The Mind of a Poet

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BOOK VII

THERE is a falling off in the remaining books of The Prelude, not only in spontaneity and freshness but also in depth and passion. Wordsworth had now dealt with the years which were the feeding source of his poetry, and had said the things which lay nearest to his heart. Much that is great and still more that is good lies ahead of us, passages of unusual biographical interest and of supreme importance for the understanding of his thought, but the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" has abated. The poet himself feared this, and it may be that he laid the work aside throughout the summer of 1804 partly because he was

checked by . . . tamer argument
That lies before us, needful to be told, (vii. 50-1)

but which he felt no great inclination to tell.

Book VII is professedly an account of the three and a half months Wordsworth spent in London in 1791, from the early part of February to the last week of May, at the close of his twenty-first year; but presumably records impressions he received in the course of his much longer residence there at various times between 1793 and 1795 as well as his more recent visits in July and September, 1802. Indeed Professor de Selincourt believes (p. xxxix) that originally this book was to have followed those that deal with France in the Revolution. London is, however, pictured as it impressed a stranger to life in a metropolis, one free in heart and mind, and not as it must have struck Wordsworth on his return from Paris, preoccupied with the Revolution, worried about finances, the future, and Annette, and out of sympathy with his native land. Except for the second visit to Paris, in 1792, when he was absorbed in political events, these were the only periods in which Wordsworth had his home in a great city; hence he makes his first brief residence in London the occasion for considering the contribution of city life to the development of the poet. What he has to say of this contribution seems to Mr. Harper (I, 106),

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and to others, "a little forced." And apparently it did not satisfy its author for, although he wrote of London at (relatively) undue length in this book, he returned to it again in viii. 70-3, 530-675, ix. 23-33, and xiii. 110-16. Furthermore, in viii. 533-9 he declares that in the present book he was "light" in mood, and "played idly with the flowers... satisfied With that amusement." It looks as if, although conscious of the inadequacy of what he had written, he could not bring himself to revise it radically. One difficulty lay in his inability throughout his later years to do justice to city life, and this not only because of his love of nature and of plain living but because he believed such life to be destructive of individuality (725-8) and numbing to the creative powers (679-81), and because in his own case it had meant separation from those he loved and wandering in the deserts of Godwinian rationalism. Then, too, as Raleigh observed, "He could look on the seething life of London with a glazed philosophic eye, and find in that confused theatre of pleasure and pain no more than the tumbling of so many marionettes. Before it could touch him near, an experience had to be simple and isolated." Yet, according to Professor Legouis,

The future poet of the lakes was really the first, if not to feel, at any rate to attempt to render in verse worthy of the theme, and without satirical design, the grandeur of London and the intensity of its life. Strange as this fact appears at first sight, it is less surprising when we reflect that the requisite striking impression could only be felt by a man fresh from the world outside of London, capable of new and vivid sensations, and sufficiently open in mind and independent of classical authorities to venture on a frank description of his novel impressions. (trs., p. 170)

Book VII reveals a contradiction similar to the one we have noticed in Book III: Wordsworth still remembered with pleasure the thrill of his first weeks in London (A 139-53) and despite his disapproval of the metropolis something of its glamor yet remained. A passage in the Letter to Mathetes implies as much:

I will compare... an aspiring youth, leaving the schools in which he has been disciplined, and preparing to bear a part in the concerns of the world, I will compare him in this season of eager admiration, to a
newly-invested knight appearing with his blank unsignalized shield, upon some day of solemn tournament, at the court of the Faery-queen. ... He does not himself immediately enter the lists as a combatant, but he looks round him with a beating heart, dazzled by the gorgeous pageantry, the banners, the impresses, the ladies of overcoming beauty, the persons of the knights, now first seen by him, the fame of whose actions is carried by the traveller, like merchandize, through the world, and resounded upon the harp of the minstrel. 8

There is, however, little suggestion of glamor in the only contemporary account of his first long stay in the city:

I quitted London about three weeks ago, where my time passed in a strange manner; sometimes whirled about by the vortex of its strenua inertia, and sometimes thrown by the eddy into a corner of the stream, where I lay in almost motionless indolence.

Think not, however, that I had not many very pleasant hours; a man must be unfortunate indeed who resides four months in Town without some of his time being disposed of in such a manner, as he would forget with reluctance. 9

On April 8, 1808, Wordsworth wrote Beaumont: "You will deem it strange, but really some of the imagery of London has, since my return hither, been more present to my mind than that of this noble vale. . . . I cannot say how much I was affected at " the sight of Ludgate Hill and St. Paul's, " solemnised by a thin veil of falling snow."

Professor de Selincourt believes (p. xxxix) that VII was in the main written during April, October, and November, 1804, but he shows that A 721-9 was composed between January 20 and March 5, 1798, and A 699-712 probably between October and December, 1800 (pp. xxi-iii).

To the list of MSS for Book VII should be added: "for ll. [A] 721-9 Alfoxden Note Book."

1-4. Cf. de S., xxxi-ii, 500-1, and [608 G-H] (additional note to i. A 1-54), where we learn that the first draft of i. A 40-8 was "written in Germany during the winter of 1798-9" and where Wordsworth's confusion of the date of his escape from the city with that of his beginning The Prelude is compared with "a similar confusion and blending of separate occasions into one" which is pointed out in the supplementary note to vi. A 216-45. Professor W. G. Fraser maintains that A 5-9
does not fit i. A 1-54 and that Wordsworth is here referring to the Prospectus to The Recluse, but he fails to account satisfactorily for vii. 2-3; Mr. D. H. Bishop likewise presents vigorously the difficulties offered by the Garrod-de Selincourt interpretation of these lines.\(^7\)

5-13. Simpler and more euphonious (note A 9-11) and, except for "So willed the Muse," better than the early versions; "uproar" (A 6) does not fit "sang" and the figures in A 7 and A 9 are not happy.

18. \textit{hindrance}: Mrs. Wordsworth was not well (Dora was born August 16), John (born the previous June) needed much attention, and there were many visitors. Under such conditions in a house so small as Dove Cottage work was extremely difficult. Undoubtedly Wordsworth was guilty of the "indolence" mentioned in A 20 (see vi. A 46 n.) but that was more or less implied in "voluntary holiday" whereas "hindrance" was not.

A 23-56. The final text is shortened but not otherwise improved by the omission of A 23, A 29, and most of A 33; but "to . . . welcome" (A 26-7) as well as "And hath begun" (A 31) were wisely dropped. "Due to this timely notice" (27) is more pedestrian than "At this unthought of greeting" (A 32), as "in whispers said" (28) is than "half whispered" (A 34), while "Associates" (30) is certainly inferior to "Brethren" (A 36). Yet in 45-8 and 53-6 the later version is the better.

44-8. Wordsworth refers again in xii. 328-35 to the stimulus his creative powers received from boughs tossed by a strong wind. Cf. also A variant of i. A 44-8; ii. 298; viii. A 80; de S., 557, lines 164-7; x. 434; xiii. 1-10; "The Minstrels played," 76; and Coleridge's "Dejection," 15-20. Dorothy wrote Lady Beaumont, November 29, 1805, that "winter winds" were her brother's "delight" and added, "his mind . . . is often more fertile in this season than any other"; but he found pleasure in the motions of physical objects of all kinds, see Recluse, i. i. 24-44. Burns wrote in his First Common Place Book:

There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood
or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear a stormy wind
howling among the trees and raving o'er the plain.

(Centenary edition, i, 374)

50-1. See p. 435 above.

52-7. How much studying Wordsworth did at Cambridge
on his return from Switzerland and how much at Fornecett in
the six weeks he spent there with Dorothy we do not know, but
it would seem that from July, 1790, until January, 1793, his life
was largely a vacation. *The Prelude* says nothing of his last
year at the university—he was in residence only five weeks—
but we learn from the *Memoirs* (i, 48) that "the week be-
fore he took his degree he passed his time in reading Clarissa
Harlowe." "For ever" (53)—A 57-60 is still more emphatic—
ignores his return to Cambridge to study oriental languages;
see Dorothy's letter of October 9, 1791.

A 61. *A casual Reveller and at large*: Presumably omitted
because, in view of 64-5 (A 70-2), misleading; yet the words
must have meant something more than "idler" (72).

58. The comma after "Yet" must be a mistake since it is
not in A and since the context makes clear that the meaning
is not adversative but temporal, "as yet."

64. *self-willed*: See iii. 355 n.

A 71. This line, omitted from the final text, makes still
more emphatic Wordsworth's assertion of his temperance and
purity, an assertion which, together with the earlier ones con-
cerning his conduct at the university (iii. 494-6, A 531-6,
A 531-41 n.; viii. 510-17 and n.) and his expression of the
horror and pity stirred in him by prostitution (A 412-34), it
is important, in view of the Annette episode, not to forget.

69-76. As X, the earliest MS of vii that we have, does not
contain 1-68 (A 1-74), the opening lines were probably not
composed at the same time as the remainder of the book. In
MS X, vii. A 75-740 follow immediately after viii. A 741-50
(de S., xxiii, xxxix). MS X contains two versions of A 90
(or A 81)-135, A 181-218 (*ibid.*, xxiii, xxxviii), from the
earlier of which, a rough draft, Professor de Selincourt apar-
rently does not give any readings.

72-6. It mattered little to Wordsworth that his room was
poor and bare since he presumably spent few of his waking
hours in it. His interests were in the streets, theatres, and other public places.

77-84. An expression of that love of romance which, despite the matter-of-fact and even pedestrian side of his nature, was very strong and deep in Wordsworth. See pp. 19-21, 402 above and also i. 166-220; v. 56-140, 341-4, 453-533; vi. 73-94; vii. 413-21, 449-57; viii. 75-97, 406-20; ix. 204-8, 300-2, 437-91; x. 17-24; xiii. 142-59, 312-49; de S., 521-2; 555, lines 80-98; 602-5, lines 60-114; Excursion, i. 177-85. Wordsworth was an admirer of Ariosto and Tasso, whom he held to be "very absurdly depressed in order to elevate Dante."8 Professor Bradley (Oxford Lectures, pp. 114-15) reminds us of the "Arabian sands" in the "Solitary Reaper" (cf. ix. A 582-3), of Wordsworth's love of Spenser, of his effective handling in "Ruth" of "un-English scenery," of old Triton's wreathed horn, and of the

Lady of the Mere,
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.
("A narrow girdle," 37-8)

Wordsworth's fondness for books of travel (see iii. 433-44 n.), and for the Arabian Nights (v. 460-76), his advocacy of fairy tales and of stories of Jack the Giant-killer and Robin Hood for children (v. 341-6, 451-533), the attraction that "daring feat" and "enterprize forlorn" had for him (The Recluse, i. i. 703-25), the importance he attached to the ministry of fear (see Chapter III) and of wonder (see pp. 480-92 above) are all related to his love of romance. The passage is as Miltonic in spirit as in style, since few poets have had a keener relish for the literature of high adventure and of strange, remote splendors than the author of Paradise Lost. Lines 80-81 have the romantic suggestiveness but little of the music that Milton drew from proper names.


103. vanity: Latin vanitas, the unprofitable employment of time, i.e. day-dreaming. Lines 103-8 are substituted for A 109-10.

105. fear: See Chapter III.

111-15. English readers need not be told that young Dick Whittington when leaving London in discouragement heard
from Holloway the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow, which seemed to say to him:

Turn again, Whittington,
Lord Mayor of London.

Whereupon, he returned to the city of which he was later thrice Lord Mayor. He and his cat are mentioned in Excursion, vii. 91-2.

119-21. Hardly clearer than A 121-3: the words Vauxhall and Ranelagh though not in themselves sweet (see de S., xlvi and n.) become so because of the associations connected with them.

128. **broad-day . . . permanent**: Contrasted with the nocturnal and evanescent wonders of Vauxhall and Ranelagh; 123-8 are substituted for A 125-8.

A 133. **Streets without end**: Cf. 68, "endless streets," which is not in the corresponding passage in A.

133-4, 137-41, 149-50 are not in A, and A 145-55, A 159-71 are not in the final text (although A 164 appears slightly changed as 213). The moralizing of 149-50 is a poor substitute for the Whitmanesque list of A 159-71, among the most vivid parts of Wordsworth's picture of London (cf. 689-721).


145-8. The reality often disappointed the expectations he had formed of London; yet he was pleased with what he saw because it was the truth. He was glad to know things as they are and, in the case of historical objects, to form a more just conception of the past.

A 147-8. "Many things, as I idly recall them, half seem not memories but the creations of fancy." Cf. iii. 612-16 n.

156-8. Notice the repetition and parallelism.

166-7. Cf. i. 509-35 n.

171. A pleasing line.

193. **dead walls**: Presumably walls closing passages through which there is no thoroughfare.

196. The semicolon should come after "merit," as in A.

197-8. MS X makes clear that "that" is a ballad, the beginnings of which lure one to purchase it but which one finds, on reading it to the end, has been a hoax.

219-20. Stylistically a great improvement over A 233-6, which is most awkward; yet this late addition gives the impression that the stay in London was marked by critical observation and reflection whereas A 61, A 141, A 145-53 (all omitted from the final text) picture it as a time of idleness and pleasure.

227-32. The change from the plural to the singular and then again to the plural (227-8) is unpleasant. "Negro Ladies," not negresses (who could not have afforded muslin) but dark-skinned ladies from India. Lines 229-32 are jerky.

230. Hitherto only out-door spectacles have been described.

232-59. These lines together with a number of those that follow might well have been omitted for the sake of a fuller treatment of the Swiss or Welsh trips.

240-59. Lines 248-59 describe small painted models in which no deception is attempted, but 240-7 refer to sights something like the Pantheon de la Guerre or the "Battle of Gettysburg," in which the spectator stands in the center of a circular building and receives the impression, through the skilful merging of foreground and walls, that he sees to the horizon. See ix. 31 n. A 269-71 is omitted from the final text.

260. *And*: A misreading of "Add," which is indistinctly written in E (de S., [608 G], supplementary note).

266. *her*: Wordsworth must have forgotten the "its" of 264 when he changed "its" (A 287) to "her."

270. *nor blush to add*: Substituted for "and . . . irksomeness" (A 291-2). In view of the subject, the style and diction of both texts are grandiose.

274-87. Another instance of Wordsworth's interest in psychology (see i. 135-45 n.) as well as an example of his humor (see i. 509-35 n.).

288-90. Clearer and pleasanter than A 310-12, the first three words of which are repeated from A 296.

288. *Here*: At Sadler's Wells. De S., [608 G] cites Mary Lamb's letter to Dorothy Wordsworth describing the play, *Edward and Susan* or *the Beauty of Buttermere*, by Charles Dibdin the younger, which was given at Sadler's Wells ("the lowest and most London-like of our amusements") in April, May, and June, 1803.
293. More sententious and sonorous but less natural than A 315.

294. *the daring brotherhood*: The managers of Sadler's Wells.

295-316. "Serious" and "light" (295) are better than "holy" and "such" (A 317); A 318-19 were wisely dropped; 298-9 are preferable to A 322-3; and 305-6 are far smoother than the awkward A 329-31 (although "By us unheard of" is of some interest). The almost monosyllabic 302-3 are, however, distinctly inferior to A 326-8 and the superfluous 314-15 are a poor substitute for 339-45, despite the ponderous A 339-40 and the cacophonous "Must haply often" (A 343). Line 316 is smoother than A 346 but both are bad; "this memorial" is taken from A 339; a comma is needed after "tribute."

316-20. These lines recall vi. 592-616 and throw some light on the process of poetic composition. Wordsworth had finished what he intended to say about Mary of Buttermere when her image rose and held him. Although on this occasion he was not "lost; Halted without an effort to break through" (vi. 596-7), the lines that follow are less the product of his voluntary mind than those that precede and are correspondingly better poetry.


330. The eight low words of this line were never changed.

333-99. The thought of Mary of Buttermere and her child apparently recalled the other, very different mother with her beautiful boy, and the character and surroundings of this second mother seem in turn to have suggested the succeeding paragraph on prostitutes, 382-99.

341-7. The somewhat diffuse 341-3 (which seem inconsistent with A 392-4) and 345-7 replace the bald A 371, A 373-4.

346. *lustres*: Chandeliers or prismatic glass pendants attached to chandeliers; cf. A 440.

A 379, A 389, A 394. "Cottage" (repeated in each of the two following lines), "indecent speech" (synonymous with "ribaldry" in the same line), and "behold" ("beheld" appears in the next line) were omitted in revision.
355-9, 366. A marked improvement over the stilted A 381-5 and the wordy A 392-4.

370-8. Although the final text escapes the awkwardness of A 398-401 ("embalm'd" is unfortunate) and omits the needless A 407-8, it contains nothing so moving as A 402-6, which may have seemed unduly personal.

382-3, 388. An effective condensation of A 412-15, A 420-3, although A 412-13 are clearer and A 421-3 more vivid than the lines which replace them. One does not shudder from the bottom of one's heart.

387. And abandoned to the pride of men who were willing that a certain number of women should be sacrificed.

388-91. Such women seemed to be cut off from the human race (although still possessing a human form, A 425). The interesting addition in MS X reaffirms the unity of mankind (see ii. 221 n.; viii. 665-72; xiii. 216-20) and declares that evil persons infect those about them as with a poisonous breath. The profound impression the prostitute made on Wordsworth is noteworthy; see A 71 n.


402-6. Very different from A 438-40, which may have seemed too personal but which give a less serious and doubtless truer picture of the young Wordsworth than that suggested by the later text. Cf. 446-7. "Casual incidents of real life," chance encounters such as that with the beautiful boy and with the prostitute.

413-21, 450-7. Romance; see 77-84 n.

421-9. Humor; see i. 509-35 n.

434-47, 450-57. Keen self-analysis; see i. 135-45 n.

443-7. Like most young men, Wordsworth was mature in some respects but very much of a boy in others.

450-5. Cf. de S., 559, line 229. It was not the play but the sudden, vivid realization that he was seeing a play which "gladdened" him.

460-5. The meaning apparently is that important matters are often closely connected with things in themselves as trivial as those just described, and that frequently it is the trivial that
preserves the memory of the important. But Wordsworth gives no illustration and one suspects he is merely rationalizing his interests and inclination.

469-76. Another instance of Wordsworth's emotional nature (see viii. A 841-2 n.) and of his keen self-analysis (see i. 135-45 n.)—which comes out again in 482-3. Powerfully as the theatre moved him, it rarely touched his imagination.

477-85. Line 479 is a condensation of A 507-8 just as 481 is of A 511-12; in 480, however, a new idea is introduced—"Rose to ideal grandeur"; 484 with its pretentious commonplaceness was added for the sake of clarity. "The plays reached my inner mind and touched my imagination only on those rare occasions when the acting rose to ideal grandeur or was so inadequate that, in criticizing it to myself, I came to realize more clearly the vague conceptions I had formed of the characters or the interpretation of the lines." On "ideal" see v. 457; xiv. 76; and p. 246 above.

486-771. The remainder of the book reveals few differences in phrasing between the early and late texts. On the other hand, 512-50 is, after vi. 420-88 (the visit to Chartreuse), the longest single passage added to the poem after the completion of A; and 598-625 is the only passage transferred to a different book after the completion of A.

486-511. A curious passage, in which the experiences and feelings of 1791 are colored with the scorn of 1793-1804. The satire (see v. 293-346 n.), which is heralded in 486-9 and acknowledged in 512-13 and A 543-5, is most obvious in 490-3, 498, 501-3 (a masterly blending of compliment and ridicule), and 506-8. Although the apologetic tone of 512-18 suggests Burke as the object of this satire, Miss Batho argues convincingly that it was directed against Pitt. Wordsworth wrote Haydon on July 8, 1831, "I am averse (with that wisest of the Moderns Mr. Burke) to all hot Reformations."

514-15, 523-34, 544-50. Not in the first draft, lines x-xv of which are not in the final text. On 544-50 see the conclusion of the note to xiv. 179-87.

551-72. Satire; see v. 293-346 n.

565-6. Added to A to make clear which "Doctor Young" is meant, but the satirical touch is lost and 566 is mechanical, eighteenth-century verse.


598-618. See the various notes on viii. A 836-58. When Wordsworth transferred this passage from viii he failed to observe that 599-602 expresses the same idea as 619-25.

619-25. Substituted for A 592-3 when 598-618 were added. See preceding note. A 593 is contrasted with "everywhere" (A 590); "single" (623) with "huge . . . mass" (621). "Fermenting" (621) throws an unpleasant light on Wordsworth's "love of man"—the topic of the following book. Cf. A 698-700; de S., pp. 547-8; x. 168, 213-16; xi. 11.

625. inherent: More liveliness and power than in themselves they possess.

626-49. Cf. viii. 539-59 and see pp. 143, 172 above and Chapter viii. The passage is characteristic of Wordsworth's peculiar power, just as the unnecessary details of 638-42 are of his limitations.

650-71. The scene just described owes its impressiveness to the imagination whereas most city sights stultify the imagination (see 679-81). Wordsworth at first says that the night scenes which follow, inasmuch as they appear to be but slightly modified by the imagination and as they impress almost every one, came "full-formed" to the mind. But as he proceeds and pictures the strange, haunting impressiveness of the deserted streets he realizes that it is only as the mind answers to such scenes that their peculiar beauty is felt. He then turns to spectacles which are "completed to our hands" and owe nothing to the creative mind. Yet a comment in the succeeding paragraph shows that this distinction also is unsound since the wearying confusion of the city, though "by nature an unmanageable sight," is not wholly so to him

who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole. (732-6)

Indeed, the difference is only in degree and in the aptitude of the observer. An imaginative mind may discover as much
"meaning" in Bartholomew Fair as in the sightless beggar—"A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees."

The beauty of London is not the theme of any of these lines or of any others in The Prelude; yet it is clear from the present passage and from others in this book, as well as from the Westminster Bridge sonnet, that Wordsworth was unusually aware of such beauty. The most surprising of these memorable night scenes, which are unlike anything in previous English poetry, is the last: the picture of winter evenings when "rains Are falling hard," the prostitute's "feeble salutation"

Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
Nothing is listened to. (662-8)

It is noteworthy that here again we have bad weather (see i. 416-18 n.) and scenes that owe their impressiveness to the solitude of the observer (see Chapter IV).

675-721. According to Henry Morley, the fair, which had formerly begun on or about St. Bartholomew's day (August 24) and had lasted two weeks or longer, was held after 1753 only from September 3d to 7th. On September 7, 1802, it was visited by Charles Lamb and Wordsworth (see Lamb's letter to Coleridge of September 8, 1802). There is no evidence that before 1802 Wordsworth was in London during the time of the fair; in 1791 he was probably in Wales, possibly in Cambridge. Hence these lines deal with an experience that presumably took place only two years before they were written. Wordsworth would have viewed the scene with other eyes in 1791.

679-81. Lines 731-6 point out that this need not be entirely true; see 650-71 n. According to The Excursion, iv. 819-25, the imagination of the shepherd is invigorated by his surroundings while that of the worldling is wasted on fickle, superfluous, and trivial things. Herein, says Raleigh, lay Wordsworth's chief objection to the city: "It distracted the senses with its multitudinous solicitations, and left no work for the imagination to do. Like a huge hall for the display of machinery, a great city exhibits a vast multiplicity of objects, each designed only for the end which it is fulfilling. . . . It acted on him like an opiate" (Wordsworth, p. 186). Pater wrote: "The glories of Italy and Switzerland . . . had too potent a material life of
their own to serve greatly his poetic purpose" ("Wordsworth," *Appreciations*). The same was true of London.

685-705. One sentence of 21 lines, which in A begins nearly four lines earlier. See v. 197-222 n. It is amusing to find "hell" (A 658) weakened to "shock" (685).

689-721. This vivid picture is similar to that described in A 159-71, which is not in the final text.

700. *weaves*: "Sway[es] the body alternately to one side and the other" (NED).

704. See vi. 505 n.

706. *moveables of wonder*: Strange sights that can be moved about.

708. *Horse of knowledge*: A horse that has been trained to pick out certain cards and the like.

717. *compose*: Eliminates the second "up" of A 690.

722-44. Cf. *Excursion*, iv. 819-25 (summarized in 679-81 n.) and *Recluse*, 1. i. 593-607 (quoted in part on p. 58 above); see also Chapter vi.

722. The awkwardness of A 695 is eliminated.

724. Replaces A 697-700 with its complacency (for Wordsworth must be one of the Stragglers of A 697) and its contempt for city dwellers (see pp. 120, 302-3, 436 above and 619-25 n.). Unless "To" of A 698 was copied by mistake from the line above and should be "Of," A 698 is in the same construction as A 697.


733-7. An excellent brief description of the imagination (see Chapter x), which Wordsworth ranked first of all powers (737). "Acquisitions" (737) is inexact since capacities are developed, not acquired, by education; but here, as in xiv. 209-20, Wordsworth wishes to make clear that imagination can be strengthened and modified by early training. The comma after "acquisitions" should come after "first," as in A 713. On 734-5 see xiv. 100-2 n.; on "under-sense" (735) see de S. note to xiv. A 71; on "a feeling of the whole" see ii. 221 n.

740-61. These lines are connected with viii. A 62 sq., the real beginning of VIII (A 1-61 being introductory). They assert
that nature shapes the soul to majesty, an idea much like the theme of VIII: that nature fosters a lofty conception of man (see pp. 108-12 above). The passage is probably related to the imagination, which has just been described (733-7); 740-4 seems to mean that the imagination is fed by close observation of nature, breadth of view, and an accurate memory of natural objects, and that these excellences are best developed by early familiarity with nature especially in its simpler and grander forms. As to "attention" see iii. 157-69, viii. A 62-8; "comprehensiveness" seems to mean breadth, largeness of soul, and recalls 734-5, xi. A 844-8, and xiii. 48-54 (in each of these passages the imagination is referred to, as it seems to be here, and xi. A 845 mentions "comprehensive"); "memory" is probably the power of recalling both visual images and their imaginative transformation; these images yield joy and strength and furnish food for the imagination, see "Daffodils," "Tintern Abbey," 22-57, and xii. 208-335. It is noteworthy that it is those natural objects which impress us as simple and powerful (see viii. 597-607 n.), that is (as 745-9 suggest) generally those seen at a distance, which minister most to us. There is a hint here of the ministry of fear. "By principles as fixed" makes the assertion a very decided one. With 745-7 cf. de S., 558, lines 208-11. Yet Excursion, iii. 928-40 (quoted de S., 558) expresses what the Solitary imagined the Indian to be; the reality was very different (Excursion, iii. 951-5). A 721-3, the original form of which (de S., 548) was among the first part of The Prelude to be written, is not in the final text nor is 745-54 in A; "views and aspirations" (755) is clearer than "measure and the prospect" (i.e., capacity and outlook) of A 724.

747. Since it is the Arab, not the Indian, who roves the desert sands, the correct punctuation must be that of D2 and E: a period after "Indian" and no mark after "sands."

A 716-28, variant in de S., 548. indolence: See vi. A 46 n. "Gave . . . mind" is parallel to "Gave . . . thoughts" two lines below. The latter line probably means stimulated his mind and gave him many thoughts.

750-6. As the sea propels, magnifies, spreads, and sends aloft, even so it shapes to majesty man's views and aspirations.
"Its shoals of life" (751) are fishes, whales, porpoises, and the like.

757-8. "Perennial" (cf. "steady," A 722) is contrasted with "changeful." Cf. xiv. 100-1. The forms of the hills are permanent, but their appearance changes with the seasons and with sunshine, cloud, or mist.

759-60. Clearer than A 728.

761-4. The apology, which was still more wordy and repetitious before the omission of the unnecessary and not quite true A 731, was probably introduced because Wordsworth implies that he possessed the rare powers described in 733-61.

761. Cf. xiii. 19-39; "relation," connection—one thought is related to another.

761, 765. This: The antecedent is uncertain since several ideas are expressed in 740-61, but 767-71 indicates that Wordsworth was thinking principally of 753-61. In any case he does not refer to the joy which came to him in London from the memory of the hills and streams but, going back to 733-40, declares that the discipline of nature enabled him to see the permanent in the transitory, the one in the many, order in confusion.

765. MS X adds the alliterative "tho' then I took No note thereof"—another indication that Wordsworth was aware of reading into his early consciousness ideas which were chiefly the product of later years (see iii. 612-16 n.). "Domain," though better than "receptacle" (A 734), gives the line, already encumbered with "This did I feel," a pompous sound.

766-71. A quiet, noble conclusion, like that of iv, vi, x, xiv. "Enduring" (see i. 409 n.) is contrasted with "transitory" (770). It is unfortunate that the stuffy "Vouchsafed her inspiration" (768) was substituted for the simpler "Was present as a habit" (A 737); yet could "the Soul of Beauty" be "present as a habit"? These concluding lines are closely connected in both thought and expression with viii. A 62 sq. but the connection was later obscured by the insertion of viii. 1-69 and the omission of viii. A 64-119.
NOTES

1. Wordsworth took his degree January 21; and we learn from his letter to Mathews of June 17 that he left London about May 27, although Dorothy wrote Miss Pollard May 23 that he was then in Wales.

2. The description of Bartholomew Fair (675-721) must be based chiefly, if not solely, upon Wordsworth's visit to the fair with Lamb on September 7, 1802. It is doubtful if Wordsworth was in London at this time of year before 1802.

3. See, for example, i. 408 and n.; vii. 621, 679-81 n., 722-30, 724 n.; viii. A 65-6, 319-22, 332-7, 433-4; xiii. 202-5; de S., pp. 547-8; Excursion, iii. 104; Recluse, i. i. 593-616; "Tintern Abbey," 25-6; "Blest is this Isle," 51-4. The Concor dance will furnish other instances.


5. Grosart, i, 322; pointed out by Legouis, trs., p. 166.

6. Letter to Mathews of June 17, 1791. In a letter to the same friend of August 13, 1791, Wordsworth says that he "did little" serious reading or study in the city. On finally leaving it in 1795 he felt like "a captive . . . coming from a house of bondage" where he "long had pined A discontented sojourner" (i. A 6-7, 7-8). His great tribute to the beauty that at times invests London, the sonnet upon Westminster Bridge, was written July 31, 1802, two years before the composition of this book.


9. Suggested by Dr. Adele Ballman.
