality of their consciousness. "Tintern Abbey" thus tells the standard Historicist story about the providential conversion of lost affective identifications into the gain of some more abiding knowledge. Similar to the contemporary "liberation-theology" of Romanticism's social signifieds, allegedly "overwritten" and misappropriated by the lyric's unconscious cunning ("what we witness in this poem is a conversion of public to private property"); Levinson, Great-Period Poems, 37), the poem's belated effort to recuperate "its" lyric self meets with only partial success. Contrary to historicist and materialist critiques, "success" here depends on the transferential construction of a sympathetic community of readers rather than on the utopia of an aiding "critical" knowledge. Ultimately, any statement, no matter how aggressively naturalizing its symbolic or lyric construction, eventuates by definition within and as a historical practice its intelligibility rests on the social recognition and acceptance of the distinctive rhetorical form it which that statement is cast. Precisely because the rhetorical, aesthetic, and spiritual conditions that define "communicability"—and by extension "community" in general—are intrinsically and irrecog- nizably social and changeable, it makes little sense to impose on some forms but not on others {say, to poetry but not to criticism) the evasion of "History" as a constitutive motive.

It is this double bind between the poem's hymn to a spontaneous and spiritualized form of historic, bural knowledge and its insuperable dependency on inherited lyric, religious, and locodescriptive rhetorical patterns that causes "Tintern Abbey" to develop as a consummately reflexive statement, an act of faith constituted in the rhetorical form of a meditative lyric and projected onto a particular historicocultural scene. At one level, reflexivity throws into relief the social conditions that constrain any practice of subjective self-declaration—what Coleridge calls "a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself" (BL, 1:273)—even as it is in progress. Beholding a landscape and negotiating what Hartman has identified as the poem's delicate balancing of object-consciousness and self-consciousness presupposes a complex, transindividual, aesthetic grammar that determines, as we have seen, not
only the practice of topographical vision (a.k.a. "experience of nature") but also its supplemental conversion into, and circulation as, a socially valid or "interesting" statement (a.k.a. "expressive poetry"). To be sure, the poem is replete with statements of a humanistic faith. Yet even these affirmations—for example, "Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold / Is full of blessings" (II. 135–34) or "Therefore am I still / A lover of the meadows and the woods" (II. 103–4)—sound forced and generic. Ultimately, the poem's subtle melancholy, a "faith" born of rhetorical mediation rather than accepted as an essential "belief," shows Wordsworth grappling with the recognition that a spontaneous consciousness is logically impossible. Thus the poem's overall message is compromised from the outset by its admission that any active construction of a self rests on conditions that predetermine that act's performance and, consequently, are irrecoverable for the interiority thus produced. Wordsworth does not present us with meditative paroles that stand to the sociocultural language of a Picturesque sensibility (and of topographical poetry more particularly) like a spontaneous, autonomous, and private cause to a mediated, contingent, and social effect. Rather, "Tintern Abbey" opens with a melancholic admission by the lyric "voice" that its desire for originality, spontaneity, and expressivity has already been thwarted by repetition, by a recursive temporality according to which things always change yet, conversely, always seem to stay the same. The poem's enigmatic spirit of self-assurance and resilience rests not on an unshakable faith but on a prolonged transfigurational rhetoric aimed at converting the lyric's initial confession of spiritual and epistemological "loss" into the "gain" of melancholy as an iterable and socially approved form of bourgeois interiority. Indeed, this general scheme of confessional transferences intensifies as the poem unfolds and seems particularly prominent in the closing apostrophe to Dorothy. Her silence, ventriloquized so eloquently by William's transfigurational effusions, confirms the lurking fear that an intact self can never be constructed from the raw matter of inward reflection alone. Clearly not a matter of simply transcribing the memories of a putatively authentic self, confession displaces and projects the lyric subject's recognition of its impossible closure and coherence as a self onto an audience. Cued by the "organic" bond between the siblings, Wordsworth's audience is to cultivate (figurally) just such a kinship with the poem and, in so doing, recollect and at an interpretive level the same ratio of sameness/difference, of "recognitions dim and faint"/"sad perplexity," which had occasioned the poet's confession to begin with. In the poem's closing scene of "autopsography"—a merit of abiding interest to our reading—William suddenly reveals how he, looking, continues to be himself the object (as well as the subject) of Dorothy's isomorphous lyric intensity ("in thy voice I catch / The language of my former heart and read / My former pleasures" II. 116–18).

From the outset, then, "Tintern Abbey" is dominated by the syntactic figure of repetition (anaphora) and by the corresponding cultural and epistemological motif of "autopsy." The latter, as Joseph Leo Koerner has shown, defines that anxious moment when specificity (seeing, gazing, beholding) yields to a potentially inextricable reflexivity as the seeing subject abruptly becomes conscious of itself as the objectified and alienated focal point of a disembodied gaze. The poem's opening 23 lines offer eloquent testimony of the extent to which repetition—both in the temporal and cultural senses of a "recurrent perception"—has intensified the generic detachment of the tourist's view in An Evening Walk; for the image in "Tintern Abbey" is not simply concerned with keeping at safe distance some empirical Other but, more urgently, responds to its lack of cultural and epistemological authority, that is, to its utter indeterminacy as "voice." Very much in the spirit of the poem's beginning, then, let us recall the beginning of the poem:

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild and western verge impress
Thoughts of more deep seduction; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark yew-tree, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which, at this season, with their ripe fruits,
Among the woods and copses lose themselves,
Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door, and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees.
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

(L.B. [80]. 116-17, II 1–23)
To begin with, the locale of the Wye Valley (including Tintern) arguably predetermines the outcome of the poetic “experience” of it in that it firmly holds the traveler to the terms of its implicit cultural contract. For to visit the most celebrated tourist site in southern Wales around 1794 was undeniably to immerse oneself in a fixed set of cultural practices and expectations. Though Wordsworth obviously does not cast the matter in such explicit form, the tension between the “hour / Of thoughtless youth” (ll. 95–96) spent among the haunting presences of nature and the experience of alienation articulated with such wistful emphasis by the poet tells us essentially the same story. Starting with the poem’s anaphoric opening, the entire verse paragraph is constructed around modular instances of repetition. The syntactic patterns of these opening verses—their repeated incomplete comparatives, redoubling syntax, and enigmatic conjunctions, or, generally speaking, their “intensification of quantitative values” (Hartman, Wordsworth’s Poetry, 26) —quickly make us wonder what might have prompted this lyric to begin with an emphatic notation of its belatedness.

The scene of temporal difference, it appears, remains virtually indistinguishable from the “scene of writing, where memories are catalogued with intentions, and impulses with the characteristic amplitudes and dispensations of utterance” (Foster, “Scene of Writing,” 83).

With its unique stress on syntactic rather than referential markers, this description of a supposedly visual experience quickly transforms the scene into a touchstone for a profoundly alienated subjectivity. The “sense sublime” associated with the specter of an irredeemably alienated self, and the desire for its temporal continuity—axiomatic, if also inefable, in a poem of such pronounced confessional and elegiac tone—is thus enacted in a meditative syntax dominated by anaphora and parallelism, that is, by formal repetitions that produce the impression of a recurrent perception.

In a striking resemblance to Turner’s early watercolors (see Fig. 14), “Tintern Abbey” seems preoccupied by recurrent visual motifs and as a result will bring the act of visual perception into reflexive focus. Turner’s early watercolors of Tintern Abbey, for example, are centered on “the repetition of a linear module and a graphic scheme (the ogive or pointed arch), that the artist could redouble and multiply, thereby assuring the overall morphological unity of his work” (Clay, Romanticism, 140). The hypothesis of a self-identical landscape, the isomorphous arches and ornaments of the abbey (whose presence here is, in any event, only conjectural), and the abstract memory of the visit to the Wye being itself a repetition of an earlier one: all these notions are subtly being appropriated as evidence for the temporal continuity of the self. The speaker’s professed approach to the
site of Tintern Abbey as epistemologically and culturally self-same, then and now, oscillates between the hypothesis of empirical identity (repetition) and the recognition of the desire that produced that hypothesis (repetition). The lyric's opening references to the supposedly indifferent, value-free passage of time ("five years...five summers with the length...Of five long winters") deny, of course, the very doubt that occasions lyric productivity and its transfigurative quest for an audience to begin with. Not surprisingly, every synaesthetic repetition and anaphoric figure asserting the continuity of the speaker's subjectivity against the backdrop of a consummately iterable, cultural objet d'art—"and again I hear...Once again...do I behold...when I again repose"—only tends to widen the temporal gap between a putatively original scene of natural instruction and the consciousness revisiting that "scene" to learn the content of that instruction. Palpably "haunted by the gap between epiphany and the text of reminiscence" (Rajan, Dark Interpreter, 218), the lyric voice seems to offer not so much a transcription of Picturesque "sight" as a critical exposé of the epistemological conditions and cultural motives that determine Wordsworth's cultivated "sight" and "vision" as a distinctive representational practice.75

Among the epistemological issues that loom so conspicuously throughout the poem, none seem more intractable and disturbing than that of temporality. For it is on account of its intrinsically temporal constitution that the poet confronts his subjectivity (i.e., becomes self-conscious) as anxious, incomplete, and inadequately identified. "Tintern Abbey" adumbrates the question of time in its tripartite division, opening in the meditative present, proceeding to the rememoration of past resources of meaning, and ending with the speaker's subtly rhapsodical transference of the epistemological problem of closure onto his present witness and future replicant: Dorothy. More significant, however, are the poem's persistent efforts at displacing the phenomenon of temporality—which as Heraclidian "flux" or as Hegel's "absolute unrest" (absolute Unruhe) prove irreducible to all abstract and absolute comprehension—into the nellorest, positional contingency of the poem's language. It is what Thomas McFarland has called the poem's "streaming infrastructure," an idiom of intensely metonymic, anaphoric, and parallellist organization, which comes to absorb the shock of an epistemological and existential sublime: time as absolute discontinuity (absolute Selbstzerrissenheit), even as Death. "Time," Hegel tells us, "appears as the destiny and necessity of the Spirit that is not yet complete within itself" (PS, 487/PG, 538). As the synopsis of all cultural productivity, "spirit" deflects the threat of temporal discontinuity—that is, the "death" of the autonomous, conscious individual—into discrete and articulate representations that no longer purport to locate the self in an immediate and fully determined relationship to its natural, empirical surroundings. Instead, Hegel's speculative idiom parallels the development of the Romantic lyric, which represents "the knowledge of Nature as the untried existence of the Spirit." Here "death loses this natural meaning...[and] becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz. the non-being of this particular individual, into the universality of the Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected" (PS, 475/PG, 544-45). "Spirit" thus coincides with the recognition of language and representation as its authentic (because virtual) destiny; for as the predicative movement and grammatical infrastructure charting the emergence of all "truth," language alone proves also consubstantial with it. Both Hegel's narrative and Wordsworth's lyrics draw on the same paradigm of language as productive "transference" (between siblings, between poet and reader, or between a "natural consciousness" and the philosophical "we"). Language thus emerges as the quintessential epistemological function, and whatever the individual speaker's local and personal affect or intended "meanings," it is in language alone that he will encounter some encryption of "community" as the deep-seated, social purpose of his own expressive acts. "Spirit," in Hegel's summation of his chapter "Revealed Religion," from which I have been quoting, "is its community" (PS, 475/PG, 545). Hegel's overall argument thus views the gradual ascendency of late-eighth-century middle-class communities as closely intertwined with the evolution of distinctively "bourgeois" languages (political, aesthetic, and scientific). Inasmuch as Hegel regards any dialectic of language and intelligence as the progressive crystallization of "pure" rationality, he will contend that, over the course of time, these historically specific forms of a political and aesthetic (post-Latinate) vernacular inevitably acquire greater formal coherence. According to Hegel, this development reaches a point where "form" doubles back on itself, thereby becoming self-aware and, as such, being "sublated" (aufgehoben) into a new paradigm of intel-

ligence. In the present context, this conversion of a highly coherent form into a reflexive intelligence means that seemingly discrete, individual (or "crypto-bourgeois") speakers recognize one another as members of the same linguistic community who have been sharing political, economic, and aesthetic beliefs and practices for some time and, as a result, now tend to represent these practices and beliefs to one another in notably similar ways. The passage of time thus produces "truth" in the distinctive histori-
And even the notice of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul.
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

[LB, 117-118, 43-44]

Here again, we note Wordsworth's characteristic replacement of the first-person singular with the first-person plural—evoking the stability and visceral presence that resonates in "our human blood," "living soul," and "the life of things"—in response to the crisis and impending demise of individual consciousness. Hegel's Protestant affirmation of a "Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected" reappears in "Tintern Abbey" as the transposition of an empirical and visual acuity into an examination of sublime shifts in the temporalized interior of the speaker's consciousness. Subtle figural shifts, together with currents intrinsic to Wordsworth's lyric style, produce the effect of temporal continuity and spiritual mobility ("the affections gently lead us on"). Throughout "Tintern Abbey" such a motion encompasses loss and gain, despair and hope; and in so cathartic particular affective qualities, it clears the space for the familiar, "deep" Wordsworthian persona self-consciously perched between a melancholic, skeletal self ("this corporeal frame") and the "spirit" of a holistic community ("a mansion for all lovely forms"). Such rhetorical mediation shelters the individual from recognizing the necessarily illusory nature of its claims to immediate self-presence and substantive identity. In its stead, the positional power of the lyric image offers itself as a supplemental defense by transfiguring that very loss of authenticity into the cultural capital of lyric scripture. "Tintern Abbey" thus seems at once occasioned by and expressive of an irreducible melancholy, with the speaker initially straining for self-affirmation and positioning his former self, only to discover that such a self is recoverable only in the guise of an as-yet-unrealized prospect, a fiction alternately displaced into the past and projected onto the future so as to mitigate the aura of "loss" that defines the lyric present. Yet how, we may wonder, can such ruminations ever compel the "interest" of an audience and achieve the "distinction" requisite for all cultural capital?

The answer to this question, I believe, lies in the poem's commerce with the Picturesque. The reflexive artistry of "Tintern Abbey" revolves around the speculative (vestigially religious) most known among art historians by its German name of Rückfigurierung. In his recent discussion of
the work of Caspar David Friedrich, Joseph Leo Koerner has drawn our
attention to Friedrich's habit of placing figures in his landscapes, their faces
typically averted and their (to us) invisible gaze radiating outward toward
often misty and partially obscured horizons. As in the opening of "Tintern
Abbey," in Friedrich there is "repetition at work (we seeing the Rückenfig-
gur seeing, or, alternatively, we see the artist's vision of himself seeing)."
Koerner also notes, however, that "something has been elided, for what
repeats our looking, the turned traveller, hides with his body the very thing
repeated: the gaze of the subject." The affective and cultural value in the
traveler's representations of natural experience, in other words, remains
inscrutable, and the averted gaze consequently "testifies to a powerful di-
mension of loss, of absence, of incompleteness within the subject." In several
of Friedrich's paintings (see Figs. 15 and 16) this incompleteness is absorbed
by the community of affect that seems to organize pairs and groups of
figures almost wholly "frozen in contemplation, their stillness a mark of
an immense interiority." Two Men Contemplating the Moon (1839) and
Moonrise at Sea (1822) show the proximity of the men sublimating an utterly
self-contained natural prospect into their convergent aesthetic sensibility,
something compounded, in the first of these paintings, by the men's defen-
ant wearing of the Aldeutsche Tracht that signals their community of po-
itical dissent. According to Koerner, the "incompleteness within the sub-
ject" operates in the twofold temporal sense of a "not yet" and "always
already":

That Friedrich's paintings seem like landscapes already seen, even if we behold
them for the first time, suggests the mysterious phenomenon of the déjà vu. In the
déjà vu, I feel as if what I am experiencing has already happened, and I have been
thrown back into a past moment of my life. While the illusion lingers, I experience
a sense of expectancy, as if I know for sure what will happen next. What I anticipate
in this immediate future is that I will recall the original experience that I now feel
myself repeating. I await a recognition that will turn the déjà vu into a memory,
one which will recapture some lost past. What is perplexing in this failure is that
the anticipated moment a little further on contains the illusion of a past origin of
experience. The déjà vu exorcises us with an anticipated return, yet leaves us in a
state of exile: anticipation becomes finally nostalgia for a place I have never vis-
ited. . . . From another perspective, the Rückenfigur as an emblem of subjective
experience, or even as painted object, is a trace of the past. It gazes out of its
future, but into a now concealed past anterior to its being: the unseen wood, the
unpainted surface of the canvas. We, the community of viewers who pass behind,
are its future. (Friedrich, 254)

Koerner's bold analyses of the déjà vu logic intrinsic to the motif of the
Rückenfigur reinstates our earlier discussion, in the context of Hegel's

Figure 15. Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840), Two Men Contemplating the
Moon (1839–40). By kind permission of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

Phenomenology of the overcoming of Death by the subject's bearing wit-
ness to its own dissolution as an autonomous individual and sublating
that "experience" (quia lyric poetry) into the domain of the "spirit" as the
center of an aesthetic "community". Koerner's analyses can be extended
into a more complex critique of the aesthetic subjectivity at issue through-
out "Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth's lyric ruminations ultimately compel
us to recognize the dissolution of the self's presumptive integrity, an event
that manifests itself as the onrush of a terrifying and quite postmodern
suspicion that the self (Wordsworth's lyric "I") may turn out to have been
all along but a product of aesthetic "representations" of subjective experi-
ence, representations at once so ubiquitous and so well executed as to be
unconsciously credited as authentic: a rather generic middle-class sub-
ject whose consciousness of its own cultural and visionary "distinction"
the representation helped constitute in the first place. To be sure, it may
seem outrageous (and it is irresistible) to second-guess in this manner the
meaning, after all, can we possibly assign to "feelings, too. Of unremembered pleasure" (ll. 31–32)? And what distinguishes the obliquities of the present meditation from the generic "unremembered acts of kindness and of love" (ll. 35–36) and from a past only remembered as mortgaging the present voice with its ineluctability: "I cannot paint / What then I was" (ll. 76–77)? Other than the mere wish to be "more deep," "more sublime," "more profound," and "far more deeply interfused," what underwrites the exemplary "human" integrity of the lyric voice? To affirm with regard to his "boyish days" how "that time is past" and how he is now "Changéd, no doubt, from what I was" (ll. 84–87), and thereby to establish a calculus between a subsidiary and incomplete (confessed) past and the (professed) plenitude of the present, is to hold out for contingent success at best. For even as the lyric voice posits itself as the subject born of (and yet asserting control over) a temporal continuum between past and present, the central suspicion to be displaced by the lyric's affirmations returns: the fear that the lyric voice itself might be but a displacement of epistemic and cultural ennui, a recognition of the qualitative indifference between the unself-conscious "coarser pleasures of my boyish days" and the likewise mechanical and repetitive "freeful stir / Unprofitable" and "dreary intercourse of daily life" which define the city dweller's observable present (ll. 74, 53–54, 132).

This déja vu unsettles the poet and reader with the uncanny familiarity of the present as mere repetition, as a phony revelation that turns out, upon closer inspection, to be insistently "scripted" and predetermined by the very past whose enigmatic nature it purports to overcome. Yet the "anticipated return" of the present, that is, its outright recognition as the instant replay of a past that appears to beg that recognition (or bait our méconnaissances), never quite materializes. Instead, present and past continue to destabilize one another and, by further consequence, to corrode the very idea of a temporal continuum that might be expected to realign inward remiscence with its social representations, the remembering subject and the subject remembered. In so "rediscovering" themselves for the first time, Wordsworth's and Friedrich's subjects enter the scene already in "a state of exile." Koenig's remarks on the non-event of our recognizing the present as a repetition of some vaguely familiar past, and of our resulting feeling of "nostalgia for a place I have never visited," warrant further attention. For this logical conundrum also throws into relief a desire more generally at work in Romanticism's lyric and painterly representations, namely, the desire to produce the subject in such a way as to spare it from becoming aware of its status as the product of a palpably
social practice of representation. To be unique and, at the same time, socially meaningful requires that the technologies of representation be absorbed into the object of their productivity. For a self to feel unique—to display what Hegel calls "Spirit" and what Wordsworth calls "Soul"—its self-awareness must assume "spontaneously" and yet as the (ontologically "late") recognition that it has already always been there. As Wordsworth puts it in "Tintern Abbey":

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was, when first
I came among these hills.

(L.B. 118, l. 39–60; italic mine)

"Tintern Abbey" evokes as a prolonged attempt to reconcile a hypothesized natural, unself-conscious, autonomous sensibility—only "remembered" as irretrievably past—and an urban, professionalized, dissociated subjectivity incapable of determining the epistemological relationship that it maintains with the former (is it recollection or projection?). In his Philosophy of Art (1805), Schelling had thematized this difference when distinguishing between two types of figures commonly placed in landscape paintings: "People in a landscape either must be portrayed as indigenes, as autochthonous, or they must be portrayed as strangers or wanderers recognizable as such by their general disposition, appearance, or even clothing, all of which is alien in relationship to the landscape itself." (145–46). The voice of "Tintern Abbey" alternately inclines to the autochthonous youth and the alienated traveler, with the former embodying Romanticism's belief in, or wish for, authentic natural "experience" (reminiscent of the unconscious pleasures of the Picturesque past in Gainsborough's earlier landscapes) and the latter strongly intimating the illusory nature of that wish. Having recognized how "feeling" and "memory" are mediated by an intrinsically social (and aesthetic) grammar, Wordsworth's lyric voice gradually relinquishes its delusive faith in grounding a self in unremembered, unrepresentable, utterly generic types of affect ("feeling," "memory," and the idea of spontaneous "recognition" itself). In response, "Tintern Abbey" stages its truth in a series of verbal repetitions and psy- chological transferences that appear to aim, cumulatively, at authenticating some exemplary self, one not verifiable as an individual with a distinctive past but merely identified as sincere by its repeated admissions of "forgetting."

Taking up Heinrich von Kleist's discussion of Friedrich's remarkable Monk by the Sea (1809–10), Koerner draws attention to Kleist's observation that the presence of the Monk in the picture, a beholder whose gaze is notably directed toward the horizon of the picture itself, "motivates everyone to articulate what many have already said in exuberant, universal familiarity." The fictional dialogues among various beholders of Friedrich's paintings, constructed by Kleist and integrated into his review of the painting for the Berliner Abendblätter, show Kleist at his ironic best as he offers a pastiche of middle-class "talk" about art consisting of confused literalisms, delusive expertise, and inane formalisms. As Koerner notes, in Kleist's review "the Räckenfigur is thus made into an initiator of discourses somehow inspiring his viewers with unbounded exegetical confidence. The views he elicits, while radically heterogeneous in content, all reflect the same false faith within their speakers that they know whereof they speak." Rather than palliating readers of Wordsworth's meditative lyric and beholders of Friedrich's enigmatic scene of contemplation with images of an organic correspondence between the "experience" of nature and the representation of such experience, the work of art serves precisely to remind us of the a priori discontinuity between these realms. The painting, Koerner argues, "will not evoke longing and loss by allowing us entrance into its spectacle, any more than the real sea [in Friedrich's painting] allowed us passage from the shore. It will instead simply repeat the experience of exclusion, keeping us out of the landscape." Kleist thus "does not explain or mediate the picture's meaning, but only repeats the picture's essential deformity of meaning" (Friedrich, 212–14).

In fact, Kleist's irony may extend even farther than Koerner realizes. A more postmodern reading of Kleist reconnects the larger motif of the Räckenfigur to Wordsworth's poem while reconstituting the social and cultural significance of Wordsworth's and Friedrich's figures, who seem so irremediably solated in their respective landscapes. For if Kleist's fictional dialogues can capture the "unbounded exegetical confidence" and "universal familiarity" that the viewers of Friedrich's canvas display and impute to one another—thus revealing notions of aesthetic expertise and middle-class "taste" to be unfounded, what Koerner calls Romanticism's caricature of Romanticism—such ironic exposure of the shallow terms founding social understanding and aesthetic community does not, however, ren-
under this conversation mere nothing. A community founded on the illusion of aesthetic expertise, false notions of cultural value, and unexamined, not to say unconscious (i.e., canonical) notions of "taste" is still, for better or worse, a community and, more often than not, peculiarly strengthened and unified by its commonplace (and quite possibly contradictory) "aesthetic predicates." Koerner's otherwise astute analyses of the integration of producer and consumer in the "Räucherfiguren" of Friedrich's paintings and in the cognate effect of déjà vu in several of Wordsworth's poems should not lead us to conclude, then, that the cultural reactivity instanced by these motifs will somehow slow down or even reverse the larger movement toward a self-conscious, robust, and authoritative culture of middle-class representation. On the contrary, the cumulative "effect" of "Tintern Abbey" pivots not only on the producer's vocational imagination but, just as crucially, on the supplemental expertise of its implied readers. For in repeating, at the level of reading, the lyric's dramatization of a conscious interiority, the alienated and still incomplete identity of an urban, educated, "middle-class" audience is invited to ground its generic montage interests in a distinctive cultural capital. As the summa of the eighteenth-century Picturesque, "Tintern Abbey" condenses the bourgeois subject's epistemological and economic instability into the deceptively local and spontaneous representations of an inward pathos. Poised as the center of an exceedingly self-conscious suffering, the lyric subject is thus reauthorized as fully, indeed exemplarily "human" precisely insofar as the confession of its incompleteness and alienation is tendered in the currency of a locodescriptive lyric wrought from the established aesthetic protocol of the Picturesque tradition. Melancholy thus begins to reveal, in a modern (Freudian) sense, a structural condition that reaches beyond the incidentals of subjective loss. What has vanished is not merely the integrity of the gentled individual achieving "virtual" self-representation by fashioning an empirical landscape into a highly discriminating, if iterable, Picturesque "scene." Also lost is the premise of the subject's and the landscape's authenticity. At the same time, however, the Picturesque's increasingly expansive "literary" mediations offer themselves not only as the cause of but also as the (necessarily artificial) remedy to and de-realization of the empirical, substantive, and temporal stability of self and other. Hence this loss of land, of individual selfhood, and of the possibility of their authentic representation is transposed into "literature" and the aesthetic more generally. Overtaken by the uncanny and mutually canceling senses of "once again," Wordsworth's "halted" speaker synthesizes this recognition of loss into poetic transfers of melancholy and projections of hope as he "on
digener Wechsel der Formen von Geld und Waren: seine Güte selbst verleihet, sich als Mehrwert von sich selbst als ursprünglichem Wert abstoßt, sich selbst verwertet. Denn die Bewegung, worin er Mehrwert zusetzt, ist seine eigene Bewegung, seine Verwertung also Selbstverwertung. Er hat die okkulte Qualität erhalten, Wert zu setzen, weil er Wert ist. Er wirft lebhafte Jungfer oder legt wenigstens goldene Eier." Ökonomische Schriften, 149.

8a. Burks, "Thoughts and Details on Scarcity" (1795), in Writings and Speeches, p. 137.

83. Inth, Doing What Comes Naturally, 144. As Marx puts it in Kapital, what accounts for "the enigmatical character of the product of labor, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities" is a direct result of "this commodity form iteself" (Selected Writings, 436). "Woher entspringt also der rätselhafte Charakter des Arbeitproduktes, sobald es Warenform annimmt? Offenbar aus dieser Form selbst." Ökonomische Schriften, 437.


85. Wordsworth's analysis of poetic cognition in this passage seems remarkably close to Schelling's 1792 Treatise Explicitly of the Idealism in the Science of Knowledge. See my translation of the latter text in my Idealism and the Endgame of Theory, esp. 76-104.

86. For strong examples of this "sympathetic" reenactment of the poet's professed faith in a rigorously philosophical idiom—it being all the while understood that the "faith" pledged in the poem and the "rigor" professed by its readers function on the same ideological axis—see Wicket, Wordsworth and the Sublime, and Foster, "Scene of Writing."

87. Levinson, Great-Period Poems, 13, 37, 39, 50, 21. Even now, the seductive appeal of Romantic belief has its advocates, as the vehement repudiation of the New Historicism project by M. H. Abrams and Thomas McFarland suggests. Tracing their axiomatic religious relationship to Romanticism, Abrams and McFarland in particular have chosen the textual site of "Tintern Abbey"—alllegedly ruined by the secular industry of Marjorie Levinson's, Kenneth Johnston's, and Jerome McGann's Marxists and contractorial critics—as the New Jerusalem for their crusade on behalf of a spiritually activist criticism that seeks to shelter the poetic word from the taint of historical reference. See McFarland, "Dissociation of William Wordsworth," in his William Wordsworth: Abrams, "On Political Readings of Lyrical Ballads;" and Bromwich's "French Revolution and Tintern Abbey," a local critique of Levinson's interpretation of the poem.


89. See Sueg Davis, "A Voyage to Tintern Abbey" (1742; published 1743); Edmund Gardiner, "Sonnet Written in Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire" (1795) and a number of other lyrics listed by Mayo in his "Contemporary Airs of the Lyrical Ballads," 492-93. Also see Turner's "Wastland of Tintern Abbey, Monmothsh-

shire," a watercolor and pencil sketch dating to c. 1794 (figure 12). On the genesis of Wordsworth’s generation, see Talfourd, In Search, 61-107.

90. In his particularly searching and acute reading of "Tintern Abbey," Mark Foster often comes close to my own pragmatic reading of Wordsworth. He states: "Poetry is in Wordsworth the means of finding or constituting himself in the world, where both self and world did not, in any precise sense, exist before...\because certainty is suspended in the immediate and unfolding poetic project, \Wordsworth in\simultaneously driven to create a justification for his enterprise...\because (his) self is unattainable and incomprehensible except through the power of an emergent discourse whose fate is open to question. ("Scene of Writing," 85-90). For a more traditional reading that situates "Tintern Abbey" carefully within more familiar literary boundaries, see Jacobus, Tradition, 103-90.

91. Mary Jacobus, for whom "nature becomes a catalyst for the continuance of memory," is more inclined to give Wordsworth's rhetorical organization of inwardness the benefit of doubt (bearing in mind, however, that inwardness in "Tintern Abbey" only evermutes as a doubting, radically Cartesian agency). Notwithstanding her expansive recovery of the poem's extensive rhetorical illusions with previous poetry, Jacobus does not appear to register any tension between the poem's rhetoric of inwardness and the emotic intentional conception of such inwardness as 'expressive.' See Tradition, 127.

92. Wordsworth's habit of projecting, by means of connotations subtly derived from his descriptive meditative figures, an "unsteady private conviction" onto a universal, transpersonal "we" has also been noted by Wolfe, Questioning Presence, 62, and by Welleck, Wordsworth and the Sublime, 34-40.

93. Knoers, Friedrich, 182. On Friedrich's temporalized landscapes, Alice Kuhnmark remarks that "landscape painting uses empirical nature as a covering or veil which it then removes to reveal the invisible world. On the other hand, this revelation is self-cancelling, for all sensation of the idea depends on the subject. Thus not only is all depiction/interpreter of landscape subjective, but moreover landscape painting exemplarily expresses the notion of romantic subjectivity. It paradoxically denies the existence of the natural world it seems to portray. ("Temporal of Landscape," 74.

94. Throughout the poem, the "effect of the statement is to display what it disclaims!" what [Wordsworth] excludes emerges with fuller descriptive power than what he owns." (Welleck, Questioning Presence, 64-65).

Instruction

1. The Kenneth Burke epigraph is from his "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," in American Writers' Congress, ed. Henry Hart, but is quoted here from Lentricchia, Criticsm, 26, 28.