# THE RE-DOUBLED SILENCE: On the Echo-Pattern of Death, Revolution, and Mockery in Wordsworth's Prelude

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"A work of language only advances more deeply into the intangible destiny of the mirror, calls forth the double of its already doubled writing, discovers in this way a possible and impossible infinity, ceaselessly strives after speech, maintains it beyond the death wich condemns it . . . ."

-Michel Foucault
*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*

The critic acknowledges his dependence on prior words that make his work a kind of answer. He calls to other texts "that they might answer him."

-Geoffrey Harman (in turn quoting Wordsworth)
*Criticism in the Wilderness*

# I

There are certain moments in Wordsworth's Prelude, certain dread-inspired realizations in the life of the poet that leave indelible impressions on his consciousness. These invariably imply perilous gaps or destructive forces in nature. At one point in Book I, for instance, the backwater of the young Wordsworth's mind is haunted by the upreared head of a gigantic crag. A later vision (in Book V) invoves the ghastly face of a corpse that breaks the tranquil surface of a lake. Such passages are usually followed by scenes of reflection and restoration. The most enigmatic of these narrative transformations involves the Boy of Winander who, in the midst of a visionary moment in a beautiful setting, stands listening in the darkness. The narrator interrupts the tale to inform us of the boy's untimely death. The significance of this visionary moment, however, is never satisfactorily resolved. Critics tend to treat it as one interruption among others. They associate the shift between the interruption and the elegiac meditation that follows as a moment of insight, but they never connect it, except by way of contrast, to contiguous patterns in the passage in which it appears. After all, similar moments are often classified as formative events in the life of the poet's past self, but only rarely as clues to the dilemma of a present self and *never* as a source of insight into historical or sociopolitical debate.

Critics such as M.H. Abrams overlook the full implications of these epiphanies by associating them only with self-interrogation and internalization. Even Geoffrey Hartman and Paul de Man, though they detect something particularly unusual about the "self-interrogation" in "The Boy of Winander," ultimately succumb to relatively easy resolutions. The death of the boy of Winander, however, should not be seen only as an interruption of the landscape in which it takes place, nor should it be dissociated from the linguistic and figural predicament of the author who describes it. For this very reason, it ultimately cannot be dissociated from the historical and sociopolitical events engaged elsewhere in The Prelude. "The Boy of Winander" is therefore exemplary of a crucial pattern in the larger poem, a pattern that draws what may appear to be disparate critical issues together and that justifies the juxtaposition of material perhaps never seen together. This pattern derives from precisely what critics have tended *not* to see in the poem. It points toward a different view of The Prelude and Wordsworth's entire idiom. On the

sociopolitical level, it also points, as perhaps no critic has observed, to a 'mockery' of any unfolding narrative of growing insight on Wordsworth's part about the hopes and "horrors" attendant upon the French Revolution, the British declaration of war, and the Terror. Instead, the poet's repeated "shock" of perceived disjunction between his embrace of Rousseau's ideals and his perception of social and political realities can be said to define the ongoing loss of an ongoing personal/political stance. This loss defies any critical resolution patterned on narrative (including any allegorizing claim to a retrospect) whatsoever.

Although Geoffrey Hartman engages Wordsworth's oeuvre "as a whole" in Wordsworth's Poetry, he takes care to dedicate an early chapter to one of the "Lyrical Ballads" originally entitled "There Was a Boy." Hartman observes that Wordsworth subtly revised the poem and later incorporated it into Book V of the "autobiographical" epic. This is the passage that we have referred to as "The Boy of Winander":

(V. 389-422)

There was a boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs
And Islands of Winander! many a time
At evening, when the stars had just begun
to move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering Lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him,--And they would shout
Across the wat'ry Vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of mirth and jocund din! And when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain Heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady Lake.

This Boy was taken from his Mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full ten years old.
--Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
The Vale where he was born; the Churchyard hangs
Upon a Slope above the Village School,
And there, along the bank, when I have passed
At evening, I believe that oftentimes
A full half-hour together I have stood
Mute--looking at the Grave in which he lies.

Perceiving the poem as seminal, a prelude to The Prelude, Hartman frames a theme: "Nature" has formed the boy, who now must rise to a new level of self-awareness, must define himself in contradistinction to the "objective" world. This implies the self-formation through crisis of self-recognition by which M.H. Abrams defines The Prelude as a *Bildungsgeschichte* (Gilpin, 128). Hartman addresses the tensions between the two stanzas. The first portrays a phase of unity between child and nature, a quasi-pantheistic synthesis, symbolized by the boy's "interwoven" fingers, and, later, by the echoing exchange between boy and owls. A moment of arrest, which comes (late in the first section) in the shape of a silence that interrupts the "jocund" exchange, foretokens an imminent consciousness of separation from nature. Death, however, intervenes before the boy can achieve self-awareness. Hartman describes Wordsworth's subsequent gaze at the grave in the second stanza as punctuating another influential theme: a poet's consciousness is *always* of death, the confrontation of a self with a buried self: "The survivor contemplates his own buried childhood." (21). Nevertheless, the interruption of a vital correspondence that for the child entails the death of an Edenically unselfconscious mode of being is deflected by the qualification ("gentle," "mild") of the shock in which the interruption manifests itself, just as the poet's subsequent "shock" of reflection is deflected by a "forgetful gaze." According to Hartman, the presence of death is overshadowed by the more eminent portrayal of beauty and unselfconscious interchange (22).

In "Wordsworth and Holderlin," Paul de Man agrees that this passage is pivotal, and he, for the most part, echoes Hartman. The first stanza describes a symbolic unity between boy and nature: "The analogic correspondence between man and nature is so

perfect that one passes from one to the other without difficulty or conflict, in a dialogue full of echo and joyful exchange."(RR, 51). According to de Man, the first prefiguration of a disruption in the "idyll" comes not, as Hartman asserts, with the advent of a silence, but in the word "hung," which suggests the boy's precariousness and links it to the church that "hangs" on a hill in the second, almost "free standing" stanza (52). After all, when the echoes cease, the world drops under "one's feet" and leaves "us" hanging. "Fancy" (probably implying Coleridge's strictures on Hartley-esque recollection in The Biographia Literaria) gives way to "imagination"; "the mind" no longer echoes nature—it contemplates itself. By the time we arrive at the "uncertain heaven," the imaginative language forms a "profound contrast to the earlier world of echoes." As Hartman claims, a loss of consciousness prefigures a consciousness of death, but this is cushioned by the reception of the reflection "into the bosom of the steady lake" (54).

De Man, then, though he employs some highly interesting impersonal pronouns, has uncharacteristically little to add so far. He favors a more temporal definition of Hartman's claim, however, than Hartman spells out at this point: "Here the poet's language glimpses its inauthentic past in light of a precarious knowledge of its future" (55). The idyllic correspondences of the past, accordingly, were not only interrupted by self-consciousness in the face of death, but were "inauthentic" to begin with. De Man is nevertheless reticent. His later essays could deepen this discussion. In his "Rhetoric of Temporality," he expounds at length on how the union of self and "nature" is *always* the result of a precarious "self-mystification" inevitably to be shattered by a fall. Moreover, in his "Autobiography as De-facement," he uses Wordsworth's own figure for language (language as a mute picture) to demystify the performative "autobiographical" gesture that posits a voice for nature and the self. The voice that language confers, De Man reminds us, is composed only *of* language, of figures or faces for a world and a self that it can render apprehensible only in the form of "mute pictures." The tropes by and through which the autobiographical gesture grants this voice therefore always freeze and deface the "self" whose very defacement they disguise in the gesture.[1] Given these premises, for the self that is and always was confronting its own loss in time, any notion of "the future" must be precarious.

De Man's reference to that future in "Wordsworth and Holderlin," however, is only peripheral. Though his later writings have an incisive bearing on "The Boy of Winander," in this essay, he relies on Hartman's perspicacious commentary on the poem and the problematics of nature in Wordsworth, consigning his own theoretic elaborations to other occasions and other boxes. In his book on Wordsworth's poetry of epitaphs, D.D. Devlin describes "There was a Boy" as "very clearly an epitaph when it was published in 1800" (101). He quotes the "received//into the bosom of the steady lake" line, claiming that it dissolves the distinction between "the world of the living" and "the world of the dead": "the active or living 'would enter' is not to be distinguished from the passive or lifeless 'received'"(111). Interestingly, this observation confirms the deathliness in that transition, but suggests (in contrast to the views of Hartman and de Man) that the word "received" asserts, rather than softens, death-perception. If the poem does indeed join ("dissolve") two worlds, more such observations and more theoretical commentary could provide a means of moving beyond an interpretation of the work that tends to flatten tensions to suit the requirements of narrative. After all, Hartman also claims that a "doubling" ("a gentle shock of mild surprise"), qualifies (and therefore softens) one of the most unsettling transitions in the poem.(WP, 19). It is possible to acknowledge this while yet suggesting that this "doubling" does unsettling damage of its own. Wordsworth, after all, is the poet of echoes, of doublings, of haunting replications, and of revenant allusions to texts and events that his poems often pretend to deny. The echo—the most important figure in the poem—is by no means so simple or idyllic as it appears. It denotes repetition that subsumes gaps in time and space. It is therefore also a figure *for* the gaps in Wordsworth's narrative. This underworld of echoic gaps is occluded by a veil of nostalgia for an idyll that in fact never was. This essay undertakes to reinterpret Wordsworth's retrospective pathos accordingly, as a mask for an underlying spaciotemporal pattern, one which proves both ordered and self-altering.

Wordsworth's consciousness of his own dissimulation with respect to this pattern, moreover, may point to a more pressing crisis of poesis than has yet been observed. Relying on "To Joanna" from Wordsworth's "Poems on the Naming of Places," the second phase of this argument demonstrates the importance of moving outside the confines of "The Boy of Winander" to confirm our suspicions. "To Joanna" and "The

Boy of Winander" are, despite their radically different surface-appearances, strikingly similar poems about epitaphic echoes. In fact, both imply a self-mocking perspective on those appearances, a perspective punctuated by death and mourning. Given the seminal importance of "There was a Boy" in establishing a reading of The Prelude, this observation suggests that not only an echoic underbeat, but likewise a self-echoing, self-mocking perspective on the masking of that underbeat, resonates elsewhere in the larger work.

The third phase of this analysis is designed to demonstrate how this spaciotemporal pattern informs the sociopolitical and physicotheological statements in surrounding passages of Book V, statements which echo and are echoed by even more overt statements elsewhere. The spaciotemporal continuum of "The Boy of Winander" is the keynote of these surrounding passages and may also be said to underlie the most political portions of The Prelude. Given these observations, the tensions between the poem's overt and covert historical views prove inextricable from the tensions that inform the earlier analyses. Both the poet's personal quandary and his ideological doubts are conceived and expressed in a single idiom. They are subject to the same forms of linguistic and thematic dissimulation. By uncovering the links between the personal and the historical, our conclusion consolidates our established observations and opens their thematic implications out toward a more spacious terrain.

## II

According to both Hartman and de Man, "The Boy of Winander" describes a joyful symbiosis that, by the end of the first stanza, dissolves, advancing, by the second stanza, a softened note of deathly self-awareness. The boy's imaginative epiphany happened long ago, and the mature reflective poet is able to meditate on the boy's death at a distance. Hartman and de Man see the text as enabling a reflection that totalizes the past as past. Nevertheless, the notion of a gap between an idyllic illusion (of correspondences between self and nature) and the subsequent dissolution of that fusion veils a more mysterious simultaneity of effects that arguably underlies—and subtly contradicts—any such reading of the poem. Initially, even a literal or thematic "surface reading" of the passage suggests that darkness inhabits the "idyllic perfection" long

before the phrases "deep silence" and "hung listening" presage a consciousness of death. The boy, after all, stands "alone" in a scene that begins "at evening," the sky darkening sufficiently for the stars to materialize. These lights move along "the edges" of the hills, edges which, like the "Cliffs" that open the poem, imply a precipice long before the word "hung" appears to destabilize matters. Even more suggestive are the noises of owls, whose "long halloos," "shouts" and "screams" (anthropomorphic cries of pain?) and "quivering peals" (for whom does the bell toll?) are already somewhat frightening *even if* Wordsworth interrupts them to inform us that it was "concourse wild//of mirth and jocund din!" Though the illusion of spontaneous naturalism in this scene prevents us from realizing it at first, owls that hoot in the night are proverbial auguries of death. The moment of greatest correspondence between nature and the boy is arguably simultaneously punctuated by a sign of the greatest threat.[2]

Following Hartman, de Man plays up the disparity between the two "Winander Boy" stanzas. This is effective, given what it lends to his reading, but de Man suggests that it is principally the precariousness of the word "hung" whose repetition connects the otherwise almost "free-standing halves" (53). This too is persuasive, given Wordsworth's own fascination with the word. In his "preface of 1815," he uses the verb "hang" as an example of self-reflective language that creates and presents novel experiences, the language of "Imagination" as opposed to that of "Fancy," which merely sifts through impressions of externalities in its production of imitative images.[3] Notwithstanding, "hung" is by no means the only term that serves to unify the poem. The vale which separates the "two halves" is bridged by many repeated gestures ("the evening," "the woods," the hill, for instance), not the least of which is the capitalized word "Vale" itself. The Vale where the boy was born and died points at first to the illusion of an harmonious circle, the notion that, in Wordsworth's terms, "origin and tendency" are "correlative."[4] Just as, in the first half, the phrase "rising or setting" modifies not only the stars, which circle above, but the boy as well—whose "uplifted"(rising) head in the first section corresponds to the poet's downward gaze (toward the grave) in the second—the figure of the Vale points to both literal and symbolic linkages. That is: "watery Vale" in the first part defines the literal gap through which the correspondences between boy and nature are said to take place. The repetition of "Vale" in the second part points to the symbolic

equations: rising-setting, cradle-grave. But the transition from one equation to the other, or especially one end of either equation to its other end, seems too abrupt to be harmonious, and it is this disjunction which occasions the disjunction between the two stanzas. As much as any thematic shift, it is the *un*gentle shock of transition between the two parts that makes them seem free-standing. The repetition of "Vale" in both sections, furthermore, sets up correspondences through a third vale, the disjunction situated between the two equations. Many readers, including Hartman, situate the meaning of the poem in this gap. As we will see, however, the so-called loss of the boy could also be associated with the loss of this gap. This negation can nonetheless amount only to a redefinition of a disjunction in the fiction we are given. A projected gap corresponding to a fictive death remains the sole formal justification for the elegy, the second section of the passage.

Curiously, both Hartman and de Man describe the transitions in "Winander" as if they were discrete moments in a series of unique events. This tendency is necessary in that it renders the text more amenable to generalizations about its movement, but close attention to specific time figures opens it to alternative undercurrents. Just as the boy in the first part passes under the stars along the hills "at evening," the narrator in the second part passes along the bank to visit the grave "at evening"; but in neither case is this a single evening. "There was a boy . . . // . . . many a time//at evening": these phrases point to a series of evenings, and the poet later visits the grave "Oftentimes" at evening. Hartman observes that the first three words of this passage are already elegiac (WP, 21). The phrase "There was a boy," further, affirms that a boy already had to have ceased to be in order to inhabit the elegiac text. By referring to what is only supposedly lost, and doing so in the rhetorical language of generic convention, the elegiac gesture could even be said to enact the loss of the loss of the boy: he comes into being, is gained *as* a loss, and this "loss" is, in turn, rhetoricized as a "once upon a time," a rhetorical gesture that frames it as "the loss of a loss." To say "There was a boy . . . many a time," however, is to also to generate uncertainty as to when was there *not* a boy. Even after the boy was supposed to have died, there "was" still, repeatedly, a boy. Since "Oftentimes" echoes "many a time, " Wordsworth's repeated visits to the grave could be said to link the repeated presence of a boy who was supposed to have been lost to the repeated

contemplation—and invocation—of that loss. The gap between the repeated projection of loss and the repeated reflection, at some later point, on that loss, is a "literal" gap of loss—the death of the boy. As a literal trope, however, the readability of that death depends on contextual signing in the same poem, a sign-like configuration which can be unmasked (as internal evidence will suggest) as thematically unjustified. If the status of that death proves fictive on the poem's own terms, it too is lost, but without gaining a nostalgic reinscription like that which perpetuates the boy. The loss of the boy may be nostalgically elevated to "the loss of loss." The loss of the death, in contrast, entails the loss of nostalgia and therefore the scene of a totalizing reflection. It is redefined as just another space in a continuum, an ongoing pattern itself defined by spaces. This is not to deny that an inauthentic illusion of unity initially masks a temporal predicament that nevertheless admits the "true" presence of death as a challenge to and from the author, but to suggest that this masking is constituted by meticulously perspicacious references to spaces that undermine the distinctions between the moods that make up the narrative. These spaces simultaneously darken the initial illusion of unity and undermine even the illusion of dark pathos that ensues. That pathos, after all, is contingent on the trope of death that predicates the loss of the initial illusion of unity, the loss that engenders pathos. Therefore, the loss of that trope cannot possibly amount to a gain.

The poet's gaze, or rather the series of gazes that conclude the second section, point to the double nature of the spacings that define the pattern, the mode in which they undermine both unity and pathos. These gazes are skewed by the delineation of the duration—"a full half hour together"—in which they would take place. Wordsworth could easily have designated a full hour for each meditation, or a half, but the juxtaposition "full half" (compounded by "together" in a reflection that describes separation) draws attention to the continuum of divisiveness—if this oxymoronic term is acceptable—that the structure of the poem asserts even as it seems to mask it.

We have suggested that this continuum is made up of repetitions and spacings. These terms, in turn, describe the echo, a central figure in the passage, and in Wordsworth's *oeuvre*. Before focusing on echoes as a theme, however, we ought to establish, on a literal level, the way they are presented in the poem.[5] The reference in The Prelude (Book I, 64) to "the mind's/ internal echo of the imperfect sound" could be

treated as Wordsworth's claim to the continuum between the "subjective" and the "objective" or external world, with some ambiguity as to where, if anywhere, the ontological priority should fall. The term "imperfect sound" points to a disturbance, a paradoxical closed circle, in the pattern that occasions the echo, since in this case it denotes the self-generated sound of Wordsworth's "own voice." In his discussion of "Tintern Abbey" in *The Visionary Company*, Harold Bloom suggests that, though Wordsworth can seem, in Hartman's terms, to be almost Blakean in his aspiration toward internal mysticism, it is nature that must "disturb the mind" into perceiving its idyllic unity with nature (Abrams,99). Insofar as nature is indistinguishable from the mind's selective imprint of it, the poet, guided by memory, nevertheless partly creates phenomena (Abrams, 100). Others, such as Ferry, see in Wordsworth's perspicacity about imperfections in the poet-nature correspondence a disdain for mutability generally, an aspiration to the "purity of eternity" the essence of which lies beyond linguistic articulation (Abrams, 18). De Man also reorients the discussion away from the man-nature model. Since it would take another essay to engage this fundamental debate about Wordsworth, it is enough to suggest at this juncture that framing this notion as an "echo" inclines Wordsworth to undercut it and complicate it more immediately than he does elsewhere. References in The Prelude to a longing for "Eolian visitations" (I, 105) and the "corresponding breeze" seem (though that breeze, that internal changeling, both is and is not of the poet) more straightforward in appearance: the self is an instrument that responds or should respond harmoniously to the gentle wind-voice of nature (as a lute//that waits upon the touches of the wind, III, 38-39). This response entails the "perceiving" and "half-creating" that, in the nevertheless pathos-ridden landscape of "Tintern Abbey," is replicated in the work of the poet, or so we are lead to believe.

The boy of Winander, however, is not a stand-in for the aeolean harp: he creates his own instrument with his hands and blows through it himself. He acts as both agent and instrument in the generation of sound. Wordsworth may have framed this act deliberately to conflict with his argument in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* for a language that recaptures the "natural" relation of elements by eschewing artificial convention. If English material philosophy would presuppose that we imitate what we see, to hold a mirror up to nature in the venerable association of art and mimesis would be to produce

"mimic" hootings, to mimic nature. Of course, this association also harks back to Ariel's lines in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, but Locke explicitly proposed to narrow the gamut of epistemic pursuit to matters of sensation and reflection. Arguably, the boy's response reflects a lingering 18th century version of this pitfall.[6] In book VII (249), Wordsworth comments on the paintings of street artists as "those mimic sights that ape//the absolute presence of reality," a wittily disdainful way of putting it—connecting "mimic" with "ape"—since he has just finished describing the caged animals at a London carnival. For the Winander boy to produce "mimic" hootings, furthermore, he would have to have heard the cageless birds sing first, but when? If he blew his calls "to the silent owls," it is they who responded to him. It is impossible to say when this peculiar exchange began. Like the stars which only ostensibly "have just begun to move" in the opening lines, the correspondence between boy and owls, which is problematic even by Wordsworth's "artistic" standards, does not begin there: it is merely one moment in an intricate continuum.

This is not to say, however, that this continuum is mechanical. We have already suggested that the owls seem to pose a kind of threat. Their "long halloos" mimic, though less symmetrically, the long "oo" (u) sounds in "blew mimic hootings," but the other responses (screams and so on) are not the least predictable, or hoot-like. Is de Man right to suggest that the language here, in comparison to the anxiety-producing "language of imagination" that comes later, is "flat and mechanical"? (RR, 53) It would seem, to the contrary, that by not imitating the boy's mimesis, these responses already interrupt a predictable pattern, disjunctively carrying out what is deceptively framed as a perfect correspondence.[7] "Anxious visitations" and "severer interventions" are, despite de Man's claims, already present. In a comparable scene in Book I, after stealing the raven's eggs on Hawkshead cliffs, the young Wordsworth hears sounds of silence, echoes of his footsteps:

(I.321)
And when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
low breathings coming after me, and sounds
of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

This effect is replicated when the boy steals a boat and heads on toward Styborrough crag:

(I.361) [The theft] was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on

According to Marchant, the boy's guilt is tantamount to an apprehension of "that which, distinctly itself, is uncompromisingly not *him*self"(51). This "creature-consciousness" in Rudolph Otto's terms, draws the integrity of his own being into question. This perception no doubt alludes to Hartman's observation that whenever the boy becomes conscious of himself, he experiences his individuality as an extrinsic nemesis, as the threat of outward things "raised against him" (WP, 215). Like the Winander Boy, furthermore, the raven-robbing version of the young Wordsworth is "alone" at evening under "the stars" on a "ridge," about to undergo profound spatial disorientation. In the traditional allegorical sense (a signification preestablished by dogma), ravens, like hooting owls, are forerunners of death. From the outset, The Winander boy is a patently estranged, even self-estranged participant in the vale of echoes.[8]

Just as curious is the observation that the screams and halloos are not portrayed metaphorically as echoes themselves, but as "halloos, and screams, *and* echoes" (my italics). "Echoes" are not responses, but doublings of responses, which here are "redoubled and redoubled." Caught in the mountains that surround the Vale, these replications accumulate like phantoms at a seance. They cannot be controlled. An echo, further, is the ideal figure for a non-fictional voice from beyond the grave because it is by definition the sound of a voice that has already died. In order to bounce off a surface and return as a phantom or echo of itself, a voice must pass away and return through a silence in the interim. These deathly intervals mark time, pointing to a continuum of disjunctions that, as we have noted, inform the movement of the poem as a whole. This continuum, is not, however, interrupted by a silence. What Wordsworth describes are "pauses of deep silence," a plurality of silences in an echo that was always defined by pauses. The word "silence," in fact, repeats three times in the first section, echoed in the second part by the

word "Mute." Dashes add additional silences: in the first part between the boy's call and the responsive shouts; in the second part between "I have stood Mute" and the Grave. Wordsworth may situate his claims for imagination and immortality in the most pregnant of these silences, but we have already suggested that such a moment rather points toward the inevitable recognition of death in the confrontation of the self with time and in language's corresponding inability to come to terms with time. The moment now admits another enigma: the question of where and how any final instance of reflection or death-recognition can take place is deflected by both the apparent unpredictability of the echo and the manner in which its constitutive pauses pass indeterminately into the past, and, as the trope itself will insist, into the future. We can confront this question only by examining the poet's self-reflection itself.

Since, in his correspondence with the owls, the boy is listening, one tends to read the highlighted silence as the shock that breaks a pattern of communication, but it is "in that silence," one silence in a series of pauses, that the disruption occurs. The shock, which presumably takes place in the boy, also acts independently as the subject of the verb "carried," whose object is in turn a distant sound: "the voice/ of mountain torrents." The nature of the shock itself, then, is cleverly eluded, and even the notion of silence is confounded by the perception of a distant voice. We, in an effort to locate these perceptions, situate ourselves both inside and outside the mind of the boy. The sudden intrusion of the present perfect tense ("Has carried") locates the shock indeterminately between the past and the present, just as a boy who "hung" under an "uncertain heaven" is dislodged in space. Once again, disorienting temporal and spatial frames do not merely mimic the boy's disorientation, but require us to consider disorienting spaciotemporal possibilities that imply an external perspective confounded with an internal one. The "visible scene," furthermore, crosses into what had been an aural space, carrying that "uncertain heaven," which is in turn steadied in the lake, into the mind of the boy, but not syntactically in that order:

> . . . a gentle shock of mild surprise
> Has carried far into his heart the voice
> Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
> Would enter unawares into his mind
> With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,

Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

We read the passive steadying of the dislodged scene in "the bosom" of the lake as a final image of recuperative balance; but chronologically, the imagery in the bosom of the lake has yet to actively enter the boy's mind. Therefore, we know the trajectory of the imagery before we perceive it, which cannot be the case for the boy. Oddly, furthermore, it is the scene and not the boy that is described as "unawares," a scene which enters his mind, not his eye, just as the voice enters his heart, not his ear. The moment is thoroughly vertiginous, but not in the way we would expect.

Hartman has it that the disorienting intervention of "imagination" here serves to foreground the boy's self-recognition, to take him out of a familiar plane. If we pursue this line of reasoning, the moment looks very like one of the "spots of time" that Wordsworth describes in book XII(250-279). These early impressions, though they are at first indistinguishable from outward sensations, are "visitings of imaginative power" that become suppressed in the "trivial occupations" of the perceiver. They nevertheless persuade the later Wordsworth to define the "mind" as "lord and master" over the "outward sense" because the life-giving power of the "spots of time" can be perceived only retrospectively. Even the language used in an attempt to reanimate a past insight of self-recognition may itself be deeply conditioned by the familiarity of a later state of tranquillity. If this is so, Wordsworth therefore frames the realization of the boy of Winander as part and parcel of a vertiginous moment in the life of his older self to break through the common conventions of mimetic reasoning, thereby reinstating what is supposed to have been a past vision.[9] Nevertheless, this framing is self-contradictory. He takes pains to *disguise* that it is he who was (and was not) the boy, even as the boy's disoriented perspective is simultaneously translated into a reflection *on the boy,* one which requires the outside perspective of the poet at the very moment we'd expect to read matters only from the inside perspective of the boy. The elision of the context of this *nausee* implies, on the surface, a rhetoric of bad faith. The very rhetoric that points to a self-reflection on the imperfect echo of a past self includes a denial of the relationship between the two selves. Wordsworth seemingly side-steps the issue: under the pretext of diagnosing a predicament as if it were that of another at another time, he denies that this

was and *is his* predicament. He relocates and renames himself as the boy, as a back-projected presence, foregrounding the echoes that run across the vale that mediates at the center of the first stanza.

Wordsworth seems to orient himself across a horizontal distance—the "vale" between the boy and the poet. The role of the disorienting moment, however, points to the integrity of what are, so to speak, vertical correspondences, as do the repeated vales and silences that, as we noted, run down the central axis of the poem. That Wordsworth chose to lodge this revised "lyrical ballad" precariously in the "autobiographical" Prelude, and not in the early books on his schoolboy days, but in Book V (which is in fact about books and their relation to the disquieting events in the life of a past "self") is all the more telling.[10] Even if we were deprived of this "context" *and* the suggestion of a disguised spot of time, self-reflection would remain the manifest theme. Wordsworth precludes an omniscient perspective by including his own figure in the poem as the narrator. The poet uses the third person pronoun, but he gives himself away: How could the "I" that meditates on the grave of the "he" that was a boy have acquired intimate, indeed internal knowledge of what that boy had been doing "alone" at evening if the "he" were not the dead child inside the "I," the child that buries the man? As we have seen, Wordsworth's meditation on the boy's disorientation draws attention to this evasion in a way that is all the more disorienting. It suggests that the vertigo brought on by the boy's awareness entails an ironic overturning of the poet's claim to aloofness even though the fall and the death of the boy are "presented" as distant subjects of a traditional pastoral elegy. This aloofness may amount to a mock version of how the poet would like us to see the poet—as a figure of pathos who has only to stand there "mute" to thereby make pathos start speaking in tongues. This elegy may well be a mock version of the tale, one even self-mocking in light of the observation that, in earlier drafts of "The Boy of Winander," the "he" becomes an "I" midway through the poem. Wordsworth originally wrote "a sudden shock of mild surprise/Would carry far into *my* heart . . . " (492, my italics). Even when Wordsworth added the elegiac second section, he changed "Would carry" to "Has carried" in the first section, suggesting, as we have observed, that the revision does not really undertake to erase the connection between past and present. Evidently, we have

yet to see the full dimensions of self-reference and mockery in the author's echoes of his own consciousness in this poem, The Prelude, and elsewhere.

## III

In our opening discussion of "the mind's internal echo of the imperfect sound," we observed a hint of absurdity implicit in an echoic figure for a correspondence between man and nature. The sound of "nature" in this instance signifies the imperfect sound of Wordsworth's "own voice." If that voice is governed by the mind, the mind responds only to the echo of its own invention. A conscious self therefore repeatedly confronts a replicated version of itself, a pattern of confounding self-awareness not unlike that "experienced" by Wordsworth *as* the boy of Winander.[11] When the boy of Winander believes he is speaking the language of the owls, he in fact only mimics his internal conception of owl sounds. The disjunctions that bring on his disorientation suggest a growing awareness that he has been deluded all along, that he and nature had never been in true correspondence. The lengthening spaces between the genuine owl sounds and the boy point to what had always been the boy's misconception with respect to his own abilites: "pauses of deep silence mocked his skill." In this line, the word "skill" is more than suggestively satiric in juxtaposition with the word "mocked": proponents of "skill" can only "mock" or "mimic" what they cannot feel or understand. "Silence" therefore mocks the mockery of skill by naming its skillful sounds "silent," by portraying mimicry precisely *in the terms* of its inherent limitation. Mockery, in fact, points to *consciousness* of the absurdity of mimicry. If the boy were fully conscious that mimicry entailed its own mockery (in the nineteenth century, the words were interchangeable), his awareness would extend not only to his past self-mystification with respect to "the silent owls," but equally to the knowledge that his own sounds, once converted into echoes and spaces, likewise cease to be his own. From the outset, these sounds only "mocked his skill" for mimicry. This is precisely what Wordsworth implies of himself by "the mind's internal echo of the imperfect sound." Likewise, we have already seen that the very figure of the echo and the spaciotemporal continuum of the echoic narrative mock the poet's skill for self-delusion. If the "pauses of deep silence" constitutive of the echoes that we have analyzed *mock* (satirize, and, ironically, imitate) the boy's and the poet's skill, so might

echoes and poesis generally. After all, didn't Wordsworth begin The Prelude by dramatizing supposed difficulties that occasioned the genesis of the poem with complaints about gleams that "*mocked* me with a sky that ripens not//into a steady morning"?(I, 37-38, italics mine).

A poet's mocked or ironized "skill" foregrounds language—his metier, the language in and by which he posits and determines his existence. This is significant because the consciousness of the poet can function only within the conventions of language. Even though he may recognize the self-delusion that allowed some former version of himself to go blissfully unaware of this, he is nevertheless no more authentic by virtue of his knowledge of his own inauthenticity. This degree of self-knowledge can in fact be dangerous because the mind and all communication are dependent on the factitious conventions of language. Without a certain deluded trust in the herd metaphors called words (including the pronoun "I"), sanity itself would crumble (BI, 216).[12] These observations become increasingly significant insofar as we can demonstrate that "The Boy of Winander" is a poem about irony and mockery. After all, if we rescind our references to other moments in The Prelude, Wordsworth appears tellingly elusive as to whether the phrase "silence mocked his skill" implies the boy's being mocked unawares, or the boy's awareness of being mocked, or the poet's self-awareness.

We can test the notion of the mockery in our paradigm of echoes by turning to a passage in one of the "Poems on the Naming of Places" called "To Joanna," written shortly after the passage on the boy of Winander. This poem closely parallels its predecessor, at least in the respects that we will consider here; and it clarifies the ironic subtext implicit, but not developed, in the earlier poem. In explaining to the local Vicar why he carved his beloved's "uncouth" name on a "native rock," Wordsworth claims that he had come, one summer morning, to a rock by the river Rotha where all the elements of nature combined, as if by themselves "In one impression, by connecting force//Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart." Here the subject, or "I" of the poet and the object, or "intermixture" in nature combine so completely that, unlike the boy of Winander and the owls, they form a single syntactic and semantic gesture. But it is also here that Joanna, a third party standing beside the poet, perceives Wordsworth's delusion for what it is, and

laughs at what Bergson would call the "mechanical elasticity" in his facial expression, one whose *un*natural mimesis merits mockery:

(50-65)

--When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laughed aloud.
The rock, like something starting from a sleep
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again:
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag
Was ready with her cavern; Hammar-Scar,
and the tall Steep of Silver-How sent forth
a noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone:
Helvellyn far intothe clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice,--old Skiddaw blew
His speaking trumpet;--back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice;
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head.
Now whether, (said I to our cordial Friend...

[The rest of this poem is included at the back of this essay]

It is already doubly ironic that Joanna, the beloved sister of the woman whom Wordsworth plans to marry, should be the one to disrupt the poet's illusion of "marriage" with the landscape, since the disjunctive "unnaturalness" of his expression is in itself ironic. That is why she laughs, *mocking* "his skill" for illusory correspondence. It is triply ironic that the mountain echoes her laughter, which is transformed, passed on as a different echo, by a mountain with another name, and so on. The reader may expect this escalation to end in a sentence or two, as it does in the Winander Boy passage. However, that the echoing goes on for another fifteen lines suggests that the message here lies not in the stated message but in its interruption, in the irony of distance, of persistent pointing to something *other* than what seems to be the message, persistently replicated in the echo itself.

The irony does not end here. The echoes threaten to go on interminably. Just as the poet in "The Boy of Winander" interrupts echoes (to interject that it was "concourse wild of mirth and jocund din!"), the poet in "to Joanna" interrupts these echoes to say: "Now whether," then interrupts his interruption to interpose, "(said I to our cordial Friend//Who in the hey-day of astonishment// smiled in my face)," and proceeds:

...this were in simple truth
A work accomplished by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched
With dreams and visionary impulses,
It is not for me to tell; but sure I am
That there was a loud uproar in the hills.

The poet, seeing his ideal "I," in correspondence with "nature," trumped by an echoing voice that laughs at itself indefinitely, interrupts his own delineation of that echo (in a dialogue with a vicar in a poem about the naming of places) to interpose yet another overlapping "I"--"Now whether (said I...)"— which will recount the interruption of yet another "I" ("sure I am"). These, in turn, are interrupted by the framing "I" of the narrator, who is writing to Joanna *about* telling the vicar about her mockery of him, "the narrator." This parabasic intercession replicates the very echoes it interrupts, informed, however, by the third-person perspective occasioned by Joanna's lateral position in the poem. The narrating self is forced to regard the narrating self as other. This ironic comment on an ironic sequence suggests the poet's claim to stand above the fray, above the echoes in the highest mountains. Paradoxically, however, this ironic verticality assures that the subject could not be in a more precarious predicament. The poet, as we have suggested, is still dependent on the duplicitous conventions of language, but they cannot shelter him any more than he can "shelter" Joanna from the "object of her fears." He is as if trapped between Joanna's laughter and the mockery of the vicar who "smiled in...[his] face." Their mocking faces isolate him in his own self-mocking consciousness, one which cannot seek its foundation in any "real" self. Wordsworth's diction here ("said I" and "sure I am,"etc.) is patently artificial in its detached comment on the supposed empirical reality or unreality of "visionary impulses." He is openly pretending that there is solid ground beneath him, but his spurious role amounts to a kind of death: its sheer artificiality points to the extent to which artifice has taken him *away* from life. His self-mockery cannot return him to his "actual" self. Ironically, in fact, it disabuses him of the deluded hope that any return is possible. Therefore, in his effort to supercede to echoes, he discovers that nature mocks *him.* Taken to its absolute, the mockery brought on by an echoic self-consciousness is another deathly consequence of a deathly figure.[13]

The deathliness in "To Joanna," however, does not stop here. The echoes (and their silences) have never ended. Wordsworth reminds us that his interruption ("Now whether...") was an evasion of a troubling perception, just as his parenthetic superimposition upon that interrupting narrative was an evasive effort to come to terms with the implications of *its* ironic potential. These lines recall the boy of Winander ("while he hung//listening..."):

> And, while we both were listening, to my side
> The fair Joanna drew, as if she wished
> To shelter from some object of her fear.

This is where this framed story ends, with "—And hence, long afterwards," just as the boy of Winander died long ago, "ere he was 10 years old." In "To Joanna," the subject of "listening" is openly "we," a pronoun which thematically acknowledges a relationship between two different "I's." This implies a parallel: Joanna cannot be sheltered from her fear of being deprived of "her" voice any more than Wordsworth can of his voice. "The fair Joanna" and the "wild-hearted maid," are, after all, fairy-tale epithets for a woman introduced with the conscious rhapsody of "we love you well,//Joanna!"[14] By dwelling on the mockery and deathliness inherent in naming, this poem defines a means of confessing to the way poetry absconds with voices . The voice conferred in a name is, as we have suggested, frozen, mute. It can "speak" only as an echo, a sound that has died, a meaning that has died. The word "Joanna" cannot mean to us anything comparable to what its predicate meant to Wordsworth. This paradox is in some sense what "To Joanna" is about. We must therefore relate the mocking echoes in Wordsworth's presented perspective to the mutual themes of death-in-naming and what appears to be a circular trajectory of echoes in "To Joanna" as it relates to "The Boy of Winander."

The terms used to describe the echoes in "To Joanna" (such as "answered," "blew," "voice") echo phrases ("Blew mimic hootings...//That they might answer him") that we saw in the earlier poem. In lieu of ". . . a gentle shock of mild surprise//Has carried far into his heart the voice//Of mountain torrents," we have "Fairfield answered with a mountain tone://Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky//Carried the Lady's voice, . . ." The voice that is carried far among the mountains has a name. It is "the Lady's voice,"

the mocking voice. Joanna's laughter is echoed (in such terms as "laughed,""laughed again,""laughter," and "Loughrigg") through the passage by a "brotherhood" of mountains, a label which further occludes Joanna's presence as sister-in-law.15 Only the laughter is not named "Joanna" because, ironically, "Joanna" is translated or transformed into other like-sounding names, such as "Helm-crag," "Hammar-Scar" and "Glaramara," which alter it as they echo it, or are, as Wordsworth explains in "Yes! Full surely 'Twas the Echo":

> Like the voice through earth and sky
> but by the restless Cuckoo sent;
> Like her ordinary cry,
> Like—but oh how different!

They are not, as Wordsworth's ironic tone in this poem may intimate, welcome "Echoes from beyond the grave," which is the phrase Wordsworth literally uses to describe "the echo" in "Yes! Full Surely 'Twas the Echo." As the "grave looks" of the critical vicar in "To Joanna" intimate, these are not echoes of immortality. If, to quote a famous phrase from "The Intimations Ode," life is "but a sleep and a forgetting," to contemplate mountains that "start" from "a sleep" and laugh back is to be awakened oneself to the world of the dead. To carve Joanna's name on the "living stone" is to not to "return" her to her natural home (as the vicar asks), but to deliver her only as an echo, a name returned through death. To impose her name in "rude characters" on the landscape in the name of immortality is a transgression punctuated by echoes that return it to a graveyard of other ruder Runic "characters." These are as ancient and haunting as their epitaphs, their dead names in typescript imply from the outset. The last name in the list is "Kirkstone," meaning "Church-Rock"; the "return" to "Joanna's Rock" is foreshadowed in this dead-language version of the Holy Rock associated with the Churchyard. This churchyard, like the Winander churchyard, is a "silent neighborhood of graves" (V.428). Joanna's name, like those other epitaphs, does not contain Joanna's material corpse—not any more than the poem does—nor can it ever replicate itself entirely, because to echo, it must pass across a vale of difference. Even as a linguistic entity, a name whose meaning has died can lead to infinite self-differentiation in the presence of which a listener, such as Joanna—who is silenced by her own laugh—can only stand mute. Wordsworth likewise

stands mute at the grave at the end of the Winander passage. But even in the "Pauses of deep silence" that constitute the echo, the presence of a linguistic breakdown is implied from the beginning. This notion of beginning with silence in the face of death from the outset is punctuated by the phrase "silent morning" (a pun implying the muteness of *mourning*) at the end of the "Joanna" poem, which recalls the "Summer morning" on which Wordsworth first saw the rock that he would "dedicate" to her.

This "poem on the naming of places" does seem to end with a scarred gesture of return: "And I, and all who dwell by my fire-side/Have called the lovely rock, Joanna's Rock." This replicates in seeming comfort the "Beings by your own [Joanna's own] fire-side" imagined in the poem's opening. It also appears that, by situating Joanna in the past ("Have called the lovely rock Joanna's Rock"), the poet gives us one more reason to see her as a past entity; yet Wordsworth, in having written the poem to Joanna (who "will gladly listen to discourse") situates himself in *her* past, as if in passing this echo of himself on to her, she can hear echoes of herself, with all their interrupting mockeries, return to her through his poem, through him. The two of them, then, who after all are supposedly to be in-laws, can be the "Beings" by each other's fire-sides only as non-beings that hear their own and each other's echoes from beyond the grave. They, like the boy of Winander, are taken from their Mates. Is this to be "a wedding or a funeral?"

One may attempt to escape this backward mode of framing the time frames by encasing the present perfect tense that concludes the poem in the future tense that begins the dedication ("you will gladly listen to discourse"). In other words, in the future perfect, Joanna and Wordsworth *will have heard* each other's epitaphs. Projecting the reflection into the future, however, does not reorient it: it is still past-obsessed. It still contemplates its own "voice" from beyond the grave. This elegiac mode is, as our reading of "The Boy of Winander" suggests, a stock position, one that pretends to protect the present and the future with a too-easy confession of uneasiness, one that must be addressed. Here our analysis of all the mockery in "to Joanna" may apply. The voices in "to Joanna" all overlap in a vertiginous feat of ironic verticality that may have another meaning, one which points to a redefinition of the self-reflection on Wordsworth's part in "The Boy of Winander."

Wordsworth's dedication to Joanna's "lovely rock" echoes the elegy ("Beauteous is the spot") to the boy of Winander, where the boy is, like himself, a languaged "self" whom Wordsworth cannot pretend to contemplate from beyond the grave without admitting not only to the deathliness of his own temporal predicament, but also to his own fate--death. This entails contemplating more than a linguistic trap. The trope of "death" has proved thematically unjustified as an event in the history of another because that "other" can be understood only as a past self whose confrontation with death echoes for a present self. The reality of that confrontation informs the disjunction inscribed in the *ongoing* echo. Just as the echoes in "To Joanna" head toward the future, even as every act of mocking, ironic distancing and projection merely toss them ahead like Kirkstone's head in a futile attempt to stand "above" or outside them, so the deathly echoes that collapse the narrative in "The Boy of Winander" cannot be outdistanced by the poet who pretends to kill the boy and reflect back on himself across the watery vale of a new stanza break. The poet not only was the dead boy inside himself. He will also be as dead as the boy. A tenuous gesture of nostalgic pathos only thinly veils an echoing and therefore ongoing disjunction punctuated by the poet's own ironic self-reflection within the vertigo of the falling boy. The backward reflection on the grave that ends the poem is arguably only an echo of the reflection of the landscape buried ("steadied") in the bosom of the lake, an effort to preserve or prolong the past, an effort that only exposes the fallacy of imagining death as a unique instance that separates past from present.

In claiming to acknowledge the finality of death, this fallacy inauthentically denies the passage of death its full status as a temporal scourge that not only shatters the claims (in and of language) to a "noble" self in the present, but also denies it the status of finality in its claim to the future. One more clue to this deception is the last line of "The Boy of Winander": "I have stood// Mute--looking at the Grave in which he lies." The extensive presence of conscious mockery in "To Joanna" makes it easier for us to see the last word in this line as a pun. "To lie" also denotes falsification, as can be said of the "thoughts that *lie* too deep for tears." Consider this stanza from "A Poet's Epitaph":

> In common things that round us *lie*
> Some random *truths* he can impart
> The harvest of a quiet eye

That broods and sleeps on his own heart. (My Italics)

These "common things," commonplaces, topoi, necessarily preclude distinctions, but when the poet gazes at them with his "eye" (and "I"), he harvests, collects dead gleanings of "random truths" about an "I" that can exist only within a defaced, mute "quiet" brooding. "Brooding" implies both cracking and hatching: birth-in-death. This is the only kind of grave in which the boy of Winander lies, because the premise that his death is in fact *his*, and that it therefore allows Wordsworth to stand above or outside death, is false. It lies. Wordsworth himself says as much with respect to a boy that we will discuss in the next phase of this essay. In a Book V passage that leads up to "The Boy of Winander," Wordsworth describes the death of a bookish boy who does not hoot to owls. The passage nevertheless applies to boys who do:

(V. 350-4) Now this is hollow, 'tis a life of lies
from the beginning, and in lies must end.
Forth bring him to the air of common sense,
And, fresh and showy as it is, the corpse
Slips from us into powder.

In this passage, the "corpse" is patently a trope, but the death of the boy of Winander is, too, a death-mask that "in lies must end." After all, as Wordsworth's mockery would imply, it was always a mask, "a life of lies//from the beginning."

Does this all mean that there are so many gaps in the narrative reading exemplified by Hartman, de Man, and Devlin that they misinterpret the poem? Not necessarily, because a too-skeptical look at "The Boy of Winander" leaves out the "interwoven" texture, a sense of the whole rhapsodic unity that, if one steps back from the painting, back from the Constable, so to speak, is incontrovertibly true to the impact and intention of the passage. Our objective has been to prove that Wordsworth suggests, in "The Boy of Winander," the problems necessarily *attendant* upon a claim to an idyllic correspondence that has been disrupted by a subtle contemplation of death. The passage is, in effect, simultaneously posing as a reflection on an idyllic/rhetorical past time (the truncation of which saves the boy from confronting the theme that the poet later contemplates) and a reflection on the ironic *potential* in such a claim, a consciousness

brought out by the exponential mockery in the narration of the second of the "Poems on the Naming of Places."[16] It is possible, then, that the entire status of idyllic self-mystification in Winander is, as is the case in "To Joanna," in part conceived as a myth, not only of a supposed belief, but of an entire framework of believing. Wordsworth hints at an allegorization of the theme of self-mystification and subsequent awareness, complete with an ironized act of renunciation in a final and staged contemplation of death. But whatever the case, it is certain that death and an *implicitly* mocking consciousness of self, as reflected in an underlying echo-structure, is present in the passage from the very beginning. The echoing visitations of the boy intrude upon the landscape, just as the echoing owls disrupt the boy's mimetic illusion. Here intrusion, at first assumed to be *contra* nature, becomes, once it has revealed its pattern, intrusion perceived as the nature of nature. This is true even to a self ("Wordsworth's") that posits a natural shelter as a mask for the problematics of the self in its temporal/linguistic exfoliation. This notion defines the entire poem as a reflection, an echo-surface on which a portrait doubles back on itself—a portrait of the insistent resistance of echoes to metaphoric application as emblems of perfect correspondence. This portrait is doubled by the internally overlapping effectiveness of a portrait of just the opposite. The echo-surface of "The Boy of Winander" is constituted by a tissue of subtler echoes that permeates every detail of delineation and spreads out eclectically throughout the landscape, involving, by extension, larger portions of The Prelude.[17]

## IV

Of course, some might object that this reading of Wordsworth's echoic landscape as a palimpsest—a surface text that veils an underlying, conflicted version of itself—is limited by a "refusal" to situate that text in its proper context. Over the course of the last several years, critics such as Marjorie Levinson and Alan Liu have come to see Wordsworth in a decidedly socio-historical light, their interpretations often entailing implicit or explicit critiques of "de-contextualized" analysis. In her book on Wordsworth's great period poems, for instance, Levinson claims that the "marriage" of Wordsworth's poetry and the criticism of Hartman and de Man was "perhaps happier for the theory than the poetry" because its effect was "to further attenuate an already

idealized canon, and to defend it more securely from proper historical interrogations" (L, 7). Levinson claims to strike a new direction in seeing Wordsworthian imagination and nature not as autonomous entities but as incarnations of an historical and moral consciousness. Emphasizing, for example, the emblematic typology of the Great Ode, she uncovers a network of historical associations that to her mind "occasion" notoriously elusive allusions that pervade the work. She thereby defines the failure of the French Revolution as the repudiated public context for the poet's internalization of loss (84).

Levinson's evidence is persuasive and useful. It initially provides a model for further inquiries into the material we have examined. However, though she acknowledges an abstract debt to Hartman in particular, what is most useful about Levinson's argument may not depart from earlier models to the extent that the exclusivity of her method would imply. In describing Wordsworth's associative context for "Nature" in the Ode as a "private amour" that has divested "Nature" of its public, political definition, Levinson arguably nevertheless re-uses Hartman's model *as* Hartman formulates it. Hartman's description of the rise of a deeply personal state of self-awareness, one which supersedes and casts nostalgia on a former unselfconscious mode of being, is not unlike that of Levinson's private consciousness that mourns the loss of an unreflective self-definition, one indistinguishable from a vaster social consciousness.

Accordingly, by reconsidering "the Boy of Winander" and its eventual placement in Book V with an eye to its socio-historical "meaning," we can demonstrate that the questions raised by Levinson and Liu in fact deepen, and do not conflict with, our so-called "decontextualized" reading. In The Prelude, the historical is patently inextricable from the personal. To speak of text and context as if they were divisible, or even as if they were the terrains of contrary modes of criticism, is misleading. Up to this point, our conclusions have re-read "nature" in The Prelude as a scored and cross-marked palimpsest. We have also recast the arrested realization of Hartman's halted traveler as a self-mocking, death-obsessed doubling within the authorial self. If text and historical "context" can be shown to be coextensive, these conclusions should perforce prove as relevant to an understanding of "history" in Wordsworth as they are to an understanding of "nature."

Wordsworth's Boy of Winander is, after all, an *integral* part of an openly sociohistorical episode. A look at *The Two-Part Prelude* and other fragments from the 1790's confirms that this and the drowned man passage were originally composed alongside the nest-robbing scene and other material for Book II. "The Boy of Winander" and the drowned man were later integrated into book V, where Wordsworth framed them as responses to certain alleged presumptions of the Enlightenment. Notably, Wordsworth prefaces "There was a Boy" with a multifold description of the model child, a dwarf "monster" of the Age of Reason, a child formed not by "nature" but by the proliferation of rationalist educational methods at the end of the eighteenth century. Wordsworth protests that "rank growth of propositions overruns/The stripling's brain." This "stripling" can "read/...the earth." He can "spell the stars." He "knows the policies of foreign lands." (314-345). The enlightened child's learning is associated with the right, the *ancien regime,* and even the empire, which Wordsworth dubs equally deplorable:

> The ensigns of the empire which he holds,
> The globe and scepter of his royalties
> Are telescopes and crucibles and maps. (V. 328-30)[18]

The Boy of Winander, in contrast, takes up the alien echo-language of "halloos" and "screams" and "shouts." In this respect, he is *situated* as a counter-proposition to the model child who can "read" and "spell" and "knows." Wordsworth's language is also an audible fanfare. His high-sounding hieratic pronominalization, the species of language which Levinson associates with the nonspecific, emblematic "Intimations Ode," is, as we have noted (and contrary to one of Levinson's premises) applicable to Wordsworth's poem of the *genius loci:* "There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs/And Islands of Winander." We find similar declamatory language in the most political part of book II: "ye mountains and ye lakes/And sounding cataracts,/ye mists and winds/ That dwell among the hills where I was born" (II, 440-42). It is no accident that this last line echoes "the Vale where he was born." In response to the "failure" of the French Revolution ("this melancholy waste of hopes overthrown" (449)), Wordsworth evokes the landscape of his childhood as a source of "support" for his "Roman confidence" (459). His "Roman" or Republican idealism is thereby fused rhetorically with emblems in nature in

a sentence that concludes (as it began) with "Ye mountains!" (462). The Boy of Winander is accordingly associated from the outset with a rhetorically defiant refusal to relinquish this idealism.[19] The behavior and fate of the boy nevertheless point repeatedly to subterranean conflict and doubt.

As we noted early on, for instance, the "mimic" hootings of the Winander Boy veil simultaneous disjunctions in the so-called "jocund din" of his concourse with the birds. The boy's mimicry amounts to an 18th century pitfall, a response to a natural phenomenon that demands, as Wordsworth urges elsewhere, "A more substantial name, no mimic show--/itself a living part of the live whole" (III, 623). Since "Mimic" is always a suspect word for Wordsworth (who, as we have noted, defines "imitation" as mere Fancy, not true Imagination), already the Boy is more a student of the Enlightenment than he may at first appear to be. A historical and textual note may well account for this inconsistency: Rousseau, the theorist behind the *Lyrical Ballads* child, argued for a return to the so-called religion of nature in part by locating the only valid political sovereignty in the general will rather than the particular will that seeks happiness at the expense of others. In the name of attaining some reparation for what he identifies in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* as our separation from our allegedly "real" or God-given nature as a species, Rousseau preached natural learning as a form of tetanization against social depravity. He maintained that children possessed natural nobility and insight; he deplored an excessive emphasis on books in their early upbringing, promoting instead the development of intellect through observation and in the service of real needs. Enlightenment educators, however, were too industrious in pursuing the ideals set forth in Rousseau's *Emile* to espouse these means. They also misinterpreted Rousseau's claim in *The Social Contract* that we in a sense must be forced to be free (not enslaved to the artificial power of ourselves or others, even in society). Seeking to "control all accidents," these educators thereby betrayed the ends.[20]

Nevertheless, the last few lines in the passage that frames "The Boy of Winander" assure us that "a wiser spirit" is at work in "the unreasoning progress of the world" (V, 383-84). This is the keynote for the Winander passage, a note reminiscent of a similar recollection about "early youth" in Book X: "When reason, which enables him to be, /Is not sequestered—what a change is here!" (392). Tellingly, however, the same passage

terms this visionary passion "oppression" and prefaces it with nightmare scenes, "ghastly visions" of The Revolution, visions of "tyranny and implements of death" (375). A call for unreason is Wordsworth's response to the allegedly absurd rationalism of the Enlightenment, but he suggests the possiblity that –to use Goya's contemporaneous title—The Sleep of Reason Creates Monsters.[21] "Monsters" is Wordsworth's term for the mob violence triggered, for example, by the fall of Verdun (X.36) or by the "swarms" of French victors at Valmy "that came elate and *jocund*, like a band...of hunters" but "shrunk form the sight of their own task...in terror"(X.14-20, my italics). Similarly, we have already observed that the "jocund din!" of the owls of Winander is disruptive, if not monstrous. In this regard, the echoes are themselves echoed: they are prototypical of Wordsworth's disgust at—or betrayed illusion of—The French Revolution. In Book VII, Wordsworth refers to the Rabelaisian revelry and class-revolution-like "mobs, riots, and rejoicings" of Bartholomew Fair not as "*jocund din*," but as "What *anarchy and din*/Barbarian and infernal! 'Tis a *dream*/*Monstrous* in color, shape, sight, sound!"(VII, 645-651, my italics). The fair, famous for its permissive masquerade in which "mobs" of city-dwellers exchanged class roles, is described as a monstrous dream, and, politically, "a parliament of monsters."

These phrases echo the "monster birth," Wordsworth's term for the model child of the Enlightenment whose knowing "sense/ of the ridiculous" makes him as obliviously ridiculous as the Bartholomew revelers. In the place of the "blessings" of the "unreasoning spirit" that Wordsworth set us up to expect in book V, we confront a self-mystified mimic and a monster of the irrational. The Boy (a naive version of Wordsworth) is a kind of rationalist in juxtaposition with the owls, but he is curious about the irrational "other." The boy's "rationalism" nevertheless defeats its "wise" ends. The "irrational" owl calls likewise fly out of control in a din associated with oppression and death. Like the boy and the owls, The Enlightenment and The Revolution are seemingly antithetical forces. They nevertheless mirror each other in that each defeats itself. The lesson here is even more enigmatic than the "severer interventions" visited upon the Wordsworth boy in book II because, though the "unreasoning spirit" of Winander is supposed to be instructive, it surreptitiously resonates only with self-negation, *conclusus mortis*.

The gesture of a "message" in Winander is in fact patterned after the echo-structure we have examined. The boy is supposed to learn from his subversive discoveries. Instead, he dies. Reflections on this death by the Wordsworth figure who visits the grave are offset by "mute" and "forgetful" gazes. In the next ripple of text, our expectations for the narrator's ensuing commentary are offset by the description of a church that reigns "silent" and "forgetful of the boy" (427). This English Church evokes not "the Red," but "the Black," all the more so because she is regal, a "Throned Lady," an echo of the image of the "monstrous" model child as a seated monarch—the very figure Wordsworth had set out to dethrone. Wordsworth concludes his *per oratio* by preaching "knowledge not purchased with the loss of power!" (449) What, however, can the instructive value of the maxim be if the price of this revolutionary knowledge is death? If, alternatively, the knowledge is *of* death, how can the sum of loss be withheld? Wordsworth's injunction to "Forget" passes on an antinomy with which he is unable to come to terms. From one end of this sequence of reflections to the other, the "revolutionary" numen is raised and rendered mute.

The political implication of this insistent muteness should not be underestimated, because "sound" is the universal component of all Wordsworth's allusions to the French Revolution. In his letters as well as his poetry, he speaks of "The sound of Liberty." This overt association is repeated continually throughout *The Prelude*, "sound" often elaborated into bird calls, trumpet blasts, and echoes.[22] As these figures (especially the echo) imply, the sound of Liberty is portrayed in close alternation with silence, its negation. In order to account for this mute, negating refrain in Winander on a historical level, we must come to terms with some of the ideology behind the "wise spirit" and wild echoes in the landscape. This amounts to something more complex than what we have referred to as "Republican idealism."

In a concluding passage of Book V, Wordsworth evokes the "untutored" but "noble attribute of man," an attribute that seeks something "loftier" than "common" life. These invocations are reminiscent of the nobility and collective freedom that Rousseau envisions, even given the subtle ambiguities of his version of Social Contractarianism. In contrast to Locke's and Beccaria's formulations, Rousseau insists that all true freedom is given over to society and the state. Unlike Hobbes, he argues that one's happiness is

one's share of society's happiness. He never clarifies, however, whether the individual will might be part and parcel of the general will only insofar as the individual will wills what the general will wills. Still, Rousseau had clearly deplored factionalism and the gulf between rich and poor that Wordworth looked to something *like* the Revolution to resolve. Wordsworth links his Rousseauesque aspirations to a desired event, a rebirth that would combine the "world of poesy" with "music, incense, festival;" and, just as tellingly, "Sounds/of exultation" that "echoed through the groves"(601-607). The putative message of the "wise spirit" in Winander is readily elided with symbols for the Revolution. This, however, is essentially the ideological spirit of the Revolution, not the perceived "reality" of the events in Paris. In a 1794 letter to William Matthews, Wordsworth expresses precisely this opposition:

> for while we expressed our detestation of the execrable measures pursued in France, we should belie our title[The Philanthropist] if we did not hold up to the approbation of the world such of their regulations and decrees as are dictated by the Spirit of Philosophy (Shaver, 77).

Though most critics, including Liu, assume that Wordsworth was not ambivalent about a cause that he defended at this time and that his disillusionment occurred much later, this and even earlier (1792) letters suggest that he was at least internally divided from the outset.[23] Later in the same 1794 letter, Wordsworth expresses a comparable ambivalence about the desirability of a revolution *in England.* He avows that "The destruction of those institutions I condemn appears to be hastening too rapidly. I recoil from the bare Idea of revolution." He nevertheless affirms that an "enlightened friend should let slip no opportunity" of furthering the aims of "social order and political justice." These latter terms are the watchwords of William Godwin's philosophy, the "spirit" of which is even more utopian than Rousseau's. Wordsworth recoils from the event, the situation, and even the "bare idea" of a revolution, yet he advocates the "Spirit of Philosophy" behind such an event. Because Wordsworth goes on to address events on the ground in conjunction with an ideology that cannot entirely mask them, the "sound" of Liberty necessarily entails deathly silences.

Revolution, in short, is supposed to recover and consummate the Rousseauesque ideals that were corrupted by the oppressive ratiocinative order of the Enlightenment, an order which sought to "control /All accidents" (V, 380-81). The "wiser spirit" of revolution is posited to unify natural/social ideals and political reality, not to set them at odds. Whatever falls outside this unity is accordingly, though ultimately unsuccessfully, deemed *outside* nature. On the face of it, Wordsworth preaches that "the situation of the French" is alien, aberrant, a self-defeating cataclysm. Indeed he insists that there is only "one nature," one nature where events complement ideals, and the Revolution has no part in this. In the later books of *The Prelude*, he continually repeats this phrase. Consider the following passage:

Mean as I was, and little graced with powers
Of eloquence even in my native speech,
And all unfit for tumult and intrigue,
Yet would I willingly have taken up
A service at this time for cause so great,
However dangerous. Inly I revolved
How much the destiny of man had still
Hung upon single persons—that there was
Transcendent to local patrimony,
One nature, as there is one sun in heaven. (X.131-140)

Poetry itself could become instrumental to the "cause." The great "cause" that Wordsworth alludes to, though, is his ideal remedy for the French Revolution, precisely what would have *excluded* his experience of the Revolution. Transcendent to "local patrimony" (patriotism, nationalism, and patriarchy), the "one nature" that Wordsworth envisions is the comprehensive state of nature, founded on a single bond of humanity. This social and moral ideal, which evokes the legacy of the Enlightenment, elides human nature with the beauty of the rural setting (nature). The Renaissance pun on the "one sun [Son] in heaven" entails endowing the ideal with divine attributes.

Nonetheless, we cannot help asking how Wordsworth could possibly have hoped to have "taken up/service" for such a cause, which would have entailed more than poetry if it were to be "dangerous." The irony that this question raises then becomes the crux of the issue. After all, when he claims that the "destiny of man" still "hung" on single

persons such as Robespierre, we are reminded of the boy of Winander, who "hung" listening and anticipating revolutionary "sounds" even as they dispersed among deathly silences, omens of vertigo and death. The "revolution" was likewise an inward phenomenon for Wordsworth—"Inly," he claims, "I revolved." Even in this highly political/rhetorical mode, Wordsworth highlights the vertiginous doubleness of his own position. On the face of it, his *rhetoric* denies that the "I" that went to Paris to witness the "dangerous" events of the Revolution had anything but a figurative connection to the "I" that held revolutionary ideals for "one nature." The mission of that first "I," that self, Wordsworth proposes, was only hypothetical, only a "would have," a story. Like the boy in Winander, however, that first self was also Wordsworth, a Wordsworth who came face to face with death, as well as the death of an idealistic hope. These two "selves" are equally subject to delusions.

The author's denial, however, cannot but be ironic. Like the "Mute" poet who often stood "looking at the grave in which he lies," the poet-idealist claims he was at this time "little graced with powers/of eloquence even in my native speech." An ideal can recover as an echo of what it was, but only by passing through a deathly muteness in the interim, like a hope for revolution that must "revolve" into death and silence before any restoration can take place, like, by extension, a "self" that must fall from "nature" before it can be restored. This restoration would mean deliverance only to the fallen world of temporal impermanence and self-awareness that in retrospect had always been "fallen."[24] The death and troubled restoration in a succession of mute tropes *for* muteness that the boy of Winander undergoes is a kind of echo-figure for Wordsworth's ongoing inability to *speak* about—and thereby create a personally affirming "sound" for—the horrors of The Revolution. He even compares what he cannot say about the "dead and dying" in the Carousel to "the mutes leaves" of a book, "leaves" evoking "nature" as well as the pages of The Prelude.[25]

This type of parallel—in which a pattern perceived in a more personal portion of the poem is replicated in a more "public" portion—is not a parallel. It would suggest that Wordsworth's sociohistorical views do not contextualize his tropes for the self. They are, rather, part and parcel of those tropes, of loci which double, redouble, but retain their complex structural, linguistic, and temporal status. Here one trope for the self is called

the "dangerous service" of revolution. Another is called "one nature," the ideal of revolution. The tensions between these grandiose figures is an aspect of the tensions between selves, and likewise between "the self" and "the revolution." It would therefore flatten "Wordsworth" and his political "persona" to view the former as a private refugee who reflects on the death of the latter. Rather, they took and take shape simultaneously within the same idiom. They also constitute a tropological predicament which is inextricably bound up with an ideological predicament, an ongoing process of loss and crippled restoration which recapitulates itself in an ongoing echo.[26]

These observations are best illustrated by passages which echo "There was a Boy" in overtly political terms. When Wordsworth recounts the prophetic "spirit" he found "to glory in," and to sustain him "through those evil times" in France, he concludes that there was a time when:

I felt a kind of sympathy with power—
Motions raised up within me nevertheless
Which had relationship to highest things.
Wild blasts of music thus did find their way
Into the midst of terrible events,
So that worst tempests might be listened to.
Then was the truth received into my heart
That under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
.....
If new strength be not given or old restored,
The blame is ours, not nature's.

(X,415-30)

Here the "highest things" are the "lofty ideals" of revolution we encountered earlier. They simultaneously imply altitude, a tempestuous mountaintop, that vertiginous site from which idealism could fall into terror. Inscribed in the "wild blasts of music," in fact, are both the "Spirit of Philosophy" and the Reign of Terror. Just as the Winander boy can hear his own echoes as music even though they are too wild to constitute a replication of his mimetic technique, so the older Wordsworth could hear the Revolution as music even though it echoed neither his dissenting Rousseauesque perspective nor philosophe-like ideals of "progress." The movement here is internally syncopated. On the one hand, it is the "blasts of music" that managed to "find their way" into "terrible events." This

"music," however, is also a figure for poesis—the "events" must therefore have found *their* way into the "music" in order to have been made accessible as that which received it. This "music," as a non-specific trope and the root of the word "muse," veils the polyphony and dissonance, the double-intrusion inscribed within it. Like all echoes among the trumpeting mountains, it is a site of zigzagging tension both within history and the self and between history and the self.

When we come to the clause, "So that the worst tempests might be listened to," a passive clause ending with a loose preposition, we confront a syntactic and tonal shift much like the one that comes late in the first half of "The Boy of Winander." Recall that through a gap in one kind of echoing "din" in Winander, a distant "voice of mountain torrents" was "carried far into his [the boy's] heart." After a syntactic shift in this parallel moment in France, the "truth" was "received into my heart." In both passages, the passive voice in part softens the "shock" of "terrible events." The same passive construction is nonetheless simultaneously lifeless, deathly in the rhetoric it poises against the thematic statement it contains. In Winander, the "voice" is somewhat elegiac; it harmonizes with the passive yielding of the receiver.[27] The "truth" in Wordsworth's France likewise resonates with resignation. It embodies, on the ideological level, the sympathy of the natural setting for the human experience of loss. It is the "truth" that speaks for defrauded *Verite*, a political version of *natura plangens.*

Even the "active" portion of the France passage, however, shows the poet renouncing the first person subject. "Motions raised up within me" and "the worst tempests might be listened to": here the self that was "I" becomes a fleeting "me," the object of a preposition. Even though the "motions" and the "music" all happen within the self, that self is portrayed as if at a great distance. Again, the like "he" in Winander that lies to us about the degree to which it implicates the reflective "I" of the poet in the same kinds of delusions that characterized a past self, the "me" at this moment in France is deceptive. It is situated as if it were incidental to the personified figures that act within it, or as if it were not even the "listener" at all, let alone the source of the music. Wordsworth's conclusion—that if there is no restoration, "the blame is ours, not natures"— amounts to more and less than the poet's *j'accuse* in a passage that begins with his comparing himself with "ancient prophets" overlooking falling humanity. It is

Wordsworth too who is always falling from nature, the "one nature" in contradistinction to which he now separates and reinstalls himself, but only in this depersonalized "ours."

When a passage begins with an "I" that becomes "me" and ends up as "we" or "ours," even the narrative terms of a connection between sign and predicated meaning stage a derailment.[28] What kind of consciousness is supposed to stand behind this sign? Is Wordsworth primarily addressing, along with himself, the revolutionaries, humanity, or the reader? If the first person plural possessive pronoun really is more politically determined, as Levinson would see it, than Wordsworth's private "mine," Wordsworth could posit it here only perversely—as his sign of his failure to hold onto that persona, to "possess" such an identity. If so, is the blame really "ours"? In this passage, the relationships between his pronominal tropes have lost both the proximity that would help us to categorize them together and the distance that would make them seem distinct. His self-restoration is injured and tentative at best, and his language draws attention to this instability. If hope still registers through negation in the clause "If there is no restoration," this notion points only to his awareness of the disjunctive continuum of his predicament, his investment in an inescapable hope.[29]

After all, again and again in overtly political passages, nature, the revolution, and the self, though predicated as a unity, become disfigured sights of conflict veiled by an elegiac stance which entails a claim: "there was a time." Before Britain entered into war with France, Wordsworth claims, "Such *was then* my belief—that *there was one*,/And only one, solicitude for all"(X, 228, my italics). This one solution, this "one nature," however, is never relinquished. It is a sight of ongoing hope, redoubled disillusionment. Thus he bemoans in an apostrophe to Coleridge:

> Oh friend,
> It was a lamentable time for man,
> Whether a hope had e'er been his or not—
> A woeful time for them whose hopes did still
> Outlast the shock; most woeful for those few
> Who still were flattered, and had trust in man. (X. 355-60)

It was a lamentable time for man who had hopes for man, *whether he had ever had a hope or not*. Wordsworth implies that it was not the measure of possibility or validity of

his hopes that mattered. It is he, however, who was always positing hope and losing it retrospectively. Like the defaced figure, the "Mute" poet who contemplates the grave in Winander, it is he who was (and is) always outlasting "the shock." Inscribed in the repetition of the already assonantally echoic "woeful" and "hope" is a history that is always falling away and revolving through shock to repeat its tale.

In all the overtly political passages that we have examined, Wordsworth's sense of self is so bound up with the unthinkable "contrarieties" of The French Revolution that he rewrites himself as a false objectification, as the history that he appears to avoid. Rewriting the self as history, however, surreptitiously entails rewriting history as the self. In a passage overtly on history, it is where experience most intrudes upon ideology that the self becomes displaced by factitious allusions to history as textbooks define it, as an "objective chronicle" of moments "locked up" in the past. In these moments of deceptive reinscription, however, it is the self that is confronting loss directly, loss not only as ideological breakdown, but simultaneously as a present predicament and future threat. Where death is confronted *as* death, not something the author can stand outside of or above, the language he uses, the language he *becomes* to evade it—these tropological disfigurements and impossibilities—write history back into the only place where it can happen: in the present, as autobiography.

The muteness of the author is therefore the echoing muteness of a history "Being written in a tongue he cannot read/So that he questions the mute leaves with pain/ And half upbraids their silence." There is self-mockery in this claim, because the language Wordsworth uses to describe his confrontation with death in a historical and past context confesses to the way he displaces himself. He claims:

I crossed (a black and empty area then)
The Square of the Carousel, few weeks back
Heaped up with dead and dying—upon these
And other sights looking as doth a man
upon a volume whose contents he knows
Are memorable but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain
And half upbraids their silence.

In this scene, it is "I" who crossed an "empty" space "looking as doth a man." This "man" is in fact an "I" who was *as if* a "he." The "dead and dying" he observed then and there were "memorable," *as if* nothing more than an echo received across a space from another past. The past is represented almost as an echo of another, eluded past, but the figure ("as if" or "as doth") is included in the representation. Wordsworth therefore confesses to his past delusion. However, the gerund "dying" and the participle "looking" evoke the present progressive; they draw attention to the inference that this "dying" has as much bearing on the present. After all, The Prelude is "being written" at a present moment, and the "silence" Wordsworth "half upbraids" is patently his own. The phrase "half-upbraids" suggests the poet has only "half" a claim to what should be entirely his. He is therefore aware—in that silence—of being only half himself, of being disfigured. This is the silence that "mocks his skill" for rewriting the Revolution as "one Nature" and rewriting himself as if he were "a man."

Wordsworth overtly represents himself adopting the pretense of positing his own silenced claim to the "sound" of liberty as something "locked up" in the past. He thereby suggests—we observed a similar instance in "to Joanna"—that he is above pretense. The self-referential suggestion, however, clearly entails the very pretense it claims to deny. In mocking his evasion of the events in the historical "volume" (The Prelude) that he is writing, Wordsworth discovers that history mocks him. This moment references the poet's response to the "'pretty prisoner'" or boxed brook at Cambridge, an emblem for the Prelude as a mock river. He marvels that "fancy" did not make him "pen down/A satire on myself" (IV.54). These references to the "prisoner," the "locked up" Prelude, and aptly, the pun on "pen" ironically evoke both the Bastille and the imprisonment of Louis XVI in 1792—"The prison where the unhappy monarch lay" (X.42). It is in this vein that the poet recounts passing through the beautiful rural town of Arras only to realize it was the birthplace of Robespierre, who ironically went on to start The Terror:

As Lear reproached the winds, I could almost
Have quarreled with that blameless spectacle
For being yet an image in my mind
To *mock* me under such a strange reverse. (X. 462-465, Italics mine)

Shakespeare has the deluded Lear speak of the wind as a manifestation of a breakdown in an Elizabethan model of the natural world, one more dynamic than the Great Chain of Being. Lear alleges that Cordelia opened up a "small fault" that allows the Love that originally colonized the universe to escape and Strife to issue in, leading to both madness (Strife in the head) and the winds of war. Lear comes to realize that his reproach was motivated largely by self-evasion, but his madness also reflects the Bard's reflection on a breakdown in "real" Jacobean politics. By satirically comparing himself to *King* Lear, the king reproaching "the winds" (here a more Romantic figure for the "corresponding breeze" between the poet and nature), Wordsworth foregrounds a historical reading of his quarrel with nature/history. He is the king of his own beleaguered *ancien regime* and is quarreling with the cause he had, still partly did, and still partly does espouse. Though the "spectacle" of nature is "blameless," the poet quarrels with "one nature" for being an ongoing "image" in his mind. It mocks him because it contains Robespierre on the "reverse," Robespierre himself exemplifying a kind of Lear grotesquely mocked (even to the point of death) by a self-defeating revolution. This echo extends to the present because the self-replication of the autobiographical poet amounts to "an image in [his] mind," an image that mocks him as "the mind's internal echo of the imperfect sound." This "imperfect sound" is simultaneously the sound of Wordsworth's voice and "the sound of Liberty." This sound revolves continually through death, through "pauses of deep silence" that *mock* the poet's skill.

The mocking "image in my [Wordsworth's] mind" is, in short, an emblem for the rewriting or "reverse" (re-verse) of the autobiographical poet, who ultimately can exist only in verse. The poet *is* a thrasonical Lear, a mad ranter who mocks his own madness but cannot escape it, not even by openly pretending to displace his genuine predicament with fictive allusions to death and madness and a disillusioned king. Accordingly, our observation that the echoing gaps in Wordsworth's narrative point to conscious self-mockery on the part of the author clearly applies even to the most historical portions of The Prelude. The disjunctive continuum exemplified by the riven correspondence between the screaming owls and the boy of Winander is not only part of a covertly political landscape: it is echoed throughout an overtly political landscape. The constitutive vales and deathly pauses in Wordsworth's narrative are therefore at all times

figures for an ongoing conflict between experience and ideology. Since personal and ideological conflict are coextensive in The Prelude, it would be reasonable to conclude that sounds and silences that seem to emphasize one aspect of this simultaneous duality thereby tend to mask the other. In either case, it is muteness that repeatedly masks the "sound" of revolution-and-death, a trope that enters the elegiac text most forcefully at precisely those moments when Wordsworth most claims to elude it. This trope, which represents the greatest threat to the noble status and identity of the autobiographical poet and political idealist, is also the key to his mute facade. Posing as a reflection on a past that fell, however, the poet's *muteness* paradoxically points to its own position as the superseding site of a self-mocking echo. Wordsworth's perspicacity always betrays him. Doubled under the veil of an elegiac stance, a revolution is still taking place.

NOTES

1 De Man explicitly sees Wordsworth's figures of deprivation as tropes for the predicament of the autobiographical self. Wordsworth's concern (in certain 'visionary' passages) with damage to the senses, and especially speech-damage or muteness, can be understood in these terms. Just as the linguistic predicament of this self is inescapable, and entails deprivation, so restoration, as represented in these passages, can come only at a price. In "Autobiography as De-Facement," however, De Man does not entirely explain what he means by "muteness" on a linguistic level. "Muteness," after all, is itself a trope for the inability of tropes to impart meaning. The tropes by, through, and in which language grants a voice for the self are "mute" presumably because of what Hegel describes as the paralyzing incompatibility of linguistic sign and predicated meaning. Under the guise of "speaking," language represents a transference of meaning that it does not transfer and does so at the expense of what it cannot posit. It thereby effaces its relationship to what it is supposed to convey. In the poems central to our discussion, the manner in which Wordsworth represents muteness suggests that the figural—which is the very form of intelligibility—necessarily deprives us of sense. (For more on de Man's allusion to Hegel, see Warminski, 83-94).

2. A 1799 version of the passage has the owls shouting back with "tremulous sobs," a somewhat obvious note of melancholy which Wordsworth toned down in the1805 version. There is also no mention of "concourse" in the pre-1800 version, which describes the yelling between boy and owls as "a wild scene" (Gill, 492). This further problematizes the notion of "correspondence." Coleridge preferred "concourse" to "scene" on the strict grounds that the latter term should refer either properly or metaphorically to the theater (see Richards, 584, Coleridge's note). Part III of this essay argues that Wordsworth does in fact imply a *staged* and hence theatrical correspondence.

In "The Idiot Boy," the "lonely shout" of the owlet (st. I) is also a "tremulous sob" (ln. 300) that falls upon dead ears. Susan "cannot hear" it (lin 292) and Johnny (who does) is nonetheless associated with the "mute" moon (ln. 90). The "solemn strains" of the owls in "The Evening Walk" (375) are from "minstrels of the haunted hill" that play over the lake only when "the last bleating of the fold expires,"(586) a clear reference to death and dirges. Other references to owls in "A Morning Exercise" (st. 2), "the Waggoner" (CantoIII), "Loving and Liking" (I.6), "The Excursion" (Bk VI,1. 327), "The Recluse" (II.521-22) and elsewhere confirm their deathly elegiac status.

In fact, a traditional allegorical reference to owls is likely, and would define the boy of Winander as an intruder, as in Grey's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard":

(Reeves, 62) Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight

And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

The boy of Winander likewise ends up in a "country churchyard," which is, of course, a graveyard.

3. In the 1805 Preface, Wordsworth states that imagination "has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent or external objects." Wordsworth adverts to a parrot and a monkey, both of which hang literally by their beaks or their tails. In contrast, he refers to passages from Virgil and Shakespeare to illustrate figurative hanging: "In these two instances is a slight exertion of the faculty which I denominate imagination, in the use of *one word*: neither the goats nor the samphire-gatherer do literally *hang*, as does the parrot or the monkey; but, presenting to the senses something of such an appearance, the mind in its own activity, for its own gratification, contemplates them as *hanging*." (Owen and Smyser, 3:31, my italics). T.S. Eliot points out that this distinction between fancy and imagination, however, can be understood only as a matter of degree. All language, after all, involves some illusion and is therefore figurative. Wordsworth suggests as much in the subtlety of the phrase "presenting to the senses something of such an appearance." Therefore, he may at one point signify the presence of imagination with a form of the verb "to hang" without deviating dramatically from gestures present elsewhere in a given poem.

4. Wordsworth's statement in *Essays Upon Epitaphs* that "origin and tendency are notions inseparably co-relative" is cited by de Man in RR, 74.

5. In The Figure of Echo, John Hollander explores the history and application of the figure since Milton (though largely in terms of "allusion," not the sense in which it is applied in this essay).

6. Wordsworth already conveys some disdain for imitation in The 1805 Preface, which cites the parrot and the monkey as examples of literal hanging (see note 3). They, after all, are themselves *un*imaginative mimics that parrot or ape what they hear or see to produce "a faithful copy." The Boy of Winander is therefore more like a parrot or a monkey than a poet of "imagination," which is "a word of higher import." Imitation also has a complex political and sociohistorical meaning for Wordsworth, as we shall see in the final portion of this essay. "They who ruled the state," Wordsworth later states of the English parliament, "child-like longed to imitate" and were therefore "not wise enough..." (X647, 52). Even without

unpacking the historical purport of this sentence, we may infer that Wordsworth considers the mimicking child in Winandermere likewise somehow "not wise."

7. In Book X, likewise, Wordsworth asserts: "Wild blasts of music thus did find their way// Into the most terrible events//So that the worst tempests might be listened to"(419-421).

   The boy can perceive his own echoes as music, even though they are too "wild" to constitute a replication of his own mimetic technique, just as The Revolution did not echo the older Wordsworth's philosophe-like ideals. This reading is pursued in greater depth in part IV of this essay.

8. Timothy Bhati sees the nest-robbing scene as exemplary of a text where the status of the persona becomes that of the author. Figures become triangulated between their genuine embodiment in the text and a more insubstantial "intention toward meaning" or figuring of something else. The suspension enacted by the narrative thereby writes the reading of its own text. The "sounds" of silent "motion" that pursue Wordsworth suggest that he exists only in the "motion." "Sound" therefore becomes a sign almost emptied of meaning, almost nonsignifying. This connection between a lost boy and an linguistic collapse illustrates de Man's position (see note #2). For Bhati's essay, "Wordsworth's Rhetorical Theft," see Reed, 86-124.

   It is also relevant that Wordsworth chooses to represent the "silent steps" as something *heard* in the first place. The aural defines otherness in Wordsworth more consistently than does the visual, but here it acts within the visual, defining the "cavern"--which is the traditional locus of the echo.* As the boy loses his bearings on the cliff, Wordsworth's syntax also becomes echoic and negating ("the sky was not a sky of earth"), and this culminates in a wind (a Wordsworthian symbol of correspondence) that completely deafens the boy, creates a noise so great that it *amounts* to a silence. Sound and silence, combined in the figure of the echo, lead to an inescapable negation, not a correspondence.

   *See, for example, "To Joanna": "That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag/ Was ready with her cavern." (John Hollander pursues the history of the echo as both figure and allusion in literature since Milton in Figure of Echo).

9. In fact, Wordsworth did use first person pronouns ("I" and "my") in earlier (1799) manuscripts to refer to "a past self." However, as this essay later discusses, he did so in conjunction with third person pronouns.

10. According to Ronald Paulson, "This is the book where Wordsworth most obviously loses his way, as if grappling without total awareness, himself part of the process of discovery"(Gilpin, 152). The observation that "The Boy of Winander," which

wasn't conceived to go here, ends up here is therefore a cue to watch for experimental contradictions. The corpse of the drowned man whose face emerges in the following scene is, as many critics have noted, an echo of the boy: both enact the shock of death in an incongruously beautiful setting. The body of the boy, however, is never found. It is not there to be recovered.

11. The pattern here is somewhat more complicated as Wordsworth delineates it:

> My own Voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
> Internal echo of the imperfect sound.
> To both I listened, drawing from them both

It is impossible to say how, if this "sound" begins in the mind, the mind can simply echo it. For the mind to echo it, it would have to begin somewhere else; yet the voice, especially when we speak of poesis, cannot generate sounds without a cue from the mind. Wordsworth speaks, moreover, of listening to "both" the voice and its echo, as if his physical and mental perceptions of the sound could be separated. Here Wordsworth denies that he cannot hear a voice independent of the workings of the mind, even though he states in "Tintern Abbey" that we half create what we perceive. Does this mean, then, that the senses are in themselves creative entities like the mind? If we take Wordsworth on his own terms, in any event, there is a lapse or gap between the ear and the mind, and perception entails a kind of echo chamber. Even the simplest act of the voice therefore must lead to a cacophony of overlapping perceptions, a doubling rhetorically represented in the phrase, "internal echo of imperfect sound." One adjective ("internal") seems a mental echo of the other ("imperfect"). "A gentle shock of mild surprise" may likewise imply a gap between a perceived "shock" and a registered "surprise," an internal echo of a more immediate perception, a relay that points to the utter evasiveness, or even the ultimate placelessness, of the phenomenon.

12. This account of the poet's awareness of his own inauthenticity (which is the basis for observations on mockery which follow) derives from de Man's interpretation of Baudelaire on irony in "The Rhetoric of Temporality" in *Blindness and Insight.*

...

De Man's thoughts on what happens when those conventions of duplicity give way are worth considering:

> "irony...at the cost of the empirical self...has to be taken seriously...: absolute irony is a consciousness of madness, itself the end of all consciousness; it is non-consciousness, a reflection on madness from the inside of madness itself" (BI, 216).

These doublings, and the notion of consciousness of unconsciousness (which, if taken to be more than comparable to realizing one is dreaming within a dream, is

tantamount to realizing complete unconsciousness, death-consciousness) elicit only the most disturbed passages in Wordsworth:

There was a darkness--call it solitude
Or blank desertion; no familiar shapes
Of hourly objects, 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 my mind
By day, and were the trouble of my dreams. (I, 42-48)

Hartman describes the moment of complete self-awareness as "a blank"(UW, p11). In these moments, Wordsworth situates his claims for imagination. "A blank" also echoes Devlin's description of the merging of life and death in the "shock" of the boy of Winander and Bhati's discussion of "a mode of knowing" and an object of knowledge that "reciprocally negate the terms of any literal or proper knowledge" (119). Paulson links the "vision" of the Winander boy to the "admonishment" of the blind beggar in book VII (Gilpin, 156). All these moments share a claim to death-consciousness, and this later moment in the life of the ravens'-eggs-robber (whom we have already mentioned) belongs with them. But this is in some sense neither the "blank" it claims to be, nor a particularly imaginative moment. Hartman would say that the perception and the imaginative response are initially fused, that it is only retrospectively that one can see what Wordsworth has imagined. Still, Wordsworth cuts himself off at line 48 and never talks about what he has "imagined." The vague forms in lines 46-48 in fact resemble an echo, a repeated reflection of a huge cliff, which has already undergone parallactic displacements and been seen from so many different perspectives that it has become an icon for the unfixable conditions of seeing. This icon or negating concept is echoed (seen) in the mind of the boy, just as the boy's seeming anagnorisis reflects the "images of trees" and "green fields" it claims to negate (the loss of loss), just as "there was a darkness" echoes "there was a boy." It is a reflection, as is the imagery taken into the mind of the boy of Winander, which is first echoed in the lake, a reflection that entails a breakdown in discourse because it leaves the subject with no stable perspective on which to rely. De Man's description of absolute irony is similarly predicated on an inward doubleness, a hypertrophy of self-conscious multiplicity collapsed inward, leaving the poet speechless.

13. De Man provides the background for this claim in "The Rhetoric of Temporality": "at the very moment that irony is thought of as a knowledge able to order and to cure the world, the source of its invention immediately runs dry." In Hoffmann, this desiccation is both deathly and deadly. De Man refers to Hoffmann's observation in *Prinzess in Bambilla*: "The instant it construes the fall of the self as an event that could somehow benefit the self, it discovers that it has in fact substituted death for madness. *'Der Moment, in dem der Mensch umfallt, ist der erste, in*

*dem sein wahrhaftes Ich sich aufrichtet.*'" (BI, 218).

14. "The Boy of Winander" begins with similar rhetoric: "There was a boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs..." The "ye" here is, like the pronoun "he," a notable substitution and suggests that latent irony pervaded the idyllic correspondences in the Winander landscape from the outset. The rhetoric here is, this essay will argue, also political.

15. Book VIII begins with Helvellyn, and an amplifying echo:

> What sounds are those, Helvellyn, which are heard
> Up on they summit, through the depth of air
> Ascending, as if distance had the power
> To make the sounds more audible?

The echoes of Grasmere's annual fair do not dissipate the commotion: they are more audible than the fair itself. The observation that echoes are amplified over distances points to their inexorability. The owls are perceived only as echoes. This likewise lends supremacy to their haunting medium. Joanna's voice, however, is taken over by the echo. The ascent and amplification of her "laughing" sound, which becomes "Loughrigg," suggests the awakening of a dead monster, an oversized golem, a Druidic Polyphemous. "The Ancient Woman seated on Helm-Crag" also implies witchcraft.

Alan Liu sees the "Daemon-Gods" of *Salisbury Plain* as references to the French Revolution. (181-200). The same can be said of the "brotherhood" of laughing mountains in "To Joanna." "Skiddow's trumpet" implies the clarions of the French Revolution, just as the "voice of mountain torrents" that is carried far into the Winander Boy's heart references revolutionary thoughts that end in literal and figurative deaths. The ironies of self-recognition and political disillusionment are conflated in all of these echoes.

By this token, Liu's observation that Drayton, in his notes to the *Polyolbion*, observes that "the community of name" (Drayton's phrase) between the Britons and the Gauls defined them in their own literature as culturally identical. Celts on both sides of the Channel spoke "Gualsh," an ancient term for "Welsh." A Celtic Britain was for Wordsworth one that could imitate the Revolution, and in book X of The Prelude, he deplores what he saw a Britain's betrayal of her neighbor.

Wordsworth certainly read the *Polyolbion*, and this section of "To Joanna" is, as Coleridge points out in the *Biographia Literaria,* a mock version of a rather self-congratulatory passage in Drayton. Wordsworth's trumpeting, like his eventual take on The Revolution, is a death-obsessed echo of the confident bravado that we find in his Renaissance predecessor:

> Which COPLAND scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill,

Upon her verge that stands, the neighboring vallies fill;
HELVILLON from his height it through the mountains threw,
From whom as soon again the sound DUNBALRASE drew,
From whose stone-trophied head it on the WENDROSS went
Which tow'rds the sea again resounded it to Dent.
That BROADWATERR, therewith within her banks astound,
In sailing to sea, told it to EGREMOUND,
Whose buildings, walks, and streets, with echoes loud and long,
Did mightily commend old Copland for her song.

*Polyolbion* Song XXX
(Quoted by Colerdige in Richards, 585).

16. Various insistent interstices and inconsistencies point to an underlying deathliness signified in the echo-structure of the passage, thereby permitting the unmasking, shattering disturbance to affect not only the retrospective contemplation on a self caught in the vale of projected loss, and a self caught in the consciousness of its own defacement, but the self for whom death is assured in the ongoing metrics of time. It is likely that the poem even points to the deathliness in an ironic assertion of this very predicament. Taken to its extreme, mockery can lead to a kind of death. No matter how he claims to side-step the issue, as in Winander, of to stand above it, as in "To Joanna," Wordsworth seems all the more aware of his precariousness.

17. It may be useful to illustrate this claim by suggesting that this phenomenon is inscribed in Wordsworth's syntax. Unlike Coleridge, who is fond of the tensions in asyndeton and parataxis, Wordsworth is obsessed with articulation. In The Great Ode, he observes how "the Pansy at my feet/Doth the same tale repeat," and both speak of something that is "gone." This suggests not only the temporal disjunction inscribed in any utterance (hence all utterances) that can be replicated, but also the application of this phenomenon to "my feet," his iambs. The Winander boy (and the stars) are rising OR setting under the trees OR by the lake: all positions are tentative. They are displaced by an overanxious striving after definition because the boy is not only a moving projection (always an echo of his last visitation), but also moving within the beam of the projector (always an echo of the "recollector's" last positing).

If, as an inevitable metaphor for these observations, every significant signifier on the page marks a "thought" that is gone, committed only to replication the moment it is marked, conjunctions may represent the mental movement within the spaces between the markings, since they almost always act as unstressed syllables: "*and* long halloos *and* screams *and* echoes loud." This notion is reminiscent of De Man's discussion (in "Autobiography as De-Facement") of the "self" that is defaced in languages; to define the continuity between selves is to self-divide; the self can be neither "cut off" nor "whole." But how does Wordsworth, who cannot claim without irony that a fiction's "belonging" to an

author does not belong to the fiction, situate himself with relation to this self-situating? He draws attention to the instability in predicated differences and substitutions. Similarly, Wordsworth's conjunctions allow echoes to intrude upon, to break up concepts and words to reveal that they too are constituted by echoes, the shifting within subdivided spaces: "There was a boy, ye know him well, ye Cliffs/AND islANDs OF WinANDer." Since echoes transform their own sounds, a repeated term is often a shifted version of its original form, "a gentle shock of mild surprise," impact and its muffled reverberation, the sinking-in of aftershock, the mark of an unmarkable impression. Under the veil of "egotistical" rhapsody, doubt, and pathos deliberately signified by articulating markers, Wordsworth obsessively scatters the figures in his "own song." In so doing, however, in responding to the unnamable spaces that mock him, he echoes the delicate ironic panic of attempting to replicate the vision that "mocks his skill." His echolalia captures the essence of this inexpressibility so artfully that it resonates as the fundamental necessity.

18. Wordsworth makes statements elsewhere in The Prelude that equate the royalist regime with the Empire. Both, he suggests, are autocratic and mechanical. In book V, he attacks enlightened educationalists as "mighty workmen" who "have overbridged/ the froward chaos of futurity." These machinists and bridge-builders of the future are cunningly aligned with Sin and Death in Paradise Lost, who build the bridge of man's damnation. Acting blindly for industry in both senses of the word, they

> Would control
> All accidents, and to the very road
> Which they have fashioned would confine us down
> Like engines...

Near the end of Book X, Wordsworth likewise condemns "an Emperor." He describes the "exulting" sunrise of the Revolution turning, at the moment of Napolean's self-coronation, to a mechanical demon:

> the sun
> That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
> In exultation among the living clouds,
> Hath put his function and his glory off,
> And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
> Sets like an opera phantom. (935-40)

The "monster" child of the Age of Reason is a "worshipper of worldly seemliness," just as the pomp of the Napoleonic era is a worldly theater of appearances.

19. Coleridge uses similar rhetoric in the opening stanza of his political allegory,

"France: an Ode": "O ye loud waves! and O ye Forests high/ And O ye Clouds that far above me soared!" Likewise, the revenant echoing of the owls across the Wordsworthian vale is metonymical of the "marriage" of Nature and Freedom, with all its historical analogues. In his Prefatory "argument," Coleridge defines the first stanza of "France: an Ode" as "an invocation to those objects in Nature the contemplation of which had inspired the poet with a devotional love of Liberty." He then goes on to invoke:

Ye Woods! that listen to the night-birds singing
midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
Save when your imperious branches swinging,
Have mad a solemn music of the wind!

Since Coleridge knew Wordsworth's *Two-Part Prelude*, as well as "There was a Boy" from *Lyrical Ballads*, these imperial ("imperious") "Woods" which "listen" to owl-songs from the "perilous slope" may well derive from Wordsworth's "perilous ridge"at Hawkshead or the "cliffs" and "woods" of Winander, where the boy "hung listening." Alternatively, Wordsworth may have been influenced by an early draft of Coleridge's allegory of disillusionment over the French Revolution, a fall pretokened by the "perilous slope." In any event, the *owl songs* are emblematic of the *spirit of the Revolution* and the "solemn music" implies poesis in the midst of a atural/imperial correspondence continually interrupted by the very "wind" that might in itself symbolize correspondence .

20. For more on Wordsworth's references to Enlightenment education and the development of that theme in *The Prelude*, see Fotheringham, Wordsworth's Prelude as a Study of Education. Folcroft: Folcroft Press, 1969.

21. At about the time Wordsworth composed "the Boy of Winander," Goya had come out with his famous "Capriccios," the most famous of which, "*El Sueno de la Razon Crea Monstruos*" ("The Sleep of Reason Creates Monsters"), represents an Eighteenth Century, Napoleonic figure asleep at his desk. Behind him a swarm of creatures, almost all of which are gigantic owls, emerge from the darkness. "Sueno" can also mean "Dream." The dream of reason creates monsters. The young Wordsworth is both rational and curious about the irrational "Other." One intruder confronts another. Whether Wordsworth ever saw a reproduction or newspaper print of of the Goya etching is unknown, but the two men were thinking similarly. Baudelaire, in "*Quelques Caricaturistes Francais*," favors Goya over Daumier for the very self-ironic tendency that we have noted in Wordsworth.

22. In a 1794 letter to William Matthews, Wordsworth asks, in reference to the Portuguese: "in what state is knowledge with them?and have the principles of free government any advocate there?or is Liberty a sound of which they have never

heard? (Shaver, 113). In Book X of The Prelude, Wordsworth states that thinking minds "Forgot that such a sound was ever heard/As liberty upon the earth." These are only the most flatly stated examples. "Sound" is often developed into trumpeting mountain echoes, such as the "prophetic blast" that opens Book V or "Skiddaw's trumpet" in "to Joanna." The mountain echo of Grasmere fair (Book VIII) is a subtle reference to the rural fete of the Revolution, just as the entire scene of mountain echoes in "to Joanna" is a political allegory (see note 14 above). In the Alps passages of book VI, Wordsworth speaks of sleeping in the mountains under "the cry of unknown birds" (643). Later, he awakens to "nations" expectantly listening to "the fife of war/...then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,/A blackbird's whistle in the vernal grove"(684-87). The owl sounds in Winander and the music of Coleridge's "night-birds" or owls (note 18) are just further illustrations.

23. Even in May of 1792, when Wordsworth's knowledge of historical events still derives almost exclusively from newspaper accounts, he is nevertheless keenly aware of the atmosphere around him and reports to William Matthews that "the horrors excited by the relation of the events consequent upon the commencement of hostilities is general." Wordsworth goes on to describe these "horrors"(Shaver, 77). Though he is referring to 'horrors" that accompanied the outbreak of hostilities between England and France, he seems to associate the English declaration of war with the spirit of Revolution. It is only back in 1791 that his letters seem devoid of tangible ambiguity with respect to the Revolution and the war. However, in this early phase, Wordsworth's correspondence hardly refers to it at all. Instead, the French language, his personal expenses, etc. are his focus.

24. This notion of "fallen" history is interestingly embodied in Wordsworth's repeated references to The Fall. Book V opens with a discussion of "prophetic blasts" indicating a "deluge" to come, when all books will be destroyed. Book X begins with mention of a"king" who had "fallen" and goes on to condemn the British for their "deluge" of ignorance (437). Later, he claims his countrymen were "stupefied"(made stupid) by the "deluge" of the French Revolution and denounces British opposition to French fervor:

    How could I believe
    That wisdom could, in any shape, come near
    Men clinging to delusions so insane? (627-29).

    The British war on France was, to Wordsworth's mind, comparable to the Terror, which fatally mimicked the war. This argument ties even French mimicry to The Boy of Winander, who imitates dark forces:

    They who ruled the state
    (though with such awful proof before their eyes
    That he who would sow death, reaps death, of worse,
    and can reap nothing better) *child-like longed*

*to imitate, not wise enough* to avoid
.....
.....they leagued
their strength perfidiously, to undermine
Justice and make an end of liberty. (647-57, my italics).

The word "end" is a highly ambiguous pun (it implies a goal as well as a termination). The imitative child is "not wise" but Wordsworth's rhetorical question about "clinging to delusions" might be a real question. If the "wiser spirit" in Winander leads to a "fall" in retrospect, is it for or against liberty? It is initially for it and retrospectively against it; but, by "clinging to delusions," Wordsworth can continue the cycle, since his "history" is without origin or end. In book II, he states:

Alone upon some jutting eminence
At the first hour of morning, when the vale
Lay quiet.....
How shall I trace the history, where seek
The origin of what I have felt?
...
What I saw
Appeared like something in myself--a dream,
A prospect in my mind. (362-72)

Morning (and mourning) is ongoing in Wordsworth, but sustained by "a prospect" in his mind. It is relevant, as we will see, that this pattern and this prospect is described as "the history" of feeling associated with an image in the mind.

25. The "mute leaves" suggest the muteness of both books and nature. The notion of a mute book is especially telling. These pages, which are the haunt of language, are given their voice in a mute trope that is literally "the muteness of words." Language, which normally disguises the effect of its own "defacement," is represented here in a form utterly antithetical to the proper conditions of language (See note 1). This moment will receive further discussion later in this essay.

26 When Wordsworth states, in Book X, that in the wake of disaster "The mighty renovation would proceed," he therefore means the renovation of his own mind as well as that of the government (556). England, however, is not at the "safe distance" from the deluge that he suggests. He is, he claims, an "univited guest" in his own country (272) and (as he states in the "vacation" setting in book IV) it is possible for "restoration" to come "Like an intruder knocking at the door"(147-48). Hope and disappoint intrude upon each other in an ongoing pattern that encompasses the past as well as the future. This fact is embodied in Wordsworth's discussion of living in Paris and reading up on the Terror "At intervals" by a light that never goes out:

With unextinguishable taper I kept watch
Reading at intervals. The fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come. (X, 62-64).

27 "Forgive me," mourns Coleridge in "France: an Ode," "I hear thy voice, thy loud lament."

28 Andrzej Warminski (in discussing de Man on Hegel) uses pronominal tropes to exemplify the schism between linguistic signs and the meanings that are supposed to stand behind them. "I," like "this" is a dissevered sign. Its perceived role is to posit its own predicate, a particular self with a meaning *distinct* from all others. The sign ("I") is nonethless the commonality of all identities. Under the pretext of speaking, it merely narrates the positing of meaning that it in fact eradicates. Wordsworth compounds the issue here in a way that draws attention to it.

29. (Note #26 illustrates this point a little differently.)

30. Wordsworth's own statement on books in Book XII is helpful in light of "the Boy of Winander" from Book V (the book on books full of strictures on books) and passages in book X which conflate the autobiographical book with the notion of a history book:

How books mislead us, looking for their fame
...
By articificial lights; how they debase
The many for the pleasures of the few,
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions for the sake
Of being understood at once
.....
.....flattering thus our self-conceit. (XII. 208-215).

Wordsworth's frequent references to fixing the "phantom of conceit" and being "penned" by one's own "conceit" ultimately threaten him with self-mockery, the notion of self-conceit in both senses of the word. As the autobiographical poet with Rousseauesque educational ideals attempting to avoid "misleading" notions, however, he recognizes that, though he is aware of the ultimate groundlessness of books, he is unable to avoid the predicament. His confession therefore takes the most self-mocking form.

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CODES:

BI= de Man, Blindness and Insight
RR=de Man, The Rhetoric of Romanticism
UW=Hartman, The Unremarkable Wordsworth
WP= Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry
L=Levinson, Wordsworth's Great Period Poems

All quotations from Wordsworth are from William Wordsworth, the critical edition by Stephen Gill, listed in the bibliography. "There Was a Boy" and "To Joanna" are included here for convenient reference.

## "There Was a Boy" (The Prelude, V. 389-422)

There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs
And Islands of Winander! many a time
At evening, when the stars had just begun
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering Lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him.--And they would shout
Across the wat'ry Vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of mirth and jocund din! And when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain Heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady Lake.

This Boy was taken from his Mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full ten years old.
--Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
The Vale where he was born; the Churchyard hangs
Upon a Slope above the Village School,
And there, along the bank, when I have passed
At evening, I believe that oftentimes
A full half-hour together I have stood
Mute--looking at the grave in which he lies.

From "POEMS ON THE NAMING OF PLACES"

II

To Joanna

Amid the smoke of cities did you pass
Your time of early youth, and there you learned,
From years of quiet industry, to love
the living Beings by your own fire-side,
With such a strong devotion, that your heart
Is slow towards the sympathies of them
Who look upon the hills with tenderness,
And made dear friendships with the streams and groves.
Yet we who are transgressors of this kind,
Dwelling retired in our simplicity
Among the woods and fields, we love you well,
Joanna! and I guess, since you have been
So distant from us now for two long years,
That you will gladly listen to discourse
However trivial, if you thence are taught
That they, with whom you once were happy, talk
Familiarly of you and of old times.
While I was seated, now some ten days past,
Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop
Their ancient neighbor, the old Steeple tower,
The Vicar from his gloomy house hard by
Came forth to greet me, and when he had asked,
'How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted Maid!
And when will she return to us?' he paused,
And after short exchange of village news,
He with grave looks demanded, for what cause,
Reviving obsolete Idolatry,
I like a Runic Priest, in characters
Of formidable size, had chiseled out
Some uncouth name upon the native rock,
Above the Rotha, by the forest side.
--Now, by those dear immunities of heart
Engendered betwixt malice and true love,
I was not loth to be so catechized.
And this was my reply--'As it befel,
One summer morning we had walked abroad
At break of day, Joanna and myself.
--'Twas that delightful season, when the broom,
Full flowered, and visible every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold.
Our pathway led us on to Rotha's banks,
And when we came in front of that tall rock
Which looks towards the East, I there stopped short,
And traced the lofty barrier with my eye
From base to summit; such delight I found
To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower,
That intermixture of delicious hues,
Along so vast a surface, all at once,

In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart.
--When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laughed aloud.
the rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again:
that ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag
Was ready with her cavern; Hammar-Scar,
and the tall Steep of Silver-How sent forth
a noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone:
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice,--old Skiddaw blew
His speaking trumpet;--back out of the clouds
Of Glamarama southward came the voice;
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head.
Now whether, (said I to our cordial Friend
Who in the hey-day of astonishment
Smiled in my face) this were in simple truth
A work accomplished by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched
With dreams and visionary impulses,
Is not for me to tell; but sure I am
That there was a loud uproar in the hills.
And, while we were both listening, to my side
The fair Joanna drew, as if she wished
To shelter from some object of her fear.
--And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons
Were wasted, as I chanced to walk alone
Beneath this rock, at sun-rise, on a calm
And silent morning, I sate down, and there,
In memory of affections old and true,
I chiseled out in those rude characters
Joanna's name upon the living stone.
And I, and all who dwell by my fire-side
Have called the lovely rock, Joanna's Rock.'