Wordsworth’s Prelude: The Continuing Relevance of the Epic in Education

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ABSTRACT

This study explores “poetic knowledge” as the episteme of the epic. The Romantic epic, as exemplified by Wordsworth's 1805 *Prelude*, modernized this traditional genre so that the epic continues to be relevant for education today. The initial chapter compares and contrasts the distinctions between poetic and scientific knowledge. Chapter Two explores the didactic possibilities of the epic genre. Chapter Three discusses poetic knowledge as a heterogeneous, variegated, and accommodating episteme that both challenges and accommodates modern conceptions of scientific knowledge. Memory cohesively unifies the narrative of *The Prelude*. As such, Chapter Four discusses the use of didactic memory in *The Prelude*. Chapter Five discusses the use of chiasmus in *The Prelude*, and references the pre-Socratic philosophy of
Heraclitus. The first section of Chapter Six explores a postlapsarian “ecology of the mind” as relevant to Book XIII of the 1805 *Prelude*. This section is followed by a general conclusion to this study that reiterates the interconnectedness between poetic and scientific knowledge.

WORDS WORTH’S *PRELUDE*: THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF THE EPIC IN EDUCATION

by

DAVID W. MILLER

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WORDSORTH’S PRELUDE: THE CONTINUING RELEVANCE OF THE EPIC IN EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle, the essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.

- Pierre de Coubertin

Give me 26 lead soldiers and I will conquer the world.

- Benjamin Franklin

 Stranger, tell the Spartans that we behaved as they would wish us to, and are buried here.

- Epitaph at Thermopylae by Simonides

This study is dedicated to the memory of Paul Hayden Duensing (1929-2006). Among the many things he mastered during his lifetime were calligraphy, type design, typography, matrix engraving, and typecasting. He was a writer, historian, linguist, teacher, musician, printer, and friend.

In the preface to Fine Print on Type (1989) Duensing states:

One of the distinctive features of the human race is the ability to understand the notion of time and to conceive of past, present, and future (every human language embodies these three basic verb forms, whether it is considered an “advanced” language or one of the supposedly “primitive” speech systems). Bound up in this awareness is the need to record, first as writing, and in a more refined – and mechanical – sense as printing. The purpose of recording out thoughts, discoveries, skills, and experience is to share these with others with whom we can have no immediate contact across space or time.

In our modern era of mechanization, Duensing taught through example that true craftsmanship continues to remain a unification of the hand and heart. Incidentally, Paul’s initials “PHD” corresponds with the degree conferred through the completion of the dissertation contained within the following pages; yet, Paul represents a living tradition of poetic knowledge that spans throughout the ages.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee members, Dr. Christine Gallant, Dr. Michael Galchinsky, and Dr. George Pullman, for all their help, advice, and support. I must make a special thanks to my dissertation advisor Dr. Christine Gallant. As I was working towards completing this study, Dr. Gallant became a Professor Emerita of English. Thankfully, Dr. Gallant was always willing and available to offer her advice on the multiple drafts necessary to complete this study. At some point, Dr. Gallant suggested reading the “Ithaca” poem by Cafavy that is included in the appendix to this study. I especially thank Dr. Gallant, and my other committee members, for joining me on the metaphorical voyage which is the following dissertation. My final sentiment is one of great hope: as one journey ends, a new one begins!
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CHAPTER ONE

Scientific and Poetic Knowledge

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love
And feed his sacred flame.  (Coleridge Complete “Love” I:330, 1-4)

It is generally accepted in modern criticism that the period of British Romanticism represents a breaking away from established norms, specifically a divergence from the established norms of genre. Rosmarin suggests that “genre is a finite schema capable of potentially infinite suggestion” (44). The epic genre is encyclopedic in its nature, encyclopedic in the sense that the genre represents an all encompassing knowledge. English education during the era of the British Romantics was classical and unspecialized. Both poets and natural philosophers (the name for scientists during the era) received the same general heterogeneous education. Nonetheless, modern education has become more specialized, and distinct pedagogies between science and the humanities have developed. The British Romantic era marks an era in which scientists and poets competed for the same public audience in an attempt to receive the title of “public educator.” Many of the British Romantics attempted to write an epic, but it is Wordsworth’s 1805 edition of The Prelude that most closely follows a poetic model of knowledge inherent in the epic as a genre. This model of knowledge, which will be referred to as “poetic knowledge” throughout this study, is a model of knowledge considered a traditional model of knowledge, and includes both emotion and reason in the pursuit of knowledge. The continuity of poetic knowledge in Wordsworth’s epic remains particularly relevant to modern education.
The tradition of the genre of the western epic represents an episteme that continues to
remain relevant to modern education. As an episteme, the epic advances a contextual, relational,
historical, and personal model of knowledge. This episteme might most easily be defined by the
simple phrase “poetic knowledge.” The term “poetic knowledge” as used throughout this study
refers specifically to this epic episteme. Poetic knowledge as an episteme includes an ethical
code that acknowledges a web of connections: community and compassion, self and other,
personal and empirical knowledge. Poetic knowledge values the interconnectedness of
contraries as a harmonious whole in the development of knowledge, not as binary divisions
working against one another.

Comparatively, Wordsworth’s utilization of an epic episteme in The Prelude generically
matches thematic developments that arise in Shakespeare’s Tempest. The heart of The Prelude,
Books IX-XII, also known as the “French Books” exhibit a sort of imaginative epistemological
tempest. The following analogies between Shakespeare’s Tempest and Wordsworth’s Prelude
may help to shed some light on Wordsworth’s use of an epic episteme in The Prelude. Firstly,
Virgil’s Aeneid, the archetypal text of imperialism and colonization, represents the foremost
model of Shakespeare’s Tempest (Wilson-Okamura 710).

Both the Aeneid and The Tempest begin with a storm that opens the way to imaginative
new worlds. As Pieters notes, the metaphor of the dangerous and unpredictable sea voyage has
been used repeatedly throughout the tradition of western literature to characterize the totality of
mankind’s existence (the known/unknown, self/other, fact/fiction). These metaphorical sea
voyages remain inseparable from the “unexpected treasures” gained on the voyage of gnothi
seauton (know thyself) (141). In The Tempest, as in other similar literary works, the sea
represents the domain of the “other.” Throughout The Tempest, Prospero grows in self-
consciousness, and he ultimately arrives at an “awareness that those from whom he wished to be freed will indefinitely remain part of him….Master and slave, colonizer and colonized, father and daughter, friend and foe - Prospero’s words bind them together forever” (Pieters 143).

The fictive shipwreck in *The Tempest* is meant to endow mankind with an ethical sensibility that applies to real life (Pieters 146). As Greenblatt states in *Shakespearean Negotiations*, the island in *The Tempest* represents “a model of unresolved and unresolvable doubleness” between fiction and reality (158). These two worlds co-exist without ever completely collapsing into one other; yet, these two worlds remain counterbalanced in a harmonious whole. This harmonious counterbalancing of contrasts promotes an aesthetic episteme that questions the overtly rational “dialectics of enlightenment,” while remaining open to the often ambivalent mysteries of both fact and fiction (Pieters 152). Cartesian duality explicitly separates the self from the other; however, the *Aeneid*, *The Tempest*, and Wordsworth’s *Prelude* all advance an episteme of *gnothi seauton* (know thyself) that involves an overstepping of the boundaries that compose the “self,” through a meeting with the “other.”

Cartesian rationalism attempts to denigrate personal knowledge as an anomaly that contaminates the truth of empirical or objective “fact” based knowledge. “Isolation, alienation, paralysis, fragmentation – all the buzzwords of modernism – can be traced to the loss of immediate, participating consciousness [personal knowledge] as a valid form of knowledge and identity” (Sullivan 44). Modern western culture continues to remain under the sway of the “Cartesian paradigm” that fuses Platonic and Aristotelian values, while also creating dualisms that create an ideal “reality” free from the “doubts” of human perception. The Cartesian paradigm, referred to as “scientific knowledge” throughout this study, currently dominates western epistemology and can be described as thus: “‘Truth’ is its goal; ‘Fact’ is its standard;
‘Science’ is its method” (Sullivan 43, 42). Shakespeare’s *Tempest* acts as an excellent analogue for Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, and the “French Books” of *The Prelude* in particular, because the imaginative “tempest” of *The Prelude* corresponds to Wordsworth’s confrontation of rationalism. With an exceptional congruity, the epistemological problems that Wordsworth faced in the 1790s are the same problems that face society today.

Wordsworth never demonizes scientific knowledge; instead, Wordsworth arrives at the conclusion that poetic and scientific knowledge remain inseparable. Throughout *The Prelude*, Wordsworth advances poetic knowledge as a means to explore the shortcomings of rationalism; however, at the same time Wordsworth works towards accommodating scientific knowledge into the more personal episteme of poetic knowledge. Fragmentation, alloyed by specialization, may well characterize modern paradigms of epistemology. However, Wordsworth sought to mitigate fragmentation through accommodation, and he specifically uses poetic knowledge as an episteme that encourages heterogeneous accommodation.

Throughout *The Prelude*, Wordsworth acts as a teacher who specifically uses the epic genre to fulfill a didactic purpose. James Dickey, a modern American poet, contextualizes the role of the literature professor in modern academia. Dickey’s reminiscence of his own college literature experience helps to contextualize the differences between poetic and scientific knowledge:

The main thing that a teacher can do for a student is what Monroe Spears did for me, confirm the student in his desire to take literature seriously. This is important; in our technology-dominated world the value of literature is getting harder and harder to maintain, but it must be maintained if we’re going to have any humanity left at all. The medical profession may save your life, but it can never make your life *worth* saving. It’s
in the realm of values, the things we set store by, that good teachers of literature operate.

(Dickey 51)

Dickey goes on to say that scientific knowledge has contributed to great discoveries, but that through an increased specialization of knowledge (exchanging myth for fact), mankind has also lost a personal connection to nature (68-69). In contrast to specialization, poetic knowledge promotes wholeness, not a fractured division of knowledge that separates personal knowledge from objective fact.

In the Homeric epics, poetic and scientific knowledge are also inseparable. In 1668, Francesco Redi, the head physician of the Medici court in Florence, became interested in the “spontaneous generation” of flies. Redi could not understand why Achilles asks his mother Thetis to cover the dead body of Patroclus. Through experimentation, Redi realized that flies do not generate spontaneously (as Aristotle states), but that they use decaying flesh as a home for their larvae (Mazzarello 237). In some sense, through Redi’s experimentation, The Iliad contributed to the development of the modern clinical environment. Achilles’ concern for Patroclus’ corpse actually illustrates an active and personal “poetic” accessibility of scientific knowledge.

Furthermore, in the Odyssey, Odysseus actively employs scientific knowledge on his voyage of discovery. Plutarch (46-120 A.D.) suggested that Book 20 of the Odyssey describes a total solar eclipse: “‘The Sun has been obliterated from the sky, and an unlucky darkness invades the sky’” (Odyssey 20.356) (Baikouzis 8823). In the 1920s, Schoch and Neugebauer computed that a total solar eclipse occurred over the Ionian Islands on 16 April 1178 B.C. In their article “Is an Eclipse Described in the Odyssey?” (2008), Baikouzis and Magnasco match five separate astronomical events in the Odyssey that all contribute to the high probability that the actual
historical eclipse of 16 April 1178 B.C. matches the “literary” eclipse described in the *Odyssey*. The solar eclipse and Odysseus’s confrontation of Penelope’s suitors occurs on the same day (8823-26).

Homer’s contemporary audience would have been familiar with the motions of the stars and the seasons for navigational, agricultural, and multiple other reasons. In *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, Gilbert Murray pointed out that Homer was definitively interested in astronomical observances, but more importantly, Murray addresses the ideal of continuing progress in poetry. Murray specifically references Wordsworth when he states that it is a modern fallacy to discount the progress of poetry:

> Science, they will say, progresses: but poetry does not. When we call a poem immortal, we mean that it is never superseded: and that implies that poetry itself does not progress….[yet] Wider fields of knowledge may constantly be thrown open to the poet….Poetry, in this way, can be taken both as evidence of the progress attained by society, and as a force in its further progress. (Murray 22-23).

Unquestionably, the Homeric epics, and perhaps the epic genre itself, have exhibited a profound effect on the development of western culture. Epistemically, Wordsworth’s *Prelude* must be considered a work of poetic progress, because Wordsworth specifically addresses modern Enlightenment rationalism. Returning to the 16 April 1178 B.C. date, the solar eclipse on this day matches the time frame of both the “historical” fall of Troy (a date somewhere between Eratosthenes reckoning of 1184 and Plato’s date of 1193 fits perfectly) minus the ten year voyage of Odysseus’s “literary” return to Ithaca (Baikouzis 8824-25). How could Homer have possibly been aware of a solar eclipse that occurs five centuries before his own time?
There are multiple possibilities that might have contributed to Homer’s awareness of a total solar eclipse over Ithaca. It might have been through oral tradition, or perhaps an astronomical observation made after the fact, during Homer’s own lifetime. Nonetheless, the actual astronomical references in the *Odyssey* “are structural and define the timeline of the epic, forming a layer akin to finding the perspective grid drawn in pencil behind a painting” (Baikouzis 8828). There are two important points to be made from all these astronomical observations: 1) Homer’s poetic knowledge of astronomical phenomena represents a precise, not haphazard understanding of “modern” scientific knowledge, and 2) scientific knowledge does not represent “specialized” knowledge in the Homeric epics; instead, “specialized” knowledge (in this case astronomical) is accommodated by the “whole” of poetic knowledge. As Wordsworth states in *The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1850) “Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science” (*Prose* I: 141).

Scientific knowledge could most easily be defined as the close observation of nature in an attempt to unlock the secrets of nature. *The Prelude* establishes Wordsworth’s personal connection to nature, and didactically advances poetic knowledge as an accommodating and heterogeneous episteme. In his book *Cultural Literacy* (1987), E.D. Hirsch makes the point that modern education continues to move away from literate knowledge. Hirsch defines literate knowledge as an established tradition of education associated with the humanities. What does Hirsch mean by tradition? In essence, Hirsch associates tradition with the materials of western canonical literate culture. For Hirsch, canonical western texts promote lifelong learning within the individual student and greater communication within society through a sense of shared
understanding (113). The classics of literature are not only great works of art, but didactic texts that have instructed students for centuries.

In his book *Virgil’s Schoolboys*, Andrew Wallace notes that Virgil’s poetry was used for instruction during his own lifetime, that Virgil explored pedagogical issues in his poetry, and that schoolroom instruction of the Virgilian corpus continued unabated into Renaissance England (3-4). From classical Greece to nineteenth century England, childhood education began with verse. Wordsworth and the majority of the other canonical Romantic poets were no exception to the rule. Whether these nineteenth century poets loved or hated their verse education, there remains conclusive proof that an early exposure to classical verse affected their entire lives.

Mary Thayer’s 1916 book *The Influence of Horace on the Chief English Poets of the Nineteenth Century* is one of the first books to trace the influence of verse education on the British Romantic poets. In Elizabethan England, a typical grammar school involved translating Horace or Seneca’s Tragedies into English. It makes one wonder, could there have been a Shakespeare without Seneca? Nonetheless, Thayer calls Wordsworth the most Horatian of all the British Romantic poets. Amazingly, Thayer states that the corpus of Horace’s poetic works might justly be titled “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind,” just as Wordsworth’s *Prelude* is subtitled (25-32). *The Recluse*, Wordsworth’s much envisioned, but never completed literary project, seems somehow to suggest the retreat of Horace’s Sabine farm, or perhaps the Lake District (where Wordsworth spent the majority of his creative life as a poet) was Wordsworth’s Sabine farm.

This study is a reflection on the definition of an epistemic tradition associated with literate knowledge and verse education. The classical literary tradition enabled “internalized sources of metaphor” which enabled “shared images, feelings, and memories” (R. Smith 3). The
decline of the rhetorical tradition in education has led to one fundamental question: what constitutes general knowledge in modern culture? Where are the shared memories that constitute internalized metaphor, shared knowledge and understanding? Wordsworth’s *Prelude* is a didactic, philosophical, and autobiographical poem with a thematic emphasis on memory, and above all, this study suggests that Wordsworth’s *Prelude* was driven by a sense of community or audience awareness. As an episteme, Jerome McGann states that poetry is not irrational; instead, poetry has a more comprehensive way of approaching truth, because poetry acknowledges the social character of human thought (*Towards 7*).

The episteme of a culturally shared literary education so prominent in education until relatively recently will be termed “poetic knowledge.” Poetic knowledge remained prominent in education until the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment produced a rival model of education that will be referred to as scientific knowledge. In general, scientific knowledge is not as comprehensive a model of education as poetic knowledge. These two models of education, poetic and scientific knowledge, are without a doubt often at odds with one another; however, they are not polar opposites, they have qualities shared in common. Wordsworth does not reject scientific knowledge, but envisions scientific knowledge as a subheading to an oceanic all-inclusive poetic knowledge, or to use another metaphor: poetic knowledge is the headwater, and scientific knowledge is a tributary. “Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge…” (Wordsworth *Prose* I:141). This chart expresses some of the important distinctions between these two educational models:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Knowledge</th>
<th>Poetic Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized</td>
<td>(contextual, relational, historical, personal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product, Solution</td>
<td>Process, Paradox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropocentric</td>
<td>Biocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Objective &amp; Subjective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a model of education, scientific knowledge emphasizes specialized knowledge concerned with an end product, final solution, or fact. Poetic knowledge emphasizes general knowledge, and represents a “way of life,” concerned with process. Scientific knowledge is anthropocentric and locates man as the wellspring of all knowledge, whereas, poetic knowledge is biocentric and values both man and external nature (all life) in the production of knowledge.

Poetic knowledge can be both objective (*a posteriori*) and subjective (*a priori*), but scientific knowledge remains limited to objective (*a posteriori*) knowledge. Scientific knowledge, as empirical is concerned primarily with “fact,” while poetic knowledge as rhetorical is more concerned with the vehicle of language than with fact. Scientific knowledge often denies or diminishes the role that language plays in communicating fact. Scientific knowledge refuses to allow emotion into the equation of knowledge, while poetic knowledge allows both reason and emotion into the production of knowledge. A general perusal of these basic divisions highlights an overarching difference between these two educational models. Poetic knowledge, through the act of accommodation and integration, represents a more unified model of education. Poetic knowledge does not simply entail the knowledge of poetry, but the unified experience of the individual towards the acquisition of knowledge. Fundamentally, a literary canon connects with education and is a “reflection of the deepest values – the beliefs and needs – of a community” (Reed *Canonization* 103). Poetic knowledge is concerned with the ethical and moral dimensions of the community.

The epic was western culture’s first textbook, and remarkably, Wordsworth’s *Prelude* promotes a philosophy of knowledge similar to the Homeric epics. Classical literary criticism
such as Horace’s *Ars Poetica* critically promotes the didactic function of art. Horace’s *Ars Poetica* stresses that art should be both dulce et utile (sweet and useful). As such, both Horace and Wordsworth approach art from the perspective of moral and didactic criticism focused on audience awareness. Horace praised Virgil’s *Aeneid* as great art because it instructed Romans how to be good citizens. And as already noted by Wallace, Virgil was aware during his own lifetime that his verse was being used in childhood education. Wordsworth creatively envisions similar didactic concerns with audience instruction in his own poetry.

In an 1807 letter to Lady Beaumont, two years after the completion of the 1805 *Prelude*, Wordsworth writes that the purpose of his poetry is “to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age, to see, to think and to feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous” (*Letters* I: 126). In an 1808 letter to Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth again emphasizes the didactic focus of his poetry: “Every great poet is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing” (*Letters* I: 170). Wordsworth chooses the epic genre for didactic purposes not readily available in his earlier lyric poems. Epic narrative infinitely expands the art of storytelling, while the genre of lyric poetry remains limited to moments of subjective emotion. “The epic reflects a disciplined poetic process in which memory and imagination become inseparably entwined” (Assmann 92).

Retrospective memory and imagination are two mental faculties that Wordsworth unites in the production and acquisition of knowledge; and as an epic, retrospective memory is the thread that links all of *The Prelude*’s episodes cohesively together. “[In *The Prelude*] Imagination is presented as the power that enables Man to convert into knowledge that which he perceives, to shape his world. In alliance with love it binds him to his fellow beings
[community]” (Gill 239). *The Prelude*, an epic with the theme of personal autobiography, utilizes retrospective memory as an art to create a monument concerned with mankind’s future education.

An audience centered critical approach to *The Prelude* invokes a critical tradition of the rhetorical art of poetry that Wordsworth himself advances in both his poetry and prose. Above all, rhetoric considers the importance of audience. Contemporary criticism of *The Prelude* often focuses on memory in the development of personal identity; however, this study hopes to demonstrate that Wordsworth utilizes memory as a rhetorical art to promote a specific model of education. Poetry wants us to see the truth (Richardson 453-54). One of the keys to audience awareness in *The Prelude* involves the fact that *The Prelude* is addressed to Coleridge. The title “*The Prelude*” was added posthumously; Wordsworth’s own heading was “Poem title not yet fixed upon by William Wordsworth Addressed to S.T. Coleridge” (Assmann 90). As an autobiographical poem, the subtitle to *The Prelude* is *The Growth of a Poet’s Mind*, not *The Growth of My Mind* (Pritchard 84-5). This subtitle suggests that the audience itself can participate in the growth of the mind, and therefore emphasizes audience awareness. In addition, although *The Prelude* is a subjective autobiography, Wordsworth objectively acknowledges the role of the community within the development of his own individual mind. In *The Prelude*, William Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Dorothy are all “joint-labourers” (*Prelude* XIII.439).

In 1832, long after the 1805 *Prelude* was completed, Wordsworth wrote a letter to William Hamilton that proclaims “He [Coleridge] and my beloved sister are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted” (*Letters* II: 625). At critical moments in the 1805 *Prelude*, Wordsworth recognizes his intellectual debt to both Dorothy and Coleridge. Marilyn Butler has suggested that *The Prelude* is an autobiography of “alienated individual consciousness” that is
“far too privileged…to seem truly universal” (“Repossessing” 81-2). Yet, Wordsworth does not privilege male and female distinctions within the development of his own mind, and his acknowledgement of Dorothy and Coleridge expresses community awareness, not an alienated individual consciousness.

In *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, Aleida Assmann discusses the distinction between classical and modern concepts of memory. She states that traditionally memory (memoria) has been used as a rhetorical art, but that modern culture considers memory not as an art, but as identity (17). “Rhetoric had guaranteed the unity of objectivity and subjectivity, which since the Enlightenment had been split into different discourses” (Assmann 81). *The Prelude*, as a philosophical work of art, is not solely subjective. Assmann argues that Wordsworth and the other Romantics proceeded upon the path initiated by Locke in which “individual recollection” was a means of “constructing personal identity” (99). According to this notion, the personal identity Wordsworth creates in *The Prelude* is an objective, not a subjective identity. However, based upon Wordsworth’s known references to Horace and the inferences he makes to the *Ars Poetica*, this assumption seems unlikely. What appears in *The Prelude* is the pre-Cartesian rhetorical “art of memory” that didactically proclaims a pre-Enlightenment unity of objectivity and subjectivity. This study argues that Wordsworth encourages the system of memory that the classical rhetoricians attributed to Simonides as the “art” of memory.

The rhetorical art of memory is a mnemotechnical method, originally created by Simonides, and adapted by Cicero and Quintilian into a pedagogical method (Assmann 17). Furthermore, this study suggests that memory in *The Prelude* replicates this tradition of the rhetorical art of memory by promoting a systematic mode of learning. Wordsworth himself wrote a sonnet on a traditional story associated with Simonides:
I find it written of SIMONIDES
That, travelling in strange countries, once he found
A corpse that lay exposed upon the ground,
For which, with pains, he caused due obsequies
To be performed, and paid all holy fees.
Soon after, this man’s ghost unto him came,
And told him not to sail, as was his aim,
On board a ship then ready for the seas.

SIMONIDES, admonished by the ghost,
Remained behind: the ship the following day
Set sail, was wrecked, and all on board were lost.
Thus was the tenderest Poet that could be,
Who sang in ancient Greece his moving lay,

Saved out of many by his piety.  (*Poetic* I:565)

This sonnet does not focus on mnemonic power, but on Simonides “piety.” Since Simonides arranges for the funeral of a stranger in a foreign country, his piety expresses the ideal that humanity extends to all mankind (Assmann 27-8). This sonnet, written in 1802, remains important to an understanding of the 1805 *Prelude*, because it shows Wordsworth’s obvious moral concern for humanity intersects with both education and memory.

It is clear that Wordsworth was influenced by rhetorical traditions, but how much influence the rhetorical “art” of memory affected his production of *The Prelude* remains to be noted. Nonetheless, rhetorical tradition influenced Wordsworth and most of the other canonical Romantic poets. Rhetoric formed a vital part of a poet’s education and Wordsworth’s concern
with the art of memory finds expression in two poems in the 1800 edition of *The Lyrical Ballads*: “Tintern Abbey” and “Michael.” In these poems, Wordsworth philosophically connects education with language, not objective scientific fact. In “The Rhetoric of Improvisation,” Scott Harshburger discusses Wordsworth’s use of Quintilian’s theory of improvisation in the poem “Michael.”

The character Michael is an uneducated rural landowner confronting a developing industrial society who speaks effectively in his spontaneity. In “Michael,” Wordsworth unifies passion and knowledge in Michael’s speech with his own aesthetic ideology of poetry: All good “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings…” (*Prose* I:148). Wordsworth’s well-known poetic theory could be defined as a psychology of poetic style. The *Ars Poetica* almost exactly parallels Wordsworth’s aesthetic ideal of a pastoral education developed in the poem “Michael.” “For Nature first shapes us within to meet every change of fortune: she brings joy or impels to anger, or bows us to the ground and tortures us under a load of grief; then, with the tongue for interpreter, she proclaims the emotions of the soul” (Horace 459). Compare these previous lines from *Ars Poetica* with Wordsworth’s poem “The Tables Turned”:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.
Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:-
We murder to dissect. (*Poetic* I:356, 21-28)
The *Ars Poetica* develops a psychology of style (Brink 99). The psychology of style persistent in Horace parallels Wordsworth’s definition of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. The unity of nature with the totality of human experience (external and internal) connects with compassionate emotion.

Wordsworth’s definition of poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion” is not possible without deep thought: objectivity and subjectivity (Clancey “Wordsworth” 134). A philosophy of poetic knowledge is couched within Wordsworth’s most basic poetic theory: the intimate unity of nature, a totality of human experience (subjectivity and objectivity), and deep thought tempered by profound emotion. Wordsworth thought that art should instruct, and that the imagination should have the moral effect of teaching us to sympathize with others. Self-knowledge must stimulate a compassion for humanity that acknowledges the social nature of human thought.

Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* concedes that even the uneducated can be moved to eloquence through improvisation, if they are moved to do so through some powerful emotion (Harshburger 37). Both Quintilian and Horace appear present in Wordsworth’s best known poetic theory. The art of classical rhetoric apparent in “Michael” highlights the connection between emotion, eloquence, and Wordsworth’s conception of his own poetry as oratory (Harshburger 39). However, acknowledging these classical rhetors brings up another question especially relevant to Wordsworth’s theme of autobiography in the epic genre: Is it possible to separate *ars* (art) from *artifex* (artist) (Brink 26). In drama, the identity of the poet remains unimportant, because all action takes place amongst characters; however, in epic poetry all action proceeds through the poet. Modern criticism often envisions the poet (individual) and
poetry (text) as separate entities. In essence, the cohesive narrative structure of epic poetry relies primarily upon the poet as the wellspring from which all action flows (Pritchard 74-5).

In Book XXVI of the Poetics, Aristotle calls tragedy superior to epic poetry because tragedy achieves a greater unity of plot within a more concise time frame. Aristotle’s bias towards tragedy appears representative of the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy initiated by Plato. Aristotle’s bias against the epic genre is primarily aesthetic, but Plato’s bias against the epic is definitively didactic. This “ancient quarrel” involves the Platonic dialogues’ attempt to usurp Homer’s position as educator of Greece. Epic poetry promotes a system of knowledge that this study defines as poetic knowledge. In the Ars Poetica, Horace notes the vatic qualities of poetry. This study does not deny such claims, but instead wants to specifically concentrate upon the didactic and philosophical qualities of poetry that promote poetic knowledge as an episteme.

Philosophers study language because it reveals the workings of the mind. Coleridge confers the title of poet-philosopher on Wordsworth: “What Mr. Wordsworth will produce, it is not for me to prophesy: but I could pronounce with the liveliest convictions what he is capable of producing. It is the FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM” (Biographia Literaria II: 129). This study suggests that the Homeric epics are the west’s first philosophic poems, but that The Prelude formally reconnects philosophy with poetry. Shortly after hearing Wordsworth read The Prelude aloud, Coleridge wrote a poem about The Prelude titled “To William Wordsworth, Composed on the Night After His Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind.” The first stanza of “To Wordsworth” notes the philosophic connection between language and thought:

Friend of the wise! and Teacher of the Good!
Into my heart have I received that Lay
More than historic, that prophetic Lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding minde
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart

Thoughts all too deep for words!— (Complete II: 403, 1-11)

Coleridge’s poem notes the unity of poetry and philosophy in The Prelude, yet equally importantly, the addressee of The Prelude recognizes Wordsworth’s audience awareness in the first line of his poem: “Into my heart have I received that Lay.”

In The Mirror and the Lamp, Abrams identifies Wordsworth as a prophetic poet guided by a providential power; yet, Abrams’s understanding of the “ethical proof” in Wordsworth’s poetry unwittingly establishes Wordsworth as a philosophic poet. As necessary, the poet cultivates the ethical proof as a means of affecting the sensibilities of the reader (Abrams Mirror 72). Wordsworth’s concept of ethos includes “honesty, truth, and audience-concern” (Clancey Wordsworth’s 9). Aristotle, although not concerned with the didactic qualities of poetry, did consider the ethical proof as perhaps the most important criteria in developing an argument that will move the audience. “Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion…” (Wordsworth
In his own words, Wordsworth defines what should be considered general knowledge within the community. In this passage, Wordsworth also expresses the ideal of *si vis me flere* in the *Ars Poetica*: “If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself” (Horace 459).

The ethical proof must compassionately convince the audience of the orator’s practical wisdom, virtue, and good will (Aristotle *On Rhetoric* 112). The ethical proof also connects with Wordsworth’s psychology of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. The ethical proof is the means “whereby the emotions and the heart of the orator are to be seen as one” with the theme to be argued (Clancey “Wordsworth” 132). Wordsworth’s most basic poetic theory, “emotion recollected in tranquility,” involves connecting the practical wisdom of the poet with powerful emotion and a well chosen poetic theme in an attempt to instruct the audience. Whereas the traditional art of rhetoric involved a unity of objective and subjective truth; Enlightenment reason proposed a rational “nonpersonal, linguistically neutral truth” known as scientific knowledge (Assmann 81). The continuity of the epistemic tradition of poetic knowledge appears in the epic genre, and this continuity remains especially relevant to modern education.

Wordsworth’s *Prelude* and the Homeric epics promote a heterogeneous poetic knowledge, as opposed to scientific knowledge. To briefly summarize, scientific knowledge is specialized knowledge, but poetic knowledge is comprehensive knowledge because it accommodates specialized knowledge – scientific knowledge seeks objective fact as a finality, but poetic knowledge is a “way” of knowing that integrates personal knowledge (*gnothi seauton*), and attempts to incorporate the individual’s experience within the conception of what
constitutes both “truth” and knowledge. In addition, poetic knowledge is both individual (personal) and social (communal). *The Prelude* promises readers the traditional tools of poetic knowledge: “This promise to teach his readers *how* to love, or *how* to think, and not *what* to think, goes to the heart of Wordsworth’s ideas about poetic education….In fact, talk of education is everywhere in Wordsworth’s poetry” (G. Thomas *Wordsworth* 3). Homer, through his epics, was known to the classical world as the educator of Greece, and Wordsworth’s *Prelude* retains the same didactic qualities of the Homeric epics.

The manuscript history of *The Prelude* begins with the Two-Part 1799 version begun in Germany, expands into the thirteen book 1805 edition, and culminates into the fourteen book 1850 edition published posthumously. In fact, all editions of *The Prelude* were published posthumously, but it is De Selincourt’s 1805 edition first published in 1926, that through critical scrutiny has received the crown as the definitive edition of *The Prelude*, and was also composed at the height of Wordsworth’s poetic power. Apart from the multiple critical disputes between the 1805 and 1850 edition of *The Prelude*, a majority of the criticism on *The Prelude* over the past thirty years concentrates upon aspects of biography and autobiography. Critical questioning of the Romantic rehabilitation and maintenance of the epic genre appear more frequently within the last decade.

Within a discussion of the maintenance or rehabilitation of the epic as a genre, this study promotes the philosophical ideal of poetic knowledge as an episteme that the epic as a genre represents. Modern criticism tends to focus on the unconventional generic methods of the Romantics, but not how these unconventional methods promote the maintenance of the epic. Marilyn Butler’s book *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* (1982) places Wordsworth within a specific cultural and historical background and labels *The Prelude* a “national epic” that “weighs
the social, secular ideology sustaining the [French] Revolution against the conservative powers [of England]” (67). If *The Prelude* is a national epic, then in what way does Wordsworth’s epic differ from Virgil’s national epic? If, as Horace states, the *Aeneid* teaches Romans how to be good citizens, then what exactly does *The Prelude* propose to teach?

The ideal of a national epic infers some sense of shared cultural values. The purpose of this previous question is not to focus on generic criticism, but to suggest the continuing relevance of the epic in education. Virgil’s works would have been important in primary education during Wordsworth’s boyhood, and they remain important today, centuries after their conception. The pedagogy of the Virgilian corpus is Orphic (Wallace *Virgil’s* 42). Derek Walcott, a modern writer of epic, “describes the goal of poetry as the beatific dissolution of the self;” however, Walcott’s epic predecessors must be both forgotten and remembered in the act of creation (Fuller 524). Literary criticism parallels epic creativity, and it will prove useful to highlight some of the criticism that New Historicism promoted in the 1980s, and that has become the dominant critical reading of the Romantics. This study agrees with much of the historical developments of New Historicism as a critical method, but suggests such criticism that does not acknowledge Wordsworth’s own sense of audience awareness remains inaccurate. Regardless of critical method, the epic remains an interdisciplinary cultural marker, an episteme that continues to be explored by artists and critics alike, and represents a shared communal value system.

Early in his career as a poet, Wordsworth was fundamentally concerned with the acquisition of knowledge. *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a collaborative collection of poetry with Coleridge, was the first real poetic success for both Wordsworth and Coleridge, and offers evidence of Wordsworth’s didactic sensitivities and concerns within his earliest poems. “Indeed, just as the French Revolution was considered to be the physical realisation of the Enlightenment,
so the poetry of the British Romantics, notably the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge, was conceived by its producers as a form of revolution carried out at the level of words” (Halpin 335). *The Lyrical Ballads* are poetry in action; they are paradoxes that make the reader question their own sensibilities, especially towards the conventional rules of genre.

“Tintern Abbey,” the last poem in *The Lyrical Ballads*, will be referenced multiple times throughout this introduction, because it parallels a discussion of many of the major questions that develop from a critical reading of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth’s concerns with education and the acquisition of knowledge presented in “Tintern Abbey” ultimately culminate in the Two-Part 1799 *Prelude*, and later the 1805 *Prelude*, which is the primary focus of this study. Similar to *The Prelude*, in the poem “Tintern Abbey,” it is the poet himself, not the abbey that is the primary subject of the poem. Marilyn Gaull states that in general Wordsworth’s poetry is subject minded as opposed to object minded: Keats is an empirical poet of objects, but Wordsworth is more concerned with the subject of man in nature (54). Gaull notes an empirical influence on Keats, but to what extent does empirical science also influence Wordsworth’s poetry? This study proposes to show that Wordsworth’s *Prelude* attempts to be both objective and subjective, and that Wordsworth does not deny the significance of empiricism. Instead, Wordsworth accommodates empiricism within the domain of poetic knowledge.

Wordsworth was definitively influenced by empirical thought. Much of Wordsworth’s greatest poetry develops paradoxes that inspire dialectic questioning which proposes that poetic knowledge is contextual, relational, historical, and personal. “A unique personal history is necessarily the context for all knowledge that is one’s own and that can truly be called human knowledge” (Franke “Involved” 448). *The Prelude* was written early in Wordsworth’s career as a poet, and although there was no guarantee that Wordsworth would ever become a successful poet
Wordsworth’s chosen profession. Wordsworth uses *a priori* knowledge when he chooses his poetic abilities and such self-knowledge is substantiated through his poetic corpus, including *The Prelude*, which although remains unfinished, demonstrates an ongoing process of personal education. Enlightenment knowledge relies heavily on *a posteriori* knowledge, the knowledge of cause and effect, and relies on empirical experience *after the fact* to determine what constitutes “true” knowledge (Burkett para.3-9). Surely, *a posteriori* knowledge played a role in Wordsworth’s continual revisioning of *The Prelude* throughout his lifetime. In “Tintern Abbey” and *The Prelude*, memory and the imagination enable both personal and communal didactic possibilities.

This study focuses on the early and later Books of *The Prelude* in an attempt to form a more succinct argument focused on the episteme of poetic knowledge. However, *The Prelude* represents an overall unity of narrative development relative to the epic genre. Nevertheless, Book V of the *Prelude* includes a dream vision sequence known as “The Dream of the Arab” that needs included in this study. There are two parts to “The Dream of the Arab,” a prologue, and an a dream vision. In order to highlight the paradoxical unity between poetry and science in this dream, hereafter the dream vision will simply be referred to as the “Stone and Shell.” This specific dream vision includes Wordsworth’s intentional blurring of the distinctions between fact and fiction in the development of an episteme of poetic knowledge. In addition, the earlier discussion of tempests and sea voyages fits nicely with this dream vision, because within this dream resides a sublime apocalyptic vision of a deluge by water, or as Smyser states “a romantic iconography of the sea” (269).
Although the Victorians claimed that the Romantics rejected science; modern criticism has slowly come to the realization that the Romantics had a more complicated interaction with science. The “Stone and Shell” dream vision that Wordsworth includes in Book V is actually Wordsworth’s poetic recreation of an actual dream that René Descartes had on the night of 10 November 1619 (Smyser 270). Whereas the Odyssey reenacts a historical solar eclipse that occurred on 16 April 1178 B.C., The Prelude poetically reenacts a historical imaginative event that occurs on 10 November 1619, two hundred years before Wordsworth writes The Prelude. Descartes recorded his dream in a manuscript entitled the Olympica (“things on high”); unfortunately that manuscript has been lost to history. Nevertheless, Descartes’s biographer Baillet must have had access to Descartes’s Olympica, because he includes Descartes’s dream in his biography of Descartes that was issued in 1692 as La vie de Descartes (Smyser 271).

Before exploring Wordsworth’s poetic reenactment of Descartes’s dream and its application to the development of poetic knowledge in The Prelude, it would be best to begin by reviewing the actual circumstances of Descartes’s dream. Jane Smyser’s 1956 article “Wordsworth’s Dream of Poetry and Science” remains one of the best starting points for a discussion of the historical circumstances of Descartes’s dream. On the night of 10 November 1619, Descartes had three separate dreams (“threefold dream”). Descartes considered this date as a significant turning point in his career, because these dreams enabled Descartes to confirm for himself that he had chosen the “right path” towards his envisioned philosophic mission and that divine paths of truth would become open to him (Smyser 270).

At the time of Descartes’s threefold dream, he was a 23 year old student who had just completed his education at La Flèche. In Discours de la Méthode (1637) (Descartes’s first published work) Descartes states that after finishing his education at La Flèche, he had become
disillusioned with books and intended to educate himself by experiencing the world. Descartes travelled to Germany, where the threefold dream occurred. The actual circumstances of Descartes’s life in Germany during 1619 reveal that Descartes had great ambitions about his life, but was plagued by uncertainty, doubt, and anxiety about his actual future. In essence, Descartes was drifting aimlessly, with little sense of direction. Baillet notes that on 10 November 1619, Descartes had made some sort of discovery about the foundations of science. This actual discovery has been lost to history; nonetheless, Descartes was certain that he would receive a dream-revelation during the night “from on high” that would confirm his philosophic mission (Browne 256-9). For the purposes of this study, this expected vision must be termed an “intuitive” logic (poetic knowledge) as opposed to the system of “discursive” logic (scientific knowledge) that Descartes later develops.

In Discours de la Méthode Descartes’s reiterates that he has chosen the right path in life; however, between his 1619 dream and the 1637 publication of Discours, Descartes had eliminated the formal significance of his dream within the development of rational “knowledge.”

As Smyser notes, Descartes’s own record of his dream (Olympica manuscript) contains Descartes’s interpretation of his threefold dream as a confirmation of his life’s work, but has been lost. Yet, Descartes’s biographer Baillet had access to the Olympica manuscript and included the threefold dream and Descartes’s own interpretation of these dreams in La Vie de Descartes (1692) (270).

All of the following excerpts from Baillet’s La Vie de Descartes of Descartes’s “threefold dream” have been translated by Norman Kemp Smith in his book New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes. Descartes’s first two dreams indicate that “Descartes was in a state of moral
uncertainty and anxiety, as well as intellectual upheaval” (Browne 260). Descartes’s third dream (of which Wordsworth’s “Stone and Shell” dream vision is based) begins as follows:

A moment later he had a third dream which unlike the two earlier dreams had nothing terrifying in it. In this third dream he found a book on his table, without knowing who had put it there. He opened it, and seeing that it was a dictionary, he was delighted, hoping that he might find it useful. At the same instant he happened on another book, no less of a surprise to him than the first, not knowing how it had come to be there. He found it to be the collection of poems entitled *Corpus Poetarum*, etc. Curiosity made him wish to read a little in it, and opening the volume he chanced to fall on the line *Quod vitae sectabor iter?* [What path in life shall I choose?] etc. At the same moment he perceived a man he did not know who presented him with some verses beginning with the words *Est et Non* [Yes and No]. (Baillet 35)

Norman Smith notes in a footnote to this episode that the *Corpus Omnium Veterum Poetarum* was a 1603 edition of the poems of Ausonius that included the two poems “Quod vitae sectabor iter?” and “Est et non,” and that these two poems face one another in separate columns on the same page in that edition (N. Smith 35).

In his book *Later Roman Education*, Percival Cole states that the poet Ausonius acted as a *Grammaticus* or Professor for aristocratic families, most notably for the emperor Gratian (7-9). Cole also notes that prose occupied a subordinate place to verse in Roman education (34).

Nonetheless, Ausonius’s two poems “Quod vitae sectabor iter?” and “Est et non” make up part of his *Eclogues* and employ Pythagorean doctrines on mathematics into somewhat pessimistic verse:

What path in life shall I pursue? ... Learning costs sleepless nights of toil; yet
ignorance lacks all that makes life fair…. All paths in life confront you with unfavourable issues. Therefore the opinion of the Greeks is wisest; for they say that it is good for a man not to be born at all, or, being born, to die quickly. Such, at least, is the Pythagorean pronouncement expressed in the following couplet:

“The first and greatest boon is never to be born: The next, to pass through Hades’ gates without delay.” (Ausonius 163-67)

The poem “Est et non” makes similar pessimistic speculations, but in this case on Pythagorean doctrines that concern language:

“The Pythagorean ‘Yea’ and ‘Nay’”

“Yes” and “no”: all the world constantly uses these familiar monosyllables. Take these away and you leave nothing for the tongue of man to discuss…. They are the instruments with which the schools fit for peaceful learning wage their harmless war of philosophic strife…. What a thing is the life of man which two monosyllables toss about! (Ausonius 171-73)

In this poem, all human discourse is reduced to “yes” and “no,” but the poem paradoxically concludes that sometimes both answers are correct. Browne states that such paradoxes imply a devaluation of life, but that Descartes’s interprets both these poems in his dream in a positive way (264).

Baillet’s *La Vie de Descartes* includes Descartes’s own interpretation of his dreams. In particular, Descartes’s interpretation of his third dream on 10 November 1619 establishes a distinction between scientific and poetic knowledge:

[He]…proceeded to interpret the dream prior to his awaking.

He judged that the *Dictionary* stood merely for the sciences gathered together,
and that the collection of poems entitled *Corpus Poetarum* marked more
particularly and expressly the union of philosophy and wisdom. For he did not
think that we should be so very much astonished to see that poets, even those who
but trifle, abounded in utterances more weighty, more full of meaning and better
expressed, than those found in the writings of philosophers. (Baillet 36)

It is obvious from the excerpt above, that at the time of Descartes’s dream, he valued poetry
highly. The fact that Descartes had “prophetic” dreams makes most modern scientific writers on
Descartes “queasy” (Browne 272). However, Descartes interprets his dream as “proof” that he
has chosen the “right” path:

… [Descartes] was so bold as to feel assured that it was the Spirit of Truth that by this
dream had deigned to open before him the treasures of all the sciences….He adds that the
Genius which had been exciting in him the enthusiasm with which, as he felt, his brain
had been inflamed for several days had predicted these dreams to him prior to his retiral
to rest, and that the human mind had no share in them. (Baillet 38)

As noted, Descartes recorded these dreams and his interpretations of them in a notebook titled
*Olympica*, as if to record them for posterity as some sort of poetic muse “from on high.” Browne
states that Descartes’s prophetic dream could be interpreted as a desire for an external validation
of the scientific discovery that he made earlier in the day. However, at this point in his life,
Descartes was not in a position to demand such external validation for an informal scientific
discovery. Descartes’s public protestation of his dream was an “oblique way of claiming access
to the truth” (Browne 272).

As Browne also notes, expressing prophetic dreams publicly is a “thoroughly irrational
activity,” but that irrational reassurance of an informal inspiration was the only avenue open to
Descartes at the time. To this day, there remains no immediate “rational” way to confirm an informal discovery or inspiration. At age 23, Descartes was neither ready to write or publish the *Discours de la Méthode* (1637) that would later win him public accolade. Although it is true that Descartes was not concerned with prophetic dreams in later life, it is also true that he no longer needed such dreams to garner public attention and support. *Discours de la Méthode* opens more “rational” modes of public attention and respect for Descartes. However, from an egocentric perspective, the youthful Descartes needed an immediate, albeit irrational assertion of his claims to “truth” during a period of great anxiety and uncertainty about his own future (Browne 273).

Wordsworth’s “Stone and Shell” dream in Book V represents a recreation and revitalization of Descartes’s dream of poetry and science. Wordsworth symbolically substitutes the dictionary in Descartes’s dream for a stone, and the *Corpus Poetarum* for a shell:

The one to be a Stone, th’other a Shell
Nor doubted once but that they both were Books,
Having a perfect faith in all that pass’d. (*Prelude* V.112-14)

Smyser suggests that Coleridge might have told Wordsworth the details of Descartes’s dream, but that Michel Beaupuy, appears the most likely candidate (272). Michel Beaupuy was somewhat of a mentor to Wordsworth during his stay in France (Gill 60). Regardless of who told Wordsworth about Descartes’s dream, the details of the “Stone and Shell” dream match with remarkable precision to Descartes’s third dream of 10 November 1619. As such, although most suspect that Wordsworth was informed by “the hearing of a Friend” (V.49) about Descartes’s dream, it also appears a probability that Wordsworth had access to the dream through Baillet’s *La Vie de Descartes*. In terms of narrative development, could Wordsworth’s “friend” who tells him the “Dream of the Arab” perhaps symbolize Descartes himself?
As an epic, *The Prelude* utilizes Descartes’s dream to advance the episteme of poetic knowledge, and there appears no better way to advance poetic knowledge than through the suggestion that within Descartes’s dream “Of such a madness, reason did lie couch’d” (V.152). In other words, the insertion of Descartes’s dream within the context of *The Prelude* shows that the *father of rationalism* ascribed to an *irrational* dream while in his twenties. Ultimately, the dream of the “Stone and Shell” metonymically refers to scientific and poetic knowledge, and questions Cartesian duality. “The balance of the images, counterpointed by their balanced symbolism (stone and shell, desert and ocean, science and poetry), evidences a conscious, sensitive artistry” (Smyser 273). Yet, before progressing onwards with a discussion of the symbolic unity of the “Stone and Shell” dream vision, it will prove helpful to review the prologue of the “Dream of the Arab.”

The prologue of the “Dream of the Arab” initiates a binary division between discursive (prologue) and intuitive (“Stone and Shell” dream) knowledge (Ragussis 154). The prologue and dream form a *concordia discors*, a harmony of conflicting logic. In Book I of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth states:

The mind of Man is fram’d even like the breath
And harmony of music. There is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move

*Prelude* I. 351-55

Wordsworth employs this pattern of *concordia discors* throughout *The Prelude*, and the “Dream of the Arab” sequence illustrates Wordsworth’s repeated discussion of a conflicting unity between scientific and poetic knowledge. The prologue begins with the line: “Even in the
steadiest mood of reason” (V.1) and frames the discordant elements of the dream vision by introducing an initial apocalyptic vision of fire:

Or fire be sent from far to wither all

Her pleasant habitations, and dry up

Old Ocean in his bed left sing’d and bare (V.30-32)

The main action of the dream takes place within a desert environment: “Old Ocean in his bed left sing’d and bare” (V.32). The main character of the dream vision is an “Arab of the Bedouin Tribes” (V.78) who bears a stone under his arm and a shell in his hand. An approaching deluge closes the “Stone and Shell” dream and acts as a discordant element to the desert environment frame. Significantly, Wordsworth also conflates the Bedouin Arab with the poet-hero-narrator of Cervantes’s Don Quixote.

Ragmussin notes Wordsworth’s “intricate doublings” throughout the “Dream of the Arab.” Ragmussin suggests that the Bedouin Arab is both Quixote and Wordsworth (154). However, within the context of the 1805 Prelude, it appears more appropriate that the Arab doubles as both Quixote and Descartes. For Cervantes, the character Quixote elicits an idealized archetype dreamer whose dreams appear too idealistic to warrant serious consideration in the “real” world. “Cervantes reminds us that there is only a fine line separating the starry-eyed idealist who wants to save the world and the hardened ideologue who wants to create it in his image” (García 40). Descartes, at age 23 – the age of his threefold dream, definitely appears to skirt the boundary between idealist and ideologue. With narrative continuity, Wordsworth himself skirts these boundaries in later Books of The Prelude. In Book IX, one of the rational “French Books” of The Prelude, both Wordsworth and Michel Beaupuy will assume the relationship of knights-errant over a “hunger-bitten Girl” (IX.511). This position of knight-
errantry will eventually reverse into a more reciprocal relationship with those in need (Y. Liu 33). Nonetheless, Book V embraces the significance of knight-errantry since the Bedouin Arab is directly associated with the fictional character Quixote.

Cervantes *Don Quixote* acts as a sort of intertext that creates the possibility of new meanings within *The Prelude* itself. Cervantes uses pseudo-realism in *Don Quixote* by presenting *Don Quixote* as a “true history” recorded by an Arab sage. Psuedo-realism tends to blur the distinctions between fact and fiction. In *The Prelude*, intertextuality produces a “strange circularity:” the “true” history of Cervantes’s Arab transmutes itself into Wordsworth’s “Dream of the Arab” (Weinfield 341). Likewise, Wordsworth’s “Dream of the Arab” conflates Descartes’s threefold dream as both an imaginative and historical event; thereby, drawing further attention to the blurred contradistinctions between fact and fiction. Paradoxically, in the “Dream of the Arab” “…facts surrounding the dream turn out to be fictions, the fictions of the dream itself are largely facts” (G. Thomas “Fact” 448). More specifically, all of these paradoxes draw attention to the interrelatedness between scientific and poetic knowledge. In essence, all “truths” are symbolically linked to one another. The stone and shell that the Arab carries in the “Stone and Shell” dream vision reveal the interrelatedness between poetic and scientific knowledge.

Wordsworth’s “Stone and Shell” dream vision relates intertextually to Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, but also to Descartes’s threefold dream recorded in both Descartes’s “lost” *Olympica* notebook and Baillet’s *La Vie de Descartes*. In reference to Descartes’s historic dream, Wordsworth symbolically uses the stone to represent the dictionary of scientific knowledge, and the shell to represent the *Corpus Poetarum* of poetic knowledge. Significantly, the title of Book V of *The Prelude* is “Books.” The stone and shell symbolize books that both participate in nature’s knowledge. In Book V, Wordsworth discusses the frailty of books as repositories of
knowledge: “Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad/ Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?” (V.47-48). “Her spirit” (V.48) refers specifically to the spirit of nature. The fact that Wordsworth transforms books into natural objects suggests that nature acts as a teacher to all mankind: “Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven/ As her prime Teacher, intercourse with man” (V.12-13).

“The poet, then, reveals the sacred mysteries of creation at the same time that he insists that these meanings are there to be read by all” (Ragussis 157). The mysteries of both poetic and scientific knowledge are revealed in the sacred language of nature. Wordsworth seems to suggest that the most proper place for the storage of true knowledge is within the mind itself as opposed to “shrines so frail” (V.48). In one sense, the creative products of the mind, as represented by books, act as “garments” (Weinfield 339). Weinfield fails to make the connection between books as “garments” and the garments that Wordsworth discovers as a boy in the “Drowning Man” episode at the end of Book V. However, an explicit narrative connection exists between the “Dream of the Arab” episode at the beginning of Book V and the “Drowning Man” episode, as one of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” at the end of Book V.

In the prologue to the “Dream of the Arab,” nature represents a “bodily Image” (V.15) of “A deathless spirit” (V.17). Wordsworth appears to connect the external “body” of nature to the ideal of cosmic logos. “As parts of the Book of Nature, the Arab’s treasures may possess some of the attributes of the Logos” (Kelley “Spirit” 569). Essentially, nature represents a form of divine language, of which mankind only participates partially. This classical and Christian Logos sustains harmony as the “highest reason” (V.40). The prologue of “The Dream of the Arab” makes both a comparison and a distinction between the divine language of nature and the profane language of mankind contained in books. Books share only partially with the divine
language of nature. If nature represents a sacred language of divine *logos*, Wordsworth seems to state that most “have lost the power to read and understand,” or perhaps even that natures’ divine language will never be completely revealed to mankind (Rugussis 156-7).

Both poetic and scientific knowledge participate equally in revealing the divine language of nature to mankind. In the prologue to the “Dream of the Arab,” Wordsworth muses:

*The consecrated works of Bard or Sage,*

Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men

*Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes* (V.41-43)

Scientific and poetic knowledge are the “Twin labourers” that labor to reveal the divine language of nature to mankind. Metonymically, the books of these “Twin labourers” find expression in the symbols of the stone and shell:

the Arab told him that the Stone,

To give it the language of the Dream,

*Was Euclid’s Elements; ‘and this,’ said he,*

‘This other,’ pointing to the Shell, ‘this Book

*Is something of more worth.’* (V.87-90)

In the prologue, scientific and poetic knowledge are “Twin labourers,” but the dream appears to make a binary distinction between poetic and scientific knowledge by claiming that the shell “Is something of more worth” (V.90). However, this opinion parallels Descartes’s distinction within his own dream that poetry “abounded in utterances more weighty, more full of meaning and better expressed, than those found in the writings of philosophers” (Baillet 36). “Unlike the closed surface of the stone, the shell is an open-ended geometrical spiral whose developing form
requires a cooperation between natural processes and the exact ratio of geometric progressions” (Kelley “Spirit” 565). However, the Arab’s contrary treasures are also complementary.

In 1838, over three decades after the 1805 *Prelude*, mathematicians proved that the curvature of a shell represents a logarithmic spiral. The ratios of a shell match the “golden ratio” of ideal symmetry idealized in classical antiquity (Kelley “Spirit” 572). Ironically, modern scientific knowledge uses the DNA double helix as a unifying symbol that expresses the “collective identity for many different areas of science,” and also represents “the highest standard of scientific creativity” (Strasser 804). However, these principles of circularity, known alternately as *chiasmus* or *hysteron proteron* have been identified in the Homeric epics. Both chiasmus and the double helix express the unifying role of movement in opposite directions. In addition, both these structures are not static structures, but express dynamic patterns of change (E. Thomas 50-52).

The figure of chiasmus will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five; nevertheless, Wordsworth appears to be making the point throughout *The Prelude* that scientific and poetic knowledge were once inseparable, and might be so once again. Throughout *The Prelude*, Wordsworth challenges the dualities of Cartesian rationalism, while remaining open to the emerging discoveries of scientific knowledge at the same time. The “Dream of the Arab” conflates stone and shell, discursive and intuitive logic, and scientific and poetic knowledge. In *The Prelude*, an episteme of poetic knowledge accommodates scientific knowledge, yet also rejects the methodical attempts of rationalism to eliminate personal knowledge from philosophical concepts of the “truth.” It is Descartes himself in *Discours de la Méthode* who skeptically doubts his own personal history in the development of truth and creates a distinction between the mind (res cogita) and body (res extensa). Wordsworth “Dream of the Arab”
challenges Descartes’s elimination of his own personal history (*res extensa*) from the
development of knowledge.

The “Stone and Shell” dream vision ends with the Arab riding away from an impending
deluge with his two treasures still in hand:

I saw him riding o’er the Desart Sands,

With the fleet waters of the drowning world

In chase of him, whereat I wak’d in terror,

And saw the Sea before me; and the Book,

In which I had been reading, at my side. (V.135-39)

Descartes’s scientific autobiography (*Discours de la Méthode*) eliminates the false impressions
of youth. In contrast, Wordsworth connects the impending deluge in the “Dream of the Arab” (Descartes’s threefold dream) to a childhood experience at the end of Book V known as the
“Drowning Man” episode. The “Drowning Man” episode represents one of Wordsworth’s
“spots of time” which will be discussed more significantly in later chapters; however, the point
to be made here is that the drowning man at the end of Book V has succumbed to the deluge of
the “Stone and Shell” dream vision. In the “Drowning Man” episode, Wordsworth not only
confirms the unity of his epic narrative structure, but also confirms that childhood knowledge
plays an active role in self-knowledge, and participates directly with the intellect of adulthood.

In childhood, the hero-poet discovers “(Those unclaimed garments telling a plain Tale)”
(V.467). Telling what sort of tale? This “Drowning man” episode completes the tale of a
deluge: both the deluge that encloses a drowned man, and the deluge of a dream, but also of
“garments” that clothe both the body and the mind (books). Wordsworth uses a unified narrative
structure throughout Book V to question Cartesian mind/body dualism. It remains up to the
reader to decide upon all of the implications between the “drowned man” episode and the “Dream of the Arab.” Undoubtedly, Wordsworth creates an awareness of Cartesian dualisms, but what is his ultimate intention? This study suggests that the episteme of poetic knowledge answers this question through the harmonious accommodation of scientific knowledge.

Just before the “drowned man” episode in Book V, Wordsworth muses that poetic knowledge is not “Knowledge purchas’d with the loss of power!” (V.449). In The Convention of Cintra, Wordsworth discusses Bacon’s conception of knowledge as power:

> Lord Bacon two hundred years ago announced that knowledge was power and strenuously recommended the process of experiment and induction for the attainment of knowledge. But the mind of this Philosopher was comprehensive and sublime and must have had intimate communion of the truth of which the experimentalists who deem themselves his disciples are for the most part ignorant viz, that knowledge of facts conferring power over the combinations of things in the material world has no determinate connection with power over the faculties of the mind. (Wordsworth Prose II: 324)

Both Bacon and Descartes privilege “the process of experiment and induction” while turning a blind eye to the role that intuitive knowledge or “intimate communion” has played in the development of their own conception of “knowledge.” More succinctly, the “Dream of the Arab” questions why Descartes denies the role of poetic knowledge at the most significant turning point in his own life?

Descartes’s dream represents an “intimate communion of the truth” visibly lacking in the philosophy of rationalism. Ultimately, memory and *res extensa* (body) are united in Cartesian philosophy. In Cartesian rationalism, memory (*res extensa* = body = personal history) acts as
fallible threshold closed to further exploration. “That threshold is the place where we are most fallible and most human, where we can least think of ourselves as autonomous, self-perceiving, self-certifying beings because we are bound to a past history” (Sepper 295). Wordsworth opens the threshold of memory in The Prelude and he explores memory through the “spots of time.” Additionally, Wordsworth connects childhood with adult intellectual development, and the mind with the body.

Regardless of Wordsworth’s challenge to the dualisms of Cartesian rationalism, in the “Dream of the Arab,” scientific and poetic knowledge are “Twin labourers” (V.43). Ausonius’s poem “Est and non” ends by suggesting that both “yes” and “no” are often the “right” answer. Wordsworth revitalizes Descartes’s dream by unifying binary oppositions: yes and no, stone and shell, intuitive and discursive, scientific and poetic knowledge. The entire episode ends with the following lines:

Poor earthly casket of immortal Verse!
Shakespeare, or Milton, Labourers divine! (V.164-65).

In conclusion, Wordsworth insists on the frailty of books as “caskets,” but also connects himself with an English tradition of “immortal verse” that participates in unlocking the divine secrets of nature. Shakespeare and Milton are divine laborers, and their “immortal verse” properly belongs within the domain of human memory. In Book XIII, at the conclusion of the 1805 Prelude, it must be understood that Shakespeare, Milton, William Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Dorothy Wordsworth are all “joint-labourers” (Prelude XIII.439) united together in the epistemic labor of poetic knowledge to help unlock the secrets of nature. The immortal language of nature exists within epic verse as an instructive art.
This study will discuss the Books of *The Prelude* in sections that appear to match critical boundaries within the poem itself. Chapter Two will discuss the didactic possibilities of the epic genre. Chapter Three will discuss poetic knowledge as a heterogeneous, variegated, and accommodating episteme, that both challenges and accommodates modern conceptions of scientific knowledge. Chapter Four will discuss the use of didactic memory in *The Prelude*. Chapter Four will focus on Books I-III, as they discuss Wordsworth’s choice of an epic topic encompassing retrospective memory. Books I-III form a retrospective narration of Wordsworth’s formal education from primary school to college. Interestingly enough, Books I-IV of *The Prelude* present a pastoral theme, in which the poet is somewhat unwilling to plunge into the deep “sea” of epic by remaining in the lyrical mode of elucidating special moments such as “spring-tide swellings”:

Sometimes, mistaking vainly, as I fear,

Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,

I settle on some British theme, some old

Romantic tale, by Milton left unsung…. (*Prelude* I.177-80)

Chapter Five will discuss the use of chiasmus in *The Prelude*. In Chapter Five, Books IX- XII will receive special attention as relative to the philosophical ideal of poetic knowledge. In these Books, Wordsworth moves from intellectual disillusionment to the recovery of his most vital power: the imagination. These Books especially promote the continuing relevance of the epic in education. In Books IX-XII Wordsworth’s epic ambitions are founded on the dramatization of the hopes and failures of the French Revolution; yet, Wordsworth’s reclamation of his lost imagination in Books XI and XII questions the Enlightenment ideals that sparked the French Revolution.
The first section of Chapter Six will discuss the use of ecology in *The Prelude* and is dedicated to Book XIII, the final book of the 1805 *Prelude*. The initial section on ecology in Chapter Six will be followed by a general conclusion to this study. Brook Thomas suggests that New Historicists should “accept the risks of the unforeseeable” (218). The Snowdon episode in *The Prelude* suggests such a possibility, because it accepts the role of serendipity in otherwise purely rational intellectual endeavors. Beginning with *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), Abrams’s suppressed the discussion of a poetics of chance in Wordsworth’s poetry by arguing that Wordsworth considered himself a poet-prophet with a providential story, and acted as the messenger of a divine agency (Abrams 65). This study challenges this conception of Wordsworth in an attempt to include a consideration of Wordsworth as poet-philosopher, as Coleridge himself calls Wordsworth.

The conception of Wordsworth as poet-philosopher is inclusive of the value of chance or serendipity in Wordsworth’s poetry. How many important scientific discoveries were brought about by chance? Newton’s discovery of gravity is perhaps the most significant story of scientific serendipity. Most critics consider Wordsworth’s ascent of Mount Snowdon in Wales as the climax of *The Prelude*. The Snowdon episode in Book XIII acts as one of Wordsworth’s most important poetic recollections in *The Prelude* and reiterates a philosophy of poetic knowledge present in the “spots of time”: “There are in our existence spots of time,/ [that] our minds/ Are nourish’d and invisibly repair’d” (XI. 258, 264-5). In the ascent of Snowdon, poetic knowledge achieves an almost organic or natural process wherein Wordsworth confirms his ambitions of epic song.
CHAPTER TWO

Epic Verse as Instructive Art

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (Shakespeare Tempest 4.1.156-58)

In “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth discusses the ongoing process of knowledge, and the imaginative “mind’s eye” that qualifies both the rational and emotional (discursive and intuitive) in the pursuit of knowledge:

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. (Poems I: 357, 44-50)

In The Prelude, the historical facts of Wordworth’s life are chosen, arranged, and manipulated for the express purpose of indicating the education of Wordworth’s poetic mind. Calliope’s (the muse of epic poetry) narrative unifying thread in The Prelude is memory, retrospective memory, an intangible essence beyond time and space. Wordworth’s memory is comprehensive and heterogeneous, and his poetic corpus represents a cohesive, philosophic, encyclopedic poem (Bewell 2-3, 15). Wordsworth uses rhetorical mnemotechnics in describing his ideal of an encyclopedic philosophic poem: The Prelude has the same relationship “as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church [The Recluse].” [And the minor poems] ... claim to be likened to the
little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices” (Wordsworth Prose III: 5-6). With the allusion of his poetry to a Gothic church, Wordsworth psychologically connects his philosophy of poetry with moral philosophy.

*The Prelude* is addressed to Coleridge, and as such, Wordsworth acknowledges Coleridge as the single most important person in the development of his mind. The conscious, communal development of Wordsworth’s mind was reciprocal. Coleridge firmly believed that English verse would benefit through his relationship with Wordsworth (Matlak 109). This study posits that Wordsworth’s memory involves communal memory and a sense of shared knowledge that not only traces the development of Wordsworth’s own mind, but aids in the maintenance of cultural values (communal knowledge) and rehabilitates the epic genre in the process. Literary works such as the *Ars Poetica*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have helped shape the minds of poets and non-poets alike for centuries. Wordsworth’s *Prelude* participates in this epistemic tradition of literary education.

“Tintern Abbey,” like *The Prelude*, explores the evolution of a creative mind or *Growth of a Poet’s Mind*. “In hours of weariness, sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart; / And passing even into my purer mind” (*Poems* “Tintern” I:358, 27-30). In these lines, Wordsworth questions how physical sensations of matter pass into, interact, and promote the development of the individual mind. How individual knowledge intersects with both poetic and scientific knowledge in the epic and its continuing relevance to modern education is the primary concern of this study; yet, Wordsworth’s early questioning in “Tintern Abbey” also highlights the Romantics’ concern with the apparent fracture between traditional natural philosophy and an emerging scientific Enlightenment that began in the seventeenth century.
In general, the Romantic poets show a keen sense of awareness of scientific knowledge and empirical discoveries in their poetry. Wordsworth, by writing an epic about his own mental development in modern times, expands and renews the conventions of the epic. Unlike scientific knowledge, poetic knowledge assigns didactic qualities to nature that are freely available to everyone to interpret with their own senses: “How exquisitely the individual Mind/ (And the progressive powers perhaps no less/ Of the whole species) to the external World/ Is fitted” (Wordsworth *Home at Grasmere* “MS.D”105, 816-19 ). Wordsworth’s awareness of empirical discoveries made through specialized scientific instruments (telescope, microscope, etc.), nevertheless does not diminish the role of the human senses in the acquisition of knowledge.

Wordsworth notes that the human senses are already perfectly fitted for interpreting the external world. “I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature, in the development of this faculty. Guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses. I have represented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents, to plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of Imagination” (Wordsworth *Prose* III: 35). In this passage, Wordsworth connects the “celestial soil of Imagination,” “processes of Nature,” and “primary consciousness” in a unique pattern that appears to question Cartesian duality in the process of knowledge. William Blake is more direct when he calls Bacon, Newton, and Locke the unholy trinity. As such, the seeds of a Romantic discontent with education were planted in the seventeenth century.

Newton’s theory of gravity (1687) marks an important emergence in the consciousness of mankind through its inductive scientific method. In modern academics, former chairs of natural philosophy have been replaced with chairs of physics. In general, universities today show a greater departmental division and specialization in their programming, than in the universities of
the seventeenth century. Scientific knowledge advances the cause of specialized knowledge at the expense of general knowledge. This paradigm shift replicates the advances that the scientific model of knowledge has achieved in formal education. “Traditionally, Newton’s theory of gravity has served as an important marker of the Scientific Revolution, yet the question of exactly when, why, and how science became emancipated from natural philosophy remains vexed” (Hamilton 460). In modern universities, departmental divisions have increased and undergraduate degrees have also become more specialized. Since values are shaped at universities, what happens when the communal values entailed through a generalized poetic knowledge are lost?

In the earliest Platonic dialogues, Socrates questions the value of specialized knowledge. Nonetheless, even before Socrates, there existed a biocentric, generalized, and encyclopedic model of knowledge that included both reason and emotion. Poetic knowledge as an episteme is synonymous with the west’s first textbook: the epic. The epic offers a philosophy of education based on poetic knowledge. Modern writers such as James Joyce or Derek Walcott, invoke the cultural memory of poetic knowledge, even as they challenge the conventions of the epic. Even as modern education moves away from the tradition of a literary education, the epic remains a repository of general education or poetic knowledge. Although Wordsworth rehabilitates the epic with modern sensibilities, his epic “contraries” continue advance the ideal of a comprehensive and heterogeneous education. In what ways has the scientific model of knowledge affected the poetic model of knowledge applicable to the humanities in modern academics?

Newton’s theories promote the science of physics. Both physics and natural philosophy attempt to explain the natural world, often to the detriment of one another. Wordsworth and
Newton graduated from Cambridge, and one could envision Wordsworth considering Newton’s impact on western culture during his formal education at Cambridge. However, Wordsworth came to see Cambridge “as a place of Error” unable to fulfill the primary aims of education (Gill 38). Does the influx of scientific knowledge affect Wordsworth’s conception of the university as failing in its mission? What does Wordsworth’s conception of Cambridge have to say about the state of modern universities? Wordsworth does not devalue science in education; instead, he promotes scientific knowledge as a tributary of poetic knowledge. However, it is clear in The Prelude that scientific knowledge (rationalism in particular) produced a crisis in education that has never been fully healed. “In the wake of the French revolution, Wordsworth’s poetry proposed to resolve the crisis initiated by the seventeenth-century collision between the Scholastic system of natural philosophy and the radical enlightenment within a more comprehensive philosophical position” (Hamilton 461). This study proposes that Wordsworth did indeed find a more comprehensive philosophical system that could house the apparent dichotomies between natural philosophy and scientific Enlightenment; that the epic as a genre represents this philosophical model, and as an episteme can be termed poetic knowledge.

Cunningham states that the Romantics were “…hostile to the mechanical natural philosophy [which later became physics] and descriptive natural history that they inherited from the Enlightenment” (Cunningham and Jardin 3). However, this study will show that Wordsworth’s early poetry was directly influenced by the natural philosophy of Erasmus Darwin, and especially by his book Zoonomia (Matlak 112-18). In addition, the renowned chemist Sir Humphrey Davy became one of Wordsworth’s closest friends in later life. The Romantics acknowledge the advances of scientific knowledge; however, in general the British Romantics view poetic knowledge as oceanic: poetic knowledge is more comprehensive than
scientific knowledge – primarily through an act of accommodation and integration. Mary
Shelley’s *Frankenstein* explores unethical scientific experimentation, and her husband’s
“Defence of Poetry” explores how poetry helps to shape minds, and exclaims that “poets are the
unacknowledged legislators of the world” (71). In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1850)
Wordsworth states that “…the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of
human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time” (*Prose* I: 141). Similar to
Wordsworth, Shelley also states that poetic knowledge is “the centre and circumference of all
knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be
referred” (*Shelley Defence* 61).

Shelley’s “Defense of Poetry” deliberately alludes to Spenser’s “Defence of Poetry,” for
both see that the great value of imaginative literature to be that it instructs the reader by
enlarging one’s sympathies and understanding, but scientific knowledge has encroached upon
mankind’s internal world:

The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man
over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally
circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements,
remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree
disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty [personal knowledge], which is the
basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and
combining labor, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? (*Shelley Defence* 60)

Poetic knowledge as a philosophy of knowledge, not limited to poetry alone, includes both
reason and emotion within the pursuit of knowledge. In addition, poetic knowledge represents a
tradition in education that includes the communal sharing of knowledge that shapes culture itself,
allows the culture to communicate effectively, and thereby enables the culture to maintain itself (R. Smith 2). Poetic knowledge, in terms of effective communication, implies the use of metaphorical language. “In science, knowledge is primary….But in poetry, the language is primary…” (Schaible 302). Science seeks closure, whereas narrative poetry (especially the epic genre) proliferates stories. The tradition of “wisdom” in the humanities is knowledge of oneself in relation to the world: “This above all: to thine own self be true” (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 1.3.78). “What the self can know of itself is its activity as the agent of knowledge, the process of its experience” (Hamlin 142-3). Augustine, the first author of autobiography, like the Delphic Oracle itself, proclaimed that true knowledge may be obtained by turning inward upon the self (Vance 5). Knowing oneself in relation to the world at large, the self in relation to the community, necessitates the ideal of a shared system of communication that preserves cultural values. This study argues that *The Prelude*, similar to the epics that precede *The Prelude*, locates knowledge within a shared sense of community.

It is clear in *The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1850) that Wordsworth is concerned with restoring a moral, spiritual, and emotional dimension to knowledge that was gradually being eroded through a concentration on scientific reason or empiricism: “The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude; the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science” (*Prose I*: 141). Note that in this passage, Wordsworth does not attempt to elevate a binary difference between poetry and science; instead, he promotes the ideal that scientific knowledge must be housed within the larger community oriented dimensions of poetic knowledge. The Romantics often refuse to see
a binary opposition between the organic and material, and instead bridge the gap between the two (Sha 150-1). The scientific Enlightenment proposed a mechanistic worldview that encouraged mankind’s separation from and domination over nature.

Aristotelian ontology is not too divergent from Descartes’ division between res cogita (mind) and res extensa (mechanical substances), in the promotion of binary thought (Christofidou 134). Such division extends to an Enlightenment rupture between moral thought and action within society. “Enlightenment reason had ruptured the formal link between God and the moral self that had been established within natural philosophy” (Hamilton 464). Poetry is action oriented, and more specifically it is transactional, because poetic “truth” is produced within the transactional communication between poet and audience (McGann Towards 7). Wordsworth’s philosophy, apparent in the epic as a genre, does not reject reason, but values compassionate emotion and self-knowledge in the continuing process of knowledge; whereas scientific reason divides the natural world into “facts” as products, it is the poet who conceives that rational facts must demonstrate a relationship to self-knowledge, and to the community to make them credible. As such, poetic knowledge recognizes the social nature of human thought, while scientific knowledge continues to view personal self-knowledge as an aberration of knowledge. The epic, as Wordsworth’s Prelude bears witness, promotes an inclusive philosophy of knowledge: personal and rational knowledge, the “feeling intellect” (XIII. 205). Wordsworth’s most basic poetic proclamation maintains that his feeling intellect has granted him the knowledge to interpret both nature and his own experiences (external and internal knowledge). The Prelude is a transactional communication between an individual and the community that attempts to promote the episteme of poetic knowledge.
Modern education often eliminates individual personal experience from the pursuit of knowledge and promotes scientific fact. The character Mr. Gradgrind, from Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times* (1854), perfectly illustrates a reliance on scientific knowledge within formal education: “Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them” (1). The philosopher John Stuart Mill, similar to the Gradgrind children in *Hard Times*, received a strict academic education from a father that ignored the role of an emotional life in the process of education. At age 20, Mill descended into a depression that was only remedied from his reading of the British Romantic poets, and Wordsworth in particular:

> What made Wordsworth’s poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a Source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings…. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness…. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence…. The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it. (Mill I: 151-52)

Mill’s *Autobiography* confirms Wordsworth’s sense of community, and his envisioned audience as capable of sharing in the poetic model of knowledge. In what way does *The Prelude* explore
individual experience and the sharing of community knowledge in the development of the individual mind?

The English philosopher William Godwin was an early influence on Wordsworth’s thought, but Wordsworth later rejected Godwin’s philosophy, perhaps because “Locke, as well as Godwin, would not have fully accepted his [Wordsworth’s] reaching truth through reason which incorporates emotion, and Locke certainly would not have thought poetry an adequate vehicle for conveying truth” (Pace para.2). The Romantics’ conception of education further develops the “18th century British philosophical tradition associated with the empiricism of David Hume that lays great stress on the role feelings should play in obtaining knowledge of the world” (Halpin Why 328). The validity of this statement and specific questions about empiricism and rationalism in relation to the Romantics’ conception of education must be delayed, but one can be certain that Wordsworth wrestled with these problems as he created *The Prelude*. “To compose a poem is to undertake a mental journey of discovery, in this case a journey of self-discovery, which achieves clarification of its purpose and its proper path only as it proceeds” (Hamlin 153). Is *The Prelude* a work of self-aggrandizement or does it offer an extended vision of positive moral and ethical community oriented action to its readership?

Historically speaking, Wordsworth certainly worked within a period that valued the traditional hierarchy of genre and his searching for a proper epic theme at the beginning of *The Prelude* rehearses the epic tradition. However, do modern undergraduates consider the epic as the highest of all literary art forms? The word “epic” is everywhere in our culture and signifies something great, but what does “epic” really mean to modern college students? In “The Tragic Fallacy,” Joseph Woods Krutch discusses the notion that the term tragedy has been appropriated by modern literature, but fails to match the traditional ideology and aesthetic of the genre
A parallel problem plagues the term epic. “Epic” has been appropriated to conform to modern sensibilities, but often fails to capture the robust presence of its canonical examples. Aristotle’s *Poetics* influenced critics and writers to think about literature in terms of generic structures and literary canons. “The Aristotelian practice of aesthetic judgment, based on a work’s approximation to an ideal form, and the practice of indicating canonical examples (the *Iliad*, *Oedipus Tyrannos*) have also been part of the [critical] tradition” (Reed *The Problem* 101). Would a modern undergraduate student identify *The Iliad* as an epic or a novel? Suppose they answer that *The Iliad* is an epic novel? What does such an answer say about our critical conception of canonicity in modern academics?

To bust or not to bust – the canon, that is a foreboding question within Romantic criticism over the past thirty years, and neatly connects with a discussion of the continuing relevance of the epic in modern education. The ideal of canonization is closely connected with education: “every canon is also the realization of a poetics” (Reed *Canonization* 111). Jerome McGann’s *The Romantic Ideology* (1983) defends a traditional Romantic canon with Wordsworth as the leading figure of this poetic movement. McGann, whose name is associated with New Historicism, claims in his introduction that Romantic “poems are social and historical products and that the critical study of such products must be grounded in a socio-historical analytic” (3). Marilyn Butler, a dissenting voice within New Historicist thought, represents a diverging sense of canonicity, and leads one to question whether canonical works such as *The Prelude* should even be read. “It [*The Prelude*] needs not ousting but supplementing, with forms of poetry and novels that are serious and intelligent without so often being private and academic” (“Repossessing” 82). Butler’s proposal to supplement the canon (containing epics such as *The Prelude*) for novels closely matches Bakhtin’s epistemic shift from epic to novel.
Most critics would associate Bakhtin as the founder of the “epic is dead” movement, but the critical dismissal of the epic goes back to the foundations of western philosophy. There is an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy that is initiated with Plato’s *Republic*. In general, poetry (metaphoric language) and philosophy are inseparable. “Can it be that there is no quarrel at all between poetry and philosophy, but that the two are inseparable?” (Rosen x). Ironically, Plato confined his writings to dramatic dialogues, and these dialogues are themselves shaped poetically. What does this matter to Wordsworth’s *Prelude*? Wordsworth’s *Prelude* philosophically promotes an episteme of poetic knowledge. In addition, the philosophical ideology of poetic knowledge advanced in *The Prelude* imitates the tradition of didactic epic poetry initiated with Homer. Whereas, the Platonic dialogues promote philosophy at the expense of poetry, modern criticism that rejects canonicity dissolves the tradition of epic canonicity and the critical aesthetic ideology that accompanies such canonicity. Nonetheless, Butler’s suggestion of supplementing the Romantic canon with novels and forms of poetry that are not epic, highlights the detrimental effects that the theories of Lukács and Bakhtin have had on the modern critical constructions of the epic genre.

Lukács and Bakhtin privilege the novel as a modern phenomenon that shrugs off its own history. By placing the novel above other genres, literary criticism that builds upon the theories of Lukács and Bakhtin opposes canonical tradition and makes the novel, not the epic, the highest of all literary genres. A good example in Romantic criticism is Bialostovsky’s dialogic styled book *Wordsworth, Dialogics, and the Practice of Criticism*. Bialostovsky’s second chapter is entitled “Displacing Coleridge, Replacing Wordsworth.” Such dialogic based criticism challenges the Romantic canon. Aristotle’s *Poetics* implies that a work of literature is based upon some formal structure of aesthetic standards; instead, the novel privileges non-literary
discourse in direct opposition to the ideal of a historic canonical tradition. The novel and the
epic relate to their historical predecessors in vastly different ways. Writers of epic (inclusive of
Wordsworth’s *Prelude*) acknowledge their generic predecessors, whereas the novel proposes that
history begins with the modern era. “The novel is a type of literature suspicious of its own
literariness; it is inherently anti-traditional in its literary code” (Reed *The Problem* 103, 101-
109). As such, the novel challenges the ideal of a traditional poetics and by extension, canon.

Both Lukács and Bakhtin attempt to unite a discussion of the novel with a qualification or
register of epic, but by doing so, “…they falsify the nature of the [epic] genre” (Reed *The
Problem* 108) and replace literary humanism with scientific holism (Reed *The Problem* 112).
Indeed, they falsify the epic and the novel by implying that the epic’s canonical and aesthetic
tradition could ever match the ideal of an aesthetic of the novel: is this a novel or an epic fallacy?
And if scientific holism replaces literary humanism, the question that remains to be asked is: how
far has scientific knowledge made inroads into the humanistic tradition of poetic knowledge?

To promote the fallacy that the epic is dead, one must 1) negate the foundational role of the epic
in the history of education in western culture, and 2) agree that the term paideia no longer applies
to the epic. “The newest lesson epic knows is always that Homer’s school remains in session:
the great texts of a culture renew their function in paideia” (Tucker 352).

The literary theories of Lukács and Bakhtin, both view the modern generic shift from the
epic to novel as epistemic, and both devalue the tradition of not only a critical poetics, but the
literary tradition of the epic itself. Yet, why do both Lukács and Bakhtin use the epic as a
register for the novel? Doing so defeats their most basic thesis, because the epic genre invokes a
tradition of shared cultural memory, but the novel is attempting to forget that memory. This
question of canonization, education, and the disparagement of the epic must be saved until later;
nonetheless, postmodernists disparage the epic, because of its supposed authoritarian voice. Is the epic a dead genre that disparages multiculturalism, suppresses marginalized voices, incapable of any profitable offering to modern education? “Levinson maintains that we have been chosen by the (specifically ‘Romantic’) past; Butler that we can, and should, choose a new past” (Chandler para.6). How does this relate to the epic and more specifically to Wordsworth’s *Prelude*? Does Wordsworth consciously choose or subconsciously suppress the past that he will remember in *The Prelude*? Is the New Historicists’ questioning of the canon, also an intention to replace the critical tradition that shaped the canon?

Clifford Siskin’s devaluing of the Romantic canon is conceived as an attempt to “effect a change in our relationship with them, one that will not dismiss them, but will help put into the past some of their extraordinary power over our professional and personal behaviours” (Siskin *Historicity of Romantic Discourse* 13-14). Does Siskin suggest that critical theory should supplant the importance of the literary work itself? Critical methodologies and literary tastes change with time. As Spenser was writing his “Defence of Poetry,” the novel was already making an entry into literary culture. And, in the twentieth century, Sartre’s aesthetic ideology of an antinovel has already questioned the conventions of the novel itself. In the 1980s, the formalism of Abrams, Bloom, Hartman, and McFarland was replaced with the New Historicism of McGann, Butler, Levinson, and Liu. New Historicism remains the dominant critical methodology in Romantic studies; however, Jerome McGann notes the power of literary works “to survive the critical abstractions we bring to elucidate them” (*Poetics* 2). Just as literary theory has changed, in what ways has the modern conception of individual identity changed since Wordsworth wrote *The Prelude*?
Charles Taylor argues that the modern conception of individual identity involves a fallacy of separateness. This fallacy involves scientific reason’s displacement of natural philosophy, and predicates the loss of moral philosophy (3-8). Do modern conceptions of the self apply to Wordsworth’s *Prelude*? Much of the criticism that has been written on *The Prelude* over the last thirty years involves the question of identity; however, the focus of this study is to decide what aspects of individual identity influence Wordsworth’s conception of knowledge and by extension, self-knowledge. In what manner does *The Prelude* consider individual moral education – the knowledge to exist ethically and morally responsible within society? The question was pertinent to Wordsworth’s contemporaries, especially Keats.

“Egotistical sublime” is a term coined by Keats in a letter dated 27 October 1818 to criticize what he believed to be the excessively self-centered quality of Wordsworth’s poetry, in contrast with his own ideal of “negative capability,” which he found in the transparent and chameleon-like imagination of Shakespeare (*Letters* I: 387). Perhaps Keats’s assessment of Wordsworth is unfair, because Shakespearean drama, like all drama, typically draws the audience’s attention towards character development, thus displacing a pressing awareness of authorship typically present in epic narrative. Keats believed that the writer of poetry should be like a “Crystal Goblet,” to use a term from Beatrice Warde’s famous essay on typography. Warde believed that a type design should not call attention to its character or design, but instead should transmit the content of writing as if the type on the printed page was transparent (Warde 16-17). Nonetheless, type design does say something about a culture simply by the choice of design. The fact that Times New Roman appears to be the default type design for academic work makes a cultural statement about the choice of Roman letter forms. Is there any reason why the default academic type face is not some half uncial? The fact that the default academic
typeface is roman and not uncial, says something about the culture that rejects the possibility of
uncial letterforms.

The Continuing Relevance of the Epic and Wordsworth’s Poetry

To return to Wordsworth, there is a division between a critical understanding of
Wordsworth as either “egotistical sublime” (Keats Letters “27 Oct. 1818” I: 387) or as a wise
knowledgeable speaker. Keats defined negative capability as ”when man is capable of being in
uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason” (Letters “21
Dec. 1817” I: 193). Later writers, notably T.S. Eliot, developed a similar sense of authorial
identity with Keats’s negative capability in mind: “The progress of an artist is a continual self-
sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (Eliot 47). Eliot appears to state that the artist
sacrifices himself to the culture. This idea is not far from the one that Derek Walcott expresses
at the beginning of this discussion. Why does Wordsworth use the epic for what appears to some
critics as a subjective affirmation of his own artistic abilities?

Contrary to the interpretation of Wordsworth’s poetry as “egotistical sublime,” this study
argues that the “hero” in The Prelude represents a knowledgeable speaker concerned for the
education of the community. In addition, this study argues that Wordsworth adopts the epic
genre for the maintenance of traditional western cultural values by advancing poetic knowledge.
More will be said about this idea in the following chapters; nevertheless, scholarship oscillates
between two critical poles that attempt to represent Wordsworth’s identity as either self-
aggrandized or wise speaker (Thomson 531). As mentioned, “Tintern Abbey” foreshadows
many of the critical questions that intersect with a discussion of the educational relevance of the
epic, and The Prelude in particular.
Questions of identity in *The Prelude* parallel issues of identity in “Tintern Abbey”: “Both the disparaging and the affirmative critics largely read the poem as if it is all about one particular character, an individual Self, closely identified with Wordsworth himself, who tries to come to terms with something, either by ignoring or belittling others, or, put positively, by incorporating Dorothy into his own picture” (Thomson 532). The fact that *The Prelude* is addressed to Coleridge, the man whom Wordsworth most credited with the development of his own mind suggests the importance of others in the development of Wordsworth’s mind. In addition, the credit that William Wordsworth gives his sister Dorothy in the crucial role of the recovery of William Wordsworth’s imagination in *The Prelude* suggests a communal aspect to the individual development of William Wordsworth’s mind. In discussing his friendship with Coleridge, Wordsworth states: “That poets, even as Prophets, each with each/ Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,/ Have each his own peculiar dower” (faculty, sense) (*Prelude* XII.301-3). Is the dialectic of autobiography a paradox of fact and fiction that is actually beyond the “irritable reaching after fact and reason” that Keats devised?

*The Prelude’s* dialectic of knowledge is not binary, but remains safe in paradox. To accept the paradoxes of language found in poetry serves science by cautioning against a naïve view of language as literal and absolute (Schaible 295). For Wordsworth, Enlightenment empiricism explains “nature’s causal record,” but fails to recognize the “complex potentialities” of chance in cause and effect narratives (Burkett para.7). Wordsworth calls the poems in *The Lyrical Ballads* “experiments” that often defy resolution; however, scientific experiments are meant to find final solutions, not create paradoxes. “The majority of Wordsworth's poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*, however, defy that kind of resolution, partly because most of them are not strictly autobiographical, but also because they are experiments in articulating problems rather than in
suggesting answers…” (Thomson 534). Like *The Lyrical Ballads, The Prelude* appeals “equally to Lockean empiricists, Coleridgean idealists or Shelleyan materialists” (Gravil 49).

However, the modern mind and modern education are not comfortable with paradox – modern culture seeks empirical answers (rationalism or empiricism, not the paradox of fusion, but the certainty of division). Wordsworth seems to be consciously developing these paradoxes throughout much of his poetry: “…poetry comes at times to look like that which, by definition, knowledge resists, and that which resists knowledge” (Bennett 20). The paradoxes created in Wordsworth’s poetry do not seek closure; instead, these paradoxes seek to provoke a dialectic response in the mind of the reader. How does Wordsworth’s philosophy of poetic knowledge respond to the changes that typify human life?

Eric Gill, in his biography of Wordsworth, states that “Tintern Abbey” introduces “a providential economy of loss and gain” used by Wordsworth in his later autobiographical poetry. “Change is the inevitable condition of life, but in *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth affirms not only that through memory nothing is really lost, but also that change yields ‘abundant recompence’” (154). In Wordsworth’s verse, thought and emotion are equally essential in conveying moral truths and lessons from his own life that are meant to find life again through the making of meaning of his poetry in the reader’s mind. The following lines from “Tintern Abbey” express the poet’s ability to find continual meaning in important visionary experiences: “While here I stand, not only with the sense/ Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts/ That in this moment there is life and food/ For future years” (*Poems* I:359, 62-64).

Wordsworth’s life experiences are creatively transformed into meaningful poetry not for himself or his age alone, but for readers of future ages: “…the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over
Wordsworth viewed the corpus of his poetic work as an organic whole, or like the “cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses” of a “gothic church” (Wordsworth Prose III: 5-6). *The Prelude*, Wordsworth’s magnum opus, survives Wordsworth’s multiple stages of revision, expansion, and incompletion. In comparison, the *Aeneid* was also left unfinished by Virgil. This has something to say about the idea of closure in the epic. Both Vergil and Wordsworth foresee the progress of poetry and the integration of new fields of knowledge. What is the epic’s continuing relevance to modern education? Is poetic knowledge a state of being or becoming? How do epic conventions support a philosophy of poetic knowledge?

A major point of contention of the epic during the age of Romanticism is the Romantic challenge to generic convention; however, the Romantic writers represent a continuity of an established epic tradition that proposes to creatively structure the pursuit of the acquisition of knowledge (Wilkie 16-24). One critical concern that is often overlooked in a discussion of *The Prelude* is how epic conventions support a philosophy of knowledge. Marjorie Levinson in *The Romantic Fragment Poem* (1986) describes how individual poems that would otherwise be considered fragments, receive a cohesive form through their insertion into *The Prelude* and take on what Wordsworth himself describes as “spots of time” (61). “There are in our existence spots of time,” (*Prelude* XI.258) Retrospective narration, memory, and the imagination all appear to have some common synthesis in Wordsworth’s conception of “spots of time.” Spots of time are true moments of poetic achievement and greatness in *The Prelude*. Spots of time are climactic moments in Wordsworth’s narrative that include a sense of chance (or serendipity), hope, and wonder. The spots of time also include moments of fear and terror as well. As Nietzsche might suggest, are the spots of time a paradoxical portrayal of Apollonian reason and Dionysian
emotion? In the spots of time, how does Wordsworth’s retrospective memory interact with his imagination?

Few modern critics question how the “spots of time” translate into poetic knowledge? Although Halpin’s description of the imagination does come close to a philosophical ideal of education contained within the narrative spots of time in *The Prelude*: “In other words, the imagination has an interpretative function which is fulfilled through its capacity to observe analogous connections between entities, chiefly because it is sensitive to, and perceptive of, features in the world and in persons which less perceptive intellects accidentally miss or overlook altogether” (Halpin 339). Without going into great detail, Wordsworth’s spots of time describe a mental acuity that enables an ability to see beauty in common, everyday things that most people miss or take for granted. Wordsworth uses the spots of time for two primary purposes in *The Prelude*: as sources of retrospective narration (memory) and sources of moral encouragement and hope (extended vision). In *The Prelude*, what is the dichotomy between narrative as memory and as cultural marker? What does Wordsworth hope to offer his readership through the spots of time? “Homeric narrative involves situations, scenes, and performance which are ritualized, that is, are not only described formulaically, but also rendered as typical of what the society *always* did under certain circumstances” (Havelock 58). Are the spots of time formulaic constructions (an epic convention) that promote moral and ethical action within the community?

This study proposes that *The Prelude* envisions community action; yet, most modern criticism on *The Prelude* focuses on aspects of biography and autobiography that limit a discussion of the role of community involvement. Levinson agrees that “modern criticism tends to interrogate the effects of the poem [*The Prelude*] within its assumed, autobiographical
context” (63); however, Levinson does not project the ideal of Wordsworth’s spots of time as a narrative maintenance of the epic. In addition, the fact that epic conventions were challenged rarely seems to translate into the counterintuitive ideal that conventions changed, in keeping with epic tradition, in order to rehabilitate the epic with modern sensibilities. A prime example of this rehabilitation is Wordsworth’s conception of the spots of time. Wordsworth’s spots of time provide a cross-section of his narrative revisioning of epic convention.

To the British Romantics, *Paradise Lost* represented a visionary ideal. The British Romantics elevated Milton to the status of an epic poet who they most readily identified as the primary figure of poetic competition. In other words, Milton’s *Paradise Lost* as an epic challenged the Romantics to respond to an even older historical epic tradition that precedes Milton. Peterfreund discusses the historical progression of genres and presents the epic as historically considered by other poets as the pinnacle of poetic achievement. However, what is critical about Peterfreund’s discussion of genre is the fact that he connects the scientific method of classification of species, genus, and class with the development of literary genres as progressing from pastoral to epic (“*The Prelude*” 441-4). *The Prelude* actually metamorphosizes from pastoral to epic through the process of narration. As such, *The Prelude* is a “metamorphic epic” that directs other genres under the cohesive narrative of the epic (“*The Prelude*” 448). As an episteme, the epic promotes poetic knowledge, while accommodating scientific knowledge.
CHAPTER THREE

In the Epic, Poetic Knowledge Accommodates Scientific Knowledge

The longer I live, the more I am satisfied of two things: first, that the truest lives are those that are cut rose-diamond fashion, with many facets answering to the many-planed aspects to the world about them; secondly, that society is always trying in some way or other to grind us down to a single flat surface....

(Holmes The Professor at the Breakfast-Table 33)

John Milton, the writer of the great Neoclassical epic Paradise Lost, had a multi-faceted philosophy of education. Although the Romantics differ from their Neoclassical predecessors (emphasis on Milton’s Paradise Lost), the Romantics did not make a clean break with the epistemological tradition associated with the epic genre. One of the paradoxes of the epic tradition has been the epic’s continual metamorphosis over time. The fixity of an epic tradition must be understood within the fluidity of the epic’s structural elements. Wilkie believes that epic is more of a tradition than a genre (viii). Wilkie generically believes that the epic is a cultural tradition, however, in more specific terms, the philosophy of poetic knowledge needs included in the discussion of this cultural tradition. In Paradise Lost, the education of Adam is both a structural and didactic element in Milton’s epic (Williamson 97). Both The Prelude and Paradise Lost share the same philosophy of education: a multi-faceted, variegated, and heterogeneous poetic knowledge. In both the Neoclassical and Romantic epic, the epic offers its audience the heterogeneous education of poetic knowledge.

John Milton was one of the first writers to use the epic genre to address reason centered scientific knowledge advanced through seventeenth century Enlightenment. Over two decades before Milton published Paradise Lost (1667), he wrote a tract entitled Of Education (1644). This tract describes Milton’s convictions on the purpose and means of an education and eventually Milton uses this tract to formulate multiple passages on education in Paradise Lost. In Of Education, Milton discusses the effect that intellectual development has upon spiritual
development; and Milton’s Christian centered concept of education compares closely to the humanistic tradition of education that seeks truth as the ultimate aim of knowledge. Milton argues that the ultimate truth of education is to acquire “knowledge of God, which was lost through the Fall” (Schuler 39). Of Education pedagogically develops the goals established within Paradise Lost itself, and effectively establishes both abstract and concrete learning outcomes and goals. In Paradise Lost, Milton addresses the skepticism that resulted through empirical based scientific knowledge. Milton does not disregard the importance of scientific knowledge; however, he does place such knowledge under the accommodating umbrella of poetic knowledge.

For Milton, the abstract knowledge of God must lead to the concrete ability to participate effectively within society. In other words, mankind has a moral responsibility to perform right action within society. Both sacred and secular knowledge are equally important in Milton’s program of education, because an abstract knowledge of God may develop out of an education of the natural or material world. “There is no strict division [before or after the Fall] between ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ knowledge; in education the most important difference is between what is true and false” (Schuler 43). Milton never limits his conception of education to theological knowledge; instead, like Augustine before him, he believed in a robust education that included sacred and secular knowledge to achieve the ultimate aim of all intellectual pursuit: truth. Furthermore, Milton stresses a continuity of knowledge that exists between heaven, hell, and earth that differs only by degree, not kind. The “unifying principle behind Milton’s use of natural sciences” implies that all three worlds (heaven, hell, and earth) are unified in knowledge, but differ in the degree of knowledge (especially as relative to natural science) (Jacobus 77, 76).
The discussion of physical cosmology in *Paradise Lost* between the angel Raphael and Adam effectively illustrates Milton’s philosophy concerning both scientific and poetic knowledge.

In Books 5-7 of *Paradise Lost*, the angel Raphael instructs Adam first on the warfare in heaven and then on the creation of the earth. In Book 8, in an attempt to extend his conversation with the angel Raphael, Adam asks Raphael about the celestial motion of the stars. Raphael answers Adam’s question, but then rebukes him and offers him further counsel. Milton’s distinction between the usefulness of scientific and of poetic knowledge is expressed in Raphael’s response to Adam’s question about celestial motions. Ultimately, Raphael’s reply is Ptolemaic, but additionally he tells Adam that whether the system of the universe is Ptolemaic, Copernican, or Tychonian remains irrelevant in regards to more necessary knowledge (Jacobus 58).

But whether thus these things, or whether not,

Whether the Sun predominant in Heav'n

Rise on the Earth, or Earth rise on the Sun,

Hee from the East his flaming rode begin,

Or Shee from West her silent course advance

With inoffensive pace that spinning sleeps

On her soft Axle, while she paces Eev'n,

And beares thee soft with the smooth Air along,

Sollicit not thy thoughts with matters hid,  (*Paradise Lost*  8.159-167)

As Raphael counsels, one’s knowledge of the system of the universe, whether right or wrong, does not really affect the actual motions of the universe. After the rebuke, Raphael instructs
Adam to regard knowledge that affects daily life as more important than the knowledge of the natural sciences.

How fully hast thou satisfi'd me, pure
Intelligence of Heav'n, Angel serene,
And freed from intricacies, taught to live
The easiest way, nor with perplexing thoughts
To interrupt the sweet of Life, from which
God hath bid dwell farr off all anxious cares,
And not molest us, unless we our selves
Seek them with wandring thoughts, and notions vain.
But apt the Mind or Fancy is to roave
Uncheckt, and of her roaving is no end;
Till warn'd, or by experience taught, she learne,
That not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and suttle, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime Wisdom  (Milton PL 8.180- 194)

The lesson here is not against natural science, but “that learning is desirable only as it finds its context in life” (Samuel 710). In other words, Milton’s philosophy of knowledge is organic, in which each circumference must be linked to the center (life). It is not the summit, but the “sum of wisdom” that is important to leading a good life. Knowledge only becomes useful and beneficial when absorbed and assimilated into a way of life that acknowledges the ethical and
moral dimensions of knowledge within society. Knowledge must demonstrate its active usefulness in daily life (Samuel 711-15).

Before the “Age of Milton,” the Ptolemaic and Copernican theories stood as rivals, and although Milton sympathizes with Copernican theory, for poetic reasons he chooses the Ptolemaic system (G. McColley 209). In *Paradise Lost*, Milton sympathizes with the Copernican system, first by gently satirizing the “orbs in orbs” of Ptolemaic cosmology:

From Man or Angel the great Architect

[………………………………………..]

Hath left to thir disputes, perhaps to move

His laughter at thir quaint Opinions wide

Hereafter, when they come to model Heav'n

And calculate the Starrs, how they will weild

The mightie frame, how build, unbuild, contrive

To save appearances, how gird the Sphear

With Centric and Eccentric scribl'd o're,

Cycle and Epicycle, Orb in Orb:  (8.72, 77-84)

“The great Architect” laughs at the “quaint Opinions” of Ptolemaic cosmology. A few lines later, Raphael presents Copernican cosmology to Adam as a hypothesis:

What if the Sun

Be Centre to the World, and other Starrs

By his attractive vertue and their own

Incited, dance about him various rounds?  (8.122- 125)
It would be easy to interpret Milton’s discussion of cosmology as emphasizing the error present in inductive empirical method. Instead of disregarding Copernican theory, Milton’s inclusive and heterogeneous cosmology of accommodation represents poetic knowledge. Tilottama Rajan states this idea effectively when she labels *Paradise Lost* “paradoxically encyclopedic,” because encyclopedias are always open to “further supplements by future readers” (32).

It should be noted that Descartes supported Copernican heliocentric cosmology, and that Newton’s theory of universal gravitation is itself an extension of the heliocentric theory (G.McColley 230-31). The Copernican system suggests more than the concept that the earth is no longer the center of the universe; it suggests that the human mind had both literally and figuratively misunderstood its place within the universe (Martin 83). *Paradise Lost* is one of the first epics to utilize poetic knowledge to confront the sense of disorder and skepticism created through Copernican cosmology and Cartesian certainty. By accommodating scientific knowledge, poetic knowledge represents the sum of wisdom, not the summit – it is an open ended “way” of knowledge, not a finite closed system (such as Cartesian certitude). Although *Paradise Lost* includes competing theories of cosmology, ultimately in Book 8, as stated in the introductory paragraph Raphael instructs Adam to “search rather things more worthy of knowledge (*Paradise Lost* Book 8 “The Argument”).

Seventeenth century English culture is alternately known as “The Age of Milton” or “The Scientific Revolution.” The disciplinary divisions of modern academia are a result of this initial branching between the arts and sciences in the seventeenth century (Duran 1-3). Whereas the Elizabethans were content to satisfy their scientific inquiry by looking into the natural sciences with classical authors (Aristotle especially), the seventeenth century gave credibility to empirical “scientists” who looked to the future through direct experimentation, instead of the classical
authors of the past (Jones 3-21). Duran’s book *The Age of Milton and the Scientific Revolution* attempts to “integrate the models that poetic and scientific pedagogy offer” (20). However, Duran also states in her introduction that poetry is the primary focus of her study, because poetry as a type of discourse enables those “not regularly engaged with scientific texts … a wider appreciation of their presence in the larger domains of education and epistemology” (16-17).

In actuality, Duran’s argument does not support a fusion of poetic and scientific pedagogy. Instead, her argument advances the ideal of poetic knowledge as defined by the “larger domains of education.” After three hundred years, can scientific and poetic pedagogies really ever become fused again, as they were during the Elizabethan age? Stephen Gould effectively states the current quarrel between the Arts and Sciences:

> If scientists would admit the ineluctable human character of their enterprise, and if students of science within the humanities would then acknowledge the power of science to increase the storehouse of genuine knowledge by working with all the flaws of human foibles, then we could break the hold of dichotomy and break bread together. (108)

However, in *Paradise Lost*, Milton as a student of science in the humanities does acknowledge the ability of science to increase knowledge. Even Bacon himself acknowledges the human dimension of scientific thought (Gould 111-12). Why, therefore does the impasse between scientific and poetic pedagogies persist? Perhaps, as apparent in both *Paradise Lost* and *The Prelude*, a more appropriate question for this study should entail: why poetic knowledge remains relevant both before and after the Scientific Revolution.

In *The Ruins of Allegory*, Martin states that *Paradise Lost* has the poetic ability to envision the demise of post-Cartesian culture as a privileged educational mode. Cartesian certitude must give way to the certainty of uncertainty. What will replace Cartesian certainty is
an information theory that allows the ability to oscillate between differing poles of thought to produce potentially new meanings (2-4). This study suggests that this “information theory” that Martin envisions already exists in the philosophical model of poetic knowledge. Both *Paradise Lost* and *The Prelude* surpass the “Cartesian logic of hierarchical exclusion through difference” (Newman 326-7). Poetic knowledge allows an oscillation between different modes of thought to produce new meaning as illustrated through Milton’s inclusion of competing cosmological theories in *Paradise Lost*.

Ironically, the age of rational certitude produced great doubt and skepticism about the place of man within the overall structure of the universe. *Paradise Lost* is an epic that must confront an old and new poetic order: Christian allegory and Cartesian certitude. The epic that Milton writes emphasizes a “transactional ‘process’ over product” that confronts the scientific disruption of narrative voice (Martin 31). The term “transactional” will prove useful to an overall understanding of the epic, and especially to Wordsworth’s *Prelude*. For in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth creates a transactional epic. Rajan states that the Romantic era focuses on secular hermeneutics by promoting the ideal that literature represents a transaction between text and reader (20). Cartesian certitude does not promote a transactional process between author, text, and audience.

Instead, Cartesian certitude “by revaluing the uncertain functions of signs in relation to presumptive truth… allegorically ‘ruins’ the cosmic ‘book’ wherein it was once imagined that God’s design could more or less be transparently read” (Martin 16). Each succeeding cosmological theory makes the earth and mankind less significant to the overall order of the cosmos. As William Blake suggests in his epic *Milton*, reversing the “diminution” of mankind and the “delusion of material priority” requires action, not rational thought alone (Peterfreund
“Blake” 150-1). The cosmic skepticism of mankind’s place within the universe does not exist in the allegories of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* or Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, because these writers of epic were not confronted with Cartesian certitude. However, instead of lamenting this cosmic disruption, Milton adapts objective and subjective thought and intuitive and discursive reason by uniting binary half-truths (emotional/rational, personal/universal, spiritual/material) (Martin 33-41).

Discursive, or Intuitive; discourse

Is oftest yours, the latter most is ours,

Differing but in degree, of kind the same.

Wonder not then, what God for you saw good

If I refuse not, but convert, as you,

To proper substance; time may come when men

With Angels may participate, and find

No inconvenient Diet, nor too light Fare:

And from these corporal nutriments perhaps

Your bodies may at last turn all to Spirit,

Improv’d by tract of time, and wing’d ascend

Etheral, as wee, or may at choice

Here or in Heav’nly Paradises dwell;  (*Paradise Lost* 5.488-500)

In this excerpt, Milton collapses the dualities of discursive/intuitive logic, and body/spirit. As such, *Paradise Lost* supports a heterogeneous philosophy of knowledge, which might also be termed heterocosmic; however, Abrams’s evidence in *The Mirror and the Lamp* supports a theory of heterocosmic poetry which suggests that Milton is not concerned with rational truth
Yet, it is clear that Milton, and subsequently Wordsworth, are concerned with both “rational” and “emotional” truth within their poetic creations. The poetic confrontation of rational truth which Milton initiates in *Paradise Lost* produces an allegorical change that can be conceived as a rhetorical change based upon semiotics. Both the Newtonian model of celestial spheres and Descartes’s theory of the vortex of celestial motion are metaphors. “Both are rational constructs used by the rational intellect to interrogate the presumably nonhuman otherness of the universe” (Peterfreund “Blake” 156).

Milton believed that language both before and after the Fall retains its same inconsistencies. However, the empirical scientists of the Enlightenment, in terms of the semiotics of language, attempted to restore language to its primitive purity in an attempt to promote scientific inquiry. The empiricists were worried about the careless use of language introducing errors into their observations. The programs they introduced at the beginning of the Enlightenment illustrate the fact that the empiricists believed that language could and should be reformed. Bacon’s use of empiricist semiotics is based primarily upon epistemological concerns. Bacon saw language as the largest obstacle to knowledge, and believed the inconsistencies prevalent within language could be overcome through the inductive method. In fact, Bacon attempted to create a universal language that would enable international scientific inquiry (Fried 117-123). Most critics emphasize the naïveté of Bacon’s attempt. Yet, instead of ignoring the inductive method, Milton brings empiricism into the fold of Christian Humanism.

Poetic knowledge suggests that language itself is the door to knowledge. In *Paradise Lost*, although the Fall of man impoverishes mankind’s ability to read God’s signs; both before and after the Fall these signs still retain “their original and fecund ambiguity” in both human thought and language (Martin 51). Milton’s educational philosophy conflates the Platonic mode,
on which Cartesian certitude is founded, with Aristotelian particulars that offer immediate
relevance to both human thought and language. Milton’s epic allegories do not represent
absolute truth, but the transactional and “oscillational truth of language itself,” which is
contextual, relational, historical, and personal (Martin 61).

Milton, as one of the last poets within the Humanist tradition, believed that education was
the key to individual worth and achievement within society. Within the Humanist tradition,
mankind’s sense of worth could not be inherited, or come through external factors such as
material wealth. Christian Humanist education depended upon education itself to develop
mankind’s inner faculties to in turn promote moral and rational awareness, and the perfect
management of life within society. In Paradise Lost, Satan represents an unteachable student,
because Satan’s misunderstanding of God begins in a general misunderstanding of the general
semiotics of language (darkness for light, etc.) (Rebhorn 81-90). However, Milton can be called
an implicit empiricist, because of the epistemological value of experience present in his treatises
and poetry.

In Of Education, Milton states that practical hands-on experience should be a necessary
component of a complete education (Fried 124-25). In terms of semiotics, Milton’s conflation of
Platonic universals with Aristotelian particulars offers a heterogeneous conflation (characteristic
of poetic knowledge) that enables the creation of new meanings within the individual. In
Paradise Lost, the character Satan explores Hobbes most basic concern about the semiotic abuse
of language:

In Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, Satan is a perverted empiricist, constantly
experimenting through violence to determine the limits of divine sovereignty, and
constantly refusing to acknowledge the resulting proofs that there are no such limits.
Moreover, Milton frames Satan’s experimental method in semiotic terms, as he always wants to push beyond divine speech (or encourage others to do so) in order to discover the supposed lack of referent which it conceals. (Fried 130)

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan’s fallen language mirrors his fallen intellect. Satan perverts the true order of things at the most basic linguistic level, because his fallen intellect recognizes only literal meanings, and not the metaphorical meanings inherent in language (Rebhorn 92). Satan, by defining evil as glory, reiterates Hobbes’ argument that moral terms such as good and evil have no application in moral philosophy, because these most basic terms are affected by subjective judgments (similar to Nietzsche’s theory in *Beyond Good and Evil*). Although Milton places this linguistic problem in the mouth of Satan, he also denies the moral relativism that both Hobbes and Nietzsche justify (Fried 131).

Satan is a failed empirical experimenter who continues to deny the proofs that are continually presented to him. Milton’s rhetoric emphasizes a hermeneutics that requires intellectual examination to find the moral truths inherent in Christian Humanism. Wordsworth proposes a similar moral transaction of rhetoric in *The Prelude*, not necessarily based upon Christian Humanism, but with the secular acceptance of a model of education based on poetic knowledge. Cartesian theory reduces all life beneath the human intellect to the status of robots, and Hobbes’s determinism associates the human mind itself with a machine (Martin 85).

Wordsworth questions these empirical mechanics within the development of his own mind:

> And what the sanction, till, demanding *proof*,

> And seeking it in everything, I lost

> All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,

> Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair (Prelude X.897-901)

By questioning empirical “proofs,” Wordsworth 1) updates the epic with contemporary concerns and 2) re-centers mankind’s moral and ethical position within society. In both Milton and Wordsworth, education becomes the primary purpose of rhetoric. Satan’s appeal to Eve to taste of the tree of knowledge is based on semiotic ignorance, the ignorance of the meaning of death:

O Sacred, Wise, and Wisdom-giving Plant,

Mother of Science, Now I feel thy Power

[…………………………………………]

To happier life, knowledge of Good and Evil;

Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil

Be real, why not known, since easier shunnd?

God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;

Not just, not God; not feard then, nor obeyd:

Your feare it self of Death removes the feare. (Paradise Lost 9.679-80, 697-702).

Paradoxically, Satan’s appeal to semiotic ignorance elicits the Fortunate Fall which produces the knowledge of both good and evil. Mankind is meant to benefit from the intellectual knowledge of both good and evil, not from the rhetorical conflation of these terms based on semiotic ignorance. Ultimately, Milton conceives that Eve’s decision benefits mankind, and Adam and Eve view their expulsion from paradise optimistically.

The final books of Paradise Lost didactically illustrate “Adam’s emotional, spiritual, and intellectual progress and state of mind,” and the reader shares (transactionally) in “Adam’s intellectual, moral, and emotional fulfillment” (Schiffhorst 59-60). As in The Prelude, Milton’s philosophy of education unites reason, emotion, and ethics. Milton does not reject scientific
knowledge, or limit mankind’s thirst for knowledge as portrayed through Adam’s questioning of celestial circumference. Instead, the sciences known to mankind are to be valued by their use in daily life (Jacobus 76). Knowledge, as portrayed through the education of Adam in *Paradise Lost*, represents the logic of the educational philosophy of poetic knowledge. Again, Milton’s position is not anti-scientific; instead he places scientific knowledge under the umbrella of contextual, and relational poetic knowledge: the sum of wisdom, not the summit. Every circle must have a center - no matter how large or small. Any knowledge as an end in itself represents intellectual pride, an enemy to wisdom. Milton’s own education was both vast and encyclopedic, but the ultimate aim of his knowledge is charitable, the “perfect management of life” within society (Samuel 721-23). A philosophy of poetic knowledge cohesively connects the epic tradition from *The Prelude* and *Paradise Lost* to *The Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The intellectual basis of Milton’s inclusive cosmology in *Paradise Lost* parallels the depictions of geography in the Homeric epics.

In the nineteenth century, William Gladstone attempted to reconstruct “Homer’s mental map of the world” (Koelsch 329) in which Gladstone envisions Homer as a faithful reporter on the traditions of western culture. Just as one might imagine and speculate on Shakespeare’s acceptance or rejection of Copernican theory, Gladstone used geography to show that Homer repeated the cultural traditions associated with the geographical locations mentioned in both *The Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Ultimately, Gladstone makes the argument that although Homer’s physical external geography may be incorrect by modern standards, Homer’s internal geography and understanding of the physical world was accurate, because it represents the traditions of the known world for Bronze Age Greece (Koelsch 333). This “internal” geography in the Homeric epics is imaginative, but was based upon the known traditions of the age.
Transactional epic poetry hopes to achieve the perfect management of life within society, by suggesting culturally acceptable solutions to any given circumstance. The successful navigation of life is a proper component of both Homeric epics. Perhaps this accounts for one of the many reasons why the Homeric epics remain important to education throughout the centuries.

“Reading is not simply the interpretation of what has already happened, but also involves participation in a history that is yet to be written and that is partly written through its reading” (Rajan 25). Halpin also suggests the transactional nature of poetry in the following statement. “Being able imaginatively to speculate forwards from reality as presently perceived – to ‘unconceal future possibilities in present actualities’ – so as to anticipate an improved altered state of affairs is a necessary condition for making new and better plans of action” ("Pedagogy” 60). In other words, imaginative knowledge can aid in the effective delegation of action in daily life.

Transactional epic poetry suggests such possibilities of action in daily life.

The Romantics’ revision of the conventions of epic must be regarded within the tradition of epic poetry that promotes the heterogeneous philosophy of poetic knowledge. Whereas Enlightenment reason promotes scientific knowledge, the Romantics’ revisioning of the epic promotes poetic knowledge in a postcartesian world. The paradox of the Romantic era as “extreme individualism in combination with extreme group-consciousness” represents the adaptability of the epic tradition itself (Wilkie 29). Wordsworth’s search for a suitable topic for his epic implies an intertextual awareness of the conventional rules associated with the writing of epics:

Sometimes, mistaking vainly, as I fear,

Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,

I settle on some British theme, some old
At the beginning of Book I, Wordsworth’s search for a suitable topic does not yet match the oceanic wisdom of poetic knowledge. Nonetheless, Wordsworth’s allusions to the epics that precede *The Prelude* synthesize the epistemological concerns of previous epic authors with contemporary concerns (Bohm 124). As a tradition, the epic carries on an intertextual discussion with previous epics (Rajan 25). Milton’s educational “objectives and outcomes” in *Paradise Lost* closely match Wordsworth’s concerns about the effective pursuit of education in *The Prelude*. The Romantics are often characterized as intellectual rebels against neoclassicism; however, both Wordsworth and Milton believed in the public duty of poetry (O’Brien 30). Milton and Wordsworth appear as intellectual rebels, but both promote the same philosophy of poetic knowledge.

Wordsworth, like Milton, stresses the importance of effective public service. Times and tastes change, but Wordsworth attempted to renew the epic with a contemporary vigor. *Paradise Lost* explores the education of Adam and *The Prelude* explores “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind,” but both epics remain equally concerned with contemporary education. As Wordsworth states in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800), the modern intellect has become blunted through modern external circumstances:

For a multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the encreasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies….
The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespear and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse. (Prose I: 128).

Wordsworth does not dismiss the work of Milton, instead he states that contemporary literature must somehow allow entry back into the formidable canon of western literature. “The invaluable works....driven into neglect” mirrors E.D.Hirsch’s sentiments about the loss of cultural literacy in the twentieth century. Wordsworth may have rebelled against his neoclassical predecessors, but he does not dismiss them from the pursuit of knowledge. Instead, Wordsworth appears dissatisfied that contemporary literature, “frantic novels,” discourage association with the writers he considers possessing a higher intellect, and whose works encourage the pursuit of oceanic poetic knowledge, instead of “extraordinary incident.”

What is striking about the philosophy of poetic knowledge in *Paradise Lost* and *The Prelude* is that both Wordsworth and Milton were educational reformers. Both Milton and Wordsworth utilize the epic as a means of educational reform. “A central theme of *Paradise Lost* and indeed, it may be argued, the central action of *Paradise Lost* is education, the pursuit of knowledge” (Coiro 145, 144). Likewise, Wordsworth attempts to make sense of an ever changing world defined by industrialism and revolution, through a discussion of the “Growth of a Poet’s Mind.” In an attempt to invigorate the epic by modern standards, *The Prelude* didactically explores the effects that contemporary events have on the pursuit of knowledge.

Although there are obvious structural differences in the Romantic epic and the Neoclassical epic; nevertheless, the Romantic writers composed their epics in response to an established epic tradition. “The great paradox of the epic lies in the fact that the partial repudiation of earlier epic tradition is itself traditional” (Wilkie 10). Both Wordsworth and
Milton are “rebels” who transformed epic conventions to make the pursuit of knowledge more palatable to contemporary audiences. However, a vast majority of modern criticism tends to dismiss the epic as a “completed” form that has no further opportunity for development and that possesses no relevance to contemporary education. Milton opens the way for the poet to become the hero of his own poem, but also the hero of a new poetics of time and space. The material world will never fully reflect the absolute world of divine forms. Instead, the dialectic between inductive and deductive, Aristotelian and Platonic, material and spiritual, accommodates and homogenizes internal self-knowledge with external experience (Martin 92-98). As such, poetic knowledge is an open, not a closed philosophy of knowledge, ever expanding and organic in its nature.

In the *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin asserts that the epic is an outdated genre, fixed in form and incapable of further development. In Bakhtin’s theory, the novel is the main genre that meets the epistemic needs of contemporary culture through its continual development. Bakhtin’s theory of the epic focuses on the Homeric epics and not on an understanding of epic tradition. Bakhtin equates the epic with monoglossia (national literature) and not with polyglossia (world literature). Bakhtin’s view of the modern generic shift from the epic to novel is epistemic, and devalues the literary tradition of the epic. For Bakhtin, polyglossia represents the novel and its cross-cultural international appeal (Bakhtin 12).

The epic as a genre in its own right may, for our purposes, be characterized by three consecutive features: (1) a national epic past – in Goethe’s and Schiller’s terminology the “absolute past” – serves as the subject of the epic; (2) national tradition (not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it) serves as the source of epic; (3) an
absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from
the time in which the singer (the audience and his audience) lives. (Bakhtin 13)

These features would have bearing on a discussion of the epic and its feasibility as a modern
genre; if, the Homeric epics were the only epics that had ever been created. However,
Wordsworth’s *Prelude* alone destroys all of these superficial features about the feasibility of the
epic to appeal to contemporary education. In reference to Bakhtin’s statement above, *The
Prelude* (1) discusses a personal past; (2) utilizes personal experience and free thought through a
discussion of the development of the poet’s own mind; and (3) seats the discussion of epic
development within contemporary social situations and national events. In addition, the epic has
more lasting contributions to the development of the novel than Bakhtin admits. Literary history
cannot explain the “…nineteenth century novel without him [Wordsworth] and the movement
toward interiority and the exploration of feelings that he epitomized; the greatest achievement of
Romantic poetry was Victorian prose” (O’Brien 29). However, the hostility towards the epic as a
genre is nothing new in criticism. Aristotle’s *Poetics* promotes the superiority of tragedy over
epic; and a century before Bakhtin’s *Dialogic Imagination*, Friedrich Nietzsche promoted
tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy* at the expense of the epic.

*The Birth of Tragedy* supports a tragic response to life. However, both comedy and
tragedy are present in the epic genre. The epic’s inclusive nature allows its audience to
participate in the production of knowledge that coordinates with the perfect management of life.
In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche compares and contrasts the genres of epic and tragedy in an
attempt to promote the superiority of tragedy as a literary genre. Through tragedy, an audience
participates in an ecstatic “Dionysian” vision not immediately apparent within Homer’s reasoned
“Apollonian” epic. For Nietzsche, the aesthetic vision of the tragedy of human life is
epistemologically connected with the ideological intuitive knowledge of the pre-Socratic philosophers. In fact, Nietzsche believed that Socratic rational thought effectively killed the tragic philosophy of life. Supposedly, Euripedes’ exposure to Socratic rational knowledge signaled the beginning of the end for the tragic genre. “Essentially, Nietzsche sees the advent of Socratic thought as effectively negating the need for tragic art in general. This is opposed to the mystical and intuitive ‘real wisdom’ of the pre-Socratics” (Devir 65). What Nietzsche appears to overlook in his discussion of the superiority of “pre-Socratic” tragedy over the Homeric epics, is that both genres (tragedy and epic) develop out of pre-Socratic philosophy.

For Nietzsche, the Socratic pursuit of rational knowledge must forever remain in deference to the tragic approach to life of the Dionysian pre-Socratic philosophers. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, modern culture represents an antithesis to classical Greek culture, and the only possible return to the tragic philosophy of life is to throw off the yoke of the Socratic pursuit of rational knowledge. Socratic philosophers are “lovers of wisdom,” but pre-Socratic philosophers are the true “men of knowledge” (Devir 69). What is at stake in *The Birth of Tragedy* is an understanding of knowledge gained through sensory perception. Plato trusted universal ideas or forms underlying all sensory objects, and disdained particulars (thereby devaluing sensory perception). “Aristotle attempted to elevate the role of particulars by asserting that the knowledge gained by the senses leads us to an understanding of universals” (Jacobus 16, 15). In modern culture, positivism and phenomenology repeat these same problems of sensory perception. Meanwhile, the epic, a pre-Socratic genre, engenders a philosophy of poetic knowledge capable of accommodating both pre and post-Socratic philosophy. Nonetheless, the epic continues to survive hegemonic criticism that continually attempts to deflate the epic’s
pedagogical importance; yet, the epic as a cultural tradition continues to remain concerned about the welfare of society (Wilkie 23). The epic continually strives to educate. Nietzsche and Bakhtin have both argued against the epistemic importance of the epic within western literary tradition, and their criticism has had wide reaching implications on the contemporary critical reception of the epic. Without doubt, modern criticism places emphasis on the novel, while often overlooking the continuing educational relevance of the epic tradition. In fact, Bakhtin states that Byron’s *Don Juan* is a novelization of the epic form and that all modern forms will increasingly become more like the novel (Walker 150). Does Bakhtin suggest that Byron’s *Don Juan* is more like a novel because it traces contemporary events, instead of historical events? Bakhtin makes the following misstatement about the epic: in epic “it is memory, and not knowledge, that serves as the source and power or its creative impulse” (Bakhtin 15). In Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, memory and knowledge are counterparts that complete one another, not binary opposites. *The Prelude* suggests that both knowledge and memory are potential creative impulses in the epic genre.
CHAPTER FOUR

Didactic Memory

"No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings."

(William Blake *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* "Proverbs of Hell," 66, Plate 7, line 21)

In Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, memory and intellect are counterparts that complete poetic knowledge. *The Prelude* suggests that both the intellect and memory are potential creative impulses in acquiring knowledge in the epic genre. Memory in *The Prelude* participates in the production of knowledge. The best way to describe Wordsworth’s use of memory in *The Prelude* is to label it “didactic memory.” In fact, didactic memory in *The Prelude* represents a somewhat complicated scheme of interrelations. First, Wordsworth rhetorically uses memory as an ethical construct in his autobiographically styled epic. Second, memory in *The Prelude* is both intratextual (dialogic with Coleridge, Dorothy, nature; “spots of time”) and intertextual (Wordsworth’s earlier poetry, classical poetry, and the epics of the epic tradition itself). Third, Wordsworth unites memory with imagination. The imagination alone is often considered the pinnacle of intellectual achievement in both the arts and sciences. Memory makes knowledge useful: “The modern test of whether we ‘really know’ something rests in our ability to use what we have been taught in a variety of situations (American pedagogy calls this ‘creative learning’)” (Carruthers 1). Memory united with the imagination fulfills the pedagogical function of creative learning, or the ability to apply knowledge to everyday situations within society. These three uses of memory interweave throughout *The Prelude*, but all contribute to the development of didactic memory. In an attempt to be more succinct, this chapter will limit the discussion of didactic memory to Books I-III of *The Prelude*. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth’s search for a proper epic theme begins with didactic memory.
Memory as Ethical Construct

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth himself is the epic model and he begins his epic by demonstrating that he achieves the ideal of ethos in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. The ethical proof must establish through the text itself the author’s knowledge, honesty, and generous disposition towards the audience. Wordsworth establishes this definition of ethical proof in *The Prelude* (Clancey *Wordsworth’s xx*). The conventional epic failed to address the contemporary strains on society and the isolation of the individual initiated through events that shattered traditional social norms, such as industrialism and revolution. The Age of Reason promoted a philosophy of scientific knowledge that instigated these groundbreaking changes that thoroughly altered the fabric of society. The Age of Enlightenment instigated many of the contemporary social changes that result during the Romantic era (both the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution). These revolutions, initiated by the Age of Reason, fractured traditional society. However, *The Prelude* mobilizes the philosophical tradition of poetic knowledge to transform conventional epic into contemporary epic.

Book I of *The Prelude* firmly establishes Wordsworth’s epic aspiration to write philosophical poetry to explore the contemporary changes that threaten humanity:

> I yearn towards some philosophic Song
> Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
> With meditations passionate from deep
> Recesses in man’s heart, immortal verse
> Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre (1.230-4)

Thus, early in Book I of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth invokes an ethos involving the epic tradition of philosophy and poetry. Wordsworth aligns *The Prelude* with an ethos that matches both the
Odyssey and The Republic. Charles Segal notes the similarity between the Odyssey and The Republic as a search for a “unified and coherent world order,” but adds that in the west “the search for a coherent world order has its roots in Homer” (317). In The Prelude, didactic memory is the overarching thematic element that infuses narrative voice throughout the epic. Narrative voice has consistently enabled mankind to coherently order individual human experience: the epic organizes “through language the multiplicity of experience which forever threatens human consciousness with the chaos of its own impressions” (Segal 315). Wordsworth was well aware that his chosen epic theme diverged from traditional epic themes. However, his choice of didactic memory as an epic theme also invokes the ethos of epic tradition.

Orpheus (son of Calliope, the muse of epic poetry) acts as the very model of an inspired singer in the Greek tradition and Wordsworth connects his “Song / Of Truth” (Prelude 1.230-1) with this inspired tradition. Wordsworth, similar to earlier epic authors, desires an education by the muses (inspired, knowledgeable epic poetry). The traditional epic is objective, with the poet simply acting as a mouthpiece for the Muse. Nonetheless, Wordsworth states in his letters that he transforms epic convention by using didactic memory to create “a thing unprecedented in [Epic] Literary history that a man should talk so much about himself….I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought” and ”therefore could not easily be bewildered” (Early Letters 489). The Prelude uses subjectivity to transform the traditional epic convention of objectivity.

Paradoxically, the epic tradition encourages challenges to epic convention, because transformation of epic conventions actually aids in the revitalization of the epic tradition. Halmi suggests that the Romantics envisioned knowledge as fluid potential, not as finite knowledge (591-6). Didactic memory in The Prelude, as Wordsworth himself states, offers the poet an
uninhibited fluid potential to discuss knowledge through the development of the poet’s own mind.

The self-awareness of the Romantic writers represents an emerging development within the epic tradition of responding to the contemporary conditions within society itself. Self-awareness on behalf of the British Romantics attempts to respond constructively to changing social conditions, such as the isolation of the individual within contemporary society. The epic tradition, like Romanticism itself, is a paradox between “extreme individualism” and “extreme group-consciousness” (Wilkie 29). Historically speaking, the conventional epic does not appear to encourage the poet to create an epic autobiography. Hamlin states that epic is not suited for poetic autobiography, but that *The Prelude* relies on the “poetic reconstruction of experience” (144). *The Prelude*, as epic autobiography, establishes the importance of personal experience in the acquisition of knowledge. Didactic memory cohesively connects *The Prelude’s* episodic development, but also confronts scientific empiricism in the process.

By making the poetic process available to the reader as “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind,” Wordsworth uses didactic memory to show the progression of poetic knowledge chronologically from childhood to adulthood. On the contrary, Descartes’s first published work, *Discours de la méthode* (1637), could be considered a type of objective scientific autobiography, since it claims that the growth of Descartes’s mind begins with his firm possession of reason. According to Descartes, childhood memories only obstruct the development of reason. Descartes’s *Discourse* attempts to deny the utility and importance of history (memory) throughout the discussion of his own personal history. Descartes equates his own childhood as an obstruction to the development of reason. In contrast, Wordsworth’s subjective autobiography states that childhood memories remain especially important to the mental development of the adult.
It is well known that Descartes’s philosophy creates a mind (*res cogita*) body (*res extensa*) dualism that persists to the present age. Descartes’s separation of mind and body also attempts to sever the modern age from history, because in Descartes’s philosophy the human body is the bearer of memory (history). (Reiss 593-94). As such, Descartes (intellect without memory) places himself as the beginning of history in the modern age; and by doing so also creates an analogue for contemporary literary criticism on the novel. Writers of epic (inclusive of Wordsworth’s *Prelude*) acknowledge their generic predecessors, whereas the novel proposes that history begins with the modern era. For Descartes, memory inhibits the development of his primary focus: rationalist epistemology.

In the opening sentence of *Meditations I*, Descartes intends to remove all “false” knowledge (memory and experience) he has acquired since his youth:

Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them. I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last. (17)

For Descartes, building the “foundations of science” involves destroying the false impressions of childhood memories. Descartes views childhood memories with skepticism. By contrast, childhood receives special attention by the Romantics, and especially in the first Book of *The Prelude*. Beginning with the history of his own childhood in Book I, Wordsworth discusses how external nature fills his mind with beautiful forms:

An intellectual charm, that calm delight

Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute

The bond of union betwixt life and joy. (Prelude I.580-585)

In this passage, the human body (memory) and the intellect create an epic wholeness that counters Cartesian dualism. In the poem “My heart leaps up when I behold” (1802), Wordsworth proclaims that “The Child is father of the Man” (Poems I:522, 7). Unlike Descartes, Wordsworth believes childhood memories have the potential to intellectually and imaginatively regenerate the adult.

In Descartes’ philosophy, human memory remains fallible, and must be “forgotten” through the practice of writing. Rhetorically, the development of ethos in Cartesian philosophy and The Prelude correspond, respectively, to scientific and poetic knowledge. The persona of the empiricist creates an authoritative “adult” identity free from faulty childhood memories.

“Memory, then, was to be avoided in favor of a methodic reason [rationalist epistemology] that was always primary. It was to be avoided also by replacing it with (a new sort of) writing” (Reiss 601). For Descartes, memory is often unreliable, and in order not to have to squander one jot of our attention on refreshing it while engaged with other thoughts, human ingenuity has given us that happy invention—the practice of writing. Relying on this as an aid, we shall leave absolutely nothing to memory but put down on paper what we have to retain, thus allowing the imagination to devote itself freely and completely to the ideas immediately before it.

(Descartes Philosophical I: 67)
By contrast, Wordsworth poetically revitalizes epic narrative with the paradox of a unified didactic memory that begins in childhood (“The Child is father of the Man”). Autobiography becomes suited to the epic tradition, because it “involves all the extreme paradoxes of the high romantic quest for identity” (Vance 2). “The individual [body] does not exist in history; rather, history exists in the individual [body], internalized as the informing principle of individual consciousness” (Peterfreund “The Prelude” 447). The Prelude didactically embraces memory for the same reasons that Cartesian philosophy rejects memory: the body contains memory (history).

In The Prelude, Cartesian philosophy (rationalist epistemology) creates an epistemic conflict of epic proportions. Cartesian philosophy fails to accept the place of memory in the development of the mind: “…without memory there is no deduction, without deduction, little, if any, thinking” (Joyce 393). The philosophy of poetic knowledge does not privilege reason alone, but offers the unity of all experience (mind and body) in contributing to the development of knowledge. Yet, Cartesian duality has become central to the imagination (intellect) of western culture (Reiss 589). “The poetic imagination….is a reciprocal power, manifesting itself both externally through nature and internally in the responding self” in which the poet recognizes through self-comprehension the totality of the growth of his own mind (Hamlin 167). Therefore, in The Prelude, the internal senses (intellect and imagination) are perfectly suited to make sense of external materialistic structures (the body and nature). Epic autobiography (The Prelude) and scientific autobiography (Discourse) both make epistemic claims that either connect or disconnect memory to an epistemic ethos (poetic or scientific knowledge). Wordsworth’s search for a proper epic theme at the beginning of The Prelude firmly establishes the epistemic ethos of poetic knowledge.
The first five lines of Book I of *The Prelude* establish an epistemic ethos that directly challenges Cartesian duality. By addressing *The Prelude* to Coleridge, Wordsworth acknowledges the intellectual debt that he owes to Coleridge in the development of his own mind. As such, beginning in Book I, *The Prelude* distorts the Cartesian boundary between self (Wordsworth) and other (Coleridge) in the development of the poet’s own mind. By challenging Cartesian duality, *The Prelude* promotes a didactic ethical code based upon retrospective didactic memory (*res extensa*).

*BOOK FIRST*

INTRODUCTION – CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze

That blows from the green fields and from the clouds

And from the sky: it beats against my cheek,

And seems half-conscious of the joy it gives.

O welcome Messenger! O welcome Friend! (*Prelude* I.1-5)

The wind seems “half-conscious of the joy it gives” the epic narrator? This pantheistic, biocentric statement opposes Cartesian mechanical philosophy that excludes mankind (reason) from mechanical substance (nature). Oneness is expressed as both a “cosmic unity and plurality,” and this sense of oneness cannot be reduced to Descartes’s linear “common denominator,” the *cogito* (Newman 326-27). Already, Wordsworth has established the importance of both physical nature and the physical body (memory) in the development of the intellect.

Once again, in the first few lines of *The Prelude*, the epic narrator challenges Cartesian duality between “self” and “other” by acknowledging Coleridge as “Messenger.” Kiran Toor
links Coleridge to a Hermetic tradition that acknowledges the intellectual debt to others. The ability to identify the self in the other dismantles Cartesian duality that separates the self from the other. Paradoxically, the self can become the other, but still remain contradistinguished, thus creating new possibilities for interpreting individual identity (Toor 3). The ethical construct of *The Prelude* involves the paradox of intellects that coalesce, but remain distinct.

Instead of Cartesian dualism, *The Prelude* exhibits what can be termed both a logic of contradiction and accommodation that elicits a new type of truth. Instead of a law of exclusion (Cartesian duality), truth becomes a heterogeneous economy of abundance, because Cartesian contradictions (mind/body) are not defined through separation, but accommodation. This poetic philosophy unites *ars poetica* (teach and delight) with *ars vivendum* (ethical code) (Kahan 159-63). Like Milton, Wordsworth believed in the practical application of poetry to promote a didactic ethical code. Didactic memory in *The Prelude* is synonymous with a didactic ethical code concerned with the welfare of society.

In terms of narrative convention, Coleridge acts as a “Messenger” at the site of Wordsworth’s memory. In fact, Coleridge influences Wordsworth’s memories of events that Coleridge could have never participated in from the standpoint of factual biography. In his literary lectures, Coleridge connects the development of the mind with nature, or the physical body (memory) with the intellect (mind):

> The individual has by this time learnt the greatest and best knowledge of the human mind - that we are in ourselves imperfect; and another truth, of the next, if not equal importance - that there exists [in nature] a possibility of uniting two beings, each identified in their nature, but distinguished in their separate qualities, so that each should retain what distinguishes them, and at the same time acquire the qualities of that being
which is contradistinguished [to them]. This is perhaps the most beautiful part of our nature… (Coleridge Shakespearean II: 117-18).

*The Prelude* is composed as a dialogue with Coleridge, with nature, and with the reader. This extended dialectic does not produce conflict, but synthesis (Wilkie 85). The dialectic of autobiography is a paradox of fact and fiction. Memory allows mankind to interpret his own identity. Reason, when aided by memory, leads to self-knowledge (*sapientia*) (Vance 10). Calliope’s (muse of epic poetry) unifying thread in *The Prelude* is the memory. Memory represents the *res extensa* (physical body) that Descartes rejects in the development of the mind (*res cogita*). The ethical construct of Descartes’s *Discourse* is rationalist epistemology (scientific knowledge). The ethical construct of *The Prelude* relies on the synthesis of the Cartesian mind and body dualism (poetic knowledge). *The Prelude* is about “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind;” however, the poet’s intellectual and imaginative development relies on a synthesis of the intellect with the physical body (memory). As such, accommodation defines *The Prelude*’s ethical construct, and this particular ethical construct aligns with the episteme of poetic knowledge.

**Intratextual and Intertextual Memory**

It is clear that Wordsworth was influenced by classical traditions, but how much classical tradition affected his production of *The Prelude* remains to be noted. Nonetheless, rhetorical and philosophic traditions influenced Wordsworth and many of the other canonical Romantic poets. *The Prelude* develops didactic memory in the form of both intratextual memory (Wordsworth’s autobiographical “spots of time;” dialogic with Coleridge, Dorothy, nature) and intertextual memory (his own poetry; English, classical, and epic poetic traditions). During Wordsworth’s “Childhood and School-Time,” rhetoric formed a vital part of early childhood education in

Beginning with the recollection of his childhood memories in Book I, most of Wordsworth’s wanderings in *The Prelude* take place through the simple act of walking. Wordsworth’s wanderings in *The Prelude* represent the unification of mind and body in the philosophy of poetic knowledge. “Put simply, Wordsworth touring from point to point is the Cartesian *cogito* turned peripatetic” (Liu *Wordsworth* 55). Liu’s statement illustrates the continuing influence of Cartesian duality on modern consciousness. Instead of *cogito* transforming into the peripatetic, Wordsworth’s wanderings in *The Prelude* suppose a pre-Cartesian philosophy that promotes the unification of the mind (*res cogita*) and body (*res extensa*). In addition, *The Prelude* envisions and promotes an envisioned post-Cartesian contemporary society breaching the boundaries of Cartesian duality (rationalist epistemology).

There exist multiple literary and philosophical analogues for the autobiographical wanderings of *The Prelude*. Some of the most relevant models include *Paradise Lost*, *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, and Augustine’s *Confessions*.

Theresa Kelley states that Wordsworth’s use of memory in *The Prelude* resembles Augustine’s “mansions of remembrance” in the *Confessions* (*Wordsworth’s* 91-2). In the *Confessions*, language is not about life, life is about language. As such, Augustine carefully chooses the events that illustrate his life and his narrative becomes metalinguistic (Vance 14, 17). Wordsworth also carefully chooses the “spots of time” that he recollects in *The Prelude* to promote didactic memory. Descartes attempts to limit the influence of memory through writing, but *The Prelude* supposes that writing *is* memory. From this perspective, *The Prelude* metalinguistically challenges rationalist epistemology. Levinson’s *Romantic Fragment Poem*
(1986) describes how individual poems that would otherwise be considered fragments, receive a cohesive form through their insertion into *The Prelude* and take on what Wordsworth himself describes as “spots of time” (61). “There are in our existence spots of time” (*Prelude* XI.258). Wordsworth uses the spots of time for two primary purposes in *The Prelude*: as sources of retrospective narration (memory) and sources of moral encouragement and hope (extended vision).

Although Wordsworth defines the “spots of time” in Book XI, the first “spots of time” actually occur in Book I of *The Prelude* and recollect Wordsworth’s childhood. These boyhood recollections of play are the “Fair seed-time” (I.305) of his developing childhood intellect.

Not uselessly employ’d,

I might pursue this theme through every change

Of exercise and play, to which the year

Did summon us in its delightful round. (*Prelude* I.501-4)

Unlike Descartes, Wordsworth’s childhood intellectual development is “Not uselessly employ’d” (I.501). Although Wordsworth’s childhood interactions with nature in Book I represent a generalized intratextual memory of generic georgic, they also specifically represent an intertextual memory of *Georgic I*. The last half of Book I of *The Prelude* follows the model of a calendar poem modeled on the last half of *Georgics I*. Wordsworth assigns childhood activities to each season of the year: “boating to summer, skating to winter, trapping woodcocks to late autumn, and to spring the stealing of raven’s eggs” (Graver “Honorable” 352). In these childhood activities, sublime conflicts aid in the development of the imagination.

The childhood activities of Book I are not just moments of retrospective narration (memory), but also offer the reader instruction about the development of the imagination, of the
mind itself (extended vision). As such, the “spots of time” offer insight into Wordsworth’s development of didactic memory. Structurally, *The Prelude’s* “spots of time” represent “stages in an aesthetic progress from sublimity to beauty” (Kelley *Wordsworth’s* 50). Perhaps the best known “spots of time” from Book I is the “boat stealing episode.” In this episode, nature instructs through sublime fear. Wordsworth is happily rowing his stolen boat, until:

The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,

As if with voluntary power instinct,

Uprear’d its head. I struck, and struck again,

And, growing still in stature, the huge Cliff

Rose up between me and the stars, and still,

With measur’d motion, like a living thing,

Strode after me. (*Prelude* I. 406-412)

This scene combines forward motion with “retrograde vision” that affirms a “growth from singleness to community” (Kneale 45). Graver states that Wordsworth utilizes generic georgic in Book I of *The Prelude* to transform rural childhood activities into an understanding of ethical consciousness (“Honorable” 347). *The Prelude’s* overall movement from an aesthetic of sublimity in Book I to an aesthetic of beauty in Book XIII affirms a process of growth from singleness to community. The role of the imagination in maintaining cultural values unifies the epic tradition through time and space. In the philosophy of poetic knowledge, mankind exists in a continual state of *becoming*. Wordsworth’s didactic memory illustrates a *process* of becoming that will reach a culmination of poetic knowledge in Book XIII. Intratextually, the “spots of time” structurally connect the growth of the imagination from childhood to adulthood. The epic
“climax” of Wordsworth’s ascent of Snowdon in Book XIII illustrates a process of becoming that actually begins in the pastoral.

As Peterfreund has noted, *The Prelude* begins as a pastoral and gradually transforms into epic ("The Prelude” 448). Beginning with Book I, *The Prelude* rehearses the standard accepted Renaissance theory of poetic development from pastoral to epic associated with Virgilian poetry. Classical authors confirm that Virgil wrote about all aspects of human experience. The pastoral life of the *Eclogues* traces the beginnings of human culture and society. The *Georgics* continue with mankind’s evolution to an agricultural lifestyle and the *Aeneid* describes human warfare and the foundation of cities. Wordsworth’s intertextual memory employs these thematic and structural developments to *The Prelude*. Although the Virgilian *Eclogues* and *Georgics* describe mankind’s relationship to nature (Virgil was influenced especially by Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*); more specifically, as didactic poetry they instruct ethical action within society, as apparent in the rural beginnings of society (Graver “Honorable” 347). Wordsworth was not alone among the Romantics for his value of pastoral poetry; however, *The Prelude* is unique among both epic and Romantic poetry, because *The Prelude* extends the pastoral to epic sequence as a structural development within *The Prelude* itself.

Virgilian poetry influences both Wordsworth’s intratextual and intertextual memory in *The Prelude*. The *Georgics* provided Wordsworth with an excellent model for his poetic fashioning of rural life in The Lake District of Northern England. Wordsworth rarely quotes Virgil directly; instead, Virgilian themes become the very fabric of Wordsworth’s own poetry (Graver “Wordsworth’s” 138). This enmeshed classical poetic tradition in Wordsworth’s poetry is what Clancey calls “classical undersong.” For Wordsworth, the ideals exemplified in the classics have a pertinent bearing on contemporary life. Wordsworth regarded Milton as a
Wordsworth’s verse allusions reference *Paradise Lost* throughout *The Prelude*, but the *Georgics* appear almost inseparable from Wordsworth’s conception of his own poetry. As such, the *Georgics* in *The Prelude* extend beyond just “classical undersong;” instead, they have been thoroughly absorbed into the fabric of Wordsworth’s didactic memory.

Wordsworth attempted a translation of the *Georgics* during his early years at Cambridge. Wordsworth’s first attempts at blank verse can be found in the same notebook that includes his translations of the *Eclogues*. Graver states that in these early translations, that the landscape of rural Italy becomes indistinguishable from Wordsworth’s childhood home in the Lake District. This transformation of rural identity from Italy to England enables Wordsworth to later include the *Eclogues* into his own original poetry with little resemblance to the original source (“Wordsworth’s” 137-46). Wordsworth had the poetic ability to adapt multiple sources into the fabric of his own poetry, such as his sister Dorothy’s journals, or Coleridge’s ideas. Through the process of literary adaptation, Wordsworth’s descriptions of natural experiences actually have their beginnings in texts, not nature (Graver “Wordsworth’s” 140). In essence, Wordsworth’s didactic memory in the 1805 *Prelude* exhibits a complex relationship between intratextual and intertextual memory.

Kelley argues that Wordsworth delays his treatment of revolutionary France until the later books of *The Prelude*, because the sublimity of revolutionary France would apparently discredit the sublimity of his childhood experiences (Kelley *Wordsworth’s* 92). This study disagrees with this statement, because in terms of the development of didactic memory, Wordsworth must reconnect with the sublime emotions developed during his childhood to regain his lost imagination, and to confront the rationalist epistemology of the French Revolution.
Didactic memory involves forgetting, or perhaps delaying development for both rhetorical and structural purposes. In *The Prelude*, the sublimity of revolutionary France results unnecessarily through rationalism, but the sublimity of childhood activities remains necessary to individual intellectual growth from childhood to adulthood. Wordsworth presents play as the labor of childhood. Paradoxically, although play appears to lack reason, play actually nurtures the imagination towards maturity (Graver “Honorable” 354). Instead of delaying the sublimity of revolutionary France, Wordsworth uses didactic memory to structurally align the labor of childhood and his loss of imagination (symbolic of his initial acceptance of the rationalism of the French Revolution) with basic classical and Renaissance poetic theory: the Virgilian poetic progression from pastoral to epic.

The later Books of *The Prelude* didactically connect the sublime georgic scenes of childhood in Book I with the philosophy of poetic knowledge found in Virgilian epic. The *Aeneid* narrates the mythic history of Rome not through reason alone, but through the sublime emotions of individuals in everyday life (MacCormack 21). The georgic seasonal childhood activities of Book I are the first “spots of time” that connect to an overall intratextual structural development of the “spots of time” as didactic memory. In *The Prelude*, retrospective narration, didactic memory, and “spots of time” all appear to have a common synthesis. This study proposes that Wordsworth’s “spots of time” function rhetorically as mnemonic devices that encourage ethical consciousness.

Wordsworth’s epic autobiography, structured on didactic memory, encourages an ethical consciousness. Much like Augustine’s *Confessions*, *The Prelude* also develops its narrative structure through intertextual memory. Augustine models the narrative structural development of the *Confessions* specifically on the *Aeneid*. Both the *Aeneid* and the *Confessions* combine the
psychology of the mind with an actual physical pilgrimage through peripatetic narration
(Broeniman 24). *The Prelude*, similar to Augustine’s *Confessions*, presents a pilgrimage that
unifies the forward motion of a physical journey with the retrospective narration of intellectual
and imaginative development. In Augustine’s *Confessions*, memory structures and unifies
narrative development. Augustine discusses the versatility of memory in the *Confessions*:

> Material things are there by means of their images; knowledge is there of itself; emotions
> are there in the form of ideas or impressions of some kind, for memory retains them even
> while the mind does not experience them, although whatever is in the memory must also
> be in the mind. My mind has the freedom of them all. I can glide from one to the other. I
> can probe deep into them and never find the end of them. This is the power of memory!

> This is the great force of life in living man, mortal though he is! (Augustine 224).

Augustine, similar to Wordsworth, uses didactic memory to choose the life scenes that
didactically narrate his life. Augustine’s *Confessions* and Wordsworth’s *Prelude* both have a
“subtext” of Virgilian poetry. Augustine envisioned the *Aeneid* as thematically about the errors
of Aeneas, and the *Confessions* are about the errors of Augustine. Augustine’s description of
stealing pears in *Confessions* 2 may seem trivial, but structurally connects with Augustine’s
didactic memory based on the *Aeneid*’s narrative structure (Broeniman 26-7). In similar fashion,
from the perspective of factual autobiography, Wordsworth’s “boat stealing” episode could be
considered trivial, because Wordsworth steals a boat briefly and then properly returns it.
However, the “boat stealing” episode is not trivial in terms of didactic memory, because this
particular “spots of time” structurally connects epic narrative with Wordsworth’s continuing
imaginative, intellectual, and ethical development.
Although *The Prelude* could be considered a secular epic that traces the “Growth of a Poet’s Mind,” its pilgrimage of individual growth suggests community growth as well. When Dante chose Virgil as his guide in *The Divine Comedy*, he had in mind both Virgil’s own poetry (*Aeneid*) and Augustine’s use of Virgil in the *Confessions* (MacCormack xx). Through following Virgil’s account of the wanderings of Aeneas, the reader comes to the understanding that entire cultures are connatural with individual destiny (MacCormack 15). *The Prelude* actually begins with the description of a city that Wordsworth is fleeing.

In the opening lines of Book I of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth describes escaping from a city that has no referential status.

> A captive greets thee, coming from a house  
> Of bondage, from yon City’s walls set free,  
> A prison where he hath long been immured.  
> Now I am free, enfranchis’d and at large.  
> May fix my habitation where I will.  (*Prelude* I.6-10)

This city only exists rhetorically through language, but also exists intertextually with the following scene from *Paradise Lost* (Kneale 39-40).

> Escap’t the Stygian Pool, though long detain’d  
> In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight  (*Paradise Lost* 3.14-15)

Kneale argues that on an intertextual level, the city that Wordsworth escapes from in the opening lines of *The Prelude* is not simply a prison, but the hell of *Paradise Lost* (40). Yet, Wordsworth also retains a Miltonic and Virgilian intertextuality within the same opening sequence of events. In terms of factual biography, Wordsworth lived a rural lifestyle in the Lake District of Northern England that was similar to Virgil’s rural lifestyle. Although the *Aeneid* traces the founding of
the eternal city, Virgil preferred to live in the countryside outside of Rome. When confronted with his poetic fame, Virgil seems to have preferred the life of a recluse (MacCormack 10). The great work that Wordsworth never wrote was tentatively titled *The Recluse*. Nonetheless, the *Aeneid* is about the founding of Rome, but in the following passage Wordsworth has successfully freed himself from the bondage of the city (lines 6-10), and is now in search of a pastoral home reminiscent of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.

> What dwelling shall receive me? In what Vale
> Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
> Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
> Shall with its murmur lull me to my rest? (*Prelude* I. 11-14).

Yet, like Aeneas, Wordsworth will flee the burning of one city (Troy, hell) in order to found another (Rome, the “paradise within”). Ultimately, the city that Wordsworth will found will be similar to *The Republic’s* idealized internal city. The city described in Plato’s *Republic* is an idealized inner state that only has the possibility to exist internally: “for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself” (*Republic* 275). This idealized city resembles Milton’s “A paradise within thee, happier far” (*Paradise Lost* 12.587) and *The Prelude’s* “mind of man becomes/ A thousand times more beautiful than the earth/ On which he dwells” (XIII. 446-448). This metaphoric city requires poetic knowledge to interpret correctly.

Philosophically, *Paradise Lost* encourages the exploration of the “paradise within” that finds direct expression in Wordsworth’s *Prelude* or *Growth of a Poet’s Mind*. As such, *The Prelude* does not break with literary tradition; instead, didactic memory both intratextually and intertextually informs the pattern of paideia in *The Prelude*. *The Prelude* as an epic is informed by epic tradition, but also effectively revisions the boundaries of poetic knowledge in
contemporary society. *Paradise Lost* narrates the mind’s non-referential status. Although *Paradise Lost* concludes with Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden, they both remain hopeful that the non-referential “paradise within” (*PL* 12.587) exists imaginatively (Weller 150).

In this sense, Wordsworth begins his epic where Milton’s epic ends: “I settle on some British theme, some old/ Romantic tale, by Milton left unsung” (*Prelude* I.179-80). *The Prelude*’s “regenerated paradise” exists within the imagination (Kneale 61). The “spots of time,” beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood, stimulate the growth of the imagination. *The Prelude* fully develops the role of “revisionary aesthetics” or didactic memory only briefly acknowledged in his earlier poetry, specifically “Tintern Abbey” (Kelley *Wordsworth’s* 62). In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth converts memory and imagination into poetry of hope and beauty (Lockridge 245).

**Interpretive Memory (Memory & Imagination) as Cultural Construct**

Post-cartesian western culture privileges individual identity. Many critics claim that *The Prelude* represents a privileged autobiography; however, this is only a half truth. *The Prelude* uses autobiography to show the web of interrelations that make an individual identity. *The Prelude* is specifically addressed to Coleridge and suggests the importance of shared experience in the development of the individual. Coleridge represents the necessary “other” that substantiates Wordsworth’s memory and imagination. The idea of a cultural construct is to suggest that there exists shared meaning between individuals within society. Biographically, Coleridge and Wordsworth might have parted ways in later life, but the poetry and prose of their intellectual lives prove they shared a sense of meaning. *The Prelude* uses interpretive memory (memory & imagination) as a cultural construct.
Wordsworth addresses Coleridge throughout *The Prelude*, but Coleridge also exists as both a messenger and “joint-labourer” at the site of Wordsworth’s memories. In Book II, Wordsworth’s address to Coleridge develops the ideal of interpretive memory as a cultural construct:

> Who that shall point, as with a wand, and say,
> ‘This portion of the river of my mind
> Came from yon fountain?’ Thou, my Friend! art one
> More deeply read in my own thoughts; to thee
> Science appears but, what in truth she is,
> Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
> But as succedaneum, and a prop
> To our infirmity.  (*Prelude* II. 213-220)

In this passage, Wordsworth and Coleridge share a sense of meaning in regards to poetic and scientific knowledge (empiricism, Cartesian duality). Science is a substitute or “succedaneum” to mankind’s infirmities in contemporary society. Through interpretive memory, Wordsworth challenges Cartesian distinctions between the self and other in the development of the individual. Coleridge and Wordsworth share a philosophy of poetic knowledge that acknowledges the interpretive role of “other” in individual intellectual and imaginative development. “To that extent, the Romantics teach us that the imagination is not a private aspect of a person’s mind, but rather the means whereby a public world is created by interacting and creative individuals who, by thinking in sufficient social harmony, realise enough inter-subjective agreement about the nature of things and feelings to, so-to-speak, bring them into existence” (Halpin “Why” 340). Wordsworth’s privileged memories (tempered by the “other”) and the sense of a shared
Romantic imagination combine in *The Prelude* to form interpretive memory as a cultural construct. Interpretive memory in *The Prelude* as a cultural construct continuously exhibits a philosophy of poetic knowledge.

Wordsworth continues the previous passage in Book II with a discussion of the boundaries imposed through the rationalism of Cartesian duality. Wordsworth uses interpretive memory to confront the “imaginative” boundaries created through scientific knowledge with the “imaginative” unity of poetic knowledge.

To our infirmity. Thou art no slave
Of that false secondary power, by which,
In weakness, we create distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
To thee, unblended by these outward shows,

The unity of all has been reveal’d  (*Prelude* I. 220-226)

Coleridge, “thou art no slave” to the rationalism of Cartesian duality that creates “puny boundaries” between the self and other, the mind and body, etc. that only exist imaginatively. Instead, Coleridge and Wordsworth insist on the imaginative unity of poetic knowledge, because poetic knowledge acknowledges the social and imaginative nature of human thought.

Wordsworth acknowledges in the passage above that the self/other and mind/body split has become central to the contemporary imagination. Although Cartesian duality has left an indelible mark on the contemporary imagination, overcoming Cartesian duality will lead to “new understandings, behaviors, and conditions” in society (Reiss 589). The above episode relates one of the many “proofs” of *The Prelude’s* use of interpretive memory to extend its vision beyond
Wordsworth’s privileged individuality. The hero-poet of *The Prelude* is an “enemy both of [scientific] professionalization and of specialization” in favor of general knowledge in which all can participate (McLane 6). However, the term “enemy” seems too harsh an appellation; poetic knowledge, as in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, places scientific knowledge (specialized knowledge) under the broad umbrella of poetic knowledge which binds all knowledge together through its generic accessibility. Poetic knowledge does not attempt to conquer scientific knowledge; instead, poetic knowledge proclaims that scientific knowledge must rely on the shared imagination of the community (cultural construct) to make its knowledge valid.

After Wordsworth states that the unity of all knowledge has been revealed to both himself and Coleridge, he explicitly states that education begins in childhood. However, scientific rationalism attempts to destroy unnecessary childhood memories because they corrupt reason. As Descartes states:

[One] entered the world in ignorance and the knowledge of one’s childhood being based solely on the senses’ weakness and teacher’s authority, it is almost impossible for one’s imagination not to be filled with innumerable false thoughts, until reason can take on its conduct” (*Philosophical II*: 400).

In fact, Wordsworth states that education begins when the child is completely dependent on the “other” for its basic survival.

Bless’d the infant Babe,

(For with my best conjectures I would trace

The progress of our being) blest the Babe,

Nurs’d in his Mother’s arms, the Babe who sleeps

Upon his Mother’s breast, who, when his soul
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,

Doth gather passion from his Mother’s eye! *(Prelude II.238-243)*

Wordsworth’s “conjectures” could easily be replaced with the ideal of interpretive memory as a cultural construct. In this passage, Wordsworth uses interpretive memory to trace the “progress of our being” that begins with a reliance on “other.” In this case, the infant babe cradled in its mother’s arms intuitively knows the “manifest kindred” with “other” that from infancy to adulthood creates meaning in culture. In this case, the first “other” is the infant babe’s mother. In summation, Wordsworth begins this passage with a reliance on Coleridge to substantiate his didactic memories and ends with a theory of knowledge that proclaims that the unity of all knowledge begins in infancy. The infant’s development of “passion” actually precedes the sublime georgic childhood activities described in Book I. Intertextually, *The Prelude* fully develops the process of *becoming* through didactic memory that is only briefly mentioned in “Tintern Abbey” (1798).

In “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth reflects by the river Wye, the “O sylvan Wye!” (56) how memory functions as a continuing process in the development of the individual:

> While here I stand, not only with the sense
> Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
> That in this moment there is life and food
> For future years. *(Poems I: 359, 62-65)*

In fact, Wordsworth poetically reenacts this process of becoming in “Tintern Abbey” through his use of didactic memory in *The Prelude*. Through interpretive memory, the river Wye in “Tintern Abbey” becomes the river Derwent in *The Prelude*. The river Derwent is the river of
Wordsworth’s fond remembrance of the Derwent initiates one of the best known scenes of Book I:

-- Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all Rivers, lov’d

To blend his murmurs with my Nurse’s song,

And from his alder shades and rocky falls,

And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice

That flow’d along my dreams? For this, didst Thou,

O Derwent! (Prelude I. 271-77)

In “Tintern Abbey,” memory acts as “an interior shelter created and preserved by the beautiful” (Kelley Wordsworth’s 58). The Prelude reenacts the same process of becoming in “Tintern Abbey” that promotes an aesthetic of the beautiful. In The Prelude, this process begins in the creation of childhood memories and continues in the recollection of these childhood memories into adulthood. The image of a flowing river makes an excellent metaphor for the imaginative development of Wordsworth’s mind throughout The Prelude.

The rivers Wye and Derwent have an explicit metaphorical affiliation to the intermingling of imaginative thought, and the sense of shared meaning that results from the formation of a cultural construct that exists between Coleridge and Wordsworth: “Who that shall point, as with a wand, and say, ‘This portion of the river of my mind/ Came from yon fountain?’” (Prelude II.213-15). Kenneth MacLean’s article “The Water Symbol in The Prelude,” discusses “the way” of water in The Prelude. Beginning with his search for a pastoral home near some “sweet stream” (I.13) in the first few lines of Book I, The Prelude consistently uses water symbolism to express both Wordsworth’s triumphs and tribulations (376-77). Water
is a metaphor for the imagination itself (MacLean 382). “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings…” (Wordsworth *Prose* I: 148). The cliché “all rivers run to the sea” makes an excellent natural metaphor for the intellectual development of the poet’s mind in *The Prelude*. The Derwent (childhood) will metaphorically flow into the wide sea described during the “climactic” climb of Snowdon in Book XIII. The sea represents poetic knowledge: an intellectual whole that includes memory and imagination, reason and emotion, intuitive and discursive knowledge, both the self and the other.

Wordsworth uses interpretive memory in *The Prelude* to acknowledge that autobiography, not just his autobiography, but all autobiography significantly relies on the role of the “other” in the creation of meaning. Imagination is “selective, synoptic [communal], integrative, and interpretative” (Halpin “Why” 340). In terms of epic narrative development, Wordsworth continually uses interpretive memory as a cultural construct throughout *The Prelude*. The cultural construct that Wordsworth creates directly challenges the epistemology of scientific knowledge. Charles Taylor emphasizes how modern culture through its adherence to scientific knowledge has ruled out the other in the development of the individual. The modern conception of individuality intentionally neglects the role of others in the development of individual identity. Modern culture defines individuality through a “declaration of independence” from others (C. Taylor 36). However, the cultural construct of *The Prelude* specifically acknowledges the “other” in the continuing formation of individual identity. The process of becoming through interpretive memory in both “Tintern Abbey” and *The Prelude* relies on the cultural construct of the “other” to create meaning. Towards the end of “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth addresses his sister Dorothy with the hope that her memory might also preserve the beautiful. "Tintern Abbey" suggests that a greater knowledge exists than any simple
resolution through fact; instead, Wordsworth’s shared vision with Dorothy expands on the web of interlocutions in the process of forging individual identity (Thomson 537). *The Prelude* expands the role of the “other” in the ongoing creation of meaning.

This study suggests that both Dorothy and Coleridge are necessary to complete the extended vision of *The Prelude* by forming a cultural construct with Wordsworth’s “privileged” individuality. In *The Prelude*, knowledge is a process of *becoming* that continues from childhood to adulthood. *The Prelude* traces “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind” through the unconventional use of the standard Virgilian sequence of poetic development from the pastoral to epic. However, Coleridge inverts the entire sequence of development that Wordsworth so carefully constructs. There are no idealized bucolic scenes in Coleridge’s childhood, because he was raised in the city:

> Thou, my Friend! wert rear’d
> In the great City, ‘mid far other scenes;
> But we, by different roads at length have gain’d
> The self-same bourne. (Prelude II. 466-469)

As described at the beginning of this chapter, *The Prelude* continually exhibits a logic of contradiction and accommodation (poetic knowledge) that elicits a new type of truth. Wordsworth’s georgic childhood scenes appear “privileged,” but they do not remain privileged. Although Coleridge is raised in the city, he becomes “The most intense of Nature’s worshippers” (*Prelude* II.477). Coleridge and Wordsworth travel diverse paths, but still share the same sense of wonder in nature. Undoubtedly, Coleridge’s childhood contradicts Wordsworth’s childhood. Paradoxically, this actually strengthens the shared sense of meaning that the cultural construct of *The Prelude* continually develops.
Finally, Wordsworth’s “Residence at Cambridge” (Book III) further develops the role of interpretive memory as a cultural construct. Similar to the epics that precede *The Prelude*, Wordsworth turned to the past to find meaning in the present. Wordsworth’s heroic vision for the intellectual health of contemporary society must somehow connect with the internal resources that have always been available to mankind (Wilkie 108). In Book III, Wordsworth reveals his heroic argument:

Enough: for now into a populous Plain

We must descend. – A Traveller I am,

And all my Tale is of myself; even so,

So be it, if the pure in heart delight

To follow me; and Thou, O honor’d Friend!

Who in my thoughts art ever at my side,

Uphold, as heretofore, my fainting steps. (*Prelude* III. 195-201).

Paradoxically, Wordsworth’s heroic argument “And all my Tale is of myself” (III.197) contains an accommodation of the “other.” Wordsworth completes his unconventional theme with “; even so” (III.197) Coleridge in thought is “ever at my side” (III.200). Wordsworth’s heroic argument reveals a basic claim that insists that Coleridge’s presence completes the journey that he is undertaking. The binary sign of Cartesian dualism no longer meaningfully interprets the totality of existence (Haney 66). In reality, Wordsworth never developed a friendship with Coleridge at Cambridge. Coleridge entered Cambridge the year that Wordsworth graduated (MacLean 375). The dialectic of Wordsworth’s epic autobiography is a paradox of fact and fiction.
Through interpretive memory, Wordsworth calls on the “venerable Doctors” (III.460) who “dwelt within these famous Walls [Cambridge]” (III.461) to restore imagination to its proper place within education. Wordsworth calls for a vigorous revival of learning at Cambridge that will rival the medieval and Renaissance humanistic tradition of an inspired education.

Lovers of truth, by penury constrain’d,

Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon read

Before the doors or windows of their Cells

By moonshine, through mere lack of taper light. \((Prelude \text{ III.}488-491)\)

In addition to the Renaissance scholars above, Wordsworth also envisions all the great English poets that attended Cambridge. In particular, The Prelude includes the vision of a youthful Milton at Cambridge:

Bounding before me, yet a stripling Youth,

A Boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks

Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,

And conscious step of purity and pride. \((Prelude \text{ III.}290-93)\)

Wordsworth seems to consciously choose the word “pride” to describe Milton in his youth at Cambridge. The heroic argument of Paradise Lost is based upon the fall of man through pride. However, in The Prelude, the concept of evil is addressed in intellectual terms, primarily in terms regarding the imagination. Wordsworth calls contemporary education at Cambridge a “recreant age” (III.409) that neglects the primary role of imagination in education. The Prelude's discussion of the contemporary conflict of the French Revolution will be addressed in The Prelude as an intellectual conflict. The following chapter will discuss Wordsworth’s hopes and disappointments with the French Revolution (Books IX-XII), and expand upon
Wordsworth’s conception of the imagination in terms relative to both scientific and poetic knowledge as inseparable contraries completing a unified whole.
CHAPTER FIVE

Chiasmus and Intellectual Transformation

A servant and messenger of the Muses, if preeminent in knowledge (perisson eideïē), should not be begrudging of his expertise (sophia), but should seek out these, point out those, invent other things, for to whom is he useful if he alone is knowledgeable (epistamenos)?

(Theognis Elegiac Poems 285, 769-72)

Chiasmus represents a rhetorical and structural literary tradition. The English expression “to set the cart before the horse” is actually connected to the rhetorical figure of chiasmus. The ancient Greek expression “hysteron proteron” literally means “the latter former.” The English expression recalls that in the tunnels of some coal mines, when a coal cart is full, the force of gravity will pull the coal cart out into the open. A horse must be connected to the cart to keep the cart from moving too rapidly, essentially countering the effects of gravity (Funk 30-1). This sense of parallel reversal, of contrary forces acting towards the same goal, ultimately illustrates the figure of chiasmus. Enlightenment reason privileges the force of gravity, thus challenging a chiastic ideal of the cosmos as conflicting forces acting together in unity. The simple figure of chiasmus may seem insignificant at first; however, chiasmus connects The Prelude to an aesthetic and philosophical tradition.

*The Prelude* has generally been understood as a breaking away from epic tradition, but the chiasms of *The Prelude* actually connect to a long chiastic tradition that dates back to Homer. Chiasmus can refer to a rhetorical trope, but also refers to the larger framing structure in epics known to Hellenists interchangeably as hysteron-proteron or ring composition (Reece 207). Welch states that scholiasts used the term chiasmus to refer to a rhetorical trope, but the term hysteron proteron to refer to structural order (255). Modern scholarship often uses the term chiasmus to refer to both the rhetorical trope and the structural order of a work of literature.
Novels and plays have a definite beginning, middle, and end in sequential time reminiscent of an Aristotelian syllogism. Unlike a novel, an epic does not proceed from A to B in a linear fashion, because like chiasmus, the structure of the epic is circular, and exists outside the constraints of sequential time. For instance, although the Aeneid begins in medias res, its actual beginning takes place in Troy. In circular fashion, the Aeneid begins in Troy and ends in the new Troy (Rome) (Wanamaker 102-3). This circuitous journey exists in most epics, perhaps most notably in Homer’s Odyssey.

Ring composition weaves even the smallest details of an epic into the larger fabric of the overall structure of the narrative. The patterning of ring composition is mnemonic, tectonic, aesthetic, and thematic (Reece 220). The minimum qualification for ring composition is that the beginning connects with the end, similar to the circumference of a circle (Douglas 1). Ring composition also represents a philosophy of poetic knowledge. The neoclassicists understood ring composition as discordia concors, basically meaning oneness or unity in multiplicity. Discordia concors embraces contraries that both oppose and correspond to one another in harmony (Wanamaker 6-12).

The term discordia concors embraces all of the same qualities that compose a chiasmus, essentially the terms are interchangeable. Chiasmus combines a philosophy of knowledge with thought patterns that cohesively connect together within the structures of language. “Chiasmus distills and delivers at the literal level what is projected as taking place at the cosmic” (Engel 6). Wanamaker connects the Miltonic simile to a pattern of discordia concors that structures the entirety of Paradise Lost. The Miltonic simile works in two opposing directions at once, and searches for truth by comparing and contrasting what is known with what is unknown. Paradoxically, the Miltonic simile must be read with a knowledge of discordia concors, the
In Areopagitica, Milton explains his use of *discordia concors* in the form of simile to narrate the overall structure of *Paradise Lost*:

Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned…. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. (*Milton’s 350*)

In Chapter One of this study, poetic knowledge was defined as paradoxical, contextual, relational, historical, and personal. In this quote from *Areopagitica*, Milton infers that both language and human knowledge are relative, and defines the good as both contrary and inseparable from evil. The opening lines of *Paradise Lost* define the harmonious contrarieties of chiasmus that define the entirety of *Paradise Lost* through the “Fortunate Fall.”

> Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit

> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste

> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,

> With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man

> Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, (*Paradise Lost* 1.1-5)

The “Fortunate Fall,” mankind’s rising and falling, imitates the circular structure of the epic itself. The epic theme reflects the structures of language, the world, and the cosmos. The apparent discords of the universe are harmonized by the ceaseless change of contrary forms into their opposites. Night turns to day, summer to winter, and the “Fortunate Fall” turns falling into rising (*Wanamaker* 120-4).
As stated in Chapter Four, instead of Cartesian dualism, *The Prelude* exhibits what can be termed both a logic of contradiction and accommodation that elicits a new type of truth. Instead of a law of exclusion (Cartesian duality), truth becomes a heterogeneous economy of abundance, because Cartesian contradictions or dualisms (mind/body) are not defined through separation, but accommodation. In essence, this is the same ideal of *discordia concors*, or ring composition that Milton employs in *Paradise Lost*. This philosophical ideal of the balance of opposites can also be traced to the presocratic philosophy of Heraclitus.

*Concordia discors* can be found in Plato, Cicero, Ovid, Seneca, Plutarch, Plotinus, and the Church fathers such as Augustine. In *discordia concors*, the microcosm (rhetoric) represents the macrocosm (structure) (Norford 22-3). In the case of *Paradise Lost*, the Miltonic simile defines the entire structure of the epic. In *Paradise Lost*, one opposite cannot exist without its other half, to do so would constitute a “half-truth.” Throughout *Paradise Lost*, Satan’s light is cast as a lunar light that receives its light from the sun/Son. However, Satan/Lucifer takes his light to be self-created. This opposition between lunar and solar light qualifies as an opposition between good and evil (Norford 29-33). Book XIII, the “climax” of *The Prelude*, creates similar distinctions between lunar and solar light as unified contraries. Antagonism works towards the creation of balance. Even in rhetoric, one must have both a subject and an object.

In rhetorical terms, chiasmus refers to a rhetorical trope that inverts word order in parallel clauses, and is related to antimetabole. Modern and classical rhetoric distinguishes that chiasmus operates on a wider scale than antimetabole, because in the reversal of terms, chiasmus also reverses ideas. However, Renaissance writers such as Shakespeare used these terms interchangeably (Davis “Better” 311-12). The term chiasmus derives from the Greek letter “X” (chi) that forms a symmetrical cross. Classical rhetoric observed chiasmus as a form of inverted
parallelism that offered symmetry (Engel 5). However, as noted, the term chiasmus extends beyond rhetoric and grammar.

Welch’s *Chiasmus is Antiquity* (1981) initiated a more astute study of chiasmus in modern literary criticism. Welch defines chiasmus as inverted parallelism that offers both inversion and balance. This aesthetic ideology is seen most often in an ABBA pattern (9-10). The crossing point, denoted as the letter “C” is often inferred in chiastic structures: ABCBA. “C” represents the central axis of *chi* “X,” around which ABBA constantly revolves in ceaseless opposition that creates harmony. These ceaseless oppositions are circuitous (ring composition) and paradoxically unify themselves through contradiction. In *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth uses a chiasmus that follows an ABBA pattern to describe the relationship of mankind’s mind to nature:

> How exquisitely the individual Mind  
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
> Of the whole species) to the external World  
> Is fitted:--and how exquisitely, too,  
> Theme this but little heard of among Men,  
> The external World is fitted to the Mind.

(*Home at Grasmere* “MS.D”105, 816-21).

Wordsworth’s “Prospectus” opens a larger discussion of the ability of chiasmus to connect the patterns of language to thought. As above, the ABBA pattern of chiasmus offers a simultaneous occurrence of opposition and reciprocity. Chiasmus offers a limitless circulation of relationships, evident in the metamorphosis of A into B, and B into A (Budick 962-64). In terms of epic structure, a chiasmus can often extend itself over several books, or over an entire
epic. Virgil repeatedly uses chiasmus in the *Aeneid* to structure thought patterns. The concentric pattern of chiasmus offers the potential for both an inversion of meaning and a collapse between distinctions. Chiasmus initiates binary opposition, only to collapse such opposition (Quint 274).

For the most part, modern criticism has overlooked the structural elements of chiasmus in *The Prelude*. Books IX-XII of *The Prelude* explores the French Revolution, but these Books also offer an extended structural chiasmus between reason and imagination, or scientific and poetic knowledge. Before exploring the structural chiasmi of *The Prelude*, it would be best to illustrate some of the rhetorical chiasmi that support the structural chiasmi of Books IX-XII.

**Rhetorical Chiasmus: Never the Same River**

Wordsworth gives his readers clues about the chiastic structure of Books IX-XII by providing rhetorical chiastic statements at the beginning of Book IX, and at the end of Book XII. The first chiastic statement at the beginning of Book IX connects *The Prelude* to a chiastic tradition. As noted in the previous chapter, water is a metaphor for the imagination (MacLean 382). “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings…” (Wordsworth *Prose* I: 148). Wordsworth’s introductory chiastic statement in Book IX presents the image of a river flowing to the sea that reverses its course. In other words, by reversing its course, the river flows to its headwaters, instead of the sea.

This image of a river flowing to the sea; but then reversing its course to its headwaters, makes a perfect representation of the letter chi “X” itself. *The Prelude’s* Books on Revolutionary France will progressively use chiasmus to explore the “river of the imagination.” Modern literature uses “stream of consciousness” to explore the “river of the imagination;” however, modern literature replaces *concordia discors* with *stream of consciousness*. Similar to Newton’s privileging of gravity, *stream of consciousness* privileges a
continual forward motion and the free association of ideas in the flowing river of “thought.”

However, *concordia discors* (chiasmus) connects the image of a flowing river with the image of both a forward and reverse flowing river, of rising with falling similar to the “Fortunate Fall” in *Paradise Lost*.

In Heraclitian philosophy, “logos” is the key term that connects an ideal of cosmic order to the structures of language (Brann 9-13). Heraclitian, and subsequently Christian Logos, suggests a structural pattern in which contradictory opposites are balanced in unity: destruction is involved in creation, creation is involved in destruction. The Heraclitian and Christian Logos imply a scale that balances all in harmonious proportion (Norford 48). “Balance consists, in *Paradise Lost*, of continual rising and falling in the scale of being: it is not static but dynamic” (Norford 51).

Nonetheless, in poetry and prose utilizing *stream of consciousness*, no single vision unifies cosmic disorder. Rationalism, scientific skepticism, and philosophical materialism destroyed the rationale that enabled the unifying principle of harmony between heterogeneous ideas implicit in the *discordia concors* (Wanamaker 133-35). The recovery of Wordsworth’s imagination in Book IX-XII of *The Prelude* must be read in terms of chiasmus (*discordia concors*). In *The Prelude*, the French Revolution is the greatest challenge to the poet-hero’s imaginative strength. The French Revolution creates the intellectual challenge that nearly destroys Wordsworth, as it did many of his contemporaries, through the loss of the imagination (Wilkie 93).

Yet, the recovery of Wordsworth’s imagination does not mean the loss of reason; instead, Wordsworth makes a chiastic relationship between reason and imagination. Enlightenment reason (scientific knowledge) and imagination (poetic knowledge) are not mutually exclusive
terms in *The Prelude*. Books IX-XII should be read in reference to how Wordsworth attempts to unify these conflicting elements. The initial rhetorical chiasmus of Book IX begins as follows:

As oftentimes a River, it might seem,
Yielding in part to old remembrances,
Part sway’d by fear to tread an onward road
That leads direct to the devouring sea
Towards the very regions which he cross’d
In his first outset; so have we long time
Made motions retrograde, in like pursuit
Detain’d.                      (*Prelude* IX.1-9)

In this stanza, Wordsworth’s mind parallels the flowing river. In chiasmus, parallelism offers inversion and balance. Inversion: the poet’s mind, like the flowing river, reverses its course. Balance: the “onward road” and the “motions retrograde” have “cross’d” to create the symmetrical chi “X” of chiasmus.

This initial chiastic image that Wordsworth creates in Book IX has its foundation in presocratic philosophy. In fact, the image exists in *The Fragments* of the presocratic philosopher Heraclitus. Heraclitus frequently uses the figure of chiasmus in the aphorisms of his *Fragments*. The following three aphorisms (12, 49a, 91) from Heraclitus’s *Fragments* (trans. Sweet) show the similarity with Wordsworth’s initial chiasmus in Book IX:

12. Upon those who step into the same stream ever different waters flow.

49a. In the same streams we both step and do not step; we both are and are not.
91. One cannot step twice into the same river…nor can one twice take hold of mortal substance in a stable condition; for by the quickness and swiftness of its alteration it scatters and gathers – at the same time it endures and dissolves, approaches and departs.

(Heraclitus)

In particular, fragment 49a exhibits a chiasmus that closely matches the introductory chiasmus in Book IX of The Prelude. Both the river and the individual are never twice the same; therefore reality is regarded by Heraclitus as a process. Reality, like Heraclitus’s river in fragment 49a is defined primarily through change (Johnson 381-2). In terms relative to The Prelude, Enlightenment reason fundamentally changed the nature of reality. Enlightenment reason retains a static or absolute logic, as opposed to an ambiguous, yet fecund fluidity.

Even today, the binary divisions associated with Descartes’s rationalism affects modern conceptions of the nature of reality. There is no way to return to a prescientific civilization, but Wordsworth finds a way to accommodate scientific knowledge within the tradition of epic. As Johnson states effectively, Galileo dropped two cannon balls from the top of the tower of Pisa to demonstrate that both cannon balls, although differing in weight, would drop at the same rate of speed. By dropping these cannon balls, Galileo was exploring the effects of gravity; yet, metaphorically Galileo bombarded the dikes of prescientific Aristotelian civilization (387-8).

Like Galileo, Descartes, Locke, and Newton challenged traditional conceptions of reality and being. Locke’s concept of the mind as tabula rasa and Newton’s theory of gravity in a mechanical universe are both built upon Descartes’s concept of the primacy of individual identity as cogito ergo sum (I think, therefore I am). Enlightenment rationalism leads to the “absolutes” of reductive materialism. According to materialism, even mankind’s consciousness results from the “material” reaction of energy or matter; not from free will.
However, both Heraclitus and Wordsworth use the physics (matter, energy, motion) of a river to illustrate the metaphysics of change. As discussed in the Chapter Three, Wordsworth uses didactic memory to explain the development of the individual mind as a process of becoming. Wordsworth’s river chiasmus illustrates the process of didactic memory that connects the development of the mind as a circuitous journey from childhood to adulthood. The introductory chiasmus of Book IX of The Prelude and Heraclitus’s fragment 49a both discuss “being” through an image of the “river of Becoming.” In fact, the proper title of Heraclitus’s Fragments is “On Nature,” which also translates from the original Greek as “On the Moving World” (Brann 5). In Heraclitean philosophy, the only constant in human life is change.

Platonic philosophy characterizes presocratic philosophers as concerned primarily with a speculation of nature (physics). Plato and Aristotle both obscure the metaphysical aspects of presocratic thought. In actuality, Homer (similar to presocratic philosophers such as Heraclitus) connects nature to being, or physics with metaphysics (Piccone 180-1). Logos remains the keyword in any discussion of Heraclitus’s philosophical method. In Aristotle, logos refers primarily to the study of language and rhetoric. In Heraclitus, logos also refers to the relationship between mankind and the cosmos, often termed “cosmological logos” (Anker 182). “Heraclitus likens the possession of real knowledge to the comprehension of language, and the structure of the world to the structure of language” (Curd 531). The philosophical ideal of logos presents itself effectively through an aesthetic of contradiction, the unity of opposites apparent in the rhetorical figure of chiasmus.

Logos is the key term in the Western philosophical tradition. Coleridge’s Aids to Reflection sheds light on the way that Wordsworth uses logos in The Prelude. In Aids, Coleridge
argues that Descartes’s *Geometry* (1637) proposes a purely mechanical universe that is a “fiction of science.”

…Des Cartes proprounced it as a truth of fact: and instead of a world created and filled with productive forces by the almighty *Fiat*, left a lifeless machine whirled about by the dust of its own grinding: as if death could come from the living fountain of life; nothingness and phantom from the plenitude of reality, the absoluteness of creative will!

*(Aids* 345)

In Descartes’s philosophy, as later refined by Newton, reason replaces the ideal of a cosmic logos, and mechanical order replaces the human will. The opening chiasmus of Book IX actually elucidates Wordsworth’s conception of a cosmic logos. How does a purely mechanical universe explain “motions retrograde” (*Prelude* IX.8) that oppose the forces of gravity?

In conventional cosmology, the effects of gravity have an unlimited range. Einstein’s theory of general relativity is based upon Newton’s theory of gravity. These theories, including the prevailing Big Bang theory, overlook the *cause* of gravity. Lambda, after the Greek letter Λ, is the generic term given to any force that opposes gravity. In Big Bang theory, lambda is known as dark matter or dark energy. In Big Bang theory, gravity and lambda are described as opposite effects always in conflict with one another (Ranzan 75-78). The Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland has been devised to search for this elusive dark matter, also known as Higgs boson. As of March of 2013, the existence of this elusive Higgs particle has been tentatively confirmed. However, in Heraclitian fashion, the cosmology of the Dynamic Steady State Universe (DSSU) questions the primacy of gravity that began with Enlightenment reason.

Instead of lambda and gravity opposing one another, DSSU theory proposes that lambda and gravity reinforce one another (Ranzan 78). In Heraclitian philosophy, the apparent
contradiction of opposites always leads to harmonious unity. The following Heraclitian
fragments, translated by Sweet, reinforce this idea:

8. What is in opposition is in agreement, and the most beautiful harmony
comes out of things in conflict (and all happens according to strife).

54. The hidden harmony is superior to the visible.

60. The way up and down is one and the same.

103. Beginning and end are common in the circumference of a circle.

DSSU theory closely matches the cosmology of *discordia concors* in *Paradise Lost*, and *The
Prelude* participates in the harmony of opposites through the use of chiasmus. Wordsworth
unifies reason and imagination, similar to the way that DSSU theory unifies gravity and lambda.

The crossing point at the center of a chiasmus, the axis at the center of *chi* “X,” evokes
the image of concentric circles (Breck 71). “Towards the very regions which he cross’d/ In his
first outset” (*Prelude* IX.6-7). Wordsworth’s initial chiasmus reinforces the ideal of a central
axis that creates the circumference of a circle. This aesthetic ideology also explains Milton’s
cosmology as discussed in Chapter Three: every circle must have a center - no matter how large
or small. Regardless of whether or not dark matter (lambda) is ever discovered, Big Bang theory
will always theorize that lambda and gravity are forces in conflict with one another. DSSU
theory proposes that these conflicting forces work together in unity, in the harmony of opposites
(Ranzan 80-2). Book XIII of *The Prelude*, as will be discussed in the final chapter; further
explores the aesthetic ideology of a cosmic logos through lunar and solar imagery in the ascent
of Mt. Snowdon.

In the river chiasmi of Heraclitus and Wordsworth, not only does the universe flow like a
river, but so does the mind. However, thought pattern is not structured like *stream of*
consciousness, but as a chiasmus. In reference to Enlightenment reason, Wordsworth’s river chiasmus provides a conflicting conception of the nature of the world, the cosmos, and the mind. How Wordsworth structurally unifies these conflicting philosophies in Books IX-XII will be discussed in the next section on structural chiasmus. Nonetheless, Wordsworth continually connects aesthetics with philosophy throughout *The Prelude*.

Philosophically, Books IX-XII of *The Prelude* narrate Wordsworth’s hopes and disappointments with the French Revolution. The French Revolution was meant to be the culmination of Enlightenment reason, but Wordsworth discovers that reason alone does not sustain the promises of the French Revolution: “To depravation, the Philosophy/ That promised to abstract the hopes of man/ Out of his feelings” (*Prelude* X. 807-9). As Wordsworth poetically proclaims in this excerpt, the rationalism of the French Revolution creates a duality that separates emotion from reason and creates an intellectual condition that promotes a morally corrupt society.

The law of universal gravitation may appear beyond reproach to a post-cartesian civilization. However, in essence, Wordsworth challenges the rationalism underlying the law of universal gravitation by denying that mankind is simply a passive observer in a purely mechanical universe. The universe that Wordsworth inhabits is a naturally organic universe, not a mechanical one. Instead of passive observer, Wordsworth argues through *The Prelude* that mankind is an active participant in an organic universe. In this respect, Milton and Wordsworth share similar cosmologies. Budick proposes that literary tradition itself is composed of chiastic relationships between poets. Surely, Wordsworth’s neoclassical predecessor Milton contributed to his own understanding of chiasmus (962-3). Both Milton and Wordsworth share a philosophy of knowledge that is organic, in which each circumference must be linked to its center.
The river chiasmus of Book IX rhetorically foreshadows how Wordsworth will structurally unify reason with imagination in Books IX-XII. Descartes’s attempt to separate memory from reason has been discussed in the previous chapter; however, Wordsworth’s reverse flowing river in Book IX reinforces Wordsworth’s use of didactic memory in the development of the rational mind. Wordsworth’s initial chiasmus in Book IX also stresses the unity of opposites (mind and nature), but also characterizes Wordsworth’s conception of the binary divisions comprising Enlightenment reason. Both the rhetorical and structural chiasmi of *The Prelude* promote a philosophy of poetic knowledge that attempts to unify the conflicting dualities of Enlightenment reason.

The friendship between Wordsworth and Coleridge acts as an analogue for the contemporary events of the French Revolution. In *The Prelude*, the analogy of friendship with social revolution promotes a logic of contradiction (Kahan 159) that protests the betrayal of human values that exists during the French Revolution (especially the Reign of Terror). An epic should appeal to a larger audience by its presentation of a “philosophically preferable model of conduct” (Mori 9). Wordsworth’s relationship with Coleridge was often strained; however, *The Prelude* suggests that Coleridge’s friendship promotes an intellectual revolution at the site of the individual poet’s mind. The poet’s mind is the axis, the crossing point, of these chiastic relationships.

Essentially, by addressing Coleridge in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth exchanges *The Prelude* itself for intellectual growth that initiates in his friendship with Coleridge. Wordsworth essentially exchanges an individual privilege (*The Prelude*) for the moral and social order of the community. Instead of abandoning Coleridge during his physical and intellectual illnesses, Wordsworth continually attempts to integrate Coleridge into his community (Kneale 59).
Wordsworth’s concern for Coleridge’s well-being translates into a concern for the health of society. Lucy Newlyn states that *The Prelude* represents a solitary quest, to which Wordsworth’s friendship to Coleridge is irrelevant (148).

Indeed, *The Prelude* represents a privileged solitary journey, but friendship is not irrelevant. Instead, friendship completes the exchange between solitary privilege and community values. Also, *The Prelude* blurs the boundary between self (Wordsworth) and other (Coleridge). Without this social exchange, then the didactic ethical code that *The Prelude* as an epic promotes becomes irrelevant. Modern poetry often lacks this didactic emphasis, but *The Prelude* does not. Instead, the symbolic transaction of friendship completes *The Prelude*’s circuitous journey of accommodation. In the final stanza of the 1805 *Prelude*, Wordsworth hopes that Coleridge will be “Restored to us in renovated health” (XIII.424).

Coleridge spent a lifetime on philosophical studies to find an ideal of cosmic logos that already exists in *The Prelude*. “He [Coleridge] knew that if a balanced view of the organic whole that constitutes all Being was to be restored, the spiritual life of Nature would have to be reborn, through the imagination” (Tomlinson 84). Logos is the key term that Coleridge uses increasingly in his prose works to counter the effects of Enlightenment reason (King 43-47). Interestingly, Coleridge suspends writing poetry as his interest in the unifying principle of Logos increases (Meurs 40). However, in *The Prelude*, both rhetorical and structural chiasmus illustrate Wordsworth’s sense of cosmic logos, of unified order through contrariety, and unites his poetry with a chiastic tradition. In essence, the friendship between Coleridge and Wordsworth in *The Prelude* represents a chiastic relationship.

Books IX-XII of *The Prelude* narrates the loss of Wordsworth’s imagination through rationalism and the subsequent restoration of an esemplastic imagination that acknowledges the
“other.” As “joint-labourers” (*Prelude* XIII.439) both Wordsworth and Coleridge negotiate the error of isolated individualism in Descartes’s rationalism. In addressing Coleridge’s friendship, Wordsworth concludes Book XII with a chiastic statement:

```
I remember well
That in life's every-day appearances
I seem'd about this period to have sight
Of a new world, a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted and made visible
To other eyes, as having for its base
That whence our dignity originates,
That which both gives it being and maintains
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from within and from without,
The excellence, pure spirit, and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees. (*Prelude* XII.368-79)
```

Thus, Wordsworth returns at the conclusion of Book XII to the Heraclitian ideal of a cosmic logos through the balance of opposites. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake states “Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence” (The Argument,” 62, Plate 3, lines 10-14).

Wordsworth uses chiasmus in *The Prelude* the same way that Milton uses *discordia concors* in *Paradise Lost*: “The symbol of concordia discord in the epic is the scales or balance, which is closely related to certain structural patterns” (Norford 47). The chiastic conclusion of Book XII specifically recalls the balance of chiasmus in epic tradition: “A balance, an ennobling
interchange” (*Prelude* XII.376). In the recovery of Wordsworth’s imagination, Books IX-XII of *The Prelude* follows a downward, then upward movement; a rising and falling that recalls the chiastic *dicordia concors* structure of *Paradise Lost’s* “Fortunate Fall.” As Shelley states in his “Defence of Poetry,” all true poets contribute “episodes to that great poem, which all poets, like the cooperating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world” (43).

**Structural Chiasmus: The Circumference of a Circle**

Books IX-XII of *The Prelude* simulates the ABBA structure of a common rhetorical chiasmus. A probable structural chiasmus of Books IX-XII appears as follows:

A. Book IX – Eros “Vaudracour and Julia”  
B. Book X – Reason (Scientific Knowledge)  
B. Book XI – Imagination (Poetic Knowledge)  
A. Book XII – Agape and Community

In these books, contrary forms transform into their opposites, illustrating a primary unity between contrarieties in the development of the hero-poet’s mind. The passionate love of the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode in Book IX transforms into a love for humanity in Book XII evoked through the symbol of friendship. Privileged Enlightenment reason in Book X transforms into a communal imagination in Book XI. Wordsworth appears to confirm this chiastic structural pattern in Book X when he states:

> My sentiments, was not, as hitherto,  
> A swallowing up of lesser things in great;  
> But change of them into their opposites, (*Prelude* X.763-5)

Following the model outlined above, the following sections will explore the chiastic circumference of Books IX-XII of *The Prelude*. 
A. Book IX – Eros in “Vaudracour and Julia”

Book IX begins with the rhetorical chiasmus discussed previously, and then proceeds to discuss Wordsworth’s hopes for the French Revolution. Wordsworth’s ideal of the French Revolution is informed by men like Michel Beaupuy, who advanced the republican cause of the revolution. In Book IX, Wordsworth and Beaupuy, while out walking, come across a “hunger-bitten Girl” (IX.511). Beaupuy’s responds to the scene of this starving girl as follows:

and at the sight my Friend

In agitation said, ‘’Tis against that

Which we are fighting,’ I with him believed (IX.517-19)

A few lines later, Wordsworth connects the “hunger-bitten Girl” with the cause of republican freedom:

And finally, as sum and crown of all,

Should see the People having a strong hand

In making their own Laws, whence better days

To all mankind (IX.530-33)

This episode on Wordsworth’s hopes for the French Revolution directly precedes a narrative foreshadowing the disappointments of the Revolution as described in the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode. The “Vaudracour and Julia” episode is often described as a monotonous and boring love story that “misses the mark,” so to speak. However, the passionate love story of “Vaudracour and Julia” initiates a chiastic structural pattern concerning the challenges posed by the French Revolution.

In terms of epic, the love affairs of Aeneas and Dido, Helen and Paris, or Odysseus and Penelope readily come to mind. Contrasted with the chastity and loyalty of Penelope, the
adulterous love affair between Helen and Paris produces disastrous results. However, Wordsworth’s tale of “Vaudracour and Julia” directly alludes to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*:

> I pass the raptures of the Pair; such theme
> Hath by a hundred Poets been set forth
> In more delightful verse than skill of mine
> Could fashion, chiefly by that darling Bard
> Who told of Juliet and her Romeo  (IX.634-38)

Wordsworth’s allusion to *Romeo and Juliet* in the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode informs an understanding of how this episode connects to the larger structural pattern of Books IX-XII. There are multiple ways of interpreting the love affair between Romeo and Juliet; however, a brief summary of the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode proves necessary.

The story of “Vaudracour and Julia” closely parallels the romantic tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*. In brief, Vaudracour and Julia are young lovers. Vaudracour comes from a noble family and Julia is a commoner. Their love affair, similar to the affair between Romeo and Juliet, is unusual because it crosses social boundaries. In the case of Romeo and Juliet, their love affair crosses the boundaries of the rival families of the Montagues and Capulets. In pre-revolutionary France, Vaudracour represents the *ancien régime* and Julia a commoner. In both stories, the love affair crosses pre-existing social boundaries. In both stories, each family attempts to separate the lovers. When Vaudracour’s father attempts to have Vaudracour arrested with a *lettre de cachet*, Vaudracour ends up murdering a soldier with his sword. In conclusion, Romeo murders twice in *Romeo and Juliet* with his sword. Only the ending to “Vaudracour and Julia” significantly differs from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. 
As a romantic tragedy, both Romeo and Juliet die at the end of Shakespeare’s play. “Vaudracour and Julia” is often characterized as a melodrama of protest, because at the end of the story the two lovers just moulder away. Additionally, there is no catharsis to end the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode. After giving birth to their child, Julia is forced by her family to enter a convent. Shamed by his “noble” father, Vaudracour takes the child to live as a hermit in the forest. Shortly thereafter the child dies. Vaudracour loses his power of speech and spends the rest of his days simply wasting away in inconsolable grief. Since Wordsworth directly alludes to *Romeo and Juliet*, and the fact that the stories so closely parallel each other, an informed reading of the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode should also explore a reading of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Joseph Pearce notes that there are three primary ways of reading the love affair in *Romeo and Juliet*. These three methods of reading apply equally to a reading of “Vaudracour and Julia.” First, a fatalistic reading proposes that Romeo and Juliet are the victims of blind fate that acts with mechanical indifference. In this fatalistic reading, no one is responsible for the events that occur, because there is nothing anyone can do to change the course of the events that occur. Secondly, the play can be read as a “feudal” or romantic reading, in which the feuding parties are to blame for what occurs. In this case, Veronese society, and the feud between the Montagues and Capulets receives the blame for the events that occur. Thirdly, the play can be read as a moralistic or cautionary tale in which free will, the freely chosen actions of each character, has wide reaching implications on the events that occur throughout the play. In this reading, the actions of the lovers must be read in conjunction alongside social restrictions (20-1).

This study suggests eliminating the second method of reading as a probability; however, the second method appears to be the main reading of the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode in
current Romantic studies. In *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*, Liu states: “The structure of society victimizes Vaudracour/ Romeo and poisons his life. So pronounced is the wrench in expectations from comic to tragic that Vaudracour changes scripts entirely to become villain rather than victim, a malcontent rather than Romeo” (377). Brenda Banks parallels Liu’s “feudal” reading by stating that: “Wordsworth’s young lovers are felled by social and historical phenomenon, specifically by the rigid class structure and legal system of the *ancien régime* in eighteenth-century France as represented in Vaudracour’s noble father, rather than by the metaphysical forces that usually defeat the classical tragic hero” (284). However, Banks later contradicts her own argument by stating that “Vaudracour represents the failure of passion and commitment in the chastised radical” (296). Is Vaudracour the victim of society or is he at all responsible for his situation through his own actions?

This study suggests that the passionate use of free will in conjunction within a determinate and limiting society ultimately determines the fate of both the couples in “Vaudracour and Julia,” and *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet, before progressing along this path, it is necessary to review a mechanistic reading of “Vaudracour and Julia.” To read “Vaudracour and Julia” as victims of blind fate that works with mechanical indifference, works towards Wordsworth’s favor in the development of issues relating to Enlightenment reason in Books IX-XII. If the universe is nothing more than a machine, as Newton’s reductive materialism suggests, then no one is responsible for the events that occur in the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode. In this case, the mechanical indifference of reductive materialism determines the events that take place like “clockwork.” Nevertheless, it seems most appropriate to read the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode as a cautionary tale on free will.
In “Vaudracour and Julia,” Wordsworth portrays reductive materialism against its opposite: free will. The failure of individuals to respond appropriately to the social challenges of the French Revolution explains Wordsworth’s choice of love as *eros* in the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode. In Book XII, *eros* transforms into its opposite, the *agape* of friendship. In this reading, one must understand that the passionate love of Vaudracour/Romeo hinder their free will in responding appropriately to the social challenges presented to them. Throughout *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare develops the *eros* of Romeo’s love as a blinding force:

> Love is a smoke rais’d with the fume of sighs;
> Being purg’d, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes;
> Being vex’d, a sea nourish’d with loving tears.
> What is it else? A madness most discreet,
> A choking gall, and a preserving sweet. (1.1.188-92)

Romeo describes love as a madness, his vision hindered by the smoke rising from the blazing fire of passionate love. At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio makes the following chiastic statement to Romeo: “If love be rough with you, be rough with love” (1.4.27). Davis states that Shakespeare uses rhetorical chiasmus in *Romeo and Juliet* to order ideas that act as a structural blueprint for the play itself (“Structural” 253). Although a specific chiastic structure in *Romeo and Juliet* has not yet been researched, the excerpts above illustrate Shakespeare’s chiastic portrayal of the contraries of passionate love. Romeo’s describes passionate love as both “A choking gall, and a preserving sweet” (1.1.192). In Romeo’s description of love as *eros* lies the crux of Wordsworth’s argument in the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode.

The irresolute passion of the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode foreshadows the Reign of Terror in Book X. In the opening scenes of *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is shaped more by the
Petrarchan sonnet tradition of love, than by the violence of Veronese society (Pearlman 24). In fact, Romeo’s concept of love is actually a parody, or inversion of Petrarchan love (Pearce 27). Romeo’s love is not the Petrarchan agape of unselfish love, but the eros of passionate, selfish love. Romeo inverts light and darkness in his confusion of Petrarchan ideals, and swears his love by the moon. The earthly and more reasonable Juliet responds:

O, swear not by the moon, th’ inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circle orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable. (II.II.109-11)

In both Vaudracour/ Romeo, murder results out of an irrational passionate love. After Vaudracour murders the soldier sent by his father to arrest him, he greets Julia as follows:

He greeted her with these. ‘All right is gone,
Gone from me. Thou no longer art mine,
I thine; a Murderer, Julia, cannot love
An innocent Woman; I behold thy face
I see thee and my misery is complete.’ (Prelude IX. 706-710)

Banks states that Vaudracour’s only heroic act is to kill one of his father’s men carrying the lettre de cachet, the warrant for his arrest (288). How can Vaudracour’s murder of this soldier be read as a heroic act, when this event ultimately seals the unhappy fate of both lovers?

Vaudracour’s act of murder must be read in light of the chiastic structure of The Prelude that also includes the Reign of Terror in Book X. If the Reign of Terror illustrates the failure of Enlightenment reason to advance the goals of Revolutionary France, then Vaudracour’s act of murder must also act as an attempt to realize the failure of love between “Vaudracour and Julia” through the extremity of passionate love, or eros.
As a cautionary tale on free will, the metaphysical force of passionate love within the confines of prerevolutionary France defeats “Vaudracour and Julia.” Book X of *The Prelude* parallels the madness of the Terror with the madness of passionate love in Book IX of the “Vaudracour and Julia” episode. The madness of “Vaudracour and Julia” and the madness of the Reign of Terror act as parallel clauses that form the first half of Wordsworth’s structural chiasmus:

The goaded Land wax’d mad; the crimes of few

Spread into madness of the many, blasts

From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven; (*Prelude* X.313-15)

If “Vaudracour and Julia” is meant to be read as a melodrama of protest, then the protest involves Vaudracour’s free will within the confines of a limiting society. The reader of *The Prelude* must remember that Wordsworth’s chiastic structure is working towards a transformation of awareness. Vaudracour fails in two ways to respond appropriately to the challenges of prerevolutionary France. First, he willingly results to violence and secondly, he ultimately submits to authority and acts ambivalently towards his own situation.

Wordsworth contrasts Beaupuy’s righteous indignation at the beginning of Book IX with Vaudracour’s failure of action and inaction. Had Vaudracour responded to his father with righteous indignation, not violence or submissiveness, then the outcome of the Revolution itself might have been different (Banks 297). Vaudracour and Julia’s dead child may perhaps symbolize the death of the initial hopes of the Revolution. Finally, Vaudracour is “cut off” from society, symbolic of the isolation between individuals instigated by Enlightenment reason: “Cut off from all intelligence with Man” (IX.928), “His days he wasted, an imbecile mind” (IX.934). Ultimately, *eros*, a passionate love that blinds reason, has led Vaudracour into a life of isolation.
In Book XII Wordsworth will transform *eros* into *agape*, thus turning one aspect of love into its opposite, and eliminating isolation through friendship (Coleridge) and familial love (Dorothy).

**B. Book X – Reason (Scientific Knowledge)**

The French Revolution supremely tests not only Wordsworth’s imaginative powers, but the imaginative powers of society. Motivated by a didactic ethical code, Wordsworth scientifically probes the living, organic body of society to discover its ailments:

> In temperament, I took the knife in hand  
> And stopping not at parts less sensitive,  
> Endeavored with my best skill to probe  
> The living body of society  
> Even to the heart; I push’d without remorse (X. 873-877)

The truth that Wordsworth discovers is that the French Revolution was supported by “reasonings false/ From the beginning” (X.884-5). Beginning with Book X, Wordsworth elucidates these “reasonings false” by exploring how rationalism fails in action. The collective madness of the Reign of Terror in Book X parallels the individual madness of Vaudracour in Book IX.

> Men like Robespierre, influenced by Enlightenment philosophy, directed the initial hopes of the Revolution towards the path of the Terror. Through the individual actions of men like Robespierre, who indiscriminately killed his enemies, the masses became caught up in the momentum of a violent Revolution. Wordsworth describes the guillotine as an indiscriminate toy made for the amusement of the masses:  
> Head after head, and never heads enough  
> For those that bade them fall: they found their joy,  
> They made it, ever thirsty as a Child,
If light desires of innocent little Ones

May with such heinous appetites be match’d,

Having a toy, a wind-mill, through the air (X. 336-341)

The connection of the guillotine to a childhood toy seems unusual, but Bohm connects this passage from *The Prelude* to a passage from the *Aeneid* that denounces violence as a proper course of action. In Book 7 of the *Aeneid*, the rage of Amata is compared to a spinning top. Just as a spinning top has no idea what keeps it spinning, Amata has no idea of the true cause and momentum of her rage (125). The violence of the Reign of Terror initiates a momentum of action that effectively turns rationalism into irrationality.

Wordsworth compares Robespierre’s rise to power during the Reign of Terror with Milton’s fallen angels in *Paradise Lost* (Peterfreund “*The Prelude*” 462). Wordsworth’s address to Coleridge in Book X about the overthrow of Robespierre not only alludes to the fallen angels in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, but also alludes to the social nature of knowledge that rationalism rejects:

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine

Through my whole life than that when first I heard

That this foul tribe of Moloch was o'erthrown,

And their chief Regent levell’d with the dust. (X.467-70)

Book I of *Paradise Lost* develops the epic argument that defines Milton’s entire epic. In Book I, Milton connects mankind’s disobedience to God with the exile of the fallen angels from Heaven. As a “fallen angel,” Robespierre initiates a momentum of action that uses violence to achieve its proposed results. Right might, wrong right. The violence of the Terror clouds the minds of the multitude in a madness that loses sight of the initial ideals of the Revolution. The rationale lying
behind the blood that Robespierre spills during the Reign of Terror matches Maloch’s “affront” of darkness for light in Book I of *Paradise Lost*:

> And with thir darkness durst affront his light.

> First *Moloch*, horrid King besmear'd with blood

> Of human sacrifice, and parents tears,

> Though for the noyse of Drums and Timbrels loud

> Thir childrens cries unheard, that past through fire (*Paradise Lost* 1.391-95)

With Wordsworth’s comparison of Robespierre to the fallen angel Moloch, there is also a generic transformation taking place. Unlike the portrayal of evil in *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth differs from previous epics by discussing evil primarily in intellectual terms (Wilkie 86). Wordsworth describes repeatedly in Book X how rationalism initiates the Revolution, but also how rationalism becomes incapable of sustaining the actions and ideals of the Revolution.

> From this time forth, in France, as is well known,

> Authority put on a milder face,

> Yet everything was wanting that might give

> Courage to those who look’d for good by light

> Of rational experience, good I mean
At hand, and in the spirit of past aims. (X.568-73)

Just as Vaudracour is caught up in passionate love, Wordsworth admits to being a youth caught up in the cloud of Enlightenment reason: “juvenile errors are my theme” (X.638). And Wordsworth describes reason as an enchantress:

When Reason seem’d the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime Enchanter to assist the work,
Which then was going forwards in her name. (X.698-701)

Enlightenment reason is an enchantress that seduces, and then breaks the hearts of mankind. Wordsworth himself participates in this “love affair,” and it ends in dejection and an intellectual crisis. Passionate love both initiates and ends the violence in *Romeo and Juliet.* In the case of both *Romeo and Juliet* and “Vaudracour and Julia,” violence keeps both sets of couples from transcending social boundaries. Yet, even without violence, both *eros* and Enlightenment reason offers an incomplete blueprint of effective social action.

Towards the end of Book X, Wordsworth signals the chiastic reversal of *eros* and Enlightenment reason (scientific knowledge):

My sentiments, was not, as hitherto,

A swallowing up of lesser things into great;

But change of them into their opposites, (X.763-65)

The chiastic reversal of *eros* and reason into imagination and *agape* in Books XI and XII respectively, illustrates the transformation of consciousness that is taking place in “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind.” Throughout Books IX-XII, Wordsworth structurally develops the transformation of “a Poet’s Mind” through chiasmus. Structurally, chiasmus offers symmetry
and inversion, reciprocity, cyclical change, transformation, and ultimately unity. Wordsworth does not condemn *eros* or Enlightenment reason; however, *eros* and reason exist as a “half-truth,” or parallel clause, to the cohesive chiastic structure that will include imagination and *agape* as a reciprocal parallel clause in Books XI and XII.

Through this chiastic structure, Wordsworth infers that liberty in France must advance through “The freedom of the individual mind” (X.826). And perhaps, the individual intellect capable of viewing both sides of the same coin offers the greatest human liberty of all:

> For howsoe’er unsettled, never once
> Indifferent to its welfare, but, enflam’d
> With thirst of secure intelligence
> And sick of other passion, I pursued
> A higher nature  

(X.831-36)

When Wordsworth gives up on “demanding proof,/ And seeking it in everything” (X.897-8) it is his sister Dorothy that helps him to recover his imagination. Dorothy speaks to Wordsworth “like a brook/ That does but cross a lonely road” (X.911-12). The isolation of Enlightenment reason transforms itself into the fullness of a communal imagination in Book XI. Wordsworth concludes Book X with reference to several philosophers, among them Empedocles: “Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles” (X.1013). The presocratic philosopher Empedocles was the first philosopher to argue in verse that the earth is composed of four elements (fire, air, earth, and water) that are moved by two opposing forces: love and discord. Perhaps a further allusion to the *discordia concors* taking place throughout Books IX-XII.

**B. Book XI – Imagination (Poetic Knowledge)**
Wordsworth successfully navigates the rationalism of the French Revolution in two primary ways 1) through an imaginative change in the conception of himself as a knight errant of nobility into a compassionate equal among the suffering and underprivileged, and 2) through friendship, and the help of others. As Books IX and X illustrate the loss of Wordsworth’s imagination through rationalism, Books XI and XII narrate the restoration of Wordsworth’s esemplastic imagination that acknowledges the “other.” Through the concept of a communal imagination, *The Prelude* attempts to alleviate the error of isolated individualism inherent in Enlightenment rationalism. In *The Prelude*, imagination is the necessary compliment to reason, or as Wordsworth states in Book XIII, imagination is “reason in her most exalted mood” (XIII.170).

In the philosophy of poetic knowledge that Wordsworth promotes, reason represents only one half of a chiastic equation working towards unity. Wordsworth’s confrontation of rationalism represents the greatest heroic challenge of *The Prelude*. Through his confrontation of rationalism, Wordsworth didactically promotes poetic knowledge as a remedy to the ailments initiated through rationalism. Wordsworth’s theory of the imagination intends to eliminate the isolated individualism of rationalism. By progressively advancing the cause of a communal imagination, Wordsworth enables *The Prelude* to transcend the boundaries of privileged autobiography.

Contemporary psychology and cognitive science claim to have “discovered” this communal aspect of the imagination. As Bruhn notes, Romantic theory and modern psychology arrive at comparable, although not identical, theories of the imagination (543-4). James Hillman developed an idea of “archetypal psychology” based on the theories of Jung. According to Jung,
archetypes govern the psyche, and these cultural archetypes (mythology, religion, art, architecture, *epic*, etc.) transcend the empirical world (Hillman 1-3).

Through archetypal psychology, Hillman proposes the “‘poetic basis of the mind’” (3). Hillman extends this archetypal tradition from Jung to Plato, and traces its inception to the philosophy of Heraclitus (4). In his article “Toward an Archetypal Imagination,” Casey defines a communal “archetypal imagination,” but more importantly for this study, he defines “fourness.” “Fourness. A four-figured pattern represents what is no doubt the most persistent and stable of archetypal arrangements….The co-presence of four factors – especially when these factors are equivalent or at least countervailing – brings with it actual or potential characteristics of balance, solidity, and regularity as well as connotations of lastingness and totality” (7). As such, Casey’s “archetypal imagination” defines what already exists in the four “French Books” of *The Prelude*. In general, archetypal psychology attempts to distance itself from empirical definitions of the imagination. Coleridge himself connects Wordsworth to the concept of a cohesive communal imagination.

In an 1804 letter to Richard Sharp, Coleridge calls Wordsworth “the only man who has effected a compleat and constant synthesis of Thought and Feeling and combined them with Poetic Forms, with the music of pleasurable passion and with Imagination or the modifying power in that highest sense of the word in which I have ventured to oppose it to Fancy, or the aggregating power” (*Letters* II: 450). “Fancy” is what Coleridge calls the rational boundaries of the imagination imposed through “passive” observer-oriented scientific philosophies, such as reductive materialism and empiricism. In contrast to “Fancy,” Coleridge considers the “imagination” esemplastic: “It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and unify”
Thus, the imagination could be conceived as an all encompassing circle. The recovery of Wordsworth’s imagination in *The Prelude* initiates an epistemic response to Enlightenment reason (scientific knowledge) discussed in Books IX and X.

Rationalism distorts the intellect by creating a sense of alienation between the self and other (Perkins 68). Coleridge’s philosophy of “imagination and Fancy” (*BL* I: 202) in the *Biographia Literaria* (1817) parallels Wordsworth’s theory of the imagination in *The Prelude*. Coleridge rejects Locke’s theory that the mind is a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) on which the external world orders individual experience. Locke’s *tabula rasa* proposes that sensory experiences are ordered through the process of association. Coleridge connects Locke’s “law of association” (*Biographia* I: 202) with Newton’s reductive materialism that makes mankind a passive observer in a mechanical universe, and he labels this process “Fancy.” In contrast, the “imagination” in Coleridge’s philosophy represents mankind not solely as a passive observer, but as an active participant in the workings of the universe. Instead of being confined by empirical association, the imagination becomes transformative and integrative.

Empirical conceptions of the imagination consider the imagination as simply another discursive tool, or “as a vehicle able to traverse [only] part of the way to what is firm and unshakable [truth]” (Sepper 1). In regards to the imagination as “fancy,” empiricism defines image as product, not imagination as process (Bruhn 545). This differentiation between the imagination as either product or process creates the overall connection between Wordsworth, Coleridge, and modern psychological conceptions of the imagination that challenge empirical conceptions of the imagination. The following description of the *process* of the imagination in Book IV of *The Prelude* poetically parallels Coleridge’s description of the imagination in the
Biographia Literaria, and rivals modern psychological conceptions of the imagination. This is one of Wordsworth’s “spots of time” known as the “down-bending boat” episode:

As one who hangs down-bending from the side
Of a slow-moving Boat, upon the breast
Of a still water, solacing himself
With such discoveries as his eye can make,
Beneath him, in the bottom of the deeps,
Sees many beauteous sights, weeds, fishes, flowers,
Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more;
Yet often is perplex’d, and cannot part
The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
Mountains and clouds, from that which is indeed
The region, and the things which there abide
In their true dwelling; now is cross’d by gleam
Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
And motions that are sent he knows not whence,
Impediments that make his task more sweet;
-Such pleasant office have we long pursued
Incumbent o’er the surface of past time
With like success   (Prelude IV.247-64)

Initially, Wordsworth develops an empirical notion of the imagination as founded upon external “fancies” (IV.253); yet after this particular line, Wordsworth develops the notion of an “archetypal” imagination. Wordsworth “cannot part/ The shadow from the substance” (IV.254-
5). His own image is fortunately “perplex’d” (IV.254) by a convolution of images that remain separate, but also combine into a unified image. Wordsworth defines an esemplastic imagination corresponding to an active process, not solely a “fanciful” external observation.

The “down-bending boat” episode quoted above participates in the “spots of time” (*Prelude* XI.258), and these memories function as an imaginative process throughout *The Prelude*. The “spots” are the products of both reason and emotion. Locke believed that emotion would always lead the individual away from reason; yet, Wordsworth counters this theory with his use of “spots of time.” Through the process of the imagination, the “spots of time” act as mnemonic aids that unite emotion and reason, and continually suggest a unity between the external world and the poet’s own mind. In Book V, the “drowned man” episode connects the “clothes” of the dead man’s body to the intellectual “clothes” of the mind – books.

Through the “spots,” Wordsworth transforms external image into the landscape of the mind’s imagination (Pace para.15). The aleatory and serendipitous nature of the “spots of time” philosophically question the notion of Enlightenment causality (Burkett para.3). “A redundancy of time stands out from within temporal currents, and a durational otherness emerges as time is seen to operate from within a distinctive torsion confronting its own flow” (Larkin 30). Larkin’s description of the “spots” precisely matches the chiastic image of the back-flowing river that opens Book IX. In this sense, each episode or “spot” in *The Prelude* philosophically reenacts *concordia discors*, a discordant harmony. The “spots of time” “mediate the moments of self-loss and self-recovery”(Warminski 989).

Much more could be said about modern psychology’s concept of blending and similar Romantic theories of the imagination that portray the imagination’s conceptual clash between conflicting images; that both generate and degenerate (Bruhn 551-55). However, Wordsworth
“down-bending” (IV.247) boat episode effectively illustrates these imaginative contradictions. More importantly, Book XI recites the ongoing process of crisis and recovery that transforms the hero-poet’s mind.

Wordsworth placed his Revolutionary hopes in rationalism; however, after Wordsworth returned home to England from France, around 1795 he suffered a deep depression connected with the failure of his own idealist rationalism (Y. Liu 19). The works that Wordsworth wrote between 1795-1797 show an aesthetic shift from “narcissistic self-concern to disinterested compassion for others” (Boyer 149). Included in this shifting of focus are the Adventures on Salisbury Plains and the play The Borderers. These works show the gradual shift in Wordsworth from selfish _eros_ to the compassionate _agape_ of “Tintern Abbey.” Before his crisis, most of the subjects of his poems were like the “hunger-bitten Girl” in Book IX who represents a pitiful character in desperate need of Wordsworth’s protection and assistance.

In Book IX, both Wordsworth and Michel Beaupuy assume a quixotic relationship of superiority over the “hunger-bitten Girl” who they both hope to free from poverty and social inequality. Wordsworth and Beaupuy’s conception of themselves as “knights errant” actually contradicts the proposed egalitarianism of the Revolution. Parallel to the non-egalitarian status of knights errant to the “hunger-bitten Girl,” both Robespierre and Napoleon rose to power by presenting themselves as the saviors of the French people (Y. Liu 33). In Wordsworth’s reexamination of the French Revolution, he questions, challenges, and transforms rationalism into its opposite: a communal imagination.

Instead of envisioning the “hunger-bitten Girl” as a victim of external circumstances, Wordsworth begins to envision a more egalitarian relationship with this girl. “Whereas he had thought these people could only receive but could not give in return, he now learned from them a
lesson about the actual or potential mutuality of assistance” (Y. Liu 24). In return, Wordsworth begins to apprehend himself as responsible for his own discontent with the failures of the Revolution. Instead of a sense of self-pity directed towards external circumstances, Wordsworth directs his efforts towards an inner intellectual transformation.

As Wordsworth redirects his intellectual energies from external to internal causes, he simultaneously redirects narcissistic self-love into compassion for others. The following excerpt from Book XI narrates the change:

Here only let me add that my delights,
Such as they were, were sought insatiably,
Though ‘twas a transport of the outward sense,
Not of the mind, vivid but not profound:
Yet was I often greedy in the chace,
And roam’d from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of its own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep. (XI.186-195)

Wordsworth realizes that a focus on external circumstances has directed his energy away from more significant and comprehensive intellectual growth. The excerpt continues:

Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thraldom of that sense
Seems hard to shun; and yet I knew a Maid (XI.196-99)
William Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy is the “Maid” that enables William Wordsworth to recover his imagination. In the recovery of his imagination, William Wordsworth recovers his own history, and also a greater confidence in his own poetic abilities. The imagination is the epistemic labor of poetry that connects the individual to the community.

A. Book XII – Agape and Community

Through the restoration of his esemplastic imagination, the poet-hero of *The Prelude* intellectually confronts the “reasonings false” (X.884) of the French Revolution. The idea of collaboration is a presiding metaphor in Romanticism and throughout *The Prelude*. “It is surprising that intertextual theory has not developed a specific term for the trope of collaboration” (Kneale 69). In Book XII, Wordsworth transforms the *eros* of Vaudracour in Book IX into the *agape* of community. Wordsworth transforms narcissistic self-love into an unselfish love for mankind. The recovery of Wordsworth’s imagination enables the change from *eros* to *agape*: “To look with feelings of fraternal love” (XII.50).

Book XII reiterates Wordsworth didactic desire to act as a teacher to the community. What he has learned, he hopes others may learn, and he expresses a confidence in humanity that insists everyone can partake of the knowledge he enjoys:

> Not with less interest than heretofore,
> But greater, though in spirit more subdued,
> Why is this glorious Creature to be found
> One only in ten thousand? What one is,
> Why may not many be? What bars are thrown
> By Nature in the way of such a hope? (XII.88-93)
Although the Revolution crushed Wordsworth’s hopes in rationalism, the recovery of his imagination restores his hopes in an intellectually egalitarian society: imagination is “reason in her most exalted mood” (XIII.170). After his intellectual crisis, Wordsworth’s directs the focus of *The Prelude* towards intellectual liberation. Intellectual liberation acts as a greater social liberator than the external liberation of the “hunger-bitten Girl” from poverty and social inequality. “Wordsworth’s theory of love [*agape*] reaffirms issues of community, sociality, and interconnectedness in both the natural world and human relationships” (Reno 178). In his transformation of love from *eros* to *agape*, Wordsworth’s structural chiasmus has circuitously moved the hero-poet’s mind from binary division towards harmony and unity. This circuitous journey from division towards the beauty of harmony represents a transformation of the hero-poet’s mind in keeping with the overall theme of the poem: “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind.”

There appear to be multiple chiastic structural patterns throughout *The Prelude*. Book I begins with the line: “Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze” (I.1). Like the rivers that flow throughout *The Prelude*, this “gentle breeze” appears throughout *The Prelude* as well. Perhaps Wordsworth’s muse, this “gentle breeze” is a symbol for the communal imagination that effectively restores Wordsworth to health in Books XI and XII, and inspires (breathes into) Wordsworth to continue with the labor of poetry. Towards the end of Book XII Wordsworth mentions Salisbury Plains, where “the Druids covertly express’d/ Their knowledge of the heavens” (XII.345-6). Perhaps Wordsworth infers that the great “archetypal” stone circle of Stonehenge additionally replicates the circuitous chiastic structure of Books IX through XII.

The Greek word *anamnesis* means remembering or recollection and is the basis of Plato’s theory of knowledge, a *remembering* of the universal Forms. Modern science counters this theory of knowledge through John Locke’s theory of the mind as *tabula rasa* (Geldard ix).
Although Plato would never admit it, the communal imagination of Wordsworth’s *Prelude* chiastically unifies these competing theories of knowledge. Much like Plato’s famous teacher, Wordsworth hopes to instigate a transformation of awareness.

It is probable that western philosophy actually began in the East. Heraclitus was more than likely exposed to Hindu Vedanta philosophy which proposes the transcendence of the dualism of everyday existence (Geldard 5-6). The Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo states that when Vedanta philosophy became precise, fixed on human reason, it tended to become a rigid system desiring fixity, not fluidity. In reference to Heraclitus, Sri Aurobindo states that “The ancient Greek mind had instead a kind of fluid precision, a flexibility inquiring logic; acuteness and the wide-open eye of the intellect were its leading characteristics and by this power in it it determined the whole character and field of subsequent European thinking” (Ghose 1).

Wordsworth’s chiastic river imagery at the beginning of Book IX reconnects western thought to this fluidity of thought. As argued previously, Wordsworth concludes the chiastic structure of Books IX-XII with a chiastic statement:

That whence our dignity originates,

That which both gives it being and maintains

A balance, an ennobling interchange

Of action from within and from without,

The excellence, pure spirit, and best power

Both of the object seen, and eye that sees. (XII.374-79)

In an ecological sense, the landscape of internal thought is precisely suited to the external world of nature.
CHAPTER SIX

Ecology of the Mind: “Joint-Labourers” in the “Mighty Mind”

I have said that in one respect my mind has changed during the last twenty or thirty years. Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me.

(Charles Darwin The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 138)

To read the ascent of Snowdon as a climax to The Prelude is to essentially read the ascent as “product,” not process. Yet, overall, The Prelude is concerned with the ongoing process of intellectual growth, with “spots of time,” and not with any single climactic moment. Does the “Climbing of Snowdon” in Book XIII represent the sum of knowledge, or simply its summit? This study argues that The Prelude cannot be read like a linear syllogism, like the rising and falling action of a novel, or even as a drama or tragedy producing a climax of action. Instead, Wordsworth’s communion with nature in Book XIII represents the consummation of an ongoing intellectual and imaginative process that occurs throughout The Prelude.

Contextually, to equate Odysseus’s return home as the climax of the Odyssey, undermines the ongoing journey of discovery that takes place throughout the entirety of the epic. Yet, if there must be a climax to The Prelude, this study argues that the climax of The Prelude occurs imaginatively in the chiastic reversal that occurs between Books X and XI. The imaginative space between these two Books illustrates the chiastic and transformative axis of the poet’s own mind. In this imaginative space, a transformation of opposites occurs; the failures of the French Revolution are transformed from a failure to a success through the process of intellectual transformation and liberation.

And now, O Friend! this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline

And consummation of the Poet’s mind (XIII.269-71)

Book XIII must then be read not as a climax, but as a consummation or reiteration of this ongoing intellectual and imaginative process.

At the conclusion to The Prelude, Wordsworth remains uncertain about the specifics of his future. Wordsworth’s poetic pursuits have led him away from even basic material comforts:

He deem’d that my pursuits and labours lay

Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even

Perhaps to necessary maintenance, (XIII.362-64)

In “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth remarks that the poem itself will provide “life and food/ For future years.” (64-5). Wordsworth repeats the same sentiment at the end of The Prelude:

Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid

Here the foundations of his future years! (XIII.198-99)

The Prelude provides Wordsworth a foundation for future intellectual labor and poetic creativity. In The Prelude, Wordsworth’s life experiences are creatively transformed into meaningful poetry not for himself or his age alone, but for readers of future ages. The poet’s increased knowledge, his intellectual growth, to make better informed future decisions, applies didactically to the reader as well, and represents the crux of Book XIII: “Calling upon the more instructed mind” (XIII.297).

In the following passage, Wordsworth reiterates the process of intellectual transformation that occurs chiastically in Books IX-XII. Yet, more importantly, the following passage elucidates Wordsworth’s direct plea to the reader to make life choices that lead to harmony and
unity. Here, once again, reason and imagination (scientific and poetic knowledge) cannot exist as separate entities, but must form a unified whole:

Imagination having been our theme,

So also hath that intellectual love,

For they are each in each, and cannot stand

Dividually. – Here must thou be, O Man!

Strength to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;

Here keepest thou thy individual state:

No other can divide with thee this work (XIII.185-91)

The contexts of this passage are Edenic and refer specifically to *Paradise Lost*. In prelapsarian Eden, Adam and Eve divide their labor harmoniously. In a postlapsarian world, the labor of tending the “garden” of the mind falls on the individual. However, individuals laboring towards a unified mind that does not “stand/ Dividually” (*Prelude* XIII.187-88), represents a community of laborers working together to achieve a common goal. The modern “bifurcation of nature” represents a “philosophical impasse between materialism and idealism” (Carolan 54). *The Prelude* suggests that when reason and imagination are united, that the natural world still possesses Eden-like potentials.

Book XIII ends with an address to Coleridge on the nature of friendship, in which Wordsworth describes himself and Coleridge as “joint-labourers” (*Prelude* XIII.439). “Above all Wordsworth invests Coleridge with the power to save him from the radical discontinuity between his prelapsarian and postlapsarian self” (Metzger 168). Kneale suggests that “joint-labourers” refers not just to the relationship between Coleridge and Wordsworth, but also to an
The final lines of *The Prelude* definitively include an Edenic context:

> Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
> A lasting inspiration, sanctified
> By reason and by truth; what we have loved,
> Others will love; and we may teach them how;
> Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth

On which he dwells (XIII.442-48)

*Paradise Lost* ends with Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden. Yet, through their expulsion, they retain the Edenic hope of “A paradise within thee, happier far” (*Paradise Lost* 12.587). The visionary imagery of Wordsworth’s ascent of Snowdon suggests that nature itself acts as a doorway towards an understanding of the complexities of the human mind. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan and Mammon’s demonic ambitions to subjugate the earth parallels mankind’s exploitation of nature and disregard for “non-sentient” life. For Milton, rational science is not the primary problem; however, scientific knowledge that acquiesces to “conquest and control” undermines scientific observation (McColley *Poetry* 5).

In Book XIII of the 1805 *Prelude*, Wordsworth develops an ecological concept of truth comparable to similar concepts in *Paradise Lost*. *Paradise Lost* describes nature “as the Book of God before thee set” (8.67). Through nature, mankind may ascend to knowledge of God:

> Our knowledge, and the scale of Nature set
> From center to circumference, whereon
In contemplation of created things
By steps we may ascend to God. (*Paradise Lost* 5. 509-12)

Wordsworth reaches similar ecological conclusions through his ascent of Mt. Snowdon:

A meditation rose in me that night
Upon the lonely Mountain when the scene
Had pass’d away, and it appear’d to me
The perfect image of a Mighty Mind,
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an underpresence,

The sense of God  

(*Prelude* XIII.66-72)

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Milton, and Dorothy are all “joint-labourers” (XIII.439) in a “Mighty Mind” (XIII.69). Wordsworth’s ascent of Snowdon encourages the circularity of epic genre, and 

*The Prelude* as epic incorporates a unity of meaning that creates a cohesive narrative. As a personal epic, *The Prelude* rehabilitates the conventions of the epic to appeal to the modern reader through an insistence on the role of personal knowledge in education. Additionally, *The Prelude’s* unity of narrative purposefully transforms loss into gain.

*The Prelude* addresses multiple life crises that are brought to a resolution in what is often described as the circular, self-oriented structure of the Greater Romantic Lyric, which includes poems such as “Tintern Abbey” (Thomson 534-37). “Change is the inevitable condition of life, but in *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth affirms not only that through memory nothing is really lost, but also that change yields ‘abundant recompence’” (Gill 154): “Not for this/ Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts/ Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,/ Abundant recompence.” (*Poems* “Tintern” I:360, 86-88). Mitchell considers *The Prelude* a comedy that follows a
providential pattern from misfortune to self-mastery (647). Although the epic genre precedes both comedy and tragedy, the Iliad often receives the appellation of tragedy and the Odyssey comedy. Although the Prelude has comic aspects, as an epic, the Prelude concerns itself more with a circularity of motion and development that includes both comic and tragic elements.

The development of the poet’s mind in The Prelude involves more than linear progress. A dialectical freedom of movement exists across the boundaries of the poet’s memory as the hero-poet moves towards a liberation of consciousness (Hamlin 154). In the Confessions, Augustine connects the fall of man with a turning away from universals to particulars (Vance 10-11). However, in The Prelude, it is through particulars, the “book” of nature, that mankind gains a better understanding of humanity itself. In Shakespearean Criticism, Coleridge states that “the language of nature is a subordinate Logos” (I:185) that has existed since the creation of the world. Nature is the “subordinate Logos” that grants access to an understanding of cosmic logos. As discussed in the previous chapter, ultimately The Prelude perpetuates the ideal of cosmic logos, in which the apparent contradictions between an inner and outer world are harmonized. The Prelude and Virgil’s Georgics suggest that mankind’s insight into nature offers intellectual growth.

Wordsworth contrasts Thomas More’s Utopia or “nowhere” with the natural world that mankind inhabits. Although the natural world is not exactly a “Utopia,” the natural world has Eden-like potentials. The following excerpt is the only passage in this study from the 1850 Prelude; nonetheless, this passage illustrates Wordsworth’s connection of the mind with nature, or an “ecology of mind”:

Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!

But in the very world, which is the world

Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,

We find our happiness, or not at all! (Prelude 1850, XI.140-44)

The ultimate discordia concors between ancient pastoral poetry and an ecologically destructive modern civilization is the reconciliation of “transcendent beauty and pragmatic choice” in the maintenance of the earth’s resources (Metzger 34). Cantor argues that the utopian excerpt above illustrates Wordsworth’s “utopian expectations for politics” during the French Revolution (386). However, Wordsworth’s ascent of Snowdon does not represent a non-referential utopia, but a specific location in the natural world that contains Edenic potentials. “We cannot return to Eden, but we can make Edenic choices” (McColley A Gust 190). This ecological consciousness is present in both The Prelude and Paradise Lost.

It is generally assumed that Enlightenment philosophy’s justification of science promotes mankind’s control and mastery over nature. Descartes raises the human intellect above and outside of the natural world, and Bacon’s natura parendo vincitur (obeying nature, one wins) insinuate the dominion of science over nature. However, in actuality, Bacon’s philosophy does not promote mankind’s dominion over nature. In fact, Bacon’s Advancement of Learning relies heavily on the Virgilian Georgics to make a connection between agriculture and the cultivation of the mind (Wallace “Virgil” 167). The following passage from Bacon’s Advancement of Learning illustrates Bacon’s use of Virgilian Georgics in the development of his own philosophy:

…these Georgickes of the mind concerning the husbandry & tillage therof, are no less worthy then the heroical descriptions of vertue, duty, & felicity wherefore the maine &
primitive division of *Morall* knowledge seemeth to be into the EXEMPLAR or PLATFORME of GOOD, and the REGIMENT or CULTURE OF THE MIND; The one describing the nature of Good the other prescribing rules how to subdue, apply and accommodate the will of man thereunto. (Bacon 134-35)

This passage from Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* closely resembles a line from Book XIII of *The Prelude*: “Willing to work and to be wrought upon” (XIII.100). As discussed in Chapter Four, Wordsworth utilizes Virgilian *Georgic* in Books I-III of *The Prelude*. To cultivate the fields of the mind requires an intellectual labor comparable to the physical labor necessary in agriculture that Virgil discusses in the *Georgics*. Bacon’s rehabilitation of mankind to a prelapsarian intellectual understanding of the natural world in a postlapsarian world requires conscious human effort (McKnight 464).

*The Advancement of Learning* asserts that true knowledge is *anamnesis* or Platonic remembrance. As such, Bacon instigates a restoration of moralistic natural philosophy that hopes to recover a proper understanding of nature. For Bacon, mankind’s fall results through a decision to become autonomous. This decision towards autonomy creates a sense of pride in mankind that can only be overcome through compassion for others. For Bacon, charity must be the motive of all knowledge, because charity destroys self-love. After the fall, mankind must labor towards an understanding of nature that was always readily available in a prelapsarian world (McKnight 465-68). Bacon believed that divine providence was working through him to restore humanity to this prelapsarian condition.

Critics often describe Bacon’s *New Atlantis* as “scientific utopianism.” However, Bacon’s perceived scientific utopia actually resembles Wordsworth’s poetic appeal to recover a prelapsarian knowledge of the natural world. “Bacon’s instauration is a program for
rehabilitating humanity and its relation to nature that is to be guided by divine Providence and achieved through pious human effort” (McKnight 476). In this sense, Bacon does not assert mankind’s control and dominion over nature; instead, like Wordsworth, Bacon insists that mankind’s labor towards an understanding of the processes involved in the natural world could benefit mankind in the recovery of prelapsarian knowledge.

One of the didactic triumphs of *The Prelude* is that Wordsworth never loses sight of the interchange between scientific and poetic knowledge. Wordsworth’s visionary experience of his climb of Mount Snowdon, Wales in Book XIII of *The Prelude* reiterates an ongoing process of intellectual change that might also be characterized as a recovery of prelapsarian knowledge. As a whole, *The Prelude* organically discusses intellectual growth and change. Chemist Ilya Prigogine notes that molecular systems are always in the process of change, of *becoming* (Carolan 58). Notably, science observes nature, but will never be able to completely document all of the complexities of ecology, because by the time the observation and documentation is complete, the ecology will have already changed (Bateson xviii). Both Milton and Wordsworth offer a more complete picture of ecology. Instead of observation alone, Milton and Wordsworth participate in an “ecology of the mind” which suggests that mankind can actively direct change through choice.

In modern civilization, global warming and other ecological concerns continue to receive a lot of media attention. However, Wordsworth’s *Prelude* suggests that epistemology is at the heart of the pending ecological crisis. For instance, Book VIII of *The Prelude* is titled “Retrospect. – Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind.” Wordsworth’s communion with nature in Book XIII represents the consummation of an ongoing intellectual and imaginative process that occurs throughout *The Prelude*. Similar to Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning*, The
*Prelude* didactically promotes knowledge that leads to compassion. In many ways, this ongoing intellectual and imaginative process mirrors Adam and Eve’s task of maintaining Eden as a garden paradise in *Paradise Lost*. “Wordsworth identifies a dependent relationship between the human mind and the natural world” that Deep Ecologists call a true consciousness of the complexity of the ecosystem (Reno 189).

In *Paradise Lost*, Eden is both an external location and an inner state: “A Paradise within thee” (*PL* 12.587). To destroy the environment through exploitation replicates the original loss of Eden, but to consciously make choices to preserve the environment suggests the possibility that Eden might be recovered both externally and internally. Science alone cannot resolve the environmental conflicts of today, because science has “epistemic blindspots” that present a fragmentary picture of reality. This incomplete picture of reality often misses many of the complex interconnections between mankind and the environment (Carolan 60-61). “Specifically, when reality is understood as complex, emergent, dynamic, and interconnected – versus space composed of dead matter moved by immutable forces – then we can begin to comprehend the novel [epic] ways of knowing…that science is simply not equipped to ‘see’” (Carolan 62). Even today, Milton continues to advance a prelapsarian ecological consciousness in modern culture.

Mark Stoll calls Yosemite Valley and the National Parks of the United States “Milton’s monuments” (263). John Muir, the creator of the concept of national park system in the United States, relied heavily on *Paradise Lost* in his advancement of the creation of the national parks system. Muir loved Milton’s works from childhood and internalized Milton’s poetry into his own writings (Stoll 260-61). In an attempt to save Yosemite National Park’s Hetch Hetchy Valley from a dam, Muir penned these words:

Their arguments are curiously like those of the devil, devised for the destruction
of the first garden. . . .

These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar.

Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people’s cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man. (Muir *The Yosemite* 715-6).

Muir considered Yosemite Valley an Eden-like national shrine free from Mammon, free from mankind’s exploitation of nature. For Muir, the Yosemite Valley acts as a sacred shrine in which mankind has the opportunity to contemplate greater truths. Essentially, Muir associates the creation of the national parks with the prelapsarian maintenance of Eden in *Paradise Lost*. As such, Milton has a proven track record in ecological conservation. Perhaps Milton and Wordsworth can offer better solutions to the ecological crisis of the modern world, because both compassionately connect the mind of man to nature.

In *Paradise Lost*, both Adam and Eve are given the task of maintaining Eden. The external act of gardening in *Paradise Lost* actually mirrors the internal labor of weeding out unruly desires and passions (Lewalski 18). In *The Prelude*, “The Climbing of Snowdon” also conflates internal and external landscapes. As Jonathan Wordsworth notes, the landscape of Mount Snowdon resembles the landscape of the poet’s own mind (460). It seems no mistake that the subtitle of *The Prelude* is “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind.” The word “growth” implies an ecological sensibility that extends to both inward and outward change. “Growth” seems like an unusual word choice for the context of the mind, but this study suggests that its contexts are Edenic.
William Clough contextualizes reductive materialism in modern scientific knowledge:

“Taking things apart is easy. Putting them back together is not. Looking at the parts of a whole leaves their parts intact, but changes their context” (11). In contrast, Diane McColley describes the process of poetic knowledge as she effectively illustrates the concept of growth in *Paradise Lost*:

But Milton has given our imaginations an Eden so rife with every sort of being and bliss and choice and challenge and possibility, such a fountain of language, such a compendium of thought and art, such music, that it surely must foster the growth of whatever can be Edenic – beauty and love and useful work and creativity – in our patchy, painful, vulnerable, blessed experiencing of this garden mould called earth. (McColley “A Happy” 273-4)

Even though Adam and Eve are exiled from Eden in *Paradise Lost*, they never abandon the hope that their postlapsarian lives will be filled with Eden-like potentials. “The World was all before them, where to choose/ Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide” (*PL* 12.646-47). In one sense, *The Prelude* begins where *Paradise Lost* ends. Book I of *The Prelude* begins: “Now I am free, enfranchis’d and at large./ May fix my habitation where I will.” (*Prelude* I. 9-10). At the end of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth has also regained an “ecology of mind” that resembles the progressive qualities of a prelapsarian Eden. In one sense, *The Prelude* represents a chiasmic reversal of *Paradise Lost*, in which mankind symbolically regains Eden through an “ecology of mind.”

Southward through *Eden* went a River large,
Nor chang’d his course, but through the shaggie hill
Pass’d underneath engulft; for God had thrown
That mountain, as his garden mould, high rais’d
Upon the rapid current, which through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst updrawn,
Rose a fresh Fountain, and with many a rill
Watered the Garden; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether Flood (PL 4. 223-231)

Wordsworth’s “blue chasm” (XIII. 56) almost exactly replicates the water that runs “through the shaggie hill” (PL 4.224) of Milton’s Eden:

[There] Was a blue chasm; a fracture in the vapor,
A deep and gloomy breathing-place through which
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
The universal spectacle throughout
Was shaped for admiration and delight,
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
That dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg’d
The Soul, the Imagination of the whole. (*Prelude* XIII.56-65)

There are two important ecological concerns to note from this comparison between Eden’s watery thoroughfare “through a shaggie hill” (4.224) and Wordsworth’s “blue chasm” (XIII.56).
First, Wordsworth unifies external and internal reality by stating that the scene before him represents the “Imagination of the whole” (XIII. 65). This “whole” concerns all of the intricate ecological interconnections between the poet’s mind and the external world. In contrast, “Looking at the parts of a whole leaves their parts intact, but changes their context” (Clough 11).

Secondly, this comparison between Milton’s Eden and Wordsworth’s Snowdon suggests that the common experience of mankind in nature has Edenic possibilities.

The “joint-labourers” (XIII.439) of The Prelude have all accepted the challenge of bringing about a renovation of humanity. The French Revolution promised a restored Eden, but wrong human choice created a nightmare (Metzger 182, 172). By the end of the eighteenth century, mankind was just beginning to learn the significance of a mechanical universe. In a mechanical universe, mankind becomes nothing more than a machine (Harwood 79). A machine bound by laws of matter and energy, and by gravity in particular. In response to Newton’s mechanically precise universe, Blake wrote in Jerusalem:

I turn my eyes to the Schools & Universities of Europe,
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire
Wash’d by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
In heavy wreathes folds over every nation: cruel Works
Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other: not as those in Eden, which
Wheel within wheel in freedom revolve in harmony & peace.

(Jerusalem 16, Ch.1, Plate 15, lines 14-20)

Blake describes Newton’s mechanical universe as a fragmentary “wheel without wheel,” (18) but Eden as an esemplastic “Wheel within wheel” (20). In 1995, the artist Sir Eduardo Paolozzi
created a bronze statue entitled “Newton” that is based on one of William Blake’s illustrations. The statue “Newton” stands in the piazza outside of the British Library in London. Several pivot points on Newton’s body make “Newton” resemble a machine. Perhaps Blake himself might ask, does Paolozzi’s portrayal of Newton as a machine suggest dominion over nature or insight into nature?

Book XIII of *The Prelude* is a rather short book, but on two separate occasions, William Wordsworth imaginatively defies Newton’s laws of gravity. First, William Wordsworth defies gravity when he reaches the summit of Mt. Snowdon:

> The Moon stood naked in the Heavens, at height
> Immense above my head, and on the shore
> I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
> Which, meek and silent, rested at my feet (*Prelude* XIII.41-44)

William Wordsworth describes the summit of Snowdon as a floating island in a “huge sea of mist” (XIII.43). Interestingly, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote a poem entitled “Floating Island.” Essentially, the first stanza of Dorothy’s poem shares in the visionary experience of William Wordsworth’s ascent of Snowdon:

> Harmonious Powers with Nature work
> On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea:
> Sunshine and storm, whirlwind and breeze
> All in one duteous task agree. (D.Wordsworth 99, 1-4)

Intertextually, Dorothy’s “whirlwind and breeze” (3) shares a sensibility with William Wordsworth’s “gentle breeze” (I.1) in the opening line of *The Prelude*. Secondly, towards the
conclusion of Book XIII, in an attempt to recall “The mood in which this poem was begun” (XIII.371), William Wordsworth again imaginatively defies Newton’s laws of gravity:

Anon I rose

As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretch’d

Vast prospect of the world which I had been

And was; and hence this Song, which like a lark

I have protracted, in the unwearied Heavens

Singing, and often with more plaintive voice

Attempered to the sorrows of the earth;

Yet centring all in love, and in the end

All gratulant if rightly understood.  (XIII.377-85)

Imaginatively, “As if on wings” (XIII.378), William Wordsworth has defied the rational boundaries of gravity. However, he centers this visionary experience in love, and compassionate knowledge. This compassionate knowledge offers both the individual and the community a great satisfaction “if rightly understood” (XIII.385).

To return briefly to Dorothy’s poem “Floating Island,” Cervelli states that Dorothy’s poem has a circuitous rhetorical energy. The poem itself behaves like an ecosystem through a “constantly self-transforming continuous structure” (66-67). This same aesthetic ideal extends to The Prelude as well. The textual environment that William Wordsworth creates in The Prelude suggests a “status humana” paradigm. “Status humana” suggests a holistic approach to nature, in which mankind weighs both the costs and benefits of altering an ecosystem. Demonstrating an effect in a laboratory environment cannot match the web of interrelations that nature itself provides, and positive laboratory results have often proven harmful holistically (Chapman 703-
The holistic concept of a Romantic ecology realizes a complex web of interrelations that stresses the accommodation of both the “self” and “other,” and sustains a sense of cosmic harmony (Khatun 3).

Finally, Wordsworth connects The Prelude to a long tradition of literary criticism that begins with Porphyry. Porphyry’s “On the Cave of the Nymphs” (De antro nympharum) represents the oldest western philosophical criticism of any work of literature. In “On the Cave of the Nymphs,” Porphyry philosophically analyzes “the cave of the nymphs” of Book XIII of the Odyssey. In his treatise, Porphyry applies the doctrine of transmigration to Homer’s cave of nymphs in Book XIII of the Odyssey. “This process [transmigration] is suggested specifically by the description of the spinning of what Porphyry takes to be garments of flesh for the soul on the wet, stony ‘looms’ that are the stalagmites of the cave” (Franke “On” 416). There are two gates to Homer’s cave, one to the physical world and one to an unchanging noetic world. Those souls entering the physical world exit through the wet, watery exit where rivers converge. The continuing flowing waters symbolize the continual change of the physical world, as opposed to an unchanging noetic world (Franke “On” 418).

Essentially, The Prelude reenacts Porphyry’s philosophical criticism in “On the Cave of the Nymphs.” Wordsworth “descends” into a critical understanding of Porphyry’s philosophical criticism of the Odyssey:

This faculty hath been the moving soul
Of our long labor: we have traced the stream
From darkness, and the very place of birth
In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
The sound of waters; follow’d it to light
And open day, accompanied its course

Among the ways of Nature  *(Prelude XIII.171-77)*

The Pythagoreans, Empedocles, and Plato (*Republic* Book VII) all conceive of the physical world as a cave. In Porphyry’s criticism the cave represents both the sensible cosmos (the sensible world of generation), and an invisible “changeless noetic universe” (Franke “On” 418). As an epic poet-philosopher, Wordsworth connects his own epic with a philosophical tradition of literary criticism that enables the reader to find meanings in a literary text that exist outside of the text itself.

The tradition of philosophical literary criticism (Porphyry’s allegorical exegesis) suggests that didactic literature begins as a sublime revelation of philosophical wisdom. Enlightenment literary criticism (literal-historical criticism) initiated an ideal of literary criticism that suggests meaning in a work of literature must remain within the domains of the text itself. The philosophical critical tradition acknowledges a larger scope to literary criticism, because meaning can be found both inside and outside the text. In philosophical criticism, the overall function of didactic poetry is “to illuminate the nature and mysteries of the universe.” Poetry “encodes” these mysteries, and the knowledge inherent in philosophical poetry (epic) cannot be exhausted by any single reader within any given text (Franke “On” 420-21). Porphyry’s “On the Cave of the Nymphs” illustrates the original intent of literary criticism, but also suggests that ancient and modern literary criticism need not remain incompatible.

This study suggests that a philosophical vision engenders Wordsworth’s *Prelude*. Perhaps modern historical criticism needs tempered by the tradition of philosophical criticism. Modern historical criticism suggests that Wordsworth’s identity is the result of “historical causation” that remains restricted by issues such as class, gender, and vocation. In modern
criticism, these “historical causes” produce the most essential meaning in the criticism of literature (Grob 190). However, the mind, in technically empirical terms, has no gender (Grob 193). As suggested by Dorothy’s poem the “Floating Island,” Dorothy Wordsworth is equally capable of enjoying the same visionary experience that William Wordsworth himself enjoys in Book XIII of *The Prelude*. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Dorothy, Milton, and many others are all “joint-labourers” (XIII.439) in a “Mighty Mind” (XIII.69). Shakespeare’s *Richard II* also participates in a discussion of an “ecology of mind.”

This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house
Against the envy of less happier lands,

This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England. (2.1.40-50)

Through increased knowledge, the “Growth of a Poet’s Mind,” the hero-poet of *The Prelude* makes better-informed, more Eden-like decisions that lead towards the freedom of intellectual liberation in a postlapsarian world. “The general outline of the notion of epic as education, as a journey of the soul, a descent into the body and a re-ascent from flesh towards freedom of purified consciousness, is in fact constant” in the tradition of philosophical literary criticism
The Romantic poets were poet-philosophers in the same way that Homer was a poet-philosopher. Modern literary criticism tends to discount or disregard the importance of the epic within the cultural education of the west. The Romantic epic proclaims the continued viability of the epic genre. The congruity of conventional change expresses itself in epic after epic. Milton rebelled against the classical conventions of epic as much as the Romantics rebelled against the neoclassical epic of Milton. Both Milton and Wordsworth engender contemporary concerns in their epics, but contemporary concerns do not institute the novelization of the epic. If anything, it is the novel that is indebted to the epic through: the metamorphosis of external narrative to internal narrative, changes in verse, and the manipulation of multiple other “rules,” such as the hero’s quest and the identity of the hero. The majority of epic canonical poets are poet-philosophers in a tradition of poetic knowledge that begins with Homer.

What is a poet-philosopher? “No man was ever yet a great poet, without the same time being a profound philosopher” (Biographia Literia II: 19). Whereas scientific knowledge limits the emotional connection to rational knowledge, the ethos of poetic knowledge includes compassion. John Stuart Mill, a contemporary philosopher of the Romantic poets, argued that good poetry operates as a moral educator. Poetry, unlike other literary forms, has the ability to provoke compassion for humanity. Human emotions are the underlying motivators of human morality and transactional poetry has the ability to inspire these emotions. “Mill, like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Carlyle and others, believes that the best poetry is poetry which not only moves us, but moves us towards the right social ends” (Gustafson 824). In other words, passion and reason
must unite together in the poet-philosopher to promote the love of virtue, and the love of virtue is necessary in a civilized society. As Wordsworth discovers during the French Revolution, reason alone cannot stimulate the love of virtue; however, an imagination inspired by aesthetic reverence promotes right action (Gustafson 826-7). In “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” Keats proclaims that “’Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’ – that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know” (Keats’s 460, 49-50). In “The Grey Monk” Blake states that “a tear is an intellectual thing” (Blake 611, 29).

John Stuart Mill believed that Wordsworth’s poetry promoted the “development and exercise of our higher human faculties” (Gustafson 828). Wordsworth “selects in preference the strongest feelings, and the thoughts which most feeling is naturally or habitually connected. His poetry, therefore, may be defined to be, his thoughts, coloured by, and impressing themselves by means of emotions” (Mill I: 358). Wordsworth, as Mill notes, is a poet-philosopher who directly associates emotion with long and deep thought:

Every great poet, every poet who has extensively or permanently influenced mankind, has been a great thinker – has had a philosophy, though perhaps he did not call it by that name – has had his mind full of thoughts, derives not merely from passive sensibility, but from trains of reflection, from observation, analysis, and generalization; (Mill I: 413)

As Mill argues, the associations that Wordsworth makes in his poetry are the effective connection of passion and reason, aesthetics and ideology, poetry and philosophy, and poetic and scientific knowledge: through the succession of these apparent series of opposites the reader sees the beauty in truth and is thereby moved to action through the power of both emotion and reason, intuitive and discursive logic.
Milton and Wordsworth, although not specifically using the term “poetic knowledge,”
employ an epistemology of poetic knowledge exhibiting audience awareness. Imaginative
poetry has the transactional potential to create new meanings between author, text, and reader.
Only emotion conjoined with reason promotes the greatest human compassion. As such,
emotion opens pathways to knowledge in the humanities that remain relevant to the successful
navigation of human life. Epic poetry maintains pragmatic social and moral objectives supported
through a humanistic approach to the pursuit of knowledge. In epic poetry, poetic knowledge
(heterogeneous) is the matrix that produces human wisdom applicable to the perfect management
of life.

Epic poetry, as a western tradition, has consistently designated an epistemology of poetic
knowledge. William Franke proclaims knowledge in the humanities is “involved knowing,”
because the subjective views of the individual are important to the conception of what constitutes
real knowledge (“Involved” 447). Throughout The Prelude, the “spots of time” suggest the
poet’s growing personal knowledge. In modern academia there remains a distinction between
objective scientific knowledge and subjective humanistic knowledge; however, the epic has
continually attempted to accommodate both of these models of knowledge in an attempt to
promote cross-pollination across the boundaries of specialized knowledge. Scientific knowledge
rates highly in modern education because it claims to effectively negate subjective human biases
that confound the pursuit of truth.

This argument is nothing new, Platonic philosophy (on which Cartesian certitude is
based) places rational knowledge above emotive intuition. Nevertheless, poetry has historically
been “the matrix of knowledge in all fields…[and] A unique personal history is necessarily the
context for all knowledge that is one’s own and that can truly be called human knowledge
The epic’s poetic knowledge combines individual experience with empirical reason, and represents an ever expanding “way” of knowledge. Nevertheless, modern education tends towards a fact based approach to knowledge that attempts to negate the importance of the individual within the pursuit of knowledge (self-knowledge).

The information age wants clean cut snippets of information that testify to unambiguous truth, not Milton’s “fecund ambiguity” (Martin 51). True knowledge involves a degree of personal subjectivity that resists separation into unobtrusive fact. The acquisition of information is not knowledge. Acquiring facts requires intelligence, but not the critical intelligence equitable with the holistic approach to knowledge represented by poetic knowledge. Why do we read the classics? “We interrogate them in order to be ourselves interrogated” (Franke “Involved” 449). True dialectic produces new meaning on many horizons. Preconceived notions of what represents truth actually negates the spirit of scientific inquiry and ultimately the pursuit of knowledge. “The poet ideally will help nourish the appropriate capacities and sentiments in us emotionally, as they educate us intellectually” (Gustafson 839). As a poet-philosopher, Homer represents the first such poet in an epistemic epic tradition. Epistemologically, the epic tradition combines objective and subjective knowledge into a holistic approach to knowledge. In western culture, epic poetry is the matrix of education; yet, the tradition of western humanistic education has come under attack by modern scientific knowledge.

Poetic knowledge is inclusive, holistic, encyclopedic, but scientific knowledge dissects knowledge into particulars that often lose sight of the whole. “The constant tendency [in modern education] is to part with the ancient tradition of knowledge, that is, to remove absolute truth and reason from our conception of it, and put into place a reductive (materialistic) premise for all
knowledge and knowing” (Loomis 164). Modern scientific knowledge attempts to reduce all knowledge to objective truth, thereby eliminating the contamination of “truth” by the subjective knowledge of the individual (self-knowledge). Modern science and Enlightenment empiricism deconstruct the integrity of the individual and blur distinctions between mind, matter, and machine (Stables 8). In the current era of scientific knowledge, human intelligence is connatural with digital technology, and mankind’s intellect has become equivalent to the human “machine.” In the tradition of poetic knowledge, the mind of man will never be connatural with machine.

In The Prelude, poetic knowledge does not simply entail knowledge of poetry; poetic knowledge refers to the sensory-emotional experience of the individual towards the acquisition of knowledge.

So, whatever poetic knowledge is, it is not strictly speaking a knowledge of poems, but a spontaneous act of the external and internal senses with the intellect, integrated and whole, rather than an act associated with the powers of analytic reasoning. It is, according to the tradition from Homer to Robert Frost, from Socrates to Maritain, a natural human act, synthetic and penetrating, that gets us inside the thing experienced. It is, we might say, knowledge from the inside out, radically different from scientific knowledge about things. In other words, it is the opposite of scientific knowledge. (J. Taylor 6)

Taylor defines poetic knowledge as the opposite of scientific knowledge, but this definition itself supports Cartesian duality. As in Milton’s discussion of cosmology, poetic knowledge accommodates scientific fact into the “larger domains of education and epistemology” (Duran 17) that produce moral and ethical action within society.
Scientific and poetic knowledge are not polar opposites. Scientific knowledge imposes a knowledge based on “facts,” but poetic knowledge offers a holistic approach to knowledge that additionally requires the sensory-emotional response of the individual. Poetic knowledge embraces scientific knowledge by elucidating what the “facts” mean in relation to the sensory-emotional individual. For instance, science can document the external causes of life and death, but poetic knowledge responds to the internal sensory-emotional meanings associated with life and death. Poetic knowledge acknowledges that humans are never completely free from social interaction (the social nature of human thought); whereas, scientific knowledge attempts to rationalize that knowledge occurs within a vacuum free from social obligations.

Scientific knowledge imposes abstract theories and methodologies that require technical training to accurately decipher, but poetic knowledge is free from such constraints. Poetic knowledge is freely available to both the scientist and common man, because it deals with sensory perception and how the individual reacts to nature and external reality. Poetic knowledge is not always aware of the particulars of scientific knowledge. Paradoxically, poetic knowledge often appears happy to rest in the unknown: “…Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is – for he knows nothing, and thinks he knows; I neither know nor think I know” (Plato Apology 38). In the modern era, the Cartesian model has simply produced the certainty of uncertainty. What Socrates appears to rally against in Plato’s Apology is the scientific ideal that the technical knowledge of facts constitutes absolute knowledge. Poetic knowledge considers facts imprecise in relation to a holistic “way” of knowledge that incorporates facts in relation to the sensory-emotional knowledge of the individual.
The Golden Age of Greek philosophy responded to the question of knowledge with a holistic approach to knowledge. The holistic approach to knowledge by the Socratic philosophers developed from the matrix of poetic knowledge present in the Homeric epics. The Homeric epics are the first evidence in the western tradition of poetic knowledge. Poetic knowledge, as knowledge from the inside out, is not much different from the model of education for children presented in Plato’s *Republic*. All of the educational experiences detailed for children in *The Republic* place the child *inside* the personal experience of the arts (songs, poetry, music) (J. Taylor 15). However, one could argue, the West’s first great philosopher is not Socrates, but Homer himself. “Ancient philosophers such as Numenius and Porphyry relay the widespread conviction that Homer was a philosopher” (Franke “Involved” 452). Platonic philosophy is distinguished by dialogue, but narrative must be one of the oldest, if not the oldest, model of human communication.

Memory and knowledge work effectively together in the narrative of the Homeric epics. “Homeric narrative involves situations, scenes, and performance which are ritualized, that is, are not only described formulaically, but also rendered as typical of what the society *always* did under certain circumstances” (Havelock 58). As such, they represent a philosophy of life and an encyclopedic repository of western knowledge. Havelock goes on to say that the Homeric epics were “bifocal.” This means that the Homeric epics not only entertain, but are also encyclopedic cultural references about how to appropriately respond to any given situation through culturally acceptable action. “In primary orality, the oral specialist, whether bard, priest, prophet, or seer, continually clothes his memorable instruction in designs that are contrived to please; so that the instruction itself is fastened on the social memory by indirection, as it is translated into active examples…Tradition in short is taught by action, not by idea or principle” (Havelock 77). “The
newest lesson epic knows is always that Homer’s school remains in session: the great texts of a culture renew their function in paideia” (Tucker 352). Epic poetry, the matrix of western education, by its inherent principles is transactional poetry.

Thus, one of the main principles of poetic knowledge is the active participation in knowledge. This tradition of knowledge as active and participatory, existed millennia before the advent of scientific knowledge.

While science likes to abstract from this inescapable human element – the fact that whenever knowledge takes place there is always someone who knows – the humanities dwell upon and accentuate precisely this human factor. They bring forward into the light of truth the human conditions surrounding all knowledge, including scientific knowledge. (Franke “Involved” 451)

Poetic knowledge explored natural philosophy long before there were any specialized scientific fields. However, the encroachment in the modern academy of the epistemic model of scientific knowledge threatens the humanistic pursuit of poetic knowledge. In the modern academy, The Arts & Sciences could easily be labeled the Arts vs. Sciences. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake has been abandoned by the modern academy in favor of specific technical programs and degrees that supposedly equate to the material rewards of an immediate job. “The Sophists, then [classical Greece] and now, justify an education driven by the power brokers of the marketplace, and, therefore, it is an education bereft of all traditional principles” (J. Taylor 18).

The modern day sophists are winning the battle of education at every turn, because scientific inquiry places ”...disbelief in all reality beyond physical Nature, or, to put it differently, a belief that material nature is prime reality” (Loomis 163). John Stuart Mill argued in the
nineteenth century that moral sentiments were not being developed in education because “business values replace the moral and aesthetic values of the individual” (Gustafson 842).

Modern education is perceived as a commodity; yet, this ideal is not the tradition of western education that begins with Homer and continues its relevancy in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*. “The educational tradition of Socrates is organic and living, more like the image of the growth rings in a tree, rather than the consumable and disposable stages of growth so prevalent in modern education” (J. Taylor 16). It seems obvious that most undergraduate students equate a college education with upward social mobility. At modern universities, the humanities are continually losing new students and are perennially threatened by budget cuts. Scientific knowledge has equated an undergraduate education with immediate reward, and the funding of scientific projects as opposed to artistic projects supports this statement. What are the humanities doing wrong?

In his autobiography, Charles Darwin states that Paradise Lost was his favorite literary work and that he took *Paradise Lost* with him on the voyage of the *Beagle* (85). Darwin’s *Beagle* diary contains an entry on 24 October 1832 that compares a phosphorescent sea with Milton’s *Paradise Lost*:

The night was pitch dark, with a fresh breeze. — The sea from its extreme luminousness presented a wonderful & most beautiful appearance; every part of the water, which by day is seen as foam, glowed with a pale light. The vessel drove before her bows two billows of liquid phosphorus, & in her wake was a milky train. — As far as the eye reached, the crest of every wave was bright; & from the reflected light, the sky just above the horizon was not so utterly dark as the rest of the Heavens. — It was impossible to behold this plain of matter, as it were melted & consuming by heat, without being
reminded of Miltons description of the regions of Chaos & Anarchy. (Darwin Darwin
111)

Darwin connects his sense of wonder with a phosphorescent sea to Milton’s “regions of Chaos &
Anarchy.” In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle concludes that wonder initiates education: “it is owing
to their wonder that men begin and at first began to philosophize” (16). Wonder brings things
closer (Verhoeven 10-14). A child-like sense of wonder animates poetic knowledge.

It is a sense of wonder and delight that sustains poetic knowledge from beginning to end.
The ability to see the wonder of a star will remain different from the need to classify the gases
and chemical reactions that make a star. Poetic knowledge involves the wonder and delight of
the stargazer, or the journey upon a phosphorescent sea. Poetic knowledge is the original sense
of wonder that inspires the need for more comprehensive knowledge in specialized studies.
Rather than creating a binary opposition between poetic and scientific knowledge, poetic
knowledge accommodates specialized scientific knowledge. Poetic knowledge insists that the
necessity to research (scientific knowledge) would not exist without the original sense of
wonder. Poetic knowledge also concludes that the original state of wonder remains valid and
important to education; even after all the empirical research has been completed.

Poetic knowledge as an inclusive philosophy of knowledge both values the concept of
wonder and does not deny the importance of scientific research. The tradition of western
education involves the poetic “way” of knowledge, not the closed system of scientific knowledge
that promotes binary opposition (J. Taylor 31). In *The Philosophy of Wonder*, Verhoeven
discusses the sense of wonder present in the Socratic dialogues of Plato:

*Philosophy is not knowledge; as a form of desire (love) it is more a pathos, a state, than
an actual knowing. Plato gives this pathos a name: wonder…. [Wonder] is not founded*
on knowledge nor has it knowledge as its goal. Rather it is an obstinate ignorance, as in
Socrates the art of avoiding institutionalized and certain knowledge. Knowledge leads to
science, not to philosophy. Science has a firm grasp of reality which it uses as a tool. In
this operation, as endorsed by the data of reality, science is verifiable. It can be expanded
by hypotheses and experiments. But philosophy is not a science; it is not a means of
transmitting knowledge. It is what it is before it can be termed knowledge. (11)

Verhoeven’s semantic discussion does not directly discuss “poetic knowledge’ in this summary,
but one can determine from Verhoeven’s discussion of Plato that intuitive logic, as opposed to a
primarily discursive logic, remained important to the Socratic philosophers and influenced
ideologies of education in the west.

Without the initial sense of wonder, there would be no motivation in students to progress
towards the acquisition of basic skills. The stories sung or recited to children by their parents
helped to inspire this original sense of wonder (Plato’s Republic values songs, poetry, and music
in childhood education) (J. Taylor 15). Not only did the traditional tales of the west inspire, they
also achieved a sense of community. For millennia, scholars from different nations and eras
shared a sense of wonder in the works of Homer. The epic tradition that begins with the
Homeric epics unites western humanity together with a shared sense of culture; however, this
“centering” of knowledge has come under threat by modern culture. The epic as a cultural
tradition is under threat, not because the novel is a superior genre, but because the value system
of western culture has been challenged by a philosophy of education that disparages the “way” of
knowledge in favor of “fact.”

Beginning with the Enlightenment, the traditional value system of western education has
changed in direct relationship to the advancement of objective truth. The ideal of absolute truth
and universal ideals influenced basic Platonic philosophy. Although Cartesian certitude is based on Platonic philosophy, Platonic philosophy paradoxically includes Socrates’s “obstinate ignorance” in its scheme of knowledge. The relativistic sophists in Plato’s dialogues argue from a sense of certainty which the Socratic philosophers rally against: “Socrates: Well, you have delivered yourself of a very important doctrine about knowledge; it is indeed the opinion of Protagoras, who has another way of expressing it. Man, he says, is the measure of all things…” (Theaetetus 12). However, the Realist tradition of harmony between the inner and outer senses manifests itself in poetic knowledge (J. Taylor 49).

Poetic knowledge allows for the possibility of new meanings of truth through varying and changing perspectives on the nature of truth. For instance, the Industrial Revolution rationalized that mankind’s life would be made better through science; however, that was not the case, life simply became more difficult and complicated for the mass of society. In addition, the intuitive abilities of the individual craftsman were replaced with the cold steel of the machines of mass production. In the following passage from The Prelude, the continuing importance of intuitive, estimative knowledge (sensory-emotional knowledge) is described. Wordsworth suggests that primary education begins at home, as an infant in a mother’s arms:

All objects through all intercourse of sense.

No outcast he, bewilder’d and depress’d;

Along his infant veins are interfus’d

The gravitation and the filial bond

Of nature, that connect him with the world. (Prelude II. 260-4)
In this passage, the child intuitively knows that its mother’s nurture creates a filial bond with the world. As such, this passage can be described as the estimative power of mankind to intuitively know what is either good or evil.

This estimative power is linked to the sensory-emotional pursuit of knowledge. This is the same estimative power that makes Odysseus able to discern the intentions of the different characters he encounters. Throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Odysseus repeatedly uses his cunning (intuitive estimation) to judge his own circumstances and make proper decisions accordingly. The estimative sense is the ability to know intuitively through experience.

Estimation was an important part of both medieval and Renaissance psychology, and was a quality esteemed to grasp intentions. Estimation implies an intuitive logic of inner intentions (Summers 208). To return to *The Prelude* passage above, the child in its mother’s arms intuitively knows the good intentions of its mother through the sensory-emotional experience of being cradled. The intuitive ability of estimation in the epics of both Homer and Wordsworth underscore the “realism” of poetic knowledge, but also suggests the active production of knowledge at the level of individual experience (self-knowledge).

Wordsworth’s relationship with the eminent chemist Humphry Davy confirmed for Wordsworth that there was an important creative and imaginative aspect to science. Although it is uncommon today, during the Romantic era, both scientists and artists engaged in multiple disciplines (across what modern academia perceives as disciplinary boundaries). “Science and poetry were blended within the intellectual climate of Wordsworth and his contemporaries in ways that have become sufficiently foreign to us that we must make an imaginative leap to grasp the extent to which they were interrelated” (Hamilton 461). English education for both Wordsworth and Davy was classical and unspecialized. This unspecialized method of education
based upon the classics explains why both poets and scientists of the Romantic era considered themselves foremost as philosophers (C. Ross 496-7). Davy himself wrote poetry and June Fullmer, Humphry Davy’s biographer notes the interrelatedness between the arts and sciences:

Performing a fastidious experiment bestows an aesthetic satisfaction something like that achieved by writing a lyric poem. For a few transcendent moments a good lyric bares, fixes and illuminates an emotion. An experiment, charged with its burden of theoretical import, illuminates as if with a bright flash some part of the previously hidden natural world. (Fullmer 69-70)

During the Romantic era, both the arts and sciences believed that all knowledge was within their domain. This model of education, based in the humanities, encyclopedic in its nature, and inclusive of moral natural philosophy, follows the model of education associated with poetic knowledge. However, the Romantic era is the crux at which the arts and sciences really began to become formally separated across disciplinary boundaries.

During the Romantic era, metaphoric walls to separate specialized fields of knowledge were built. Catherine Ross suggests that increased specialization resulted from a heightened competition between the arts and sciences for the same public audience (a public audience which knew as much about Shakespeare, as botany, or politics) (498). “Poems and experiments alike, initially private in their conception, transform themselves to public acts. Without a hearer a poem is less than complete; nor is an experiment complete without an audience” (Fullmer 70). During the era of Romanticism, the arts and sciences began to compete for the same public audience, and the differences between scientific and poetic knowledge became more notable.

Humphrey Davy invented the coalminer’s Davy Lamp, which allowed coal miners to work in safety, without the fear of sudden fires. The Davy Lamp, and other scientific inventions
of the time, saved human lives and increased worker productivity. Davy believed that his pioneering efforts in chemistry could only increase these material benefits (Hindle 24). As Davy himself states in his *Introductory Discourses*, these advances in science materially benefit society:

> Science has done much for man,...but is capable of doing much more; its source of improvement are not yet exhausted; the benefits that it has conferred ought to excite our hopes of its capability of conferring new benefits; and in considering the progressiveness of our nature, we may reasonably look forward to a state of greater cultivation and happiness than we at present enjoy. (*Collected II*: 319)

Whereas Davy’s scientific discoveries prove to have practical applications that increase the material benefits to society, Wordsworth’s practical applications of his poetry suggest more immaterial benefits to society.

At a secular level, poetry offers society the moral benefits of cultural literacy. In *The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1850), perhaps while contemplating Davy’s *Introductory Discourses*, (Hindle 25) Wordsworth suggests the immaterial benefits of a moral and heterogeneous poetic knowledge:

> If the labours of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition,...the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science....The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet’s art as any upon which it can be employed.... If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration….(*Prose I*: 141)
In this passage, Wordsworth establishes the poet’s moral relationship to the new discoveries of science. Similar to Milton’s discussion of cosmology in *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth suggests that heterogeneous poetic knowledge benefits mankind in daily life as much as scientific knowledge.

During the Romantic era, many considered the sciences amoral, because they did not address mankind’s moral relationship to the world. Natural philosophy, the forerunner of empirical science, did consider mankind’s moral relationship to the world in a comprehensive way. However, Enlightenment reason effectively broke the link that natural philosophy had established between God and the moral self (Hamilton 464). On a secular level, poetic knowledge does establish a compassionate moral link between man and society.

However, the epistemological “Two Cultures” thesis of C.P. Snow often appears as a reality in modern academia (C. Ross 500-1). “And, of course, the huge funding disparity between the National Science Foundation and the National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities combined reflects a profound gap between the importance attached to the kinds of knowledge and utility provided by these different ways of knowing (Schaible 296). To put it all into context, Davy’s scientific lectures were filled to capacity, and no poet of the era came close to matching a fraction of the financial success that Davy enjoyed early in his career (C. Ross 499). Around the same time that Davy was packing lecture halls, Wordsworth accepted a low paying government position as Distributor of Stamps for the distribution of paper used in legal transactions (Gill 296). Wordsworth did not benefit materially from poetic knowledge, but he did benefit intellectually.

Wordsworth himself benefitted intellectually from poetic knowledge through his own explorations of empirical science. Robert Matlak finds traces of Erasmus Darwin’s *Zoönomia* in
Wordsworth’s position on nature’s mental life, his emphasis on the symbiotic relationship of the human body to nature in terms of physical and mental health, the corporeal texture of his inner-body imagery, and even in the stylistic repetition found in the experimental portions of The Lyrical Ballads (76–81).

The combined effect of [Erasmus] Darwin’s empirical evidence and medical science – the mental and emotional life of nature; the autonomic integrity of body systems, with the supporting descriptions of their interior motions; the responsiveness of body to external stimuli and its consequent condition of mental and physical being; the independent life of body and mind deriving from patterned behavior; the pleasure that body and mind experience in repetition – all have some bearing on the world view, experience, imagery, diction, and rhythms Wordsworth now employed in his poetry (Matlak 118).

Zoönomia fused natural philosophy with Enlightenment methodology. While Erasmus Darwin utilized a Scholastic-Aristotelian system of classification, his scientific laws also acknowledge Newton’s discoveries. To compare and contrast, Charles Darwin’s Beagle journal exhibits a Miltonic influence, while Wordsworth’s ideas upon the mind’s development in The Prelude exhibit an influence by Charles Darwin’s paternal grandfather – Erasmus Darwin (scientific and poetic intertextuality)!

“He [Erasmus Darwin] theorizes, in other words, that the mind creates lasting (and “luminous”) impressions linked to an embryonic understanding, a concept with affinities to the notion of spots of time that produce an impression that a sensitive viewer can retain for contemplation, which Wordsworth describes in the first part of the Two-Part Prelude” (Hamilton 471). Wordsworth likens the landscapes of the mind with external nature; contextually, Charles Darwin’s phosphorescent sea has similarities with Erasmus Darwin’s luminous mind. This
evidence suggests that Wordsworth does accommodate specialized scientific knowledge into a heterogeneous poetic knowledge. Poetic knowledge suggests that mankind can never be in complete possession of all knowledge.

In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates is wiser than others because he does not assert to know what he does not know. This is the state of humanity itself, mankind can never be in absolute control or possession of all knowledge. Poetry and philosophy are united by their discussion of the unknown in life. In Plato’s *Ion*, Socrates states that neither Homer nor the rhapsode Ion could be the possessors of all the technical knowledge of the specialized branches of knowledge discussed in the Homeric epics. “Socrates: No one can fail to see that you speak of Homer without any art or knowledge. If you were able to speak of him by rules of art, you would have been able to speak of all other poets; for poetry is a whole” (*Two, Ion* 24). The argument that Socrates makes is that Homer is under divine inspiration and is therefore not knowledgeable about the technical aspects of the subjects he discusses (*Two, Ion* 26). Under the inspiration of the Muses, Socrates equates the understanding of both poet and rhapsode as some sort of divine madness absent of reason (*Two, Ion* 26).

The argument that Ion fails to make on behalf of his own defense is that both he and Homer are not necessarily the possessors of all technical knowledge relevant to each specialized field of study, but that they are the possessors of a heterogeneous poetic knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. The encyclopedic knowledge presented in the Homeric epics initiates the tradition of education synonymous with poetic knowledge. Paradoxically, Plato models his dialogues on existing Homeric pedagogy, but also attempts to disassociate himself from this same pedagogy. “For the pedagogical significance of Plato’s new and different philosophy becomes evident precisely insofar as that philosophy breaks with the poetic foundations of the
Attic education and asserts itself against the whole tradition” (Gadamer 47-48). “Can it be that there is no quarrel at all between poetry and philosophy, but that the two are inseparable?” (Rosen x). Likewise, Wordsworth suggests that poetry and science were once united and might be so once again.

A unified view of the Romantic era, like modern education, has suffered from a stratification of thought. Since the 1970s, the sense of what defines “romantic” has been fetishized by competing theoretical concerns. Deconstruction, historicism, cultural studies, and feminism amongst others, has created a hollow sense of “Romantic,” simply because the theories assume precedence over the term and era itself (M. Ross 123). The humanities, society, and the cosmos themselves are fractured. This fracture mirrors the increased specialization in modern education, but is quite unlike the tradition of education:

A modern university is a collection of subjects loosely united by the demands of business and the professions for trained personnel and arranged for the convenience of its administrators. However, the great tradition of philosophy has held that knowledge is analogous, that is one integral structure having many parts but moving together and arranged from within by its intrinsic nature. (Quinn “Preface” 3)

As early as 1955, Arthur Bestor realized that part of the problem with the organization of modern academia lies in the fact that administrators are not themselves scientists or scholars, but are trained in the field of education. These educational technicians are not “prepared to judge the kinds of intellectual skills that are necessary to maintain the scientific, technological, [scholastic,] and professional progress of the nation” (102, 101).

John Stuart Mill states that the undergraduate degree should not rely on specialization, but on a foundation of heterogeneous poetic knowledge:
It is not a place of professional education. Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men for some special mode of gaining their livelihood. Their object is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings. It is very right that there should be public facilities for the study of professions. It is well that there should be schools of Law, and of Medicine, and it would be well if there were schools of engineering, and the industrial arts. (Mill XXI: 218)

Specialization should be the domain of graduate and specialized schools, not the province of the undergraduate college. As Mill states, the undergraduate college should offer the heterogeneous knowledge of poetic knowledge that allows educated students to communicate effectively across the boundaries of specialized knowledge.

The loss of poetic knowledge in undergraduate colleges, sponsored by administrations that seek to streamline the access to professions requiring specialized knowledge, only aids in fracturing the western cultural tradition of an education in the humanities that promotes poetic knowledge. “But instead of clinging to [specialized] absolutes, we must learn to swim, to be able, like our best metaphors, to stay alive by connecting unlike realities, one connection perhaps at a time, until we have created for ourselves an island sufficiently large and lovely and lush to sustain us in relationships of love and justice and mutual respect” (Schaible 312). Without some common ground to unite humanity, there will eventually be no common culture. Poetic knowledge allows cross-pollination between professions that only increases compassion and understanding across disciplinary boundaries. A fundamental choice must be decided in education: fragmentation or unification. The epic, as a genre, continues to stress the relevance of unification through poetic knowledge, Wordsworth’s “Imagination of the whole” (XIII. 65).
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PRIMARY

An toiseach bha am Focal, agus bha am Focal maille ri Dia, agus b’e am Focal Dia.


**SECONDARY**


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Kahan, Claudine T. "Shelley's 'Hymn To Mercury': Poetic Praxis and the Creation of Value."


APPENDIX A

“Floating Island” by Dorothy Wordsworth

Harmonious Powers with Nature work
On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea:
Sunshine and storm, whirlwind and breeze
All in one duteous task agree.

Once did I see a slip of earth,
By throbbing waves long undermined,
Loosed from its hold; — how no one knew
But all might see it float, obedient to the wind.

Might see it, from the mossy shore
Dissevered float upon the Lake,
Float, with its crest of trees adorned
On which the warbling birds their pastime take.

Food, shelter, safety there they find
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;
There insects live their lives — and die:
A peopled world it is; in size a tiny room.

And thus through many seasons’ space
This little Island may survive
But Nature, though we mark her not,
Will take away — may cease to give.

Perchance when you are wandering forth
Upon some vacant sunny day
Without an object, hope, or fear,
Thither your eyes may turn — the Isle is passed away.

Buried beneath the glittering Lake!
Its place no longer to be found,
Yet the lost fragments shall remain,
To fertilize some other ground.

(Dorothy Wordsworth: A Longman Cultural Edition 199-200)
APPENDIX B

“Ithaca” by Cavafy
Trans. Daniel Mendelsohn

As you set out on the way to Ithaca
hope that the road is a long one,
filled with adventures, filled with understanding.
The Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes,
Poseidon in his anger: do not fear them,
you’ll never come across them on your way
as long as your mind stays aloft, and a choice emotion touches your spirit and your body.
The Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes,
savage Poseidon; you’ll not encounter them unless you carry them within your soul,
unless your soul sets them up before you.

Hope that the road is a long one.
Many may the summer mornings be
when—with what pleasure, with what joy—
you first put in to harbors new to your eyes;
may you stop at Phoenician trading posts
and there acquire fine goods:
mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
and heady perfumes of every kind:
as many heady perfumes as you can.
To many Egyptian cities may you go
so you may learn, and go on learning, from their sages.

Always keep Ithaca in your mind;
to reach her is your destiny.
But do not rush your journey in the least.
Better that it last for many years;
that you drop anchor at the island an old man,
rich with all you’ve gotten on the way,
not expecting Ithaca to make you rich.

Ithaca gave to you the beautiful journey;
without her you’d not have set upon the road.
But she has nothing left to give you any more.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca did not deceive you.
As wise as you’ll have become, with so much experience,
you’ll have understood, by then, what these Ithacas mean.

(Collected Poems 13-14)
Q.E.D.