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Cognition and Representation in Wordsworth's London

1. Introduction

THIS PAPER IS PARTLY AN EXPLORATION OF SPATIAL PROCESSING IN LITERARY cognition and partly an analysis of Wordsworth's mimetic theory and practice in Book 7 of *The Prelude*, "Residence in London." The yoking of these topics is less arbitrary than it may seem, though it was, I admit, fortuitous that I picked up the Wordsworth straight upon the heels of Stephen Levinson's definitive new treatise on *Space in Language and Cognition*.[1] Having Levinson's study in the background no doubt helped to foreground for me what is on any view a remarkable passage of spatial representation early in Book 7, in which Wordsworth bids London, "Rise up" and "Before me flow!" (149–50) and then proceeds to escort his readers (note the shift to the first person plural pronoun at line 169) through the streets and districts of the city thus conjured.[2] This seventy-line imitation of the phenomenal experience of London is unusually thorough-going and consequently absorbing; the obliging reader feels, for the duration at least, *in the midst* and *on the move*, advancing through a streaming scene of buildings, people, and objects, with attention shifting here and there among clusters of visual and auditory images that give way one to the next in steady succession—much as they appear to do when one is really walking in the city.[3] The passage thus provides an exemplary instance of what cognitive linguists like Levinson call a *body* or *driving tour*, that is, a mental or linguistic representation of embodied movement through a spatial array, such as one pic-

1. Stephen C. Levinson, *Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

2. Quotations of *The Prelude* are, unless otherwise noted, from the 1850 version in *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979). All other quotations of Wordsworth's poetry and prose are from *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford UP, 1950).

3. For important reservations about the equation of mental and literary representations, see Meir Sternberg, "Universals of Narrative and Their Cognitive Fortunes (I)," *Poetics Today* 24.2 (2003): 297–395, esp. 313 and 354.

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tures to oneself in wayfinding or speaks to another when giving directions. For obvious reasons, body tours and route descriptions tend to be scrupulously and single-mindedly realistic, and that Wordsworth's passage is no exception in this regard should suggest at once how exceptional it therefore is with respect not just to the bulk of his verse but indeed to the better part of English romantic verse in general.[4] By happy conjunction, then, I found myself possessed of a deviant text, a new descriptive apparatus, and two substantial and potentially related questions (and if that's not a recipe for a scholarly article, I don't know what is): first, how exactly does this or indeed any text work its mimetic magic in the mind of the reader? And second, what is the function and status of this and other orders of mimesis in Book 7 specifically and Wordsworth's poetics generally?

Though simply fortunate in the event, I might have found my way to these important cognitive and mimetic matters more intentionally and systematically. As long ago as 1958 M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp* traced the development of a new psychology of art in romantic criticism and philosophy, especially the English variety, which, though typically idealistic in its interpretation of psychological data, was nevertheless habitually empirical in their pursuit. As Abrams puts it, in language that suggests how deep the foundations of contemporary cognitivism lie,

> A salient aspect of the romantic era in general was the sharpened 'Inner Sense,' as Coleridge called it, for the goings-on of the mind, and a new power, by these poets and critics who are 'accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of consciousness.' Coleridge himself had no equal as a microscopic analyst of the interplay of sensation, thought, and feeling in the immediate cross-section, or 'fact of mind.' . . . In this aspect, English criticism, of course, participated in the tendency of English empirical philosophy, which characteristically tried to establish the na-

4. See Michael Gassenmeier and Jens Martin Gurr, "The Experience of the City in British Romantic Poetry," in *Romantic Poetry*, ed. Angela Esterhammer (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002) 305–31, who praise Wordsworth's "amazingly objective and empirical attitude toward the city," especially here in the London tour, which marks for them "the emergence" in English poetry of "an unbiased perception and presentation of the urban experience and scene" (311). They suggest that Wordsworth's "modes of poetic presentation" in the London tour in some respects "anticipate techniques that are rated as major innovations of early twentieth-century urban poetry with its loss of faith in traditional syntax and its preference for isolated phrases and asyndetic sequences of fleeting images and perceptions . . ." (311). This seems to me a bit overstated: to my mind, it is Browning more than anyone whom Wordsworth here anticipates. On the matter of Wordsworth's precedents, see Gassenmeier and Gurr 305–7 and Lucy Newlyn, "Lamb, Lloyd, London: A Perspective on Book Seven of *The Prelude*," *Charles Lamb Bulletin* 47–48 (1984): 169–85.

> ture and limits of knowledge by an analysis of the elements and processes of the mind.[5]

Wordsworth, of course, is the poet foremost in Coleridge's mind when he speaks of watching "the flux and reflux of [our] inmost nature," and though Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude* that it is a "Hard task, vain hope, to analyze the mind,"

> . . . to range the faculties
> In scale and order, class the cabinet
> Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase
> Run through the history and birth of each
> As of a single independent thing[,]
>
> (2.223–28)

these lines nevertheless make a fair description if not of the purpose of *The Prelude* then at least of its procedure and achievement,[6] as Frederick Burwick suggested just a few years ago in an important successor to and in certain respects corrective of Abrams' study. Because of the generic diversity of its evidence—not only critical-theoretical prose of the period but also poetry of all kinds, novels, creative non-fiction, etc.—*Mimesis and Its Romantic Reflections* reveals how romantic literary practice itself constituted an influential working out of the new psychologically focused poetic theories of the period. Wordsworth here takes his central place in the discussion, most notably for my purposes in Burwick's analysis of the poet's widely illustrated tendency to represent reflective and optical *misrepresentations* of external reality, in order to advance "a truth that may well reside in illusion but is nevertheless the truth of the reciprocity between mind and nature."[7] This characteristic form of Wordsworthian mimesis, memorably attested in the lines from Book 4 of *The Prelude* beginning "As one who hangs down-bending from the side / Of a slow moving boat" (256 ff.), involves, as Burwick has it,

> a meticulous verbal account of visual details and typically implicate[s], as well, details of perceptual and psychological response. This latter movement . . . takes advantage of the *dedoublement* of reflection to represent both the objective and the subjective. Optical reflection . . . is

5. M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford UP, 1953) 140–41, 156.

6. Not to mention Wordsworth's other verse. Perhaps the most obvious proof of the general point is Wordsworth's arrangement of his collected poems in terms of "the powers of mind . . . predominant in the production of them" (753).

7. Frederick Burwick, *Mimesis and Its Romantic Reflections* (University Park: Pennsylvania UP, 2001) 156.

[thus] a model for visual perception as well as an analogue for mental reflection. (148)

We will return to the idea of the mimetic interpenetration of object and subject, what Wordsworth himself terms "A balance, an ennobling interchange / Of action from without and within" (13.375–76); for the moment we may simply notice Burwick's drawing of the analogy between visual perception and mental reflection. For cognitive scientists, as we shall presently see, this essentially spatial analogue is more or less foundational to many (if not all) forms of cognition, especially the sorts prompted by verbal and other kinds of representation. In the ensuing consideration of spatial imaging in the processing of Wordsworth's text, I shall thus be following Burwick in fathoming the significance and limitations of this analogy, only in this case considering the matter as much as possible from the reader's perspective.

In the nearly half century between Abrams and Burwick, a number of other critics have anticipated various aspects of my focus, of whom for space considerations I'll at this juncture mention only two. In his richly nuanced study of Wordsworth's development, *The Borders of Vision,* Jonathan Wordsworth observes of Book 7 that "the pictorial vision . . . is given unusual scope. We are treated to a panorama of London life, a word-painting that has much in common with the giant contemporary *Eidometropolis* of Thomas Girtin."[8] Indeed, the poet himself explicitly thematizes this parallel between the unusually vivid scenic descriptions of Book 7 and the kinds of realism practiced by Girtin and other visual and plastic artists, who fashion "mirror"-like "sights" that, in Wordsworth's appreciative but nonetheless carefully evaluative description, "ape / The absolute presence of reality" (7.232–34). The logical backbone of the paragraph containing these lines is a hierarchy of aesthetic values descending from the "subtlest craft" of refined means and pure ends through various kinds of "imitations" of the external world to the still "more mechanic" art of scale replicas, which reproduce in exacting detail "All that [the eye] sees" in the object of imitation itself (236–38, 248, 259). Given the density of key terms from contemporary discourse about the nature of original or genuine art—"ape," "mirror," "craft," "imitation," "skill," "mockery," "mechanic"—surely Wordsworth here invites our evaluation on a similar scale of the verbal scene-painting that surrounds and indeed partly constitutes this crucial passage.[9] Such is the contention of Ross King, who likewise takes Jonathan

8. Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 295–96.

9. We draw much the same conclusion from Wordsworth's frequent parallel in Book 7 between theatrical and memorial "scenes"—see, e.g., 7.262, 334–35, 491, 650–54, as well as

Wordsworth's cue concerning the significance of the panoramic to the book as a whole:

> The introduction of the panoramas is in some respects ironic here, for these exhibitions purport to accomplish what Wordsworth himself attempts but ultimately fails to execute in Book Seventh, namely a panoptic view, in his case one of the city of London. But if the panorama is in this sense an aesthetic model for Wordsworth's poetic aspirations, it also represents an example of representation gone disastrously awry and as such becomes an analogy or type . . . for a language which improperly designates its object. Book Seventh consists in part of an exploration of the relationship between nature and reality and its figurative representation in which the graphic image corresponds to, but distinguishes itself from, its referent in the world of nature.[10]

I disagree with King's sense of Wordsworth's panoptic aspirations and ultimate failure, but his study rightly describes the chief fault of "panoramic representation": it "faithfully catches the outward shape but neglects the insubstantial inward spirit—the ideal form which for Wordsworth . . . was the noble object of artistic representation" (63). Fortunately, I suppose, for me, King never gets round to analyzing where and how specific passages of Wordsworth's own "figurative representation" of London either aspire toward or significantly depart from the aims and effects of panoramic representation. This, considered through the specific lens of spatial representation and cognition, will be the burden of the following comments.

2. Spatial Processing in Literary Cognition

Let me begin, however, by briefly introducing the key assumptions and terms, mostly derived from Levinson, that will inform my reading of Wordsworth's verse. The twin purposes of an apparatus, of course, are exactness and economy, and I believe Levinson's experimentally exact description of spatial cognition can help not only to lend analytical rigor and efficiency to the discussion but also to avoid the sorts of errors that are likely to arise in their absence. I can make the point and some preliminary distinctions by returning for the moment to King's assertion that "Wordsworth . . . attempts but ultimately fails to execute . . . a panoptic view . . . of London." There are indeed several stretches of Book 7 where Wordsworth represents a "panoptic" point-of-view, or in cognitive-linguistic

the by-no-means incidental allusion at line 288 to Hamlet's well-known comments about dramatic mimesis "hold[ing] . . . the mirror up to nature."

10. Ross King, "Wordsworth, Panoramas, and the Prospect of London," *SiR* 32.1 (1993): 57–73, esp. 57.

terms, a *gaze tour* or *survey perspective* based on "a fixed viewpoint where one's gaze travels over a [specified] path" (Levinson 32), much as it does in Girtin's and other panoramic displays that "*Fix* us upon some lofty pinnacle, / Or in a ship on waters" and allow us to survey from that point "a world / Of life, or life-like mockery beneath, / Above, behind, far stretching and before" (7.244–47; my emphasis). Wordsworth adopts this sort of perspective most obviously for the depiction of Bartholomew Fair, when he invokes the Muse's aid to "lodge us, wafted on her wings, / Above the press and danger of the crowd, / Upon some showman's platform," from which secure point he directs our gaze first "below, through every nook / Of the wide area," then up to "the midway region, and above" (7.683–85, 689–91).[11] But this kind of representation of a visual survey is by no means predominant in Wordsworth's treatment of London: his depiction of the city streets, as we've seen, involves not a gaze tour perspective, but a body tour perspective, in which "a pathway is found through the array, and the imagined tour of oneself along the path is used to assign 'front,' 'left,' etc. from any one point" (Levinson 32). In the mind's eye here, the point of view is not fixed and commanding as it is in the survey of Bartholomew Fair, but mobile and limited: "we turn" left or right at the beginning of the second paragraph of the tour and "Abruptly" enter the visual-auditory field of "some sequestered nook"; or again, midway through the third paragraph, "on the broadening causeway we advance," and here the progressive aspect of the participial adjective brilliantly evokes our imagined forward movement along the path (7.169–70, 199). Repeated spatial deictics throughout the extract such as "thence," "come," "homeward," and "far-seen" (7.172–73, 211, 215), likewise enforce our imaging of the whole as an embodied "pilotage" along "strip-maps constituted by landmarks, left/right turns, and paths" (Levinson 289). Wordsworth has no intention here of creating a panoptic representation of London; he instead intends, as he says explicitly at the outset of the passage, to immerse his readers in the "endless stream of men and moving things" that constitutes the city's "everyday appearance" to one who dwells and walks within it. Wordsworth cannot fail at what he didn't attempt, and I take it as decisive that a key metaphor for the structure of Book 7—a spatial one of course, like

11. But see James Heffernan, "Wordsworth's London: The Imperial Monster," *SiR* 37.3 (1998): 421–43, who argues that the vantage is nevertheless insecure: "A showman's platform is of course a perch of questionable value. It permits a panoptic view of the fair, and thus seems to make possible a Foucauldian vision supreme in its power to dominate what it sees. But a raised platform puts the viewer himself on display as an object of sight, and thus makes him part of the material world that can never be fully mastered by the disembodied romantic mind. Nevertheless, Wordsworth's account of the fair is clearly driven by his ambition to oversee it from a point above the crowd" (441).

those with which Wordsworth figures the structure of the whole poem[12]—is exactly that of a "way that we must tread" (7.318).

Such spatial conceptualization, even of canonically "temporal" forms like music, literature, and time itself[13]—is, according to Levinson and other cognitive scientists, "at the heart of our thinking":

> It has long been noted that spatial thinking provides us with analogies and tools for understanding other domains, as shown by the efficacy of diagrams, the pervasive spatial metaphors of everyday language, the evocativeness of place in memory, and the special role that geometry, astronomy, and cartography have played in the development of science and technology. Spatial cognition probably plays this central role because it seems to be the evolutionarily earliest domain of systematic cross-modal cognition: any animal needs to relate what its eyes, ears, and limbs tell it about the immediate structure of the world around it—foraging, avoiding predators and finding home base require this. (xiii)

This evolutionary spatial bias is biologically adapted and grounded in other perceptual modes of the sensorium as well: our ongoing spatial orientation and perception are hardwired, for example, to the inner ear, the otoliths responding directly to gravity to establish vertically, the semicircular canals sustaining the sense not just of balance but also of an *origo,* that is, the egocentric point origin for the perceptual projection of a three-dimensional coordinate system to conceptualize surrounding space ('up/down,' 'front/back,' 'left/right'). Now, while the vertical axis of this coordinate system is "overdetermined by gravity" and our upright stance, the horizontal axes are comparatively underdetermined. "The conceptual puzzle therefore," says Levinson, "is how to define angles on the horizontal plane, such that

12. See, e.g., "'tis a theme / . . . of determined bounds" (1.641–42); "here . . . have I retraced my life / Up to an eminence" and "now into a populous plain / We must descend" (3.170–71, 197–98); "Even as a river . . . / Turns, and will measure back his course, far back, / Seeking the very regions which he crossed / In his first outset; so have we . . . / Turned and returned with intricate delay" (9.1–8); "I rose / As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched / Vast prospect of the world which I had been / And was . . ." (14.381–84); etc.

13. See, for example, the dead or at least moribund spatial metaphors in Wordsworth's conceptualization of memory as something "*looked at through a space* / How *small*, of *intervening* ['to come between'] years" (7.442–43). Friedrich Lenz, ed., *Deictic Conceptualisation of Space, Time, and Person* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003), explains the spatial foundation of temporal conceptions as follows: "In local space proximity-distality distinctions are immediately relevant, whereas in other deictic dimensions the underlying *centre-periphery* image schema . . . and its differentiation can only be applied through conceptual metaphor. In time deixis the abstract domain of time is conceptualized by recourse to the concretely perceivable domain of space. . . . In a linear order scheme the referents are understood as 'located' at a certain 'distance' from the deictic centre" (viii).

search domains can be reliably projected off a ground object" (76, 321). Different languages encourage different solutions to this puzzle, but in English the predominant strategy involves a relative frame of reference, which "imports the observer's bodily axes and maps them onto the ground object thus deriving named angles" (76).[14] We've observed this phenomenon in both the body tour of London and the gaze tour of Bartholomew Fair, in which we map our bodily axes on the grounds of the speaker's pacing self or a showman's platform in order to project the nameable visual angles implied in our conceptualization of "turn," "advance," "below," "midway," "above," etc.

To get a clearer view of how all this works, consider the following lines, where Wordsworth depicts, as in a catalog, five more or less stock characters he beheld on the stages of London theaters. As you read the passage, watch as carefully as you can your mental representation of its words and images:

> Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
> The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
> All the mean upholstery of the place,
> Wanted not animation, when the tide
> Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
> With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
> Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame
> Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
> Of thick entangled forest, like the moon
> Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
> With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
> Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
> Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
> Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling
> His slender manacles; or romping girl
> Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
> A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up
> In all the tatters of infirmity
> All loosely put together, hobbled in,
> Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,

14. See Ellen Fricke, "*Origo*, pointing, and conceptualization—what gestures reveal about the nature of the *origo* in face-to-face conversation," in *Deictic Conceptualisation of Space, Time, and Person* 69–93, who postulates a primary deictic origo with "allocating powers" (87) over a number of secondary origos that can be instantiated on both verbal and gestural levels. A similar "deictic shift" theory receives specifically literary treatment in many of the chapters of *Deixis in Narrative: A Cognitive Science Approach*, ed. Judith F. Duchan, Gail A. Bruder, and Lynne Hewitt (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995).

From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabout
Of one so overloaded with his years.

(7.407–29)

To mentally model these "ever-shifting figures of the scene," we must envision each on the stable ground of a theatrical stage. This ground, cued by the word "theatre" itself in the first line and the four metonymic images of a theater in the next two lines, is readily generated through what is often called (slightly confusingly now, given Levinson's typology of frames of reference) "frame" knowledge, "a cognitive structure of culturally determined assumptions and expectations developed from past experiences with similar situations, and stored and organized in so-called frames."[15] Thus, using stored memories of typical theater situations, we instantly project in the mind's eye a "search domain" or conceptual space that minimally involves a fixed and unobstructed point-of-view upon a three-dimensional stage (that is, an audience perspective from, say, the center of the first row in the first balcony). Our bodily axes are simultaneously transposed to this fixed point, which permits the naming of angles: left, right, upstage, downstage, etc. With ground and point of view in place—vaguely lit and furnished to some unpredictable and normally inconsequential degree—we easily image the first figure, "some beauteous dame" (composed again with recourse to frame knowledge), entering "through a *deep* recess" upstage and "*Advanc*[*ing*]" downstage. Likewise with the next figure, the "sovereign king" and his "train" (frame knowledge), who immediately and wholly supplant the first figure on the same ground and traverse the stage, windingly, probably from left to right or right to left (depending on the reader's physiological and memorial biases and again typically without salience). We repeat the process of figural substitution with the captive, the romping girl, and the Yeatsian old man, each of whom likely takes a describably different trajectory (largely determined, I suspect, by our spatial conceptualization of semantic differences in the verbs "led," "Bounced, leapt, and pawed," and "hobbled") across a comparatively sketchy but essentially uniform ground.

Our mental representations of these figures' various movements upon the stable ground involve not only frame knowledge (the figures comport themselves in typical ways, the dame gliding gracefully, the king pacing with ceremonial dignity, etc.) but also what Levinson calls the "conver-

15. Paul Werth, "'World enough, and time': Deictic space and the interpretation of prose," in *Twentieth-Century Fiction: From Text to Context*, ed. Peter Verdonk and Jean Jacques Weber (London: Routledge, 1995) 181–205, esp. 182. It may be that Levinson's three "frames of reference" (intrinsic, relative, and absolute) are essential or foundational types of "frame knowledge" that constitute a conceptual precondition for any of the infinitely variable cultural and experiential kinds of frame knowledge that Werth identifies.

sion" of "the description of complex static arrays . . . into a description of motion through units or 'chunks' of the array" (32). Conceptually, any spatial configuration is greater than the sum of its parts; it is a "complex static array" that cannot be visualized at every point of its entirety simultaneously. Visual art provides an analogy: while painting is a spatial rather than a temporal form of representation, the viewing of a given work (like its making) nevertheless involves time as the eye moves across the canvas and, taking in its lines and colors, recognizes (really "cognizes" or conceptualizes) its forms and patterns and their relationships (e.g., figure-ground). Likewise with mental spatial models, whether two- or three-dimensional: the mind's eye (Levinson figures it as "small window") travels from point to point to bring different features into resolution, at one micro-fractional moment beholding only a simple part of a propositionally present but otherwise undifferentiated and undiscriminated complex whole, and in the next micro-fractional moment traversing the array to another simple part which then comes instantly and more or less exclusively into focus.[16] The sense of movement is, if such a distinction can even be made in this context, comparatively illusory; it is akin to the optical illusion of the flip book, where the rapid succession of different static images creates the appearance of a single figure in motion.[17] Thus, as we read of the king "winding round with train / Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards," our sense of the figures' sinuous and stately movement across the ground of the stage is a composition, a montage, of static imagistic metonymies—king, train, courtiers, banners, line of guards—envisioned in succession, that is, as points along a hypothetical line. The unimaged interstices between imaged points are, though semantically empty, nevertheless inferentially conceptualized as units (in a 2D configuration) or chunks (in a 3D configuration) of space that may be traversed (and indeed articulated and thereby "realized" or imagistically filled in if the mind is so prompted or pressed).[18] The illusion is especially complete in the London tour, where

16. See Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*, tr. George G. Grabowicz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1973) 238.

17. In a fundamental sense, literary cognition always involves this kind of spatial illusion: the mind processes a serially ordered set of discrete parts—words, phrases, images, etc.—into an integrated conceptual whole (whether pictorial or simply propositional).

18. We get a very good sense of the dynamics involved when the distance traversed between points or foci is in any way conceptually deviant, as in Keats's mindbendingly wonderful description, in Book 3 of *Endymion* (*Complete Poems*, ed. Jack Stillinger [Cambridge: Belknap P, 1982]), of Glaucus' magic "cloak of blue" on which "every ocean-form / Was woven in with black distinctness":

> The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell,
> Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell

the combination of the reader's experiential frame knowledge of urban environments and a body tour perspective enforced by a variety of place and time deictics, frequentatives (e.g. "dazzl[e], "straggl[e]," "dangle"), and many other verbs and verbal adjectives in the progressive aspect, creates an extraordinary sense of fluidity from a bare handful of discrete "world-building" elements.[19] Just consider how much space must be traversed in the first four lines of the third paragraph of the London tour, and yet how few are the component units and chunks from which we conceptually extract that spatial extension. Beginning in a "thronged" street near the inns of court, we move with a human "tide that slackens by degrees," until we reach a "half-frequented scene" with "wider streets" and "straggling breezes" from the suburbs (7.189–92). We've traveled many blocks indeed on the fleet conceptual wings of five noun phrases, five simple points in what is after all a hugely complex static spatial array.

3. Imagery Versus Imagination in Literary Cognition

While something of a conceptual miracle when analyzed this way, our mental modeling of represented space and movement as three dimensional body or gaze tours is in fact quite routine and therefore, at least for Wordsworth, hardly an access of imaginative power. The many critics who speak of Wordsworth's indulgent or ambivalent attitude toward his London experiences are surely right,[20] but it is nonetheless true that Wordsworth weighs and judges these experiences, and his representation of them, according to as strict a scale of value as he brings to the evaluation of panoramic and other mimic arts. Wordsworth is frankly dismissive of each of the passages we've been analyzing: the London tour, for example, he waves away with an imperious "Enough," and he likewise truncates his catalog of the theatre's "ever-shifting figures" with the trivializing exclamation "But

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> To its huge self; and the minutest fish
> Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,
> And shew his little eye's anatomy.
>
> (3.197, 199–200, 205–9)

The mind dizzies as it shuttles from the figure of a black dot on a blue cloak to the "huge" and fully swollen figure of a whale, which necessarily visually exceeds the ground of the cloak, and then again as it juxtaposes first the figure of a tiny fish and, many, many times enlarged, the microscopic anatomy of its "little eye." In either case, the orders of magnitude between the two static images are without specific content; they are empty propositional spaces which permit the conceptualization of rapid movement between, in terms of scale, extremely disjunctive spatial arrays.

19. I take the phrase "world building" from Werth.

20. See, e.g., Jonathan Wordsworth 294–95, Lucy Newlyn 182, King 57–58, n. 2, Heffernan 422, and Gassenmeier 316.

what of this!" and devotes the remainder of that paragraph and the following one to a series of evaluative contrasts between, on the one hand, the "girlish child-like gloss / Of novelty" provided by London's theatrical representations and, on the other, those "meditations holy and sublime"

> which I had shaped,
> And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
> When, having closed the mighty Shakespear's page,
> I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.
> (7.219, 430, 445–47, 482–85)

"Shakespear's page" excels, Wordsworth insists, because it awakens and activates "the imaginative power," whereas the performances of Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden leave that power "languishing" and even "asleep" (7.468–69).

Wordsworth gives an important hint as to the nature of the distinction he's after in the very curious metaphor with which he describes his pleasurable absorption in theatrical entertainments: "even then" the imagination "slept,"

> When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart
> Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears
> It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.
> For though I was most passionately moved
> And yielded to all the changes of the scene
> With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm
> Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind . . .
> (7.469–76)

"The suburbs of the mind"! As Jonathan Wordsworth has said in another context, "so much for Wordsworth the Nature-poet" (176). Wordsworth images the mind as a mighty city—perhaps 'citadel' would be the better term—not so much an analogue of London as a counterpoise or a countervailing locus of interest. He admits here to being "passionately moved" by the represented action and therefore promptly "yield[ing]," with perfect suspension of disbelief and complete conceptual transportation, "to all the changes of scene." For all its passionate engagement, however, his response involves only the more outlying or, to use a different spatial metaphor, centrifugally oriented functions of the mind (more precisely, the sensorium, the total perceptual apparatus that transmits data about the external environment to the brain for cognitive processing and integration). As a viewer or 'reader' of these theatrical scenes, he is "obsequiously" subject to the representation, given over to it, passively obedient to its mimetic commands. Notably, this is exactly his condition (and by implication ours)

when walking (or conceptualizing walking) the streets of London, utterly absorbed in "the quick dance / Of colours, lights, and forms" (7.154–55). In the paragraph just before the tour begins (in 1805, by the way, the two are one, certifying their tight logical connection), Wordsworth is discussing how his youthful "bold imaginations" concerning London

> in due time
> Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
> And now I looked upon the living scene;
> Familiarly perused it; oftentimes
> In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
> Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
> Paid to the object by prescriptive right.
>
> (7.143–49)

Beginning with the very next line, the tour is rendered in illustration of the point: it reveals that familiar, "everyday appearance" (7.152) of London that, over time and with accumulated experience, laid his fond but wayward imaginations to rest. Here again, as in the evaluation of theatrical imitations, Wordsworth stresses the "obsequious yielding" or "courteous self-submission" of the subject to "the object," that is, to the phenomenal fact which in both cases is a "living scene" of (or made in imitation of) the external world. In neither instance does the absorbing "storm" of external perception or mimetic conceptualization awaken a corresponding breeze of internal perception or *self-representation*—"all *that* mighty heart," to adopt the words of another city poem, "is lying still," asleep ("Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802," 14). Wordsworth takes pleasure in the actual no less than the imitative experiences of London, but neither kind attains to that "ennobling interchange / Of action from without and from within" that represents "The excellence, pure function, and best power / Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees" (13.375–78). This "ennobling interchange" is of course precisely the effect Wordsworth ascribes, at the end of the long passage concerning his theater experiences (7.482–85), to Shakespeare's therefore superior mode of imitation.

We can conflate some of the ideas I've extrapolated here by noticing the identity of "the city of the mind," "the imaginative power," and "action . . . from within." To whatever degree a present or represented object brings the imagination into activity and thus self-awareness, to just that degree it mounts in worth. Such imaginative reflexivity is obviously not the effect of the lesser forms of art such as panoramas and scale models, with their submissively faithful imitations of the "absolute presence of reality," nor is it the effect, Wordsworth is at pains to show, of the sort of scene-painting he has himself indulged in a most unaccustomed way. And neither

is it the effect, our careful accounting above notwithstanding, of our cognitive processing of these linguistically depicted scenes. In a more routine reading, we too will likely "yield to all the changes of the scene / With an obsequious promptness," generating from metonymic cues and stored frame knowledge a wholly absorbing conceptual space that will, at least for its duration, more or less effectively suppress self-awareness or reflection. Wordsworth defines this sort of art and its effects in the 1815 Preface to his *Poems,* which begins with an analysis of "the powers requisite for the production of poetry," the first two of which are "Observation and Description":

> i.e., the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer; whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in memory. This power, though indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time; as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects, much in the same way as a translator or engraver ought to be to his original. (752)

As readers of Wordsworth's memorial but essentially unmodified observations and descriptions of London, we too are "in a state of subjection to external objects," even though at that second-remove from the original occupied by the translator of a poem or the engraver of a painting. Such "[C]opying the impression of the memory," as Wordsworth termed the London tour when he first composed it in 1804 (*1805* 7.146), produces a form of art comparable in value to the panoramas, scale models, and theatrical performances he enjoyed at firsthand in London: all are diverting pleasures, but none represents or induces, in Wordsworth's special sense of the phrase, an imaginative action from within.

Because our gaze and body tours necessarily involve "images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects," they also fail to satisfy Wordsworth's definition of imagination—"the Power so called," he protests at a famously critical juncture of Book 6, "Through sad incompetence of human speech" (6.592–93). Despite its name, imagination is not a mere image generator; image generation, in Wordsworth's view, is simply "a mode of memory." "Imagination," by contrast, "is a word of higher import, denoting [both] operations of the mind upon those objects [or images in memory], and processes of creation or composition, governed by certain fixed laws" (1815 Preface, 753). Jonathan Wordsworth has summarized the point here very nearly in the terms of our argument: "Wordsworth himself might have preferred not to use

the term imagination with reference to natural scenes stored up within the mind. 'Sensible objects really existing, and felt to exist,' he commented to his nephew, 'are *imagery*. . . . imagination is a subjective term: it deals with objects not as they are, but as they appear to the mind of the poet' " (178). The experiential and cultural frame knowledge with which we conceptualize figure and ground in the mental representation of a linguistic text refers, by definition and probably invariably, to "natural scenes stored up in the mind" and "sensible objects really existing" or "felt to exist"; it is therefore, in Wordsworth's terms, simply imagery. To earn the designation "imaginative," a work would have to represent, and thereby prompt our self-reflective cognition of, certain "operations of the mind" and "processes of creation or composition" involving something more than or different from the spatial conceptualization and arrangement of images held in memory.[21]

A cognitivist will be glad to hear that these imaginative operations and processes unfold according to "certain fixed laws": they must therefore be describable, like the processes of routine spatial cognition. The laws Wordsworth has in mind he elsewhere calls imaginative pleasures, for example, in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads,* where he speaks of "the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude [or dissimilitude in similitude]. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder" (740). He defines this same law or imaginative pleasure principle in somewhat different terms in the 1815 Preface: in the perception of similitude in dissimilitude or dissimilitude in similitude, the imagination is "employed upon images in a conjunction by which they modify each other"; by "being thus connected with, and opposed to, each other," the images are rendered much more affecting than they would be if perceived or represented "separately" (754).[22] And Wordsworth says very much the same thing again in Book 7 when he documents his perception of the profound dissimilarity between things superficially similar, the absorbing but self-effacing drama of London theaters and the self-activating and self-revealing drama of Shakespeare's page. The former neither wakes nor feeds "the activity of the mind,"

> Save when realities of act and mien,
> The incarnation of the spirits that move
> In harmony amid the Poet's world,

21. Abrams' discussion (156 ff.) of mechanic and organic theories of literary invention merits rereading in this connection.

22. See also Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* ed. John Shawcross, 2 vols. (London: Oxford UP, 1954) 2.56: "the composition of a poem is among the *imitative* arts; and . . . imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the SAME throughout the radically DIFFERENT, or of the different through a base radically the same."

> Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth
> By power of contrast, made me recognize,
> As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
> And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
> When, having closed the mighty Shakespear's page,
> I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.
>
> (7.476–85)

Bracketing the first exception to the unimaginative rule of London theatrical experience, those rare but here unexemplified occasions when "realities of act and mien . . . Rose to ideal grandeur," we take up the second, that "power of contrast" that "made [Wordsworth] recognize, / As at a glance," the ennobling interchange of subjective and objective activity authored by "the mighty Shakespear's page." It sometimes happened that, as he watched with pleasurable absorption a typically pedestrian staging of Shakespeare, a certain speech or infelicity in performance would prompt the sudden recall of his own prior reading and mental representation of the given passage and scene. With this unexpected perception of contrast between things at one level identical, his imagination would awaken from its self-submissive mimetic slumber of the moment before, and the conceptual weather at once would intensify and whirl in upon the city-center of the mind. The sudden conjunction and opposition of the two forms of representation was more affecting than either the viewing or the reading experience considered in isolation because it sparked a flash of self-recognition that revealed the lineaments and action of his own "shaping" imagination. In effect, this contrastive doubling of conceptual arrays turns the mirror of Shakespearian mimesis away from outward nature and upon the central self.

Only summarized here, the imaginative "power of contrast," of dissimilitude in similitude, is exemplified and invoked several times in Book 7, most extensively in the maid of Buttermere sequence. Ostensibly a recollection of plays depicting the "'forms and pressures of the time,'" "dramas of living men / And recent things yet warm with life," "or some domestic incident / Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame" (7.288, 290–93)—in other words, further examples of artistic representation conforming too strictly to external fact, like the pictorial and plastic varieties already described—the passage in fact illustrates a different and on Wordsworth's scale higher order of mimesis. Wordsworth has barely summarized the melodramatic plot of *The Beauty of Buttermere* when the very words he's writing suddenly "bring back the moment when we [he and Coleridge] first, / Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name, / Beheld her," the actual Mary Robinson, "serving at [a] cottage inn" (7.302–5). The juxtaposition of the fictional *Beauty* with the factual Mary constitutes an in-

stance of imaginative contrast that departs from the representation of externally perceived facts and through that departure calls attention to its own activity and impositions. Notice that, for the reader, these lines provoke a sudden proliferation of discontinuous search domains or spatial arrays: one representing Wordsworth's memory of the play at Sadler's Wells, another representing his earlier memory of his and Coleridge's first encounter with Robinson at a country inn, and still another, cued by the direct address of Coleridge ("O distant Friend!," "These words to thee / Must needs bring back . . ." [7.796, 302–3]), representing the moment of composition in which Wordsworth recollects and mentally collocates these two distinct memories. As our minds transit between the three interpenetrating but nevertheless disjunctive arrays, we behold a representation not of external reality (though that is what all three conceptual scenes imitate, more or less, in themselves) but rather of the internal "ties / That bind the perishable hours of life / Each to the other" (7.461–63), which is to say, in Wordsworth's grandest formulation of the same idea, imagination "in her own mighty and almost divine powers" (1815 Preface, 754). Before the sequence is done, Wordsworth compounds this "picture of the mind" ("Tintern Abbey," 61) still further by projecting two additional arrays that likewise depict contrastive memorial scenes, the first of a mother and "lovely Boy" (7.336) at the refreshment table of a theater and the second, from four years earlier, of a prostitute.[23] The memorial "image" of the virtuous Mary and her deceased child, arising out of nowhere and crossing[24] the image of her theatrical counterpart, is itself then crossed by the spontaneously recollected images of comparatively vicious women and a "lusty" and "vigorous" child (7.351). For Wordsworth, representations like this one that conceptually "commingle" "sundry forms" (7.317–18) and thereby stimulate the pleasurable perception of contrast are superior because they focus our attention not on external objects of experience and memory but on modifying operations of the mind itself that in lesser forms of imitation remain unsummoned and unseen.[25]

The imaginative power of conjunction and opposition is of course a key

23. See Jonathan Wordsworth on Wordsworth's recollections of Mary Robinson: "It is all very pastoral and seemingly pointless, but then comes one of those strange Wordsworthian moments in which 'the picture of the mind / Revives again,' asserting the right to qualify present experience" (299). This of course is the point, which seems to me to answer the objection hazarded just a page earlier that "Mary of Buttermere . . . had no place in the London Book" (298).

24. The word is Wordsworth's: in the actual moment of composition in 1804, he writes "I am crossed / Here by remembrance of two figures" (*1805* 7.366–67).

25. See *Biographia Literaria:* "The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man" (2.39–40).

macro-structural principle of *The Prelude,* more important even than temporal chronology or episodic causality to the composition and comprehension of the poem. Equally vital is the corresponding power of disjunction and apposition, or similitude in dissimilitude, well represented in the opening lines of Book 7, which depict not the memorial London of 1791–1802 but the immediate and spatially remote scene of composition in Grasmere, 1804. The lines explicitly announce a resumption of and rededication to the task of *The Prelude,* a second "glad preamble" to inaugurate the composition of a second suite of six or, in the event, eight books. This rather heavy-handed device is reiterated in a much subtler and more convincing way at the level of imagery, which requires us to project and conceptually commingle four distinct spatial arrays, one within Dove Cottage just "After the hour of sunset yester-even," another "Thereafter," outside the cottage, "as the shades / Of twilight deepened," a third "this morning" (presumably within at a desk by a front window), and a fourth, generated by the self-allusions that bracket the passage, representing the distant memorial scene of the glad preamble (7.19, 31–32, 44). While retaining a sense of the spatio-temporal disjunctions and imagistic differences between the four arrays, we inevitably also sense that they coalesce as a ground or "foil" to "set off" (7.601) our perception of an essential figural identity subsisting among them. Thus, though redbreasts are not glowworms and neither are dark boughs of a grove, nor is sound sight or either feeling, yet all are equated as signs of renewed power and made to resonate with and "overflow" upon one another: "Silence touches" as "sound had done before"; branches "Tossing in sunshine" make "the strong wind visible"; the wind "wakens" conceptual "agitations" not only "like its own," but also just like those of the "quickening breezes" that "saluted" him from without and within when he "issu[ed]" in gladness "from the City's walls" six years earlier (7.1–4, 35–36, 46–47). At its best, as in the multivalent relations of apposition and opposition that invest the original and more famous "spots of time" (note, by the way, the spatial metaphor of "spots"), the conceptual interchange among discrete arrays makes manifest to the mind's eye a kind of action that cannot "be looked at by the common sun" (7.457). The effect is aptly described by those lines from Book 8 where Wordsworth celebrates the first access of this ennobling poetic power,

> inspiring and inspired,
> When everywhere a vital pulse was felt,
> And all the several frames of things, like stars,
> Through every magnitude distinguishable,
> Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
> Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy

> Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man,
> Outwardly, inwardly contemplated . . .
>
> (8.479–85)

The comma in the final line may be interpreted paratactically and hypotactically, that is, "Man / Outwardly *and* inwardly contemplated" as well as "Man / Outwardly *and therefore* inwardly contemplated." As Coleridge puts it, our "inmost being . . . can not be conveyed save in symbols of time and space" (2.120); understanding this, Wordsworth multiplies "distinguishable" arrays ("the several frames of things") of "outward" or world-oriented representations in such a way that, conceptually, each becomes "half lost . . . in the other's blaze" and all are, in a way they never were in reality, "mutually indebted." This "interfusion" (Coleridge again; see note 22) represents a power and a picture of "inward Man."

The encounter of the blind beggar likewise concerns "Man / Outwardly, inwardly contemplated," and it too is essentially structured by oppositions and appositions, both explicit ones within the passage[26] and implicit ones, activated or not depending upon the reader's conceptual energy and retention, with surrounding passages both near and at first glance incidental (e.g., the London tour's "traveling cripple, by the trunk cut short" and sailor "beside a range / Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed") and far and unquestionably crucial (e.g., the drowned man and dream of the Arab in Book 5, the discharged soldier in Book 4, etc.) (7.203, 205–6, 626–48). This "huge fermenting[27] mass"—not only of "human-kind" as seen externally on the streets of London but also of scenes and images, figures and grounds, remembered by the poet and conceptualized by his readers—"Serves as a solemn back-ground, or relief," that not only sets off the figure of the beggar but also invests it, "For feeling and contemplative regard," with "More than inherent liveliness and power" (7.622, 624–25). That life and power which are not "inherent" to "single forms and objects" (623) derive from and thus inhere in the mind that perceives, remembers, and conceptualizes such forms and objects; here and

26. For example, horizontal motion versus vertical stillness ("overflowing," "go[ing] forward with the crowd," "procession," "moving pageant" vs. "upright," "stood," "propped," "unmoving," "steadfast") and sightedness vs. sightlessness ("I looked, nor ceased to look," "the shapes before my eyes," "a second-sight procession," "the view," "gazed" vs. "blind" and "sightless").

27. The epic simile of the Grotto of Antiparos provides another emblem of the reading experience Wordsworth strives to create, whereby each fixed image of representation "instantly unsettles and recedes" in the reader's mind, so that "Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all / Commingle, making up a canopy / Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape / That shift and vanish, change and interchange / Like specters,—ferment silent and sublime!" (8.567–72).

throughout *The Prelude* Wordsworth induces us to exercise and contemplate, in "meditation holy and sublime," this living and life-bestowing imaginative "power of contrast."[28]

The blind beggar passage illustrates another of the fixed imaginative operations or pleasure principles Wordsworth enumerates in the 1815 Preface: the "delight . . . of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number" (754). As every commentator has recognized, the poetry here hits a sublime note not elsewhere heard in Book 7, but many have found the effect more or less "unaccountable."[29] However, with Levinson's apparatus in hand, it's fairly easy to describe at least the cognitive process by which this sense of sublimity is produced. Wordsworth again depicts himself on a body tour "amid those overflowing streets," "go[ing] forward with the crowd"; the deixis enforces a relative frame of reference on the spatial array, such that we map our bodily axes onto our narrator's and envision the scene from his mobile point of view, with "The face of every one / . . . pass[ing] by" (7.626–29). Thus, we too seem "to look" and look again at face after face, or point after point in a complex spatial array whose interstitial units or 'chunks' provide a conceptual ground for a description of our and others' motion. We scan these faces, conceptually beholding single points but allowing for uncountable numbers of such points in the array, "Until the shapes before [our] eyes bec[o]me / A second-sight procession, such as glides / Over still mountains, or appears in dreams" (7.632–34). In this strangely muted but nonetheless startling transformation, the innumerable points in the array, "face[s] . . . every one," are first abstracted[30] and generalized into a single but still plural category of "shapes" and then—and here's the fulcrum that levers

28. One of my favorite instances of contrast, though not one especially effective in terms of *imaginative* action, is that between the exquisite Hogarthian scene painting of the "lovely Boy" on the refreshment table, in which the representation "draws all things to one" and makes them "take one colour and serve to one effect" (1815 Preface, 755), and the almost Kandinsky-esque visual jumble of Bartholomew Fair. On the latter, see James Heffernan 442, Jonathan Wordsworth 296–97, and Marilyn Gaull, "Pantomime as Satire: Mocking as Broken Charm," in *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period*, ed. Stephen E. Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 207–24, esp. 215.

29. The adjective is Newlyn's 181. For various and conflicting readings of the passage, see Jonathan Wordsworth 304, King 67, and Heather Glen, "The Poet in Society: Blake and Wordsworth on London," *Literature and History* 3 (1976): 2–28. I largely concur with Heffernan's assessment of the passage's theme: "Implicitly, then, [Wordsworth] is admonished to close his eyes to all the sights of the city . . . so that like Milton he 'may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight' (*Paradise Lost* 3.54–55). . . . The beggar thus . . . silently authorizes the poet . . . to secede from a crowd that had threatened to engulf him, and to contemplate himself as universal man" (439–40).

30. See Wordsworth's reflections on "the creative or *abstracting* virtue of the imagination" in "Essay Supplementary to the Preface" (751; my emphasis).

the sublime—further consolidated into unity both grammatically (in the singular noun "procession" and singular verbs "glides" and "appears") and imagistically by being conceptually converted into a single swath of shadow, cloud, or mist moving or "processing" "Over still mountains."[31] In the accomplishment of this astonishing feat of mind, notice that we abandon not only London for the Lake District, but also, in the same mental moment and movement, our mobile and crowd-confined body tour perspective for a fixed and expansive gaze tour perspective on the plural and therefore necessarily distant mountains. Like Wordsworth, we are conceptually "far-travelled" indeed, beholding transformations and interfusions "beyond / The reach of common indication" or representation: numbers melted and reduced to unity, embodied motion fluctuating into disembodied stillness, London streets resolving into Lakeland mountains (7.635–36). And just here, on the ground of this cognitive ferment, Wordsworth at once presents the arresting figure of the blind beggar, a "spectacle" deliberately contrived to (among other things) admonish the physical eye absorbed in passing shows of humankind and to turn the mind's eye round, "as with the might of waters," upon "unmoving man" as he is, inwardly and essentially, within himself (7.643, 647).

In addition to the powers of contrast and consolidation, the blind beggar passage represents a third and, for this study, final type of imaginative activity, whereby images are "immediately endowed by the mind with properties that do not inhere in them, upon an incitement from properties or

31. To my knowledge, the image of the "second-sight procession" has never been adequately explained (and such indefiniteness is no doubt part of its force). In "'A second-sight procession' in Wordsworth's London," *Notes and Queries* 16.1 (1969): 49–50, W. J. B. Owen, following Z. S. Fink, links the image to a description in *An Evening Walk* (lines 196–211) of the optical illusions sometimes produced at sunset upon the mountains of the lake district: as the shades of evening rise toward the crest of the mountain, the strange interplay of light and shadow creates the appearance of a spectral horseman or horsemen, silently ascending the mountainside. The only thing that cues this connection, however, is Wordsworth's note to the lines in *An Evening Walk* referring the reader to James Clarke's *Survey of the Lakes*, which, in the process of recounting Lakeland tales of such shadowy visions, uses the phrase "second sight." This seems rather tenuous; Wordsworth in *The Prelude* might just as well be referring to a book entitled *Second Sight*, published in 1763 by one "Theophilus Insulanus," who gives the following definition of the phenomenon which is highly relevant to image and idea patterns that recur throughout Book 7: "From many cogent proofs, I am induced to think, that the Second Sight is not seen by the organ of the eye" (*O.E.D.*, "second sight," 2). Consulting the 1804 manuscript version of the blind beggar passage, Owen notes that the second-sight experience involves the "disappearance . . . of 'all the ballast of familiar life'" (49), and this line may well recollect lines from the "Intimations" ode, written in the very same year, concerning "obstinate questionings / Of sense and outward things, / Fallings from us, vanishings" (145–47). This, at least, seems to be the effect Wordsworth is after in the blind beggar passage: the faces lose their individual identity and realistic immediacy and merge into a comparatively insubstantial and unified visionary mass beheld, as it were, at a great distance.

qualities the existence of which is inherent or obvious" (754). One inherent or obvious feature of a crowded street-scene is the general visual similarity of the many faces. Incited by the perception of this, Wordsworth endows the image, through the metaphorical conceptual overlay of a strip of shadow or cloud processing over still mountains, with properties of contexture, singularity, and indeterminateness that it doesn't in fact possess. In a more playful passage of Book 7 that is nevertheless likewise concerned with "the laws and progress of belief" at work in our conceptualization of "wonders from the eye / Of living Mortal covert" (7.276, 282–83), Wordsworth directs us to an even more startling example of this endowing and modifying power of imagination, authored not by his own hand but by Milton's. In the performance of Jack the Giant-Killer at Sadler's Wells, Jack disappeared before the audience's eyes by "don[ning] his coat of darkness," "black as death," with "the word / *'Invisible'* flam[ing] forth upon" its front (7.281, 286–87). Wordsworth is of course amused by the act of imaginative erasure this ruse of costuming is supposed to prompt, but he discovers a fairly noble dramatic analogue in the opening speech of *Samson Agonistes,* in which Samson, lamenting his blindness, complains, "The Sun to me is dark / And silent as the Moon, / When she deserts the night, / Hid in her vacant interlunar cave" (86–89).[32] This is very good poetry indeed—"silent" to describe the utter cessation of light is no less deft and surprising than the conceptual dynamics involved in converting the horns of the waning moon into the mouth of a vacant cave into which she glides and disappears—but Wordsworth's real interest here is, I feel certain, the immediately succeeding lines:

> Since light so necessary is to life,
> And almost life itself, if it be true
> That light is in the Soul,
> She all in every part; why was the sight
> To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd?
> So obvious and so easy to be quench't,
> And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
> That she might look at will through every pore?
>
> (90–97)

To convey the extremity of Samson's passion, Milton, with strict dramatic propriety, represents him conceiving and uttering one of the most stunningly just and grotesque analogies in all of literature. Why should the sense of sight be confined to two small eyeballs, when the surely lesser

32. John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey P, 1957).

sense of touch is distributed over the whole body? Why not sight, too? As his mind stretches to accommodate this wish, Samson performs an act of conceptual modification and blending[33] whereby the perceptual continuity and unity of the sense of touch across the whole surface of the body, an obvious quality of feeling, is first "dissolv[ed] and separate[ed] into number," and then the resulting images of "every pore" are, because of their inherent concavity, transformed into eye-sockets and instantly stuffed, at all points of the epidermis, by round and staring eyeballs! The final array is monstrously unnatural, not only in a physiological sense but conceptually as well: as in an M. C. Escher drawing, figure and ground, eyeball(s) and pore(s), continuously exchange places, and here, both scale and perspective are also destabilized, so that the mind's eye restlessly shuttles, zooming in and out in something like a physics-defying body tour, between two discontinuous gaze tours, one a magnified focus on a single bulging pore, the other a normal focus on a body studded with millions of winking eyes. This indeed is a wonder "Not to be looked at by the common sun" (7.457) but only, in Samson's richly ironic words, by the "light" that quite obviously "*is* in the Soul," illuminating "every part" of this impossible spatial array.

In the higher kinds of Wordsworthian mimesis, we likewise dim the natural and normally commanding representations of outward sight and conceive *by* and, as a consequence, *of* the supernatural lamp of imagination. Later in *The Prelude* Wordsworth speaks of the "despotism" and "tyranny" of the "bodily eye," which often and perhaps even "inherent[ly]" rules the mind with "absolute dominion" (12.121–31), and he provides a fair demonstration of this now-proven cognitive fact in his representations of the London tour, the theatrical scenes, and Bartholomew Fair. But Book 7 also provides a number of counter-examples—the second glad preamble, the maid of Buttermere, and the blind beggar—of modes and forms of imitation in which imagination,

> The soul of Beauty and enduring Life[,]
> Vouchsafe[s] her inspiration, and diffuse[s],
> Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
> Of self-destroying, transitory things,
> Composure, and ennobling Harmony.
>
> (7.767–71)

By harmonizing (etymologically, "jointly articulating") the inward soul of man and the outward press of things, these literal *compositions* ("to position together") of imagination are contrived to open and reflect that "watchful

33. For a brief introduction to the cognitive theory of blending, see Mark Turner, "The Cognitive Study of Art, Language, and Literature," *Poetics Today* 23.1 (2002): 9–20.

eye, / Which, with the outside of human life / Not satisfied, must read the inner mind" (*1805* 8.62–68). As a study and illustration of different orders of mimesis and their cognitive effects, Wordsworth's London book thus teaches with considerable clarity how to discriminate and value genuinely imaginative forms of representation, the kinds that see us grasping (with) our greatest strength (13.274).

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