## Prelude as an autobiographical poem pdf

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Wordsworth's The Prelude is literally the autobiography of an orphan. It records in its way the death of the poet's mother when he is thirteen. It is specified 'in its way' because, as many readers have noted, even though the poet tells of his mental growth, oddly, the deaths of his parents
are barely mentioned at all. [1] Part of the meaning of the poem in the aspect of its story is registered in the manner of its telling. The burden of disclosure is distributed unevenly across and through the poem is the meaning of the poem is the poem is made discontinuous with itself and is ruptured. This creates the opening for a symptomatic reading of the
poem's speech, and of its silence. There is a relationship here between the text of the poem and the significance of what it speaks about. Evidently, the meaning of this conjuncture is something which can be shown but not stated. It is in the formal nature of autobiography that this should be so. Form is bestowed on ideology by the text in question; a
line is drawn between 'public' and 'private' forms of history. It is determined what can and cannot be said in the story of (in this case) the growth of a poet's mind. It is at this moment that history is entering the text as ideology; the raw materials of memory and experience worked by The Prelude are themselves determinate and determining. The
discourse of the work traces the outline of the absent centre which it is about. What is thus shown without being stated, it will be argued, is the production of subjectivity through the individual. In Wordsworth, famously, 'The Child is Father of the Man'. [2] This 'fathering', as portrayed autobiographically in The
Prelude, is to be investigated here in terms of the later Althusserian theory of ideology. The aim is to shed new light on the much-discussed question to be reached here is that The Prelude is a great poem by its deep registering of the significance of historical change
precisely because rather than in spite of its political conservatism. It is important, first, to locate what appears to be an all-orienting pun made early on in The Prelude's account of mental growth. Wordsworth writes: 'Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear' (I.305-06). These fostering agencies of 'beauty' and
'fear' are in fact recognizably parental 'presences of Nature' (I.490). In this respect, Nature is nurture. It is argued that the second half of the eighteenth century witnesses a close entangling of aesthetic and sexual-political concerns. It is, particularly, notions of the state and of the family which become entangled. As an aspect of this it appears
virtually second nature for the poet of The Prelude to think of Nature itself in terms of the sublime and beautiful; that is, in terms of the sexes in general and of his parents in particular. The beautiful is 'feminine', and connected with the mother. But the most
significant thing about this matrix, it is here maintained, has to do with Wordsworth's insisting in his poem that, with regard to his 'fostering', he feels himself to have been 'A favored being' (I.364). The poet speaks of himself in this light as 'a chosen son . . . I was a freeman, in the purest sense / Was free, and to majestic ends was strong' (III.82-90). To
proceed with this investigation of Wordsworthian subjectivity as made manifest in the face of Nature, the next thing to do is to establish the nature of Nature? There is Wordsworthian subjectivity as made in the supposedly least alienated moments of his life, that
Nature has been to him, as it is described in 'Tintern Abbey' (that magnificently finished version of The Prelude in miniature), 'all in all' (76). Alan Liu has argued in discussion of the 'sense of history' in Wordsworth that 'there is no nature except as it is constituted by acts of political definition made possible by particular forms of government'. [3] Liu's
is an historicizing of the concept of Nature, produced from within the so-called New Historicism in Romantic studies. This is a movement 'which I criticize', to quote Liu himself, 'but to which I continue to be committed'. [4] It is not necessary here to endorse the radical textualism of New Historicist poetics; there would arguably be the danger
otherwise of repeating a 'Romantic' transcendence of the world. Seeing an emergent textuality in all forms of social life entails naturalizing the existence of all texts as such. But aside from this, the strategy of historicizing Nature in the production of historicizing Nature in 
about the power of history itself. Liu's concern is to suggest that Wordsworth's own deep sense of history foreshadows this kind of understanding. This suggested line of enquiry, starting out from Nature as a form of cultural construction, is worth pursuing for the purchase it offers on that secret or hidden reality which is apparently screened by the
term 'Nature' as used by Wordsworth in fact throughout The Prelude. There are a number of the screenings evident in the composition of the boat-stealing adventure as it relates 'an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure' (I.388-89) is ostensibly that natural
law cannot be transgressed in this guilty way with impunity: the poet has been taught a lesson by Nature. But beyond this, the stolen-boat episode presents the entangling of aesthetics and sexual politics from Wordsworth's own boyhood as an ideological problem. The matrix of the masculine-sublime and the feminine-beautiful is imaged as the
structure of subjectivity itself. The experience of this is figured in the poem in terms of specular relationship becoming disrupted by symbolic power. Wordsworth writes of how 'The moon was up, the lake was shining clear' (I.383). But, the narrative continues, upon committing his stealthy, troubled and pleasurable 'act', the 'huge cliff' as seen by the
boy from the boat itself, 'Rose up between me and the stars' (I.409, 410). At this juncture the poet's use of language, by its obscure syntax and difficult thought, clearly becomes problematic. Wordsworth gives the following account of the content of his subsequent imaginings and dreams: 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.422 The mental growth described in this passage is natural, it could be said, precisely to the extent that it is political (in the sense specified by Alan Liu); the dreams are of 'huge and
mighty forms that do not live / Like living men'. Wordsworth's lines give expression in their contradictoriness to the determinative force of certain unnatural words, as it were. By this unnatural words, as it were. By this unnatural words, as it were. By this unnatural words worth himself emerges as a compelling, but only problematically articulate poet. As he remembers it, this scene seems to dramatize in a structurally
indirect way the placing of a certain taboo on a specific act of pleasure. This is the unreal moment when he becomes aware in the process of his childhood socialization of the reality of this bar. Catherine Belsey has shown (in part through a reading of the boat-stealing episode of The Prelude) that it is in the poetic texts of the turn of the eighteenth
century that 'the unconscious is for the first time produced in discourse'. [5] Cartesian subjectivity comes of age in and by the figural language of Romantic writing. The text of Wordsworth's poem puts ideology to work, here to facilitate a living out of the 'problem' of a symbolic disruption of the specular at the level of gender construction. As a result,
the text itself is driven up against that 'line' between the public and the private which is drawn from the ideological point of entry of history into The Prelude. This proves a means, with regard to the 'not said' of the subject's emergence in Wordsworth, of making the silences speak. What gets 'said' whilst remaining unspoken in this way is the relation
of form to ideology within, in this case, the totality of autobiographical discourse. For the text of Wordsworth's poem suffers an internal displacement in the form of 'the trouble of my dreams'. Nature, that great Wordsworthian 'all in all' and figurative foster parent in The Prelude, it emerges, is but a screen for patriarchy itself as both the condition
and effect of mental growth for Wordsworth the poet and orphan. To put it this way is to hint at the reason why there is an element of structural indirection built into the specific elaboration of Wordsworth's text. One might ask, why not tell the story of one's family relations as it is? Why talk in The Prelude about acts of theft, as Wordsworth
sometimes does—touching on woodcock snaring, birds-nesting and boat-stealing—when the poem's drift appears to bear on the process of one's childhood socialization into gender identity? Why tell of chance encounters with male solitaries—the discharged soldier, the blind beggar in London—when the sense seems to have to do with receiving
intimations of mortality: 'I looked,/ As if admonished from another world' (VII.622-23)? It is all rather enigmatic. David Ellis, after Richard Onorato, suggests with regard to this peculiarity a possible correspondence between Wordsworthian 'spots of time' and Freudian 'screen memories'. [6] (I take it as read that the boat-stealing episode in The
Prelude constitutes an instance of a Wordsworthian spot of time, though it is not explicitly designated as such in the text.) [7] A screen memory, for Freud, is an essentially repressive operation of the mind whereby mnemic images of a notably consequential nature, often directly sexual in derivation, are associatively displaced onto, and in this sense
'screened by', others which are correspondingly less consequential. These memories work to conceal 'an unsuspected wealth of meaning . . . behind their apparent innocence'. [8] Commenting on the 'distinctive feature' of what are held to be completely ordinary phenomena, Freud continues: 'they are extremely well remembered but . . . their content
is completely indifferent' (III.320). So it is that the correspondence with the spots of time in Wordsworth seems remarkably close. For the spots, too, appear outwardly ordinary but are inwardly extraordinary in terms of their significance and their complex relation to sexuality. The Prelude seems positively to invite a 'symptomatic' reading of its text,
after the fashion of the critical practice developed by Louis Althusser and his collaborators, drawing upon Freudian theory. Its usefulness here consists in its identification of the silences and absences which deform the literary text. It reveals the represed presence of the ideological materials which will have been worked over in the production of the
text at issue. This particular reading has now to be pressed against the Ellis interpretation of The Prelude. It will become apparent that the political implications of Wordsworth's working with spots of time in his poem are in fact misread in the context of Ellis's own discussion of memory and autobiography. The upshot of the work which Wordsworth
undertakes with these spots, according to Ellis, is that 'Nature' (the single most significant and powerful codifying term in the whole lexicon of The Prelude), is, by the final, imagination-consecrating Book of the poem, 'standing in for the mind' (p. 159). This is what comes from the combined displacing and screening action of the spots themselves. And
as a result, the mind itself is ultimately, in Wordsworth's words, 'lord and master' (XI.271) regarding its essentially interactive relationship with outward sense (p. 160). If this were not the case, 'the spots of time could not be interpreted optimistically' (p. 160). This is Ellis's conclusion, made in the light of the apparent serenity and confidence
negotiated by Wordsworth in 'Imagination, How Impaired and Restored', the critical eleventh Book of The Prelude (the very site of the explicitly-designated spots themselves). Contrary to this, however, it may be argued that the serenity, confidence and indeed optimism of Wordsworth's spots is misplaced. Robert Young, drawing on a Lacanian insight,
sees that the position arrived at by the close of this particular poem is, really, a positioning. He notes how, in pursuit of the imagination, Wordsworth is 'in fact caught within the function that occurs in its locus'. [9] The reason why this capture comes about is because the action of going after such a spectacularly all-consuming thing as the imagination
itself 'necessarily finds the subject "inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it" (p. 80). [10]Young's reversed perspective on the relationship of 'quester' to 'quest' in this pursuit calls into question the assumptions governing the familiar reconciliation of subject and object as sine qua non of Romanticism proper. Ellis tends to share uncritically with
his Wordsworth, then, precisely that optimism which goes with idealism in the formation of Romantic ideology. It is a matter of seeing through the haunting recollections and memorializations set forth in Wordsworth's epic exploration of his own subject, the
reality of that which is being avoided as a positive means of facilitating mental growth. As we shall see, the 'natural' freedom of the parents are linked to the play of history itself, and to the experience of failure as a complex ideological achievement. It can be argued, now,
that the memory of the death of Wordsworth's mother in fact lies behind the voicing of the first spot of time (XI.278-327). The poet's re-imagining of the fate of the hanged murderer serves to establish with great vividness in his poem the frank reality of death. Then narrative attention is switched suddenly, undemonstrably to the spectacle of 'visionary
dreariness' (XI.310) centring on the sight of the pitcher-bearing girl struggling against the wind with a naked pool and signal-beacon at a distance. The effect seems that of a montage. Images of femininity, valorized as such in terms of the specific culture of Wordsworth's epic, are juxtaposed with the concept of death. Syntagmatically, a number of
signifiers are brought into significant relationship with a single signified. This manoeuvre signals and codifies what can be described as the death of femininity in The Prelude. Indeed, if the manifestly archetypal nature of this spot (the 'bare' common, the 'naked' pool, the nameless woman) is taken into account, then the conclusion becomes clear.
What, above all, is treated in this not fully articulate yet wholly suggestive way in this first spot is the death of the mother-figure herself. Then slightly later in this same Book, in the second spot of time (XI.344-88), Wordsworth deals in a more direct way with the loss of his father. Doubtless this reflects on the part of the poet the increased maturity of
his greater years. Of the father's death, the sorrowful 'event', in Wordsworth's words, 'appeared / A chastisement' (XI.368-69). As to why this should be so, Wordsworth remembers how he has since 'bowed low / To God who thus corrected by the Father, have previously been
directed hostilely towards the paternal father. Hence the sense of chastisement felt at his passing away. This hostility has manifested itself, it can be assumed, in the shape of the boy's desire for the mother. We have noted the extent to which the child's relationship with Nature, as remembered by the adult, conforms to the pattern of an Oedipal
sexuality. The prospect of a Christmas holiday from school and concomitant return home in Hawkshead, an imminent event at which the thirteen-year-old is 'Feverish' and 'restless' (XI.346), is one of anticipated pleasure and connectedness. It is in this strict sense, dependent on the social conditioning of such qualities as 'pleasure' and 'connectedness'
as feminine, that the poet of The Prelude may be said to display desire for the mother. This is a type of desire which inevitably generates hostility towards this figure manifests itself in this second spot in the boy's taking for granted the imagined presence of the father during periods of his actual
absence. This doing without the father is tantamount to consigning the displaced parent to a kind of death. And so, perhaps, when waiting for the father's scheduled return the boy looks 'in such anxiety of hope' (XI.371) with 'trite reflections of morality' (XI.372) whilst 'in the deepest passion' (XI.373). Having taken the father's presence too much for
granted, Wordsworth's reaction is to feel himself chastised in the event of his death. Wordsworth has reacted in such a way as to actively assert, as both a punishment and compensation, the restoration is to feel himself chastised in the event of his death. Wordsworth has reacted in such a way as to actively assert, as both a punishment and compensation, the restorative significance of memory in his life. 'I would enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration', he writes (XI.341-42), making this claim
immediately prior to the relating of this second spot. Seen in this light, the close attention to detail subsequently shown at the level of narration in the poem is remarkable. Even by Wordsworth's own standards this second of his 'affecting incidents' (XI.343) evinces an extraordinary lyrical realism. It constitutes a moment of particular intensity. The
details of the scene—the 'naked' wall, the 'single' sheep, the 'whistling' hawthorn—are plain in the extreme. Yet they are all the more emphatic for their simplicity. (How one would not have wanted things between himself
and his parents (particularly his father) to have been any other way. He encapsulates 'Imagination, How Impaired and Restored' in his reporting of a late tendency on his part to overlook the importance of life in London and
of his suffering disappointment at the collapse of the French Revolution. It has all meant succumbing to a creeping impairment of the imagination. But just ahead of dealing with the death of his parents through the spots of time episodes, Wordsworth is able to call a halt to this social-psychological process of decline: I shook the habit off Entirely and
for ever, and again In Nature's presence stood, as I stand now, A sensitive, and a creative soul. XI.253-56 Wordsworth matches a Miltonic Puritanism of the heart: he has become, as an individual and an orphan, decidedly all the stronger, mentally, for the personal
losses he has suffered. The power of memory he everywhere exemplifies as a poet, arguably to a unique and pre-eminent degree, seems vitally attributable, psychologically, to the event of the death of the thirteen-year-old's father. Richard Onorato, concentrating on the relationship of the poet to the orphan in The Prelude, emphasizes how the poet's
'fatherless freedom' revealingly illuminates his 'need to invent himself' (p. 307). But what might be the political implications of Wordsworth's inventing himself in this way, by means of a discourse founded on absence in the form of a 'fatherless freedom'? The readings of The Prelude which want to interpret the poem 'optimistically', such as those of
Ellis and Onorato, tend to take Wordsworthian 'freedom' as implying freedom' and a susceptibility to mediated ideological determination. Moreover, it overlooks what appears to be the
greater powerfulness of this latter determinative mode. As Althusser has shown, it is when ideology operates from an unconscious basis that it achieves its greatest potency regarding its subjectification of the individual. The individual. The individual. The individual is subject if, in Althusser has shown, it is when ideology operates from an unconscious basis that it achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject if, in Althusser has shown, it is when ideology operates from an unconscious basis that it achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject if, in Althusser has shown, it is when ideology operates from an unconscious basis that it achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject if its achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject is, in Althusser has shown, it is when ideology operates from an unconscious basis that it achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject if its achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject is a subject if its achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject is a subject if its achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject is a subject if its achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject is a subject if its achieves its greatest potency regarding its subject is a su
[11] The point of the 'great' literary work is that by its text giving form to ideological unconsciousness of this kind, it helps to free us from the pressure of that which, historically, must not or cannot be said. We have reached the point at which can be demonstrated directly the greatness of The Prelude as understood in this sense. This, then, is to turn
to the two parts of Wordsworth's poem in which is marked a certain resolution of Oedipal tensions. Symbolically enough, the parts in question are located at the narrative centre and circumference of the work. They feature landscape and scenery the character of which is strikingly sublime. This is to refer to those passages in the poem in which
Wordsworth recalls, first, his crossing of the Alps (VI.525-72) and, second, his ascent of Mount Snowdon (XIII.1-119). It is in these particular stretches of the text that the poet of The Prelude goes one better than the Freudian patient who, having 'lost his father at a very early age', 'was always seeking to rediscover him in what was grand and sublime
in Nature'. [12] Wordsworth's achievement consists in his succeeding in rediscovering his father in the grandness and sublimity of Nature when he discovers the imagination. The sudden turning away from the anti-climax of having unknowingly crossed the
Alps to the surprise of finding oneself being crossed by imaginative power is the most impressive feature of the passage. Across the caesura separating the end of one verse-paragraph from the start of another (at lines 524-25), the text shifts into a different register. In a further instance of crossing, the text itself crosses the lacuna which opens up
with the speechlessness of disappointment felt in the moment of Alpine anti-climax. The Prelude, not a unified plenitude of meaning, is made remarkably dissonant by this movement. What is happening is that the distance separating the poem from itself.
Crossing the Alps in this unknowing way is for Wordsworth a complex achievement. Its significance is not gauged in strictly empirical terms. There is a sense of disappointment felt in relation to Nature itself. But Wordsworth's own second nature—now, evidently, a reality in the context of the growth of his mind—is on hand to save this particular poet
of Nature from radical disillusionment. Wordsworth writes at line 525: Imagination!—lifting up itself Before the eye and progress of my song Like an unfathered vapour, here that power, In all the might of its endowments, came Athwart me. VI.525-29 Robert Young has used the phrase 'phallic ghost' (p. 82) to characterize the nature and appearance
of the imagination as manifested in Wordsworth's apostrophe. Certainly there is a clear acknowledgement here of the sublime as decidedly masculine. On the basis of this, indeed, it has symbolic power over Wordsworth's being crossed by imaginative 'power' as it comes 'Athwart' him puts him in the grip, so to speak, of the masculine.
sublime. It happens that the imagination itself actively means him. The apostrophe continues: I was lost as in a cloud, Halted without a struggle to break through, And now, recovering, to my soul I say 'I recognize thy glory'. VI.529-32 These lines testify to the experience of conversion. The subject has been lost, but now is found. Acknowledging the
powerfulness of the imagination in the aspect its masculine sublimity (and sublime masculinity) has meant rendering oneself able to recognize the 'glory' of one's own 'soul'. At the same time, it has meant subjectifying oneself before this imaginative power. But what comes from this is, paradoxically, a strong sense of freedom on the part of the
subject. Wordsworth goes on to write of the feeling in this moment of having been set free from the clutch of all finite references. It is a justly famous passage, at once affirmative and profound: Our destiny, our nature, and desire, And
something evermore about to be. VI.538-42 Here, the sense of crossing, of crossing over into the space of a new phase of one's life is palpable. The lines are reverberate with an underlying sense of an ending. Wordsworth's life has come to a halt so that it can start over again; the narrative break cuts both ways. Progression beyond this effective
threshold of the symbolic then comes about by means of entrance into a realm of apparently infinite signification. It is implied that it is this 'infinitude' which quarantees the wordsworthian imagination. Its features are seen
internally unified. It is this unity which evokes the infinity of endless significations. Allusions made to the Bible and Milton show the subject taking up a position in sublime discourse. Concluding this account of his 'conversion', Wordsworth tells of how, to his mind, the different sights and sounds of the Alps Were all like workings of one mind, the
features Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree, Characters of the great apocalypse, The types and symbols of eternity, Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. [13] VI.568-72 This passage exemplifies mental growth in and by its disclosure of that point in the formation of subjectivity when the subject, on the point of grasping the form of
outward sense, is in fact taken in by it: 'inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it' (Lacan). It reveals Wordsworth's learning to come to terms with the reality of his actually decentred place in the universe. There is the laying to rest of an Oedipally troubling 'ghost', in the shape of the memory of the father. The transgressiveness of the child
manifested in, for example, the boat-stealing desire to strike out against limitations turns into the 'wise passiveness' of the adult. [14] The paradox is that of 'infinitude' itself: there is no longer anything to strike out against when there is felt to be an endless crossing of limitation. For Wordsworth, the process of the orphan's socialization is now
complete. What has been played out is a drama of interpellation. This is to invoke Althusser's 'little theoretical theatre' (p. 48), in which 'Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects' (p. 44). We will come shortly to Wordsworthian subjectivity being put forward
here is that the rediscovery by Wordsworth of his parents in Nature's presence, constitutes a fortiori his own crisis-resolving interpellation as an ideological subject. When remembering the growth of mind, Wordsworth's tendency is to get things the wrong way round, or upside-down. In the
quise of Nature, that politically-defined form of society, ideology in its dominant formations has hailed him. He has responded by saying, in effect, 'I recognize thy glory', in turn recognizing that the hailing was 'really him' who was hailed in this way. It is very much because of his orphaned state, his 'guilty
feelings', and his memory that Wordsworth in The Prelude is 'a chosen son . . . and to majestic ends was strong'. That the poet feels himself to be so free just shows the success of the subjectivity which exists in this world. It is Althusser, seeking to articulate Marx with Freud and Lacan, who comments that 'you and I are always already
subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individuals in this way 'gives us the "consciousness" of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition'
(p. 47). These comments may be said to be responsive to the Wordsworthian problematic of 'crossing', of apostrophizing imagination in a moment of crisis as coming 'Athwart' oneself. Althusser's theory of ideology puts on stage for us that eternal circularity in the structure of subjectivity which arises when the structure itself is predicated on ritual
recognition. This paradoxical circuit is to the category of the ideological what the 'something evermore about to be' of 'Our destiny, our nature, and our home,/ Is with infinitude—and only there' is to Wordsworth's sublime in Nature. The wit and point of what is staged in the Althusserian 'theatre' consists in its making explicit that which appears
natural—Althusser's word would be 'obvious'—as itself an effect of ideological discourse showing, in relation to the subject, what cannot be stated. Althusser has been criticized—in the context of Romantic studies, by Philip Shaw, for instance—for failing to acknowledge the importance of those ideologies which are resistant to 'the dominant ideology'
[15] Against this, however, it must be stressed how the crucial Althusserian insight is one into the functioning of dominant ideology when it is so dominant that the question of a resistant subordinate ideology when it is so dominant that the guestion of a resistant subordinate ideology when it is so dominant that the guestion of the historical and non-natural guarantees the individualistic freedom of the
subject. We are dealing with the difficulty of just such a problem as this where Wordsworth himself is concerned. In our consideration of what the autobiography of an orphan might look like we have now reached the point where opposites meet. Across the terrain of subjectivity there is a clear point of contact between Wordsworth's autobiographical
poetry and Althusser's scientific theory. In a way, Wordsworth and Althusser come together on the point that, in Althusser's words, 'individuals are always-already subjects' (p. 50). The peculiar state of affairs described in this remark is the result of the school-family couple in modern society functioning as the dominant ideological state apparatus.
Where this is theorized in Althusser, it is dramatized in The Prelude. Typically, the child is born into subjectivity, but as a subject-to-be. It has a name—the father's name—and an identity, but not a mind of its 'own'. It therefore becomes what it is. A certain ownership of mind is being claimed retrospectively in what we saw of Wordsworth's moment of
apostrophe—of turning away—in the crossing of the Alps. Wordsworth turns away from fatherlessness to the father. He becomes what he is as a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition, a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition as a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition as a subject and a 'free' individual. Althusserian science as, by definition as a subject and a 'free' individual as a subject as a subject and a 'free' individual as a subject as a
without a discourse. In Wordsworth's case, this mirror 'speaks' of what it is to be free, specifying, as a matter of definition in relation to the excellent discussion of
Wordsworth which has been produced by Marlon Ross. Studying, principally, the Lucy lyric 'Three years she grew in sun and shower' and 'Nutting'—the latter of which was intended in 1798 for inclusion in the 1799 Prelude—Ross examines, as he terms it, 'woman's place' in Wordsworth's 'ideological landscape'. [16] He argues that the poet of an
individualistic stance against the norms of established pedagogic practice and for, on this basis, the education of women is, nevertheless, a subject of interpellation. The argument turns on that familiar foundational pun in the 'Fair seed-time' passage of The Prelude: whereas Wordsworth seems to be portraying a radically natural feminine education
one divorced from society and social convention, his education turns out to reproduce the system of upbringing from its overt institutional context by setting it in the woods and on the mountains. p. 400, my emphasis This statement leads to a concise summing up of the complex nature of 'freedom'
as it is represented by Wordsworth in his ideological landscape: 'Nature here codifies the social appears to dismantle it' (p. 400). Society naturelizes itself by Nature more than Nature socializes itself by society. Nurture is Nature more than Nature socializes itself by society.
structured forms. At the same time, it makes a point of seeking actively to disguise the fact that this is not a natural process. Everything has the appearance of being as it should. This glance at Ross is enough now to direct our attention towards Nature's beautiful-feminine aspects and the bearing which they have on Wordsworthian subjectivity.
Wordsworth's account of his ascent of Mount Snowdon is placed at the outer edges of The Prelude, at the beginning of the concluding thirteenth Book of the sublime to the narrative. But if the tenor of the episode of crossing the Alps
had been one of conversion, now it is changed to one of confirmation. And the presence here of that which is beautiful in Nature is what makes the difference. This is the moment of rediscovery of the mother in Nature's beauty which Wordsworth shows, but does so without stating it. This showing-without-stating marks the poem's relation to ideology
as history's mode of existence in and through the text. Signification itself skews as the resultant poem is pressurized into giving form to a discourse on absence, namely the silence of the dead mother as it presses on the orphan's growth of mind. As we shall see, that the mother speaks to the subject in this way from the contrasting position of the
abject is the point. What we have with the ascent of Mount Snowdon is another of those Wordsworthian experiences ('spots of time') the full significance of which is grasped only retrospectively. Most importantly, the mode of Wordsworthian experiences ('spots of time') the full significance of which is grasped only retrospectively. Most importantly, the mode of Wordsworthian experiences ('spots of time') the full significance of which is grasped only retrospectively.
the shore / I found myself of a huge sea of mist' (XIII.42-43). The change is registered at the level of syntax, with the syntax itself becoming slightly twisted: the subject is located in the body, rather than at the head, of what is said. This feature of the writing should, by now, be enough to alert us to something interestingly untoward going on in the
language. We have entered once again into the transfigurative matrix of the masculine-sublime and the feminine-beautiful. The 'sea of mist' swells into an 'ocean' (XIII.46), to the point whereby the 'real sea' (XIII.49), the Irish Sea which should have been visible at a distance, is eventually 'Usurped upon as far as sight could reach' (XIII.51). Nature is
displaced by mind in this displacement of the natural sea by a figurative counterpart. The imagination, that 'phallic ghost', is making its sublime presence felt—'lifting up itself'—once more. In the mist there is 'a fracture in the vapour . . . through which', Wordsworth writes, 'Mounted the roar of waters . . . roaring with one voice' (XIII.56-59). The unity
of this roaring 'voice' is a manifestation of imaginative power. It is revealed at the end of Wordsworth's paragraph how, in that breach Through which the homeless voice of waters rose, That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged The soul, the imagination of the whole. XIII.62-65 What Wordsworth has recognized, it is explained in the next verse-
paragraph, is himself as a subject in relation to the mind (the 'sea of mist') and Nature (the 'real sea'). The structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relation to the structure of this relationship is hierarchical; indeed, it reproduces the structure of this relation to the structure of this relation to the structure of this relation to the structure of the 
autobiography of an orphan. Wordsworth's retrospect confirms, not least by its use of the passive voice, the subject's interpellative conversion, his becoming what he is in terms of a subjectivity which is ideologically 'always-already': A meditation rose in me that night Upon the lonely mountain when the scene Had passed away, and it appeared to me
The perfect image of a mighty mind. XIII.66-69 It is this 'image', in and by its perfection, which secures the position in this poem of not only the subject, but also Nature. For this 'mind' is 'one that feeds upon infinity' (XIII.70). It is fundamentally active compared with the sort of 'wise passiveness' which is induced by 'infinitude' itself. And it is 'exalted
by an under-presence./ The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim / Or vast in its own being' (XIII.71-73). In other words, it is sublime, and by its sublimity it locates the place of that which is beautiful. We shall look closely at this 'place' in a moment. But to press on with what makes the Snowdon scene, for Wordsworth, the 'perfect' image of this 'mighty
mind: it becomes apparent that the scene itself is one of triangulation of ideological positions. It brings the subject's position into the foreground of discourse even as it establishes, there, the dominance of mind. This double movement is a precondition for the various manifestations of imagination. But this is not all. For this conjuncture is itself
dependent on the subordination of that which is made abject by the mind's domination of the eternal subject. This dependency is what makes Wordsworthian subjectivity as deep as it is. Drawing upon Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, Mary Jacobus has this to say about Wordsworth's complex conception of 'fathering': 'The mother must be absent or
dead in order for the child to be father to the man, and the note of the poet's voice satisfyingly reiterated and prolonged' (p. 240). This sends us back to the Snowdon scene in The Prelude, to the image of the moon as one which, structurally, seems to be there for the subject's recognition of itself and its relation to mind. The moon features twice in the
passage in question, at lines 41 and 52. By his use of this image at these points Wordsworth is able to put a frame round the central action of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real. It is mentioned at the point of transformation of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real. It is mentioned at the point of transformation of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real. It is mentioned at the point of transformation of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real. It is mentioned at the point of transformation of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real. It is mentioned at the point of transformation of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real. It is mentioned at the point of transformation of the mind's displacement of Nature at the level of the real.
above my head' (XIII.41-42). Then, immediately after the account of the 'real sea' becoming 'Usurped upon' by the 'sea of mist', the following observation is made: 'Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this shew / In single glory, and we stood, the mist / Touching our very feet' (XIII.52-54). Use of the adverbial 'Meanwhile' here suggests that, in this
moment of displacement, the moon is at once 'there' and 'not there'. As a frame it is part of the very definition of the action, but it is not the action itself. It is both 'inside' and 'outside'. What it is deconstructed. Because of this, it occupies the position reserved for the abject in Wordsworth's 'fathering' of himself, his becoming what he is. This
combined marginality and femininity of the moon as image is what connects it with the mother in Wordsworth. It brings us now to the maternal 'fostering' which is performed by the beautiful consists in socializing this individuality. The
sublimity of Wordsworth's ascent of Mount Snowdon is marked by his pressing on ahead of the others in his party, to the point where he is, in fact, 'the foremost of the individual who feels free in the presence of forms of the
sublime.) The Snowdon scene suggests that this distinction, marked both physically and narratively by Wordsworth, is important for the subsequent experience of Nature's displacement by the mind. There is a shift in the narrative from the first to the third person, from 'on
the shore / I found myself to 'we stood, the mist / Touching our very feet'. Wordsworth's physical individuality in this scene is shifted at the narrative level. The subject's sociality which seemed absent before the transfiguration of sea into mist is now confirmed as present. At the points marking what is 'before' and 'after' in this respect the moon either
'stood naked in the heavens' or 'looked down upon this shew'. This seems no coincidence: the suggestion, clearly, is that sublimity tempered in this way by beauty constitutes an ideal model of subjectivity. Nature displaced (the 'moon stood naked'/the 'moon looked
down'). It articulates the social, as a category, in relation to that which is categorial about the individual. The subject's emergence is thus stabilized by Nature's beauty. This subject emerges out of the zero degree of imagination. There is a sudden projection of mind over matter in the moment of sublime uplift. This project is, necessarily, as
narcissistic as it is idealistic; it would be unable, otherwise, to get off the ground in the first place. If there is the danger of a crisis of subjectivity ensuing from the precariousness of this emergence, then the precariousness of this emergence, the precariousness of the precariou
symbolic disruption which is performed by specular relationship. Wordsworth's saying to his own soul 'I recognize thy glory', or Nature's scenery appearing as 'The perfect image of a mighty mind' serve to exemplify the intrinsic specularity of the very feeling of stability. Ronald Paulson notes how it is often the case in Wordsworth 'that temporally the
sublime must be succeeded by the beautiful'. [17] This is another way of describing the temporality of abjection. Clearly, the moon's shining in the way that it does in The Prelude is ideologically loaded. Wordsworth's poem is 'unconsciously' reproducing the structure of social institutions in precisely those places—the Alps, Mount Snowdon—which are
supposed to be the furthest removed from society itself. The result in this case, not merely a matter of 'entangling', is a more or less systematic codification of the discourse of sexual politics by that of aesthetics. Interpellation as an ideological subject in The Prelude is something which is neither hidden nor spoken of by Wordsworth. Nevertheless, it is
spoken about, in the sense of constituting the unsaid of Wordsworth's silence which can be heard in his speech. It is, precisely, what goes without saying, understood as a discursive category. This helps to explain the influence it exerts, in Wordsworth, in determining the poet's mode of insertion into the world by the growth of his mind. Working
through Wordsworthian subjectivity is the interpellative moment with its effects of disavowal of the ideological character of ideology arising in the forms of consciousness and recognition. It follows that Wordsworth's bearing towards the world itself should be grasped in terms of the complex sense of what it is to be 'a freeman'. On this basis, it
emerges how Wordsworth the man might be said to stand in symbolic relation to his age; The Prelude as an orphan's autobiography reads as the spiritual biography of a generation. The hegemonic institutions of British society prove themselves strong enough, in the 1790s, to withstand that threat of radical change which emanates powerfully from
republican, revolutionary France. This is, at the same time, the story of Wordsworth's guilty abandonment of the English Lake District. As a model, this is one which is at once virtuous and reactionary. It invokes a form of practice in which the
very land which is laboured on in as wholesome a way as possible, over against encroaching market relationships, is always handed down from father to son. (The poem 'Michael' comes to mind as a forceful dramatization of this basic idea.) It is not hard to see how ambiguously provincial this vision may prove to be. What also is problematic is the way
that the imagination (of all things) functions as the agency which binds this community together by means of an apparent overdetermination as a type of 'usurpation'. A well-known passage in The Prelude dealing with the sheer enjoyment of relationship felt by the 'infant babe' (II.237) nursed in his mother's arms touches on 'the first / Poetic spirit of
our human life' (II.275-76). Wordsworth's concern is to establish imaginative power as benignly binding, and as an expression of 'the great social principle of life / Coercing all things into sympathy' (II.408-09). But that 'Coercing' there, by its suggestion of 'masculine' force, reveals the degree to which, at the level of discourse, sexual politics has been
codified by aesthetics. Here, the beautiful is 'usurped upon' by the sublime. The mother-figure is displaced by the imagination as the source of our socially sympathetic feelings. Concomitantly, there is a shift from the active to the passive on the part of the subject regarding its relation to that specific source of feeling. This movement from the infant
babe, which 'Doth gather passion from his mother's eye' (II.243), to 'Coercing' is not unfamiliar to us from the course of what is described as 'The progress of our being' (II.239) traced by Wordsworth in his autobiography. The Prelude is overdetermined to the point whereby it speaks, either with or against the grain of its historical nature, of more than
just Wordsworth's own life, and more than just what is 'own' in that life. The result is that the moral and political gains of the doctrine of home finally espoused by Wordsworth in his work are, more fundamentally, his work's great ideological give-aways. The Prelude prides itself on its eventual discovery of how 'the mind of man becomes / A thousand
times more beautiful than the earth / On which he dwells' (XIII.446-48). But this is a 'truth' which in reality had been waiting to be found. It is the action of Wordsworth's poem in its rising and falling, emerging and mirroring which is telling and decisive. The Prelude shows, in and by its very act, that rebellious late-eighteenth-century society frightens
itself by means of the alternating shrieks and sighs of the sublime and beautiful into accepting a state of affairs where, at the end of speech, the appealing prospect of a 'fatherless' future existence tends rather to fade away.
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