

# “Spirits,” “the Infant Babe,” and “the Spots of Time” :

The Mode of Autobiography in Wordsworth’s *The Two-Part*

*Prelude* (1799)

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Toru Kobayashi

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## I

It is already known that there are various versions of *The Prelude*, the autobiographical poem written by William Wordsworth. Because of remarkable differences between them, some critics have directed their attention to the aesthetic quality of each text (Wordsworth, “Growth” 3-24 ; Jarvis 528-51 ; Stillinger 3-28), and others to the poet’s revisionary workings by which later texts had been produced (MacGillivray 99-115 ; Sheats 473-90). As to the revision to the poem, Wordsworth made it several times during each composition of the versions, as well. To put it briefly, every text has scenes where the poet looks back over the narrative and passes the content, which is about his life itself, in review ; and it is where another revisionary consciousness of his comes out respectively (Wordsworth, “Revision” 18-42).

With these characteristic circumstances, the earliest text, the two-part *Prelude* of 1799, can be conceived to retain the peculiar significance, or problematic, if read in the context of the about fifty-years’ period the poet required to revise this autobiographical poem. The text has much bearing on Wordsworth himself especially in the following aspects : the method of writing autobiography, the dynamic relationships around him, and his intense wish to have the secure sense of identity as a poet of *The Recluse*,

the philosophical poem which was not to be written against his will. Furthermore, the revision done in the middle of the 1799 text largely helps to give rise to a pitfall, with which he unwittingly would be confronted later, and it would affect much of his entire engagement on rewriting *The Prelude* that continued until his death. As far as the revision perceived in the earliest version is concerned, his workings there are not only for the reconsideration, or reshaping, of the preceding narrative, but also, in effect, for the more rigid construction of his identity as an autobiographer. In the pages that follow, the analysis will begin by uncovering the way Wordsworth revises in the poem.

## II

In the two-part *Prelude*, the poet's revision seems to be realized in a twofold manner: the displacement of writing method, and the change of his state in the relationship with the forms of Nature among other things. Although Wordsworth does not mention it clearly there, these conversions establish for him the new beginning, and through which the mode of autobiography substantially shifts. The first question is about the actual structure of the mode initially used. Here is the opening lines of the poem:

Was it for this  
 That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved  
 To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,  
 And from his alder shades and rocky falls,  
 And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice  
 That flowed along my dreams? (I. 1-6)

"For this," the poet continues to ask, the river, "Derwent. . . composed my

thoughts/To more than infant softness. . . ?” (I. 7-12) in next lines. Here conceived in repetition of his urgent questioning is his anxiety for the ability to compose *The Recluse*. Around the period of writing the two-part *Prelude* the project of the philosophical poem was persistent in Wordsworth’s mind, and in reality he was in depression because he could not undertake it in spite of ardent urgings from Samuel Taylor Coleridge with whom he discussed the plan (Wordsworth and Gill 503-25). As long as there is the anxiety behind, then, the autobiographical writing begins to develop in a way that through the investigation of his own past his apprehensiveness about the disability would be gradually relieved to prove himself capable of composing *The Recluse*(Gill 6-11 ; Izenberg 225-26).

At least in the first half of the First Part of the poem, he would be definitely promised to be such, if he managed to establish himself as “A favored being” (I. 70). Wordsworth relates the elucidatory story about becoming it in the following way :

The mind of man is fashioned and built up  
 Even as a strain of music. I believe  
 That there are spirits which, when they would form  
 A favored being, from his very dawn  
 Of infancy do open out the clouds  
 As at the touch of lightning, seeking him  
 With gentle visitation — quiet powers,  
 Retired, and seldom recognized, yet kind,  
 And to the very meanest not unknown —  
 With me, though rarely, in my boyish days  
 They communed. Others too there are, who use,  
 Yet haply aiming at the self-same end,  
 Severer interventions, ministry  
 More palpable — and of their school was I. (I. 67-80)

The poet says that “A favored being” is not the characteristic he was by nature endowed with, but the work of artifice by the “spirits” seeking and forming, and he also insists that he, too, belongs to the group who find their favors. It is this status as the chosen one that assures him of possessing qualifications to write *The Recluse*. With this logic in mind, Wordsworth here represents himself as “favored,” an image rather traditional in its allusiveness to the literary relationship between poets and the Muse where the origin of poetic powers reside in their passive attitude to her. Then, though the poet does not doubt their existence, the plausible question might be thus : what are the “spirits,” or, are they the *genii loci*, or some kinds of spiritual beings of Nature ? But, back to the problem of his revision and considering the following narrative from this point of view, it is not the questions about substance of the “spirits,” or truthfulness of the story he recounts that need much attention. Here must be emphasized that the “spirits” substantially support and govern Wordsworth’s writing as a kind of rhetoric.

Introducing the subject matter on mind-fashioning by the “spirits,” the poet embarks on description of the scenes where he encounters them, and the enumeration of these is to verify the process of identity formation which he thinks he experienced. At this point, the “spirits” are very functional for Wordsworth in two ways. First, their formative influences and the effects on him make the grounds for his securing a status of the chosen poet, and this enhances the genuineness of his ability to write *The Recluse*. Secondly, since they are selected for the theme of present narrative, the “spirits” work for him as the main impetus to advance the poem. The poet narrates each confrontation in nearly chronological order. For example, he perceived that “a huge cliff, /As if with voluntary power instinct, /Upreared its head” (l. 108-10), when he went boating on a lake. And while skating, he was checked by the mysterious moving “the solitary cliffs” (l. 180) showed “as if the earth

had rolled/With visible motion her diurnal round” (I. 181-82). Through these experiences, he affirms, “The passions that build up our human soul” (I. 134) were intertwined “with high objects, with eternal things, /With life and Nature” (I. 136-37), “The elements of feeling and of thought” (I. 138) were purified, and “Both pain and fear” (I. 140) were sanctified, and eventually he felt “A grandeur in the beatings of the heart” (I. 141). However, as some critics show, it turns out that it is the genuine forms of Nature, rather than the “spirits” or something supernatural, that form the mind of Wordsworth, even though they are subsequently referred to as “powers” (I. 186) or “genii” (I. 186) in the poem (Eakin 389-405 ; Stoddard 1-24). So, it can be said that the “spirits” are not the entities, either natural or supernatural, but a kind of rhetoric in substance which is very operative for the poet in his significant unification of his confrontations with the formative Nature. In other words, they are a rhetoric to Wordsworth, the autobiographer, which is useful enough for him to generate a story of his life, in putting those fragmented memories in order to be narrated. On this ground, the method of his present writing would be understood to be dependent on a rhetoric, that can be called the rhetoric of spirits.

And then there is another noteworthy aspect here in the lines where he recounts the way his poetic mind evolves. That is his state in the dynamic relationship with the outside. Obviously the poet puts himself in the position of the receiver. As remarked earlier, he was sought, and his mind was fashioned and built up by the “spirits,” and not only this formation process but also his identity itself are based on his passiveness, which is literally represented in the word “favored.” At this juncture it is not difficult to point out his lack of positiveness as a subjective entity, but, granting it to be the case, he is unmistakably a unified being here. The unity of the poet’s self is realized by his own memories of encounters with the formative Nature, and much more by the present narrative aimed to show definitely

his actual identity which is nothing but “A favored being” to himself.

Wordsworth revises later this mode of autobiography consisting of the rhetoric of spirits-based writing method and his passive state to be substituted by the other mode which has a very different structure. Before the actual manner of his revision is analyzed, however, some lines, seen in the middle of the First Part of the poem, are to be brought into question, where the poet turns back and reviews the narrative composed heretofore. The story so far narrated is, by his judgment, “a song/Venial” (l. 248-49), and he finds it unsatisfactory, because, in his own words, “much is overlooked” (l. 251). Yet, this shortage is regarded so serious by the poet, that he says,

. . . we should ill  
 Attain our object if, from delicate fears  
 Of breaking in upon the unity  
 Of this my argument, I should omit  
 To speak of such effects as cannot here  
 Be regularly classed, yet tend no less  
 To the same point, the growth of mental power  
 And love of Nature’s works. (l. 251-58)

His sense of failure centers upon his neglect of “the growth of mental power/And love of Nature’s works,” which he thinks is crucial to his “object,” and so has to be told. This notion is an earliest pivotal occasion to urge himself toward the revision, partly because the “growth,” the coming subject of his narrative, would be significantly related to the famous lines on the “spots of time,” whose argument has much meaning to Wordsworth, the revisionary poet and autobiographer.

### III

After recounting the episode of the drowned man which he witnessed at the age of eight, Wordsworth begins the argument as follows :

There are in our existence spots of time  
Which with distinct preeminence retain  
A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed  
By trivial occupations and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds —  
Especially the imaginative power —  
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;  
Such moments chiefly seem to have their date  
In our first childhood. (I. 288-96)

The things here named “spots of time” turn out to be some particular memories that are traceable to his boyhood. Taking the examples only from the lines related to the above quotation, they include the sight of the drowned man which he caught at Esthwaite Water, the dreary landscape with the pool, the beacon, and a girl that he saw while “an urchin” (I. 299), and the bleak scene that happened to surround him waiting for horses before the death of his father. These are the memories to which the poet gives special treatment, because, according to his understanding, his spirit, chiefly “the imaginative power,” is revived through recollection of them. The various meanings of the “spots” are not our concern here. Attention should be directed only to the more fundamental, or indispensable, phase on which the reasoning for their peculiarity stands.

The actual drama occurring in the “spots of time” develops between the two poles ; the present poet and his pasts, and he is favorably affected by them through recollection. Then, it is the temporality that is the necessary

presupposition for the function of the “spots” to be realized. Based on this temporality those poles are distinctively generated and the recollection, which is the mental activity to fill a gap between them, is put into operation. Furthermore, the temporality is also notable in present context because of its pivotal nature where both the “spots” and the “growth,” his recently recognized subject matter, meet. Growth means the change in time with affirmative meaning, which is nothing but a temporal phenomenon, and, therefore, can be discerned that its existence too is grounded in the temporality. And a series of lines, beginning with the poet’s reference to the “growth” up until the “spots of time” argument, is so significant in the whole narrative of the two-part *Prelude* in some respects. It can be perceived that through these lines the temporality is introduced into the poem as one of the crucial themes more substantially than ever, and this indicates that Wordsworth becomes more conscious of the temporal aspect of himself. Viewed from the modal change of the autobiographical narrative, it is understood that almost all preparations for the poet’s revision are completed by these lines.

It is very interesting, then, to see the alternation of the relationship between the poet and the outside, which happened in conformity with the emergence of the temporality as a theme in the poem. While the poet is seen as passive in some ways vis-a-vis the “spirit,” in his opening words of the Second Part of the poem the change of his state is evident. Wordsworth says : “Thus far, my friend, have we retraced the way/Through which I travelled when I first began/To love the woods and fields” (II. 1-3). This is also the passage, though short, where the poet reviews the preceding narrative, but the point is the expression through which he represents himself as a lover of Nature, that means an active subject. Bearing this conversion of his state in mind, the following lines look more suggestive, where he apparently talks about a memory of the travel by horse :



O, ye rocks and streams,  
 And that still spirit of the evening air,  
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt  
 Your presence, when, with slackened step, we breathed  
 Along the sides of the steep hills, or when,  
 Lightened by gleams of moonlight from the sea,  
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand. (II. 133-39)

In the description of his relationship with the outside, or the “spirit,” the transference of his focal point is significant. It is the poet himself perceiving the presence of the “spirit,” rather than the formative influences which it would afford him, that is in the focus of his recounting, and this suggests that he is no longer passive, and that he is not just the object to be affected, but rather the subject who behaves actively. And the autobiographical narrative leads to where both this subjective consciousness of his and the temporality appear intertwined. That is the argument which begins with the words, “Blessed the infant babe” (II. 267), but its importance has another reason to be respected. It is in this Infant Babe passage that the poet’s revision is actually observed.

The passage starts as follows :

Blessed the infant babe —  
 For my best conjectures I would trace  
 The progress of our being — blest the babe  
 Nursed in his mother’s arms, the babe who sleeps  
 Upon his mother’s breast, who, when his soul  
 Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,  
 Doth gather passion from his mother’s eye. (II. 267-73)

Primarily Wordsworth’s intention is not just to describe the babe, but to

investigate “The progress of our being” from the initial stage. And it is recognized in this historical aspect which the argument gets to bear at its onset that the temporality is conceived by the poet. Like the “growth” and the “spots of time,” the “progress” is nothing but the temporal phenomenon. Yet, more importantly, the temporality has come to be regarded in his mind as a reality with its own significance, which is meant in that the “progress” is objectified by him to be the object of his inquiry (Miall 233-53). The investigative description of the babe has been designed for him to “trace/ The progress,” which is the temporal aspect of the man.<sup>1</sup> Then, what is the characteristic of the babe? Our concern is limited to the active voice of the last three lines, since it is clear from it that the babe is a subjective being who takes the initiative. This is also true even when he is examined in a different light, as Wordsworth later says: “From Nature largely he [the babe] receives, nor so/Is satisfied, but largely gives again” (II. 297-98), and that “his mind, /Even as an agent of the one great mind, /Creates, creator and receiver both, /Working but in alliance with the works/Which it beholds” (II. 301-05). Facing Nature, the babe still conducts himself as an active subject.

The poet, then, suddenly concludes the Infant Babe argument with these lines, allowing it to become insufficient.

Such, verily, is the first  
 Poetic spirit of our human life —  
 By uniform control of after years  
 In most abated and suppressed, in some  
 Through every change of growth or of decay  
 Preeminent till death. (II. 305-10)

The argument eventually has been over the manifestation of “the first/

Poetic spirit,” and, he also says, there is the difference in its development between persons. The central reason of his inconclusive investigation into the “progress” is so short an account of the temporal sequence which will have followed after the infancy. But in spite of this defect, if it comes to the problem of revision by the poet, these lines are peculiarly important, because here, in narrating the “progress,” Wordsworth employs a different method of writing autobiography. Firstly is the wording, “Through every change of growth or of decay,” that is used by him talking about “some” whose “first/Poetic spirit” would remain “Preeminent till death.” From this expression and his implied viewpoint, the poet’s understanding of the human life can be extrapolated : it is the entity which consists of the sequential incidents, “every change,” and, therefore, is a temporal one based on the linear temporality. In this respect, as far as whole passage of the babe is concerned, it has been the narrative, though scant, where the poet tries to trace the gradual development of an aspect of human mind, the “Poetic spirit,” from its birth to its end. And it is evident that this method of writing is very different from that previously used, in which the formative influences of the “spirits” were the only subject to be narrated. Comparatively, the present method would lead to the narrative with wider perspective in which an individual’s life should be understood and verbalized from one aspect or theme in a linear, temporally ordered way. Then there is the passage in the two-part *Prelude*, that permits a reading that intentionally or not, Wordsworth writes down his own life with this method, and that is the very argument about the babe. After the above quotation he continues thus :

From early days,  
Beginning not long after that first time  
In which, a babe, by intercourse of touch

I held mute dialogues with my mother's heart,  
 I have endeavoured to display the means  
 Whereby this infant sensibility,  
 Great birthright of our being, was in me  
 Augmented and sustained. (II. 310-17)

Consequently, the argument is the autobiographical narrative of Wordsworth himself. Although it is a version almost too abridged to be noticed, he recounts the “progress” of his “Poetic spirit” from its first appearance. Here can be discerned that the present method of writing autobiography is dependent on another rhetoric, which may be called the rhetoric of temporality.<sup>2</sup> There is the remarkable contrast between this and the rhetoric of spirits. The present focus of the poet's attention is upon the temporal aspect of the mind, which has been typically objectified in its “progress.” Realized in the writing method, the new rhetoric makes it possible to investigate temporally his own self which has subjective consciousness. On the other hand, what the rhetoric of spirits actually could do through his writing was to encourage him to describe the various scenes only of his confrontation with the natural forms with his notion that he was nothing but the passive entity fashioned by Nature. It is in these points that the substantial manner of the poet's revision is observed. It consists of the alternation of the mode of autobiography through which the writing method and his dynamic relationship with the outside radically change.

Here, it is recognized that the revision which is realized in the middle of the poem brings about the new beginning to Wordsworth, but it seems to be unsuccessful in two respects. And, when it comes to both near and distant future of the two-part *Prelude*, there is another noteworthy aspect concerning the revisionary poet himself. Logically speaking, by composing an autobiographical narrative with the rhetoric of temporality-based writing

method, his identity will have been established in a way considerably different from that which was previously seen in the case where he wished to recognize himself as “A favored being.” That is to say, if Wordsworth could have definite evidence of the immortality of his “first/Poetic spirit,” his identity as a poet of *The Recluse* would be established. What is to be next considered is the development, or subsequent use of the new rhetoric by the poet, and there the whole history of *The Prelude* also matters.

#### IV

In the two-part *Prelude* there are more lines which must be read in the context of the Infant Babe passage. After narrating the period when he was about fourteen, Wordsworth makes a remarkable statement as follows :

’Twere long to tell  
 What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,  
 And what the summer shade, what day and night,  
 The evening and the morning, what my dreams  
 And what my waking thoughts, supplied to nurse  
 That spirit of religious love in which  
 I walked with Nature. But let this at least  
 Be not forgotten, that I still retained  
 My first creative sensibility,  
 That by the regular action of the world  
 My soul was unsubdued. (II. 401-11)

The point is the last sentence which readily appears to be a groundless utterance, when considered the conceivable form that his narrative should finally take if written with the rhetoric of temporality. Since there are no more references to, or much less any evidence of, his later retainment of the

“first creative sensibility” anywhere in the poem, the statement is no more than an insistence of his wishful thinking. Hence, it is true that for Wordsworth the new beginning comes to a deadlock in the poem, which means that the newly designed establishment of his identity cannot be accomplished.

Taking into account his poetic activities following the composition of the two-part *Prelude*, however, it is this failure that made him plan the revision of the whole poem. Really, in each later version, as its expansion of the narrative structure covering more of his historical development shows, clear is Wordsworth’s intention to secure himself the “creative sensibility” since infancy, which, being carried out, would become a sufficient evidence to prove the preservation of subjective consciousness (Salvesen 1-45 ; Abrams 71-195 ; Mills-Courts 140-202). Further, such recognition of his self’s intractability, or totality in time, which should be acquired through writing an autobiography with the latest method, would be a testimony of his becoming the poet of *The Recluse* (Johnston 100-18 ; Rzepka 62-71). The new beginning, presented but not fully developed in the earliest version, comes to be the starting point from which the other autobiographical projects will evolve.

But there is the problem of the actual revision by Wordsworth : his aim to compensate the insufficiency disclosed in the poem of 1799 cannot explain thoroughly all of his later poetic activities on the autobiographical narrative. After the completion of the earliest text, he made three major revisions of it. In 1804, the decision of composing the five-parts version was put into practice, but soon it was abandoned. Then, it was in 1805 that *The Prelude* was revived again with the extended form of thirteen books, and at the time of his death in 1850, he left the world the fourteen-book text, which was a revised version of the poem of 1805 (Kishel 271-85 ; Jay 59-72). The peculiarity which the history of the poem finally takes on is its length

long-sustained for the poet's working on it, and this indicates that Wordsworth during his lifetime did not regard *The Prelude* as a finished work, which also suggests that at least since 1804 he had been faced with some difficulties which prevented him from completing, or kept him revising, it (Arac 57-70). This is another reason why the new beginning ends rather unsuccessfully. And one of the causes of this would be traced back to his understanding of the "spots of time" which had been already revealed in the earliest text of 1799.

The argument of the "spots of time" and the "spots" themselves had been very important for Wordsworth, the revisionary poet. During his later reworkings of *The Prelude*, both were considerably relocated within the whole structure of the poem, and his careful treatment of them evinces their functional significance as the poet hopes to narrate effectively the formation process of his identity (Lindenberger 143-56 ; Wordsworth, "Five-Book *Prelude*" 1-25 ; Gill 82-89). Also to the poet writing the two-part *Prelude*, the "spots of time" passage played an important role. As mentioned earlier, it largely helped him to discover the meaningfulness of the temporal aspect of himself, and, in consequence, prepared grounds for his revising the mode in which the autobiographical narrative should be composed.

However, read in the context of his comprehension, the "spots" appear formidable hindrances as well to the development of the new beginning. The first remarkable feature about the "spots" is the poet's state within the dynamic milieu. The move from his passive to active state is one of the modal changes which his revision effectuates, and this alternation is the point which would be in direct contradiction to what the argument of the "spots" clearly expresses. As Wordsworth said, they are particular memories, and through their recollection, his mind is revitalized. It is evident, then, that when confronted with the "spots," he is passive, under their influence, which is the same state as seen in the scenes of education by the

“spirits” or the formative Nature. Therefore, the “spots” have the capability of undermining his consciousness of, or confidence in, himself as a subjective entity, and its achievement depends on the poet’s attaching importance to them. Secondly, the “spots,” especially while in their operation, would block the poet in writing autobiography from employing fully the rhetoric of temporality. Notable is the difference of the actual way between both cases which the temporality, the common presupposition, is to be realized. In the unique mechanism of the “spots,” it is between the peculiar pasts stocked in his memory and the present poet recollecting them that the dynamic relationship occurs, and this implies that while they are functioning, the whole historicity of the poet’s self is laid aside in his mind. To put it more concretely, when the poet meets with the “spots,” the intermediate process, the actual proceeding of the time from those pasts to the present, is transcended (Magnuson 194-97). But, when it comes to the autobiographical narrative, it is that proceeding, or the historical process, formerly called by him the “growth” or the “progress,” that must be pursued by the poet narrating with the rhetoric of temporality. Then, here appear the contradictory situations in which either the “spots” or the rhetoric has priority, and whichever the case, one hinders the other from being sufficiently realized. Since the “spots” has been a great concern of Wordsworth’s throughout his working on *The Prelude*, and meanwhile, he knows well it is necessary for him to trace the temporal aspect of his subjective consciousness, he must have been in a predicament, where the state of him is always made to falter between active and passive, and the narrative itself cannot be developed easily, being caught between the two ways which are chosen for the temporality to be actually realised. And this terrible plight is one of the grounds for the difficulties which has forced him into incessant revising of the poem, or has delayed its completion.

The two-part *Prelude* of 1799, put in the context of the whole history



which the poem eventually assumes, tells much about Wordsworth an autobiographer and revisionary poet. While he composed it, the intractable circumstances which would perpetually attach him to the poem were furnished, and they are ascribed to his idea about the “spots of time” revealed in the earliest version. Logically speaking, it is impossible to resolve this state of conflict, and so it would be properly called a pitfall, because the poet thereafter has to make interminable reworkings of the poem. That means he has been forced to assume the very identity as an autobiographer, not the poet of *The Recluse* which he wished to hold. But, it is also true that the moment he referred to the “spots” was by nature when the poet became ready for the revision, that is to say, when the mode of autobiography began to be really converted. Then, the moment was originally a starting point newly located by him, as shown by the fact that since then he had actually composed the new lines with novel plans in mind, if not in the two-part version, but in its later developed ones. Though it can be called a pitfall by ones who know the whole history of *The Prelude*, it must have been regarded as a new beginning at least by the poet who would make a fresh start after the temporary completion of the first text.

### Notes

- 1 It is not true that Wordsworth suddenly becomes conscious of, or directs his attention to, the temporal aspect of the man. Such a concern of his had been already seen in the lines preceding the Infant Babe passage. There he starts to argue by questioning in some respects an understanding on the human mind widely spread. For example, he asks if the mind can be divided into the parts to be analyzed respectively, or, if the origins of some customs and mental tendencies can be traced. Decisively rejecting these possibilities, he concludes that there cannot be any “beginning” (II. 267) of customs, desires, and even clear thoughts. In this argument, as its conclusion suggests, Wordsworth’s

reflection centers upon the temporality of the mind, which the “beginning” of mental activities represents here. It is very probable that this sort of inspection gave him certain opportunities to become conscious of the other temporal aspect of the mind, which is the “progress” (II. 269) (Ruoff 174-86).

- 2 This expression is not semantically equivalent to the usage by Paul de Man in his essay, “The Rhetoric of Temporality” (De Man 187-228).

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## Synopsis

“Spirits,” “the Infant Babe,” and “the Spots of Time” :

The Mode of Autobiography in Wordsworth’s The Two-Part *Prelude*(1799)

By Toru Kobayashi

The history of *The Prelude*, the autobiographical poem written by William Wordsworth, is the history of his revisionary workings on it. Read in the context of the developmental aspect of the poem, its earliest version, the two-part *Prelude* of 1799, appears to be of much significance for Wordsworth himself who had been resultingly a poet of the autobiographical narrative in a sense against his intense wish to write *The Recluse*.

The point is his revision that was conducted during the composition of the earliest text, and it effectuates the alternation of the mode of autobiography in which the narrative could develop. The initial subject matter of the poet’s writing is the scenes of education by the “spirits,” with his understanding that his mind is fashioned by them to be their “favored being.” And also, it is this status as the chosen one that makes certain his identity as the poet of *The Recluse*. Thereafter, as is obviously seen in the Infant Babe passage, the poet narrates chiefly the progress of his first poetic spirit, which is active in its behavior, from infantile stage, and his desired identity would be established by the recognition of his current preservation of the spirit. The modal change of the autobiographical narrative consists of conversion of the writing method and that of the poet’s state in the dynamic milieu, and it is principally the “spots of time” passage that brings this about. It introduces into the poem the temporality as a crucial theme, which is to be actualized in the poet’s investigation of the temporal aspect of the mind, that is the progress of his poetic spirit.

The significance of the “spots” is also discerned in another aspect of Wordsworth, the revisionary poet. His first attempt to compose in the new mode fails, because in the two-part *Prelude* he could not fully manifest himself as still preserving the spirit. It is this failure that caused some other projects of

autobiographical narrative to evolve in him, as the fact shows that after the completion of the 1799 text, there came revised versions each of which has an extended structure to cover more of his historical process. But the problem is the continuation up until his death of the poet's working on the poem, which suggests that he had been confronted with difficulties that prevented him from completing it. One of the causes of this is traced back to his initial understanding of the “spots” which had already appeared in the first text, since they have potential as hindrance for the poet to write sufficiently about himself in the new mode of autobiography. For Wordsworth, the revisionary poet, both the “spots” and the mode had been so important that there emerged the contradictory situations which had eventually led him into the perpetual reworking of *The Prelude*. Then, for the poet the function of the “spots,” which has been already put into operation even during his composing of the earliest text, is twofold: one as the promising occasion to bring him the new mode of autobiography, and the other as a pitfall that would more rigidly define his identity as a poet of autobiography, which Wordsworth has really held ever since.