

Book X is about W's "Residence in France and French Revolution" (cf title). Opens on a vision of the Loire as the autobiographical poetic voice sets out to return to England in 1792. This vision gradually morphs into an epic account of the recent historic events in France: the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, and a meditation on time and the course of history.

⇒ **How is the poet's personal experience in post-revolutionary France transformed into a romantic meditation on history through the poetic imagination which "dissolves, diffuses and dissipates in order to re-create" (Coleridge)?**

1. The autobiographical account of the post-revolutionary years by an Englishman in France.

Title, with polyptoton, anchors the poem in genre of autobiography. Setting explicitly mentioned with proper noun: from the "Loire" 4 to "England" 8 (at least at the beginning of the poem) = a linear journey?

A narrative poem: hence use of the past tense + use of the first person (4) + synecdoche "my steps" (7-8)

Persona = construed as an observer of nature => cf accumulation of natural elements of an all-encompassing gaze 5-6 = myriad of almost synesthetic impressions with internal rhyme ("vineyard, orchard"), spondee "calm waters" mimetic of a sense of peacefulness...

A historical narrative of the events of 1792, from the deposition of King Louis XVI in August 1792 ("From his Throne / The King had fallen" 8-9) to the September 1792 proclamation of the French Republic ("the venerable name / Of a Republic." 30-31). Historical account combined with subjective judgements like "'Tis true" (32), and an ultimate form of optimism in the end with the metaphor "ephemeral monsters" 37 to refer to the September massacres (on September 2, 3, 4 in which 3,000 Royalist suspects were taken from prison and slaughtered in retaliation of the signature in July of a manifesto signed by the "allied forces" and the Duke of Brunswick according to which violence or outrage done upon the king would be avenged by military executions = a reinforcement of martial law to terrorise Paris). So after the September massacres, the Republic was proclaimed and the Jacobin extremists were a minority in the new assembly elected on September 22. Wordsworth thus proves optimistic that the moderates, the Girondists, would prevail.

⇒ Beginning of the autobiographical poem evolves from pastoral poetry to epic heights, while the poetic subject seems to recede...

2. An epic narrative of the birth of the French Republic.

An epic strain in this opening: contrast between the very peaceful, "beautiful and silent" beginning, this sense of balance echoes by the binary rhythm, and the epic heights a few lines later.

The events of the summer of 1792 are told in a way that gradually decontextualises them:

- through periphrases (Paris becomes "the fierce Metropolis" 7)
- hyperbole (cf account of the victory of the French troops at Valmy on September 20: 19-20 "Had shrunk from sight of their own task, and fled / In terror" = exaggerated description of the retreat of the allied army from France, monosyllabic words enhancing the dramatic intensity)
- comparison of the Austrian and Prussian army to "a Band / Of Eastern Hunters" 14-15 = belittling ("Band"), exoticism?
- alliteration: "desolation and dismay" 20
- use of capital letters to reinforce the elevated tone + Miltonian turns of phrase "the last punctual spot of their despair"
- Personification of concepts like "The State" 24 => "her security" (25), endowed with "a high and fearless soul" (26; binary rhythm echoing the beginning of the poem and a form of restored stability) / Republic is born: cf personification = "The body and venerable name / Of a Republic"

⇒ An unsettling combination of genres: the pastoral and the epic, with a paradoxical dissolution of the “I” in this autobiographical poem?

3. The poetic imagination at work to “dissolve, diffuse and dissipate” generic boundaries and restoring a sense of design.

To account for this paradox, assumption: the “I” does not disappear, but the subjectivity here = a *poetic* subjectivity = the poetic voice is that of a visitor in France, a visitor that recounts his story by revisiting genres and reinventing poetry in the process = work of poetic composition => crucial.

A generic exploration prone to distort reality, to renew our vision on Nature and history, and their relationships. The pastoral can be combined with the epic and generic boundaries dissolve.

Poetic exploration takes the form of blank verse (underlying tribute to Shakespeare - // cf “scenes” 4 – or Milton cf line 17) => blank verse = codified, but allows a degree of freedom and exploration => cf numerous run-on lines, where syntax and verse do not match (cf 19 – 20 etc.. => *rejets*, as if poetic form could not always contain the poetic voice).

Perception is fragmented (cf accumulation, syntactic reversals 7 / 8...) = impressionistic style through which the lyrical subject emerges, but not as One that masters, but rather one that is the recorder of impressions: cf position of “I” on line 4 => middle of the line, not stressed (+ scan l. 4) / a reader (“Dire cloud upon the front of which was written / The tender mercies...”).

Still: what unifies perception is an all-encompassing gaze that stems from a close observation of Nature, a principle that supersedes the contingencies of history. What seems to push the narrative forward is the mere movement of Nature = as the day “fade” 3, visions of war occur + the army of the allied forces is referred to by the animal metaphor of a “swarm” (13) or a “dire cloud” (10). The personifications and hypallages merge the natural and the human (“calm waters” “breathless trees” 6...). Space and time are blurred, placed as they in a cosmic frame, historic events like the September massacres becoming in the last line “things that could only shew themselves and die” = fleeting notions in the grand scheme of things. While the world of men is steeped in change, Nature becomes a symbol of constancy and wisdom => the text and such a perception foreshadow the *Lyrical Ballads* in which this theme will be further explored.