

Poetry as Contemplation

T'ao Ch'ien's *Homing* and William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*

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HOMING

BY TAO CH'EN. TRANSLATED BY LUCIEN MILLER.

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|---|--|
| <p>1 <i>let's return!</i>
 <i>garden and field will turn</i>
 <i>to weeds</i>

 <i>why not return?</i>
5 <i>I was the one who forced mind</i>
 <i>to serve the body</i>

so
 <i>why despair?</i>
 <i>why sorrow alone?</i>
10 <i>aware the past was ill-advised</i>
 <i>the future can be pursued</i>
truly
 <i>those erring ways 'till now</i>
 <i>they're not irrevocable</i>
15 <i>now right</i>
 <i>in the past I was wrong</i>

 <i>the boat</i>
 <i>rocking rocking</i>
 <i>lightly sails forth</i>
20 <i>the breeze</i>
 <i>wafting whirling</i>
 <i>blows about my clothes</i>
 <i>I ask a traveller the way ahead</i>
 <i>and grow anxious</i>
25 <i>with dim rays of</i>
 <i>daybreak</i>

then
 <i>looking up</i>

 <i>home!</i></p> | <p>30 <i>sudden delight</i>
 <i>a sudden rush forward</i>
 <i>servants welcoming me</i>
 <i>children at the gate</i>
 <i>waiting</i>
35 <i>the three garden paths</i>
 <i>nearly overgrown</i>
 <i>but pine and chrysanthemum</i>
 <i>still there!</i>
 <i>leading a child</i>
40 <i>I enter my house</i>
 <i>a wine cask there</i>
 <i>full to the brim</i>
 <i>taking a cup</i>
 <i>I serve myself</i>
45 <i>gazing at the courtyard trees</i>
 <i>the countenance turns</i>
 <i>cheerful</i>
 <i>leaning across the southern window sill</i>
 <i>a sense of</i>
50 <i>satisfaction</i>
 <i>now I realize</i>
 <i>with just enough room to stretch one's legs</i>
 <i>how easy to be</i>
 <i>at peace!</i>

55 <i>a daily walk</i>
 <i>the garden becomes a delight</i>
 <i>though there's a gate</i>
 <i>it's usually closed</i></p> |
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- with a staff to prop up my age
60 I stroll
and rest
now and then glancing up
looking afar
- clouds
65 carefree
leave the mountain peaks
- birds
weary from flight
know to return home
- 70 while the sun
fading dimming
soon will set
I fondle a lone pine
and linger on
- 75 now I am home!
wanting no tie with society
only to cease wandering
the world and I
mutually parted
- 80 then
why go out?
what would I look for?
- my delights
lucid chats with close friends
85 lute and books
to ease melancholy
villagers announce the coming of spring
work waits in the western fields
- perhaps I order a canopied carriage
90 perhaps row a lone boat
not only exploring valleys
in their beautiful depths
but crossing hills
on switchback trails
- 95 trees joyously emerge
into bloom
- springs bubble and begin
to flow
- 100 admiring nature's myriad creations
flourishing in season
sensing my life
of movement
has come
to rest
- 105 it's over!
how much longer a sojourn
on this earth?
why not set my heart
at rest?
- 110 whether at some time
I come
or go
why now this hustle and bustle?
where do I want to go?
- 115 wealth and honor
are not my desire
paradise
can't be expected
cherishing a good morning for
120 going out
alone
maybe I lay aside my staff
and weed the field
ascend the east slope
125 stretch and sigh
arrive at a crystal stream
and extemporize in song
riding with the course of change
reaching my end
130 delighting in heaven's will
what have I to fear?

The following article is dedicated *in memoriam* to my *lao-shih*, the late Chen Shih-hsiang, Professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Regrettably, he never saw my paper nor my translation of T'ao Ch'ien's *fu* in their present forms. None the less, I hope this essay shares something of his spirit, not only because it was written with him in mind, but also since the source of my understanding of T'ao Ch'ien is Chen Shih-hsiang. I fondly think that *Homing* is his poem. For me, the tragedy of his untimely death is that he always knew what *kuei* meant, to return to where one's mind and heart ought to be, but he always put off that return to continue as teacher, administrator, scholar or friend so that he might help someone else. At long last he has come home.

Approximately fourteen hundred years and two generally independent literary traditions separate the Chinese poet T'ao Ch'ien¹ and William Wordsworth. Despite these extreme differences of chronology and culture the two writers invite comparison because they occupy similarly prominent positions as nature poets within their own national traditions. More particularly, T'ao Ch'ien and Wordsworth ought to be studied together because, in one specific and intriguing instance, their literary works and biographies are reminiscent of one another. At nearly the same age and under comparable circumstances, a return to a familiar scene in the rural countryside inspired two equally celebrated poems on the meaning of nature: namely, T'ao Ch'ien's *Homing*² and William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*.

In his preface to *Homing* T'ao Ch'ien observes that this *fu* (Rhapsody)³ written in his thirtieth year⁴ marks a critical moment in his life when he determined to leave public office and to abandon urban society in order to resume once again a life in the country — in short, to “return to nature”. Similarly, as we may easily infer from the full title of *Tintern Abbey* (“Lines Composed a Few Miles Above *Tintern Abbey*, on *Revisiting* the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798”)⁵, and from the opening lines of the poem, Wordsworth's source of inspiration is his “revisit”, after several years absence, to a familiar English landscape.⁶

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1 T'ao Ch'ien 陶潛 t. Yüan-ming 淵明 365-427 A.D.

2 *kuei ch'u lai tz'u* 歸去來辭. I wish to gratefully acknowledge the sensitive classroom interpretation of T'ao Ch'ien's poetry by the late Professor Chen Shih-hsiang of the University of California, Berkeley, as the source and inspiration of my understanding and translation of *kuei ch'u lai tz'u*. I am also indebted to Professor James Hightower's well known study and translation of this and other *fu* by T'ao Ch'ien, “The *Fu* of T'ao Ch'ien”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XVII (June 1954), 169-230.

3 *fu* 賦. “Rhapsody” is a translation of *fu* popularized by Professor E.H. Schafer. Professor Hightower, remarking on T'ao Ch'ien's use of the *fu* genre in *Homing*, observes that the poet subverted the tradition of the *fu* and “made a conventional form the vehicle for intensely personal expression.”

4 Hightower, p.169.

5 Italics added for emphasis.

6 In an article on the first attempt in the post-Reformation Church of England to found monastic communities on medieval lines, Peter F. Anson (a Cistercian monk of Caldey Abbey, Caldey Island, Great Britain) notes that a group of Roman Catholic Trappist monks became marooned in England after the French revolution and lived in seclusion on the estate of Mr. Thomas Weld in Lulworth. In 1796 they moved into a monastery near Lulworth Castle which was dedicated to St. Susan. Anson suggests that this small Roman Catholic community led to the revival of monasticism in the Church of England. St. Susan's was “the first monastery built in England

*Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.⁷*

The meaning of "return to nature" and the significance of the difference between T'ao Ch'ien's "return" and Wordsworth's "revisit" will be noted later. Suffice it to say for the present that Wordsworth's second view of the natural landscape along the river Wye is of critical importance to him.⁸ As we note in the last lines of *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth bids his sister, Dorothy, not to forget:

*That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love – oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love.⁹*

These lines remind me of an informative passage from *The Prelude*. In Book I, in which he discusses his childhood and early school years, Wordsworth describes an escape from London to the English countryside:

*. . . casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.¹⁰*

In *Tintern Abbey*, as in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth "revisits" nature not merely as a truant or a fugitive, but as a pilgrim. It is in this frame of mind ("with far deeper zeal/Of holier love") that he discovers a marked change in himself and in his perception of nature.

While this correspondence in personal experience and consequent common poetic concern with nature are intriguing, a comparison of the poems themselves is more deserving of our attention because of what it reveals about concepts of style, the meaning of nature, and the growth of the poetic mind. Even a superficial reading of the poems will indicate that while they are derived from a similar experience and built around a shared theme, they are radically different. *Tintern Abbey* appears discursive in style, somewhat prolix in language, exalted in mood, and tentative in

since the Reformation" and it attracted many visitors. "That same year Mr. Matthew Lewis published his super-Gothick novel *The Monk*, which was a mixture of the supernatural, the horrible and the indecent. Neither could Mr. William Wordsworth escape from the fascination of medieval monkery. In 1798 he published the poem 'Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey'." An entertaining speculation – Tintern Abbey may have meant more to Wordsworth than a mere geographical location. See Peter F. Anson, "Building Up the Waste Places", *Cistercian Studies*, VI, no.1 (1971), 41-42.

⁷ lines 1-4. The edition of *Tintern Abbey* cited in this paper is that found in *English Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. Russell Noyes, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp.259-260.

⁸ As Charles J. Smith notes in his article, "The Contrarities: Wordsworth's Dualistic Imagery", this second visit impresses upon the poet a profound sense of permanence in nature and of change in himself. See *PMLA*, LXIX (December 1954), 1184-1185.

⁹ lines 152-155.

¹⁰ *The Prelude*, Book I, lines 87-93. ed. Carlos Baker (New York and Toronto, 1958).

its philosophical musings, while *Homing* seems to be a poem of a more direct style and simple imagery; its generally dispassionate tenor leads to a conclusive statement on accepting the human condition.

To understand the intrinsic qualities of these two distinct poems – and in the example of *Homing* the beauty is almost peculiar in its very simplicity – we might seek to identify in them what Gerard Manley Hopkins calls “inscape”. Writing to his friend Robert Bridges, Hopkins thus defines the term he invented:

No doubt my poetry errs on the side of oddness. I hope in time to have a more balanced and Miltonic style. But as air, melody is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling “inscape” is what I above all aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive . . .¹¹

W.H. Gardner notes that Hopkins continually seeks to examine the “unified complex of characteristics” of a thing which constitutes its “individual essence”:¹²

Now this feeling for intrinsic quality, for the unified pattern of essential characteristics, is the special mark of the artist, whose business is to select these characteristics and organize them into what Clive Bell has called “significant form”. So too Hopkins must have felt that he had discovered a new aesthetic or metaphysical principle. As a name for that “individually-distinctive” form (made up of various sense-data) which constitutes the rich and revealing “oneness” of the natural object, he coined the word *inscape* . . .¹³

I should like to suggest that a fruitful way of approaching the “inscapes” of *Homing* and *Tintern Abbey* – that is, the distinctive pattern and “significant form” which constitute their intrinsic quality – is through T'ao Ch'ien's and Wordsworth's poetic presentation of landscapes. Both poems are, in a sense, landscape poems. Wordsworth gives a detailed description of the scene along the banks of the Wye in the first twenty-two lines of *Tintern Abbey*, while *Homing* is a steadily expanding explication from an enclosed garden to the world of nature at large. But I have in mind here not merely the external scene in the English or Chinese countryside – for in this sense perhaps the two poems may not properly be considered “landscape poems” – but the internal landscape in the mind of the poet. There exists a link between the landscape over which the eye of the poet passes and the subjective state of the mind which contemplates. As J.E. Cirlot notes, there is:

. . . an analogy whereby the landscape is adopted by the spirit in consequence of the inner bond linking the character of the scene with the spirit of the observer himself.¹⁴

In the relationship between external and internal landscapes in *Homing* and *Tintern Abbey*, I find a complex inwardness working itself out and developing through the poems themselves.¹⁵

In his article, “The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery”, W.K. Wimsatt remarks on the well known fact that the Romantics commonly read meaning into landscapes. *Tintern Abbey* is

11 Letter to Robert Bridges dated Feb. 15, 1879. Reprinted in *A Hopkins Reader*, ed. John Pick (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1966), pp.149-150.

12 *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W.H. Gardner (London: Penguin Books, 1958), p.xx.

13 Loc. cit. “inscape” is essentially the meaning of 理.

14 J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, tr. Jack Sage (New York, 1962), art. “Landscape,” p.169. In support of the view that there is an inner bond between scene and inward mind, Cirlot cites Kuo Hsi's opinion that hills and gardens are always the haunts of one who wants to cultivate his original nature.

15 A suggestion of my colleague, Professor Warren Anderson, Chairman of the Program in Comparative Literature, University of Massachusetts.

"a whole pantheistic poem woven of the landscape".¹⁶ Cirlot insists, on the other hand, that the link between the landscape and the mind of the observer is not the latter's projection; that is, the inner bond which leads to the analogy is real. Whether there is a correspondence between the external landscape and one's inward state, certainly Wordsworth was sure of it. One of his chief virtues is his mystical sense of a life in natural things. This view is set forth near the beginning of *Tintern Abbey* in the following lines:

*Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.*¹⁷

Wordsworth's point is not merely that the "lofty cliffs" visually connect the landscape and the sky. He is talking about links: "thoughts of more deep seclusion" arise from the scene and enjoy correspondences and analogies in it.

That the pastoral scene along the Wye river is in reality a landscape of the mind is made expressly clear in *Tintern Abbey* in the very first lines in which Wordsworth reflects on the scene he has described:

*These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration*¹⁸

Wordsworth is explicating the analogy between the landscape and his spirit. Contemplation is essentially a non-visual experience. Consequently, the landscape of the mind realized in contemplation must be rendered in poetry in non-visual terms of "sensations sweet" which are "felt in the blood" and "felt along the heart", and which pass into the "purer mind" with "tranquil restoration".¹⁹

To appreciate in what sense *Homing* and *Tintern Abbey* are landscapes of the mind, let us begin with a consideration of stylistic similarities and differences — those features which together constitute the poems' inscape.

Homing begins with an initial statement of self-awareness. The poet regrets his wasted years as an official, but now rejoices in his decision to abandon bureaucracy and to return to his country home (lines 1-16). Arriving home at daybreak, he is soon greeted in the familiar garden by his

16 W.K. Wimsatt, "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery", in *English Romantic Poets*, ed. M.H. Abrams (New York, 1960), 31.

17 lines 4-8.

18 lines 22-30.

19 There is vagueness in the above quoted lines in which Wordsworth reflects on the influence of nature. But to criticize these lines for a lack of specificity is to miss the mystical vision of a landscape of the mind. Speaking of the passage, "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart", Carl Woodring observes that it represents Wordsworth's attempt . . . "to represent a unifying sentiment of physical and spiritual being . . ." *Wordsworth* (Boston, 1965), p.192.

children and servants who accompany him as he spends his day enjoying simple domestic pleasures (lines 18-42). Thereafter he delights in strolling about his garden at sunset and watching birds returning to their nests (lines 43-62). There then follows a passage in which the poet pauses and reflects on the meaning of his severing ties with the past and resuming the pleasures of friendship, music, literature, and nature (lines 63-92). Finally, expanding on his previous contemplation, he perceives that a philosophy of acceptance of the present changing moment offsets concern for wealth and honor and dispels the fear of death (lines 93-119).

The first twenty-two lines of *Tintern Abbey* closely describe a scene along the Wye river that Wordsworth has not viewed for five years. In contrast to *Homing*, *Tintern Abbey* does not begin with a direct statement of self-awareness, although Wordsworth's consciousness of the paradoxical elapse of time and the changelessness of nature will evolve into his later perception of change in himself. After the initial description, the poet reflects on the effect such natural scenes have on his mind when he is removed from them (lines 23-57). Next this consideration leads him to describe his developing understanding of nature as he grew from boyhood to maturity, and to articulate his present awareness of an ineffable presence that is "interfused" in nature and man (lines 58-111). In the concluding lines, he perceives nature through the eyes of his younger sister, Dorothy, and suggests to her to remember their shared experience of the scene along the Wye as a source of love between them and as a key moment of profound understanding of nature (lines 112-159).

As poetry with a common motif of the return or "revisit" to nature, there is a basic likeness between *Homing* and *Tintern Abbey*. Both proceed from the description of the natural scene to reflection upon its significance. Here the basic stylistic similarity ends, however, for the two poems are distinct in the rhythm and directness with which they unfold, and in their particularity of description. *Homing* begins in a straightforward declarative style that is characteristic of the entire poem. The reader is witness to the narrator's self-examination and subsequent enlightenment, and thus the former immediately shares with the latter the experience and significance of "returning":

Let's return!
 garden and fields will turn
 to weeds
 why not return?
 I was the one who forced mind
 to serve the body
 so
 why despair?
 why sorrow alone?
 aware the past was ill-advised
 the future can be pursued
 truly
 those erring ways 'till now
 they're not irrevocable
 now right
 in the past I was wrong²⁰

²⁰ lines 1-16. For the convenience of English readers, I have numbered the lines in my English translation of *kuei ch'u lai tz'u* (*Homing*). The Chinese text is as follows: 歸去來兮，田園將蕪胡不歸。既自以心為形役，奚惆悵而獨悲。悟已往之不諫，知來者之可追。實迷途其未遠，覺今是而昨非。

Suddenly, in a passage which immediately follows these lines of sober reflection and which directly contrasts with them in both rhythm and mood, we find the poet voyaging home:

the boat
rocking rocking
lightly sails forth
the breeze
wafting whirling
blows about my cloths
I ask a traveller the way ahead
and grow anxious
with dim rays of
daybreak
then
looking up
*home!*²¹

As the poem and the event it depicts unfold before us, we experience the return. Indeed, in each line of T'ao Ch'ien's *fu* and in a step-by-step progression, we encounter a new scene and a fresh emotion. We should note further that a feeling of joyous arrival is not only conveyed by words such as *pen*, "rush",²² or by the sudden appearance of the country home, but also by the accelerated rhythm of the passage. The *fu* moves from a twelve character line to an eight character line during this transitional passage. After the narrator enters his abode, the twelve character line is resumed. Simply by shortening the lines, thus blending rhythm and meaning, T'ao Ch'ien enforces the experience of joy and surprise.

The sense of rhythmic movement and of direct experience is not effected by a mere change in the length of lines. One sense of the word *kuei*, "return",²³ (the first word in the title of the poem and the first word in the first line) is "to home" or to come to rest in the place where one ought to be. As the narrator says later in the poem, he is pleased "to cease wandering".²⁴ In the passage we are discussing, there is a parallel between the external scene and the inward state of the poet which is developed stylistically. As the movement of the boat ("rocking rocking") and of the breeze ("wafting whirling") ceases in the sudden discovery of home, so too the individual's life of movement comes to rest in an internal state of contemplation. The remainder of the poem, following the transitional passage on the swift voyage home, is an elaboration on the theme of domestic bliss reflected in internal peace. The rhythmical rocking of the boat, the voyage of its passenger, and the latter's inward anxiety over the condition of home, family, and garden — all these *kuei* or come to rest as the poem progresses forward to the following reflection:

admiring nature's myriad creations
flourishing in season
sensing my life
of movement
has come
*to rest*²⁵

The very different inscape we find in *Tintern Abbey* is to be explained as the embodiment of the landscape of another mind. In contrast to the relaxed, direct, and economical presentation in

21 lines 17-29. 舟搖搖以輕颺，風飄飄而吹衣。問征夫以前路，恨晨光之熹微。乃瞻衡宇。

22 *pen* 奔。

23 *kuei* 歸。

24 絕游 line 77.

25 lines 99-104. 羨萬物之得時，感吾生之行休。

Homing, the distinctive design of Wordsworth's poem is solemn, discursive, and prolix.²⁶ In the first section of *Tintern Abbey* Wordsworth tells us three times in half as many lines that he has been absent from the present scene for "five years". He repeats the phrase "again", or "once again", four times to emphasize his return to the countryside.²⁷ His original depiction of hedges as "hedge-rows" is later expanded to "hardly hedge-rows" and finally is elaborated into "little lines of sportive wood run wild".

The terse muscular diction of *Homing* vividly contrasts with the language of *Tintern Abbey*. In other poems Wordsworth's fondness for prolixity and his occasional fussiness sometime make tedious reading. The poet's faults are easily catalogued.²⁸ Here however we must understand the meaning of the contrast. The "significant form" of T'ao Ch'ien's poem is analogous to abstract painting or calligraphy. Bare, stark, and elemental, it contains only the essentials of an external and internal landscape necessary to depict a settled state of mind. On the other hand, as Carl Woodring observes, the discursive repetitious pattern of *Tintern Abbey* is the deliberately tentative voicing of Wordsworth's inward state. In the first twenty-two lines of the poem, the combination of a wandering imagination, specific detail, the juxtaposition of a variety of times and places, together with speculation on the meaning of the revisit to the rural scene — all these constitute what we might style an associationistic inscape which allows Wordsworth to be suggestive rather than conclusive.²⁹ As I noted earlier, for Wordsworth contemplation is essentially a nonvisual experience which is expressed in poetry in tentative, cautious, paradoxical language:

*And now, with gleams of half-extinguished
thought,
with many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again . . .* 30

Wordsworth can say that while his thought is "half-extinguished", his recognitions "dim and faint", and his perplexity only "somewhat" felt, "the picture of the mind revives again", because once again he is accurately (if tentatively) depicting the contemplative experience that is a revelation of the landscape of his mind. As Lionel Trilling remarks:

His finest passages are moral, emotional, subjective; whatever visual intensity they have come from his response to the object, not his close observation of it.³¹

26 Basil Willey suggests that Wordsworth tends to discuss his experiences instead of communicating them — a tendency modern readers dislike. "Wordsworth and the Locke Tradition", in *English Romantic Poets*, p.90.

27 Carl Woodring observes the validity of Wordsworth's approach. The repetition of "five" and "again" binds the poem together and interweaves time and place; as time passes, the soul grows. *Wordsworth*, p.60.

28 Carlos Baker has assembled the following list from various critical sources: inconstancy of style, bathos, mental bombast, linguistic incognuities, overly solemn matter-of-factness, eddying thought, dullness, overmildness, flatness. "Sensation and Vision in Wordsworth", in *English Romantic Poets*, p.96.

29 Woodring suggests that the accurate external details and evocative language in the opening lines of *Tintern Abbey* symbolize inner reality. The passage where Wordsworth speaks of "a sense sublime" (lines 93ff.) represents a noumenal sense of God. The poet is talking about the realization of moral freedom through the acceptance of the order of Nature. It is a tentative philosophical assertion. This is why it contains much doubt and the language itself is intensive, unlimited, and inclusive. *Wordsworth*, pp.59-62. On the other hand, Wimsatt complains that in the opening lines of the poem Wordsworth skips about. There is "always something just out of sight or beyond definition". "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery", in *English Romantic Poets*.

30 lines 57-61.

31 Lionel Trilling, "The Immortality Ode", in *English Romantic Poets*, p.126. We might suggest that Wordsworth's discursiveness not only reflects that movement of his mind, but also the motion of nature. Furthermore, the discursive repetition in the poem's opening lines serves to invoke the mood of a religious rite, as well as to represent a tentative voice.

This contrast between direct and discursive inscapes and between conclusive and tentative philosophical assertions in *Homing* and *Tintern Abbey* is further exemplified in another aspect of inscape, namely, narrative design. In *Homing* we find a progressive movement — a chronological movement from past to present time and a gradual expansion of space. A single day of domestic pleasure (lines 30-54) develops into a daily walk in the garden (lines 55-74), thence expands to seasonal delight in the coming of spring (lines 75-104), and finally unfolds in the acceptance of mutability and death at the close of the *fu* (lines 105-131). This same pattern of expansion is also imparted by the extension of the locale of the poem from a single room (lines 39-54) to the garden (lines 55-74), and finally to the countryside (lines 89-104) and the world of nature beyond (lines 119-131). Like the style of the poem, which is plain, economical, and unselfconscious, the progressive movement in time and expansion in space are no accident. As the poet moves away from urban society, he travels steadily across the plain of an external landscape which reflects the internal landscape of his mind — a landscape that is dispassionate, hopeful, serene, and simple.

The narrative design of *Tintern Abbey* is altogether different because it is a reflection of another natural and mental landscape. The first twenty-two lines of the poem are a description of the scene that is presently before the poet. Subsequently, Wordsworth recalls what meaning similar scenes held for him in former days:

. . . oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet . . . 32

Later in *Tintern Abbey*, the poet's attention returns to the present scene:

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished
thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand . . . 33

Almost immediately, this present moment causes him to think of the future:

. . . in this moment there is life and food
For future years. 34

The same moment leads him to ponder wistfully the past and how he has changed:

. . . from what I was when
first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led . . . 35

Wordsworth's method may be identified as a montage technique whereby he groups together past, present, and future, the innocence of youth and the experience of maturity. As in his use of lengthy description, this vacillating time sequence is a deliberate practice. In *Tintern Abbey*, the

32 lines 26-28.

33 lines 57-62.

34 lines 64-65.

35 lines 66-70.

poet presents his nature philosophy by means of a narrative design that allows his imagination to wander freely and to swing, like a pendulum, past each dimension of time, and to move from descriptions of places and reflections on scenes to moralizations on their meaning. Again narrative design – another feature of inscape – is indicative of external and internal landscapes. In remarking on Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*,³⁶ Lionel Trilling observes that this poem is Wordsworth's farewell not to poetry but to Eden – that innocent state of identity of the self with the universe and that sense of a pre-existent unity of being. The *Immortality Ode* represents a new awareness of death and mortality which replaces the old vision of youth and makes things significant and precious. Trilling suggests further that *Tintern Abbey*, like the *Immortality Ode*, is also a poem about the loss of “the visionary gleam”.³⁷ In contrast to *Homing* in which an expanding landscape is a reflection of mental serenity, *Tintern Abbey* presents an unchanging natural scene which highlights the shifting landscape of Wordsworth's mind. As Carlos Baker observes, Wordsworth's discursive style allows him to present a “double exposure” of an identical scene: a past and present view, first of all, and secondly, a juxtaposed vision of innocence and experience through the eyes of his sister, Dorothy, and himself.³⁸

... thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister!³⁹

In general the narrative designs of the two poems, though altogether distinct, are convincing. T'ao Ch'ien's restrained language and expanding narrative allow the reader to partake in the poet's vision of a return to nature. At the beginning of this *fu*, we witness the poet's self-examination and subsequent enlightenment *prior* to the return. Thence we become part of the homeward journey as the narrative unfolds before us. Here we begin to note that T'ao Ch'ien's emotional response to nature is a result of experience. His “countenance turns cheerful” *after* he gazes at fruit trees in blossom. He feels “a sense of satisfaction” *while* leaning across the southern window sill. He discovers that by taking a daily walk, “the garden *becomes* a delight”.⁴⁰ *Homing* is a revelation of nature that (through narrative design) becomes a poetic experience for the reader as well as the narrator.

As revelation, *Homing* is unique. It is not a presentation of a vision that originates in some external agent beyond the poet or outside our own experience. Rather, *Homing* may be termed experiential or existential – a revelation of a common event and a shared action, a return to the place where one's mind and heart ought to be. In contrast to T'ao Ch'ien's poem, *Tintern Abbey* is not an experience from the world of action in which all may participate. Wordsworth's revisit to what is to him a familiar and unchanged scene in the English countryside allows him to contemplate *alone* the meaning of nature. Instead of setting his experience before us in a progressive pattern, as T'ao Ch'ien does, the English poet permits his imagination to roam so that he may

36 Full title is *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*.

37 Lionel Trilling, “The Immortality Ode”, *English Romantic Poets*, pp.138 & 140.

38 Carlos Baker, “Sensation and Vision in Wordsworth”, *English Romantic Poets*, pp.138 & 140.

39 lines 115-121.

40 lines 46, 48, 56. 昞庭柯以怡顏。倚南窗以寄傲，……園日涉以成趣。

convey to himself the significance of his own emotional response to nature. He is not interested in defining nature in terms that will be familiar to everyone. I remarked earlier on the passage where Wordsworth, writing of "these beauteous forms" of nature, says they are not "as is a landscape to a blind man's eye". He owes to them, he affirms, "sensations sweet" which he has "felt in the blood, and felt along the heart". The reader may object to such ambiguous similes and vague references to the poet's own circulatory system. The poet may feel in his blood, but we seldom do. This is precisely Wordsworth's point. *Tintern Abbey* is not a revelation which affirms our common experience, but rather a witness to a contemplative vision which can only be unique. As a testament, it holds out to the reader a suggestion of the independence and efficacy of the latter's own private meditation on "these beauteous forms".

At the beginning of this essay, I suggested that *Homings* and *Tintern Abbey* were suitable for comparison because they are both celebrated poems on the return to nature. The preceding remarks on landscape philosophy and inscape will allow us now to examine more specifically the significance of this return to nature and the meaning of nature as a contemplative vision.

Tintern Abbey does not symbolize a "back to nature" movement of the poetic imagination. Wordsworth's second journey to the banks of the "sylvan Wye" is a "revisit" rather than a "return" to nature. The distinction is important. Arthur Beatty points out that Wordsworth subscribes to a view of nature espoused by Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke. Nature is considered "the source of truth and reason". It is rationalistic, intellectual, and anti-sentimental.⁴¹ In Rousseau, we find an altogether different view of nature. Reason is suspect, primitives are held to be "noble savages", and man in society is evil.⁴² In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth notes that nature no longer means to him what it once did in his boyhood:

*For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.*⁴³

He affirms that Dorothy's mind (when she reaches maturity) "shall be a mansion for all lovely forms";⁴⁴ it is "these beauteous forms" in his mind's eye upon which he can reflect now and which give him peace. The contrast between the unchanging scene and his changing self impresses upon the poet the realization that he can "revisit" but never "return" to nature. Speaking of his youth "when like a roe I bounded o'er the mountains", he says:

*That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.*⁴⁵

In maturity, there is "abundant recompense":

*For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.*⁴⁶

41 Arthur Beatty, *William Wordsworth* (Madison, 1960), p.132.

42 *Ibid.*, p.134.

43 lines 72-75.

44 line 140.

45 lines 83-85.

46 lines 88-93.

In this maturity, Beatty suggests, nature takes second place. The poet contemplates her, but feels distinct from and above her. "Imagination and Intellect become the guiding forces . . ."⁴⁷

It is on this level of contemplation where Wordsworth tries to approach the ineffable in mere words that he becomes most fervent and lyrical:

*And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.*⁴⁸

Beatty explains that "thought" teaches Wordsworth that man is the center of the universe and the "mind of man" is the culminating point of the "something" which is "interfused" in the universe "and rolls through all things".⁴⁹ He describes this growth in Wordsworth as presented in *Tintern Abbey* by relating it to the three stages in man discussed in Hartley's *Observations on Man*: childhood is the period of simple sense perceptions; youth is the time of simple ideas and emotions; maturity is the stage of complex ideas and emotions. Speaking of the three periods described in *Tintern Abbey*, Beatty says:

Thus each age has its own integrity and at the same time the earlier is essential to the development of the later. In the light of this philosophy the poet found comfort for the loss of immediate joy of boyhood and youth; for, in accordance with this theory, it is the general law of life that the vividness of sensation and feeling should die away with the coming of maturity, and it is equally the law of life that thought, intellect, the philosophic mind, which are the compensations of maturity, should be attained only in the last stage of development.⁵⁰

Such an interpretation of the celebrated passage of ambiguity in *Tintern Abbey* provides a formula which might make the piece more acceptable to skeptical readers like William Empson. In his *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Empson complains about this passage from *Tintern Abbey*:

The reason why one grudges Wordsworth this source of strength is that he talks as if he owned a creed by which his half-statements might be reconciled, whereas, in so far as his creed was definite, he found these half-statements necessary to keep it at bay. There is something rather shuffling about this attempt to be uplifting yet non-denominational, to put across as much pantheism as would not shock his readers.⁵¹

It seems to me that Beatty's defense of reason and Empson's attack on ambiguity are both clearly rational extrapolations which are blind to Wordsworth's declared sense of mystery. This is not to deny that the passage is wordy, imprecise, ambiguous even but it simply is not some "half-statement" of the "non-denominational" creed of "pantheism". Nor can Wordsworth's lines be understood by identifying them as the expressions of the complex ideas and emotions of maturity (Hartley's third state). To affirm these viewpoints is to ignore Wordsworth's attempt and his achievement. After all, the poet is talking about "something far more deeply interfused". What does he mean?

⁴⁷ Beatty, *op. cit.*, p.143.

⁴⁸ lines 93-102.

⁴⁹ Beatty, *op. cit.*, p.73.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁵¹ William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (Edinburgh: New Directions, 1947), 2nd rev. ed., p.154.

I am not certain of the answer, of course, but as an example of “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (Wordsworth’s definition of poetry), the passage under discussion represents one of the purely contemplative moments in *Tintern Abbey*. It will be helpful to cite analogues from contemplative literature. In chapter fourteen of the first book of *Dark Night of the Soul*, St. John of the Cross expounds the last line of the following “Stanzas of the Soul”:

*On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings – oh,
happy chance! –
I went forth without being observed, My house
being now at rest.*⁵²

He explains “My house being now at rest” in the following terms:

When this house of sensuality was now at rest – that is, was mortified – its passions being quenched and its desires put to rest and lulled to sleep by means of this blessed night of the purgation of sense, the soul went forth, to set out upon the road and way of the spirit, which is that of progressives and proficient, and which, by another name, is called the way of illumination or of infused contemplation, wherein God Himself feeds and refreshes the soul, without meditation, or the soul’s active help.⁵³

In drawing a parallel between Wordsworth and John of the Cross, I am not trying to claim that the English poet was a “progressive” or “proficient” in St. John’s sense, nor am I suggesting that *Tintern Abbey* represents some sort of dark night of sensual purgation. A comparison of levels of personal spirituality would be ludicrous. The poems are analogous in a shared sense of the moment of infused contemplation, which is coupled with an awareness of the powerlessness of words. Like St. John’s dark night of infused contemplation which is “an inflowing of God into the soul”,⁵⁴ Wordsworth’s awareness of “a presence” and “a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused” is a discovery, not an invention. Mystic and poet are in accord in claiming that infusion (whether in oneself or “all things”) happens *to* the person; it is not self-created.

If we understand the common experience of infused contemplation in *Tintern Abbey* and *Dark Night of the Soul*, we are able to appreciate the hesitancy and imprecision inherent in Wordsworth’s affirmation of a sense of mystery. John of the Cross declares that one cannot accurately express the experience of infused contemplation because of an “interior incapacity”: “that is, of the interior sense of the imagination – and also that of the exterior sense corresponding to it”.

For this we have both authorities and examples in the Divine Scripture. For the incapacity of man to speak of it and describe it in words was shown by Jeremias, when, after God had spoken with him, he knew not what to say, save “Ah, ah, ah!”⁵⁵

Wordsworth is not pretending that God is speaking directly to him in the contemplative moment when he grows aware “of something far more deeply interfused”, but he is affirming that the experience is something which happens to him, and he is aware of his own verbal limitations as he speaks of “a presence”:

⁵² Saint John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. & ed. E. Allison Peers (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1959), 3rd rev. ed., Prologue, p.33.

⁵³ *Dark Night of the Soul*, Book I, chapter 14, pp.87-88.

⁵⁴ *Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, chapter 5, p.100.

⁵⁵ *Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, chapter 17, p.160.

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

In this narrow particular sense, mystical contemplation and poetic contemplation — that activity of the creative imagination — are analogous. Speaking of the transition to infused contemplation (which is called “the beginning of the mystical life”), William Johnston says:

It is no mere emptiness; it is ineffably rich; it is filled with the presence of Something or Someone beyond the grasp of words and ideas.⁵⁶

Johnston's explication reminds us of Wordsworth's “sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused”; it supports our suggestion of the parallels in mystical and poetic contemplation.⁵⁷

I should like to cite one other analogue from the Western contemplative tradition which may serve to illuminate *Tintern Abbey*. I noted earlier Professor Beatty feels that “thought” informs Wordsworth that man is the center of the universe, and the “mind of man” is the culminating point of the “something” which is “interfused” and “rolls through all things”. It seems to me that the culminating point barely touched on by Wordsworth is not the “mind of man”, but what contemplatives have termed *le point vierge*, the mystical “center of the soul” which is simultaneously the center of the universe. A prose passage from the writings of the late Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, offers an analogue to Wordsworth's lines which is similar in ambiguity, necessity, and beauty:

Again, that expression, *le point vierge*, (I cannot translate it) comes in here. At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of *absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship . . . if we could see it we would see billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun. . . .⁵⁸

⁵⁶ William Johnston, S.J., *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970), p.28.

⁵⁷ In a chapter entitled “Defining Mysticism” in *The Still Point*, Johnston outlines an inclusive definition of “contemplation” which fits Oriental and Occidental forms. He notes that the Latin equivalent for “contemplation” was “the translation of the Greek *theōria*, which for Plato and Aristotle was the apex of the philosophical life, a supreme and magnificent act in which one intuitively grasped the truth in an instantaneous flash accompanied by great joy.” This type of contemplation is the result of “dialectical and syllogistic thinking”. Johnston identifies another form of contemplation which he calls “vertical thinking” — that “apophatic mysticism of darkness” by means of which “the mind goes silently down into its own center”. This is the tradition of “negative mysticism with its strong Neoplatonic flavor which had been gradually Christianized by Dionysius, Augustine, the Rhineland mystics, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and the rest”. The author demonstrates that Zen meditation shares many features in common with both *theōria* and “vertical thinking”. Noting that Aquinas' broad definition of contemplation, *simplex intuitus veritatis*, applies to both forms of contemplation, Johnston suggests: “it seems to me that the same Thomistic definition which includes Aristotelian *theōria* and Christian mysticism can also be applied to the Zen *satori* and to any other religious or philosophical experience which genuinely grasps the truth: all can be put in one category as *contemplatio*, a simple intuition of the truth.” *ibid.*, pp.124-125, 127, 132. It is within this broad inclusive sense of the term that I am approaching *Homing* and *Tintern Abbey* as contemplative poems.

⁵⁸ In an article entitled “Le Point Vierge in Thomas Merton” in *Cistercian Studies*, VI, no.2 (1971), 153, Sr. M. Madeline Abdelnour, S.C.N., cites this quotation from Merton's *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1966), p.142.

Perhaps there is some common ground of spirituality between poet and mystic here that cannot be identified very precisely in literary criticism or dogmatic theology. A life devoted partially or wholly to contemplation yields contact with a "presence" — an impelling motion, spirit, or God at the untranslatable *le point vierge* where one experiences "a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused". Contemplative visions yield fresh perceptions.

To understand the contrast between Wordsworth's revisit and T'ao Ch'ien's return, we need to assimilate the latter's vision of nature in *Homing*. I have said before that *kuei* means "to return", to go back where one's mind and heart ought to be — in a metaphorical sense, "to go home" where one belongs. What does "home" mean? What sort of "nature" do we find in the Chinese countryside and the landscape of T'ao Ch'ien's mind?

To comprehend T'ao Ch'ien's contemplative vision, one needs to shift his attention away from that which Wordsworth considers essential: even the most superficial perusal of *Homing* reveals that T'ao Ch'ien does not name an impelling spirit nor allude to the powers of the Imagination or Reason. There is no tendency to discuss Man, Nature, or Love as abstractions or ideals embodied in the tissue of sensate reality. The Chinese poet does not hear in nature "the still, sad music of humanity". There are no apparent ethical values built into the Chinese landscape.

For Wordsworth, contemplation on the "beauteous forms" of nature influences:

. . . that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love.⁵⁹

He tells his sister:

. . . Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.⁶⁰

T'ao Ch'ien's return to nature is voiced in a more simple "why not?"

let's return!
garden and field will turn
to weeds
why not return?⁶¹

Wordsworth suggests that the love of nature leads to the love of man. Carl Woodring notes the converse is also true: there is "a strengthening of Nature's power by the interfusion of such personal love as that between the poet and his sister".⁶² As Wordsworth says to Dorothy in the last lines of *Tintern Abbey*:

59 lines 33-35.

60 lines 122-134.

61 lines 1-4. 歸去來兮、田園將蕪胡不歸。

62 Wordsworth, p.64.

Nor wilt thou then forget
 That after many wanderings, many years
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!⁶³

T'ao Ch'ien delights in "lucid chats with close friends"⁶⁴ and in his "children at the gate"⁶⁵ waiting for his homecoming, but he does not muse over the connection between his feeling for people and his admiration for "nature's myriad creations flourishing in season".⁶⁶

There is, however, an intimate relation between man and nature which is implicit in the poem and partially accounts for its beauty. We should note T'ao Ch'ien's simplicity in characterizing his return to nature if we wish to understand the fusion between seasonal cycles and human growth in *Homing*. The poet describes features of the natural landscape in the most elemental terms. In contrast to Wordsworth's "deep and gloomy wood", "orchard-tufts", and "little lines of sportive wood run wild", T'ao Ch'ien briefly alludes to "three garden paths", "pine" and "chrysanthemum".⁶⁷ He speaks simply of springs which "bubble and begin to flow"⁶⁸ while Wordsworth's waters roll mysteriously from their mountain-springs "with a soft inland murmur". T'ao Ch'ien mentions that he enjoys "lucid chats" with friends, but he does not elaborate on the content or significance of these conversations. Wordsworth discovers that a talk with Dorothy is a revelation of himself and of the meaning of nature: "in thy voice I catch the language of my former heart". The Chinese poet casually plays the lute "to ease melancholy"⁶⁹ while Wordsworth listens deeply to the voice of nature and hears "the still sad music of humanity".

I observed before that T'ao Ch'ien's active life of movement ceases as the rocking rhythm of the boat comes to rest in the peaceful pursuit of domestic contemplation. While the poet does not make explicit the harmony of nature and man, his contemplative vision is clearly a union of the most essential forms of a life at home and a life in nature. T'ao Ch'ien's sense of "return", then, is a return to domesticated nature or, to use Teilhard de Chardin's words, a return to nature "hominised":

Hominisation can be accepted in the first place as the individual and instantaneous leap from instinct to thought, but it is also, in a wider sense, the progressive phyletic spiritualisation in human civilisation of all the forces contained in the animal world.⁷⁰

According to Teilhard's concept of the evolution of consciousness and reflection, there is a process of unification and sublimation within which nature is spiritualized by man.⁷¹ The major representative of this idea of hominized nature in *Homing* is the cultivated garden. The poet leaves the

63 lines 155-159.

64 line 84. 親戚之情話。

65 line 33. 稚子候門。

66 lines 99-100. 萬物之得時。

67 lines 35 & 37. 三徑、松菊。

68 lines 97-98. 泉涓涓而始流。

69 line 86. 樂琴……以消憂。

70 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p.180. Gerald Vann, O.P., notes: "Hominization is Père Teilhard's term for what Sir Julian Huxley has called 'progressive psychosocial evolution', i.e. the process whereby mankind's potentialities are more and more fully realized in the world, and all the forces contained in the animal world are progressively spiritualized in human civilization". Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans. Gerald Vann, O.P. (New York and Evanston: Harper Colophon Books, 1963), footnotes, p.116.

71 *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp.165 & 243.

active life not only because reflection gives rise to a pervasive sense of regret over the past, but also because he is apprehensive about the state of “nature” – his home and garden, his children and friends. Upon his return he discovers the effect of contemplation on external objects (both natural ones and those created by man) upon his internal state. The combination of a cup of wine, a simple window sill, and a bit of knee room makes reflection on courtyard trees a peaceful experience and affects the poet’s own physical appearance:

*gazing at the courtyard trees
the countenance turns
cheerful
leaning across the southern window sill
a sense of
satisfaction
now I realize
with just enough room to stretch one’s legs
how easy to be
at peace*⁷²

This experience, combined with the earlier growth in self-awareness and consequent decision to leave the active life, marks a level of maturity from which he is able to perceive differently. This difference in perception of the external landscape underscores a significant change in the internal landscape of his mind. The eagerness and excitement with which he returns home is transformed into a different level of spirituality: an unambitious state akin to the Taoist attitude of acceptance and “passive accomplishment” (*wu wei*).⁷³ He becomes simple, small, and humble – an unknown person except to his intimate community of family and friends:

*my delights
lucid chats with close friends
lute and books
to ease melancholy
villagers announce the coming of spring
work waits in the western fields*⁷⁴

The poet walks in a self-contained garden:

*a daily walk
the garden becomes a delight
though there’s a gate
it’s usually closed*⁷⁵

Contentment is fostered by an acceptance of reality as he finds it, a joyful willingness which is engendered by the experience of an external and internal alliance of landscapes of nature and mind.

The same level of spirituality is found when T’ao Ch’ien does open his garden gate to venture into the world beyond. Here too matter is spiritualized and nature is hominized by the presence of man:

72 lines 45-54. 眄庭柯以怡顏。倚南窗以寄傲。審容膝之易安。
73 *wu wei* 無爲。
74 lines 83-88. 悅親戚之情話，樂琴書以消憂。農人告余以春及，將有事於西疇。
75 lines 55-58. 園日涉以成趣，門雖設而常關。

*perhaps I order a canopied carriage
perhaps row a lone boat
not only exploring valleys
in their beautiful depths
but crossing hills
on switchback trails*⁷⁶

T'ao Ch'ien's point is not that man is unable to become one with wild uncultivated nature, but that a return means man can know nature only through its hominization. Nature apart from man does not exist. Valleys and hills are understood through man-made means of discovery. At the point where the poet is the furthest removed from his cultivated garden, he hominizes nature by celebrating it in song:

*cherishing a good morning for
going out
alone
maybe I lay aside my staff
and weed the field
ascend the east slope
stretch and sigh
arrive at a crystal stream
and extemporize in song*⁷⁷

Nature is not conquered or subjugated by man. Hominization means that nature is spiritualized by man's identification and union with it.

In T'ao Ch'ien's contemplative vision, his definition of nature and of what is natural is consonant with his sense of spirituality. The external landscape which reflects the internal one is essential, unmodified, and unselfconscious. The Chinese poet's emphasis on the individual's experience of common pleasures (children, gardening, walking, wine, boating, conversation, music) constitutes his definition of what is "natural". This kind of experience parallels of course the kind of life belonging to nature which the poet must relearn:

*birds
weary from flight
know to return home*⁷⁸

T'ao Ch'ien seeks to imitate the sense of timeliness and instinctive knowledge of origins which he admires in nature. He wants to identify with the simplicity, regularity, and fecundity of the external landscape:

*trees joyously emerge
into bloom
springs bubble and begin
to flow
admiring nature's myriad creations
flourishing in season
sensing my life
of movement
has come
to rest*⁷⁹

76 lines 89-94. 或命巾車，或棹孤舟。既窈窕以尋壑，亦崎嶇而經邱。

77 lines 119-127. 懷良辰以孤往，或植杖而耘耔。登東臬以舒嘯，臨清流而賦詩。

78 lines 67-69. 鳥倦飛而知還。

79 lines 95-104. 木欣欣以向榮，泉涓涓而始流。羨萬物之得時，感吾生之行休。

We do not find in *Homing* the three ages of man (childhood, youth, and maturity) which are presented in *Tintern Abbey*. There is however a definite sense of growth which culminates in the final lines of the poem. T'ao Ch'ien begins his return with an attitude of ill will towards official life and with a sense of regret over an ill considered ambition. After a relaxed period during which he rejoices in domestic tranquillity and hominized nature, he begins to reflect on the abandoned world and the state of nature. He achieves a new level of awareness:

it's over!
how much longer a sojourn
on this earth?
why not set my heart
at rest?
whether at some time
I come
or go
why now this hustle and bustle?
where do I want to go?
wealth and honor
are not my desire
paradise
can't be expected
cherishing a good morning for
going out
alone
maybe I lay aside my staff
and weed the field
ascend the east slope
stretch and sigh
arrive at a crystal stream
and extemporize in song
riding with the course of change
reaching my end
delighting in heaven's will
*what have I to fear?*⁸⁰

In this new consciousness death becomes unimportant. Wealth and honor are no longer worth considering. The possibility of another life or an after life really does not merit speculation. What counts is simplicity: a pleasant day, a garden to idle in, a new song to chant. The fruit of contemplation is the spirituality of acceptance. The poet joyously embraces reality as it really is, that is, as it presents itself to him in its most elemental form.

For T'ao Ch'ien, contemplation results in the cessation of questioning, speculation, and fear. Wordsworth observes that for him the reflection on "these beauteous forms" leads to "sensations sweet" which have a favorable moral influence. In contrast to T'ao Ch'ien, his contemplation flowers in a new form of tentative speculation:

Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight

⁸⁰ lines 105-131. 已矣乎！寓形宇內復幾時？曷不委心任去留？胡為乎！遑遑欲何之？富貴非吾願，帝鄉不可期。懷良辰以孤往，或植杖而耘耔。登東皋以舒嘯，臨清流而賦詩。聊乘化以歸盡，樂夫天命復奚疑？

Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened: – that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on, –
 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.⁸¹

A “blessed mood” such as “the deep power of joy” is implicit in *Homing* too, but it originates in a childlike state of identity with nature which is realized as one crosses the threshold of maturity. For Wordsworth, this identity is no longer possible. He laments the loss of his “boyish days” when nature “to me was all in all”. The philosophical difference between the two poets belongs to different attitudes and perceptions: unique forms of contemplation. T'ao Ch'ien does not perceive the world to be unintelligible and he does not appear conscious of “the burthen of the mystery”. Perhaps as a consequence he does not speculate on becoming “a living soul”.

I think that here a final analogy might be drawn to help us understand T'ao Ch'ien's return to nature and the reason for his joyous acceptance of the human condition. In an essay on the Buddhist concept of Emptiness, the late Zen scholar, D.T. Suzuki, writes:

Metaphysically speaking, it is the mind that realizes that there is no self, no ego, no *Atman* that will pollute the mind, which is a state of zero. It is out of this zero that all good is performed and all evil is avoided. The zero I speak of is not a mathematical symbol. It is the infinite – a storehouse or womb (*Garbha*) of all possible good or values.

zero = infinity, and infinity = zero.

The double equation is to be understood not only statically but dynamically. It takes place between being and becoming. For they are not contradicting ideas. Emptiness is not sheer emptiness or passivity or innocence. It is and at the same time it is not. It is Being, it is Becoming.⁸²

According to this contemplative's vision, terms that are commonly considered contradictory are held to be equivalent. Elsewhere Suzuki states that “Paradise has never been lost and therefore is never regained”.⁸³ If one perceives the world according to the vision that zero equals infinity, he will accept it as an earthly paradise.

This analogy is further elucidated by Thomas Merton. In a discussion of the meaning of *Nirvana* (a numinous term often identified with non-desire, the unchanging, and non-suffering), he suggests that it is equivalent to *Samsara* (desire, change, and suffering):

Enlightenment is not a matter of trifling with the facticity of ordinary life and spiriting it all away. As the Buddhists say, *Nirvana* is found in the midst of the world around us, and truth is not *somewhere else*. To be here and now where we are in our “suchness” is to be in *Nirvana*, but unfortunately as long as we have “thirst” or *Tanha* we falsify our own situation and cannot realize it as *Nirvana*. As long as we are inauthentic, as long as we block and obscure the presence of what truly is, we are in delusion and we are in pain. Were we capable of a moment of perfect authenticity, of complete openness, we would see at once that *Nirvana* and *Samsara* are the same.⁸⁴

81 lines 35-49.

82 From a dialogue between Thomas Merton and D.T. Suzuki called “Wisdom in Emptiness”, in Merton's *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p.107.

83 *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, p.134.

84 *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, p.87.

To paraphrase Merton, T'ao Ch'ien's spirituality of acceptance is based on a search for simplicity in ordinary life immediately present to him. In his contemplative vision of perfect authenticity he is aware of the presence of what truly is, and he is thus willing to proclaim the end of desire. Contemplative experience enables him to identify with the natural course of change — with the birds that “know to return home” and the “myriad creations flourishing in season.” The will of heaven reveals itself in this natural movement. Identification with change leads to the realization: “what have I to fear?”

In closing I should like to make two suggestions: one is that T'ao Ch'ien, Wordsworth, John of the Cross, D.T. Suzuki, and Thomas Merton all appear to share the contemplative vision — what Aquinas calls *simplex intuitus veritatis*, “a simple intuition of the truth”,⁸⁵ the other is that the above presentation might provide yet another basis for the discussion of the integrated study of contemplation in its various forms, Oriental and Occidental, poetic and mystical, secular and religious. I am reminded by the writings of the contemporary Cistercian Abbot, André Louf, that monks, poets, and businessmen hold a contemplative vision in common just as they share the same world in which they live:

The monk withdraws into solitude because he wants to. This means that he puts a certain distance between himself and the exterior world. He chooses somewhere a peaceful spot where few men come and, if possible, where the natural surroundings are particularly beautiful and where the whole setting is conducive to recollection. Must we say that he “leaves” the world, or that he goes out of the world? We cannot say this of him any more than we can say it of a city-dweller who chooses the same site to build a country home. Both men remain quite simply “in” the world. . . . The monk chooses a corner of land where he can live both his poverty and his richness more intensely. The businessman does the same thing, but so that he can relax a little and dispose himself for more intense activity. Both are “in” the world, and the world helps them to be themselves more fully.⁸⁶

In *Homing and Tintern Abbey* T'ao Ch'ien and Wordsworth both withdraw into a certain form of solitude “where few men come”. Returning to or revisiting nature separates the individual poet from some particular entity in the exterior world so that he may become his interior self. Like St. Bernard, T'ao Ch'ien seems to have been an *amator loci* — a lover of the place in which he dwelled and came to rest; perhaps this is why he was a *pneumatikos* or *pneumatophoros* — “a spiritual man or bearer of the Spirit”.⁸⁷ Wordsworth, on the other hand, may be identified with those pilgrims and gyrovagues who, Louf tells us, “did not want to have a home base anywhere, and yet needed the wide open spaces of this vast world”⁸⁸

85 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol. II, Part II of the Second Part, Q. 180 Art. 3, Reply obj. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York, Boston, Cincinnati, Chicago, San Francisco: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947).

86 André Louf, “Monastic Witness in a Secularized World”, *Cistercian Studies*, VI, no. 3 (1971), 209.

87 Louf, *ibid.*, p. 215.

88 Louf, *ibid.*, p. 210.

陶潛與華滋華斯之沈思詩—「歸去來辭」與「亭藤僧院」

(中文摘要)

陶潛的「歸去來辭」和威廉·華滋華斯的「亭藤僧院」同以表現詩人的沉思經驗為主旨，點明陶、華二人精神生命的轉捩，回歸自然，發現自我。本文主旨乃以比較研究的方法，探索中英二詩人所認知的外在世界與內在世界交互感應的關係。

「歸去來辭」以簡賅的「胡不歸」設問，於詩人言，固是反省之詞，但其上下文所構成的氣勢，正可以令讀者隨詩人深入其心神之極悟，並經驗詩人清明朗靜的世界。反之，「亭藤僧院」的句法雖於輕鬆處兼含沉嚴之勢，華滋華斯所揭櫫的哲學體系，卻是試探性、暗示性，而不是嚴密必然的。二詩於敘述風格上，亦多見殊異。「歸去來辭」全詩隨時間的轉移和空間的擴展而進行，一日瞬息，遽爾移換為四季之遽遞。詩人所處，時在一室，忽在園圃，終而在廣大的鄉野，甚至於在不可描摹的大自然之際。反之，「亭藤僧院」交融了華滋華斯所認知的過去、現在、及未來，詩人的設想幻思亦取一來往轉化的路線，忽焉在天真無邪的童年世界，突然又回到眼前無限憂患心思的現實。此係就一般技巧言之。

就全篇主題而言，若進一步比較「自然」和「回歸」的意義，便可見陶、華二人的沉思經驗雖具有某種共通性，創作當下設想的方式，卻是相異的。華滋華斯之重訪自然界，一如香客之朝山，當他自覺身心成熟之際，正是大自然威勢喪失，而他自己的幻思心智浮現以領導生命前進之際。故重訪自然亦即華滋華斯沉思經驗的象徵——此時他的思意起伏，文字尚且失去了表達思想的力量，冥冥間大自然的啓迪和振撼竟非他所能形容的了！華滋華斯覺得他已經不再屬於大自然，他因默想大自然，改變了大自然，進入另一超越大自然的境界。陶潛則不同，「歸去來辭」以「歸」字為全篇意義的關鍵，



返樸歸真，如羈鳥池魚之戀慕舊林故淵，化大自然為人間，為詩人可及可見的新世界。自然因人心之傾向而神且靈，但自然又是他當下認知的世界，展現新耕的田疇，稚子幼童，野老農夫，詩酒琴書，此大自然既是真實的人間，故能讓陶潛沉思默想，不為所惑，不為所驚，終而不喜亦不懼，縱浪大化中，處卑居下也沒有怨言了。

