

On Man; the Heart of Man and Human Life”: A Phenomenological Reading of Wordsworth’s Michael

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Abstract

A phenomenological analysis of William Wordsworth’s Michael reveals that Michael’s attachment to his land goes beyond its life-sustaining qualities to act as his source of identity and existence. It is also on the basis of this love for his land that Michael proclaims his love to his son who appears to him as a gift from nature. This misplaced notion of his love for his son vis-a-vis his love for the land forms the basis for his internal conflict which leads him to sacrifice his son in order to save his land from forfeiture. According to the poem, Michael has an extraordinary attachment to his land and bases his existence on this it.

Key words: Romanticism- Nature- William Wordsworth- Lyrical Poetry- Martin -Heidegger- Phenomenology.

“Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated”

(William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*)

Introduction

Phenomenology is a philosophical discipline that focuses on real-life experiences. This discipline posits that human beings derive meaning from their life experiences. The argument here is that all experimental hypotheses, artistic analysis, and reflective structures are all based on the experiences of the particular individual and inform their perspective or reflective position. According to phenomenology, the description and definition of everyday life experiences of an individual will dictate the decision that one takes when faced with a dilemma. These experiences can be analyzed in terms of the individual's knowledge, creativity, interpersonal relationships as well as the particular situation. In literature, phenomenology describes the artistic works through the connection between the author's knowledge and that of the readers in their quest to unveil the different elements of the world and human beings.

Historically, the theories of phenomenology were put forth by Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher whose vision of philosophy was based on the empirical data from life experiences with no scientific or experimental assumptions or presuppositions. This notion was later developed and simplified

by one of Husserl's adherents, Martin Heidegger who posed that philosophy should not be speculative or academic but should strictly focus on the pieces of evidence gathered from the life experiences of the individual.¹ According to Heidegger, human understanding of a situation or object is nothing but a prediction based on their experiences and expectations, making it definitive. He continues to argue that the basis of understanding or meaning is a system of assumptions and beliefs derived from life experiences.²

Heidegger's rationale could be viewed as a fundamental reform of the classical concept of analyzing and interpreting literary works, which was based on the assumptions of an ideal situation put forth in the texts. This theory also incorporates the general understanding of the existence of man, describing it as a series of actions and experiences that propel an individual towards their future. Heidegger's notions are an extension of Husserl's focus on the nature of knowledge towards a focus on ontology. Heidegger proposes that the systemic analysis of human existence should be described based on the particular experience at a particular moment in time, which he refers to as 'Dasein' (12). According to Heidegger, there is no absolute methodical or methodological way of determining the meaning of human existence, as all this is dependent on the particular experience in the given moment in time. Heidegger argues that meaning or interpretation is always "ahead of itself" (sich vorweg), and a projection of an individual's expectations and experiences. Heidegger posits that meaning is based on a "fore-structure" (Vorstruktur) of experiences, expectations, and beliefs. An individual uses it to inform his understanding and interpretation of an occurrence.³

Romanticism and the Experience of the Typical Man

William Wordsworth is described as one of the earliest radical English Romantic Poets of the eighteenth century. He launched the "Romantic Movement" in English literature by introducing a more personalized, artistically creative, and spiritually inclined form of poetry (Dempsey 78). This novel form of poetic ingenuity gained so much popularity that they have been considered to have tremendously contributed to the advent of the Romantic Movement. It is believed that Wordsworth, together with other poets like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth, led to the demise of the Neo-classical concept approach to poetry and English literature in general (Tomko 580). Whereas Coleridge is known for his mastery of the supernatural, Wordsworth's infallible fascination with nature came to characterize almost all his poetry. No reader of English literature would fail to realize that "Wordsworth's association of nature with deep individual feeling and an amorphously transcendental spirituality, in opposition to modern social and economic life and the city, remains probably his greatest environmental legacy today" (Bennet 207).

The 1800s poem *Michael* is a classic illustration of Wordsworth's artistic prowess and mastery. The reader is presented with an artistic and harmonious

integration of poetic ideas into a thought-provoking narrative song. Wordsworth’s love for novelty and innovation propelled him to the creation and advocacy for poetry that focused on the real-life experiences and emotional turmoil of the ordinary person. *Michael* is one of the poems found in the famous collection of poems called *Lyrical Ballads*; a collection of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge published in 1798 and famed for the introduction of romanticism in English literature (Gifford 6). These poems presented a new type of poetry that focused on the acknowledgment of the typical person and nature, therefore incorporated real-life experiences and language of the common man in their poetry. This was a break from the conventional form of poetry of the eighteenth century, which focused on hypothesized concepts of human life (Gifford 5).

More importantly, the *Lyrical Ballads* depicts a moment of illumination of how the personal intersects with the public in Wordsworth’s poetry (Gill xvi). Throughout this paper, therefore, phenomenology will be applied on William Wordsworth’s *Michael* to illustrate how the subject, the object, and experience amalgamate to generate the essence of human life, existence, as posited by Martin Heidegger.⁴ As Mikel Dufrenne argues in “The Phenomenological Approach to Poetry” (1976):

As for poetry, every step of its process opens up to phenomenology. First, because the phenomenology of poetry lets us take hold of, if not define, the poeticalness of poetry. And secondly, because a phenomenology of poetry leads to an ontology and thus provides a foundation for other interpretations. (109)⁵

This is what makes the researcher believe that a phenomenological reading of poetry would probably yield a more insightful analysis of poems.

As *Michael*, was classified as “a political pastoral” by *The Cambridge Introduction to William Wordsworth* (81), this paper primarily focuses on providing evidence and discussing how the poet portrays the connection between human beings and the land, their feelings and affections, and their daily struggles and experiences⁶. In other words, it is an attempt to show how the “subject” and the “object” are intertwined in Wordsworth’s work to create a poem that is exemplary of the principal Romantic ideals. William Wordsworth’s pastoral poem is a new form of a tragic tale whose interpretation is hinged on Heidegger’s notion of ‘Dasein’ where the main character or the protagonist’s notion of his existence and knowledge (Being and Consciousness) are hermetically intertwined in such a manner that they reflect on his decisions when faced with a dilemma.⁷ In accomplishing the above discussion, the paper will discuss Michael’s character, his love for his son vis-à-vis his love for his land, and finally, establish the internal conflicts and experiences that inform his decisions in the poem.

The Subject-Object Association in *Michael*

William Wordsworth's *Michael* is made up of 491 unrhymed lyrical lines. Although the poem is subtitled '*A Pastoral Poem*', it does not seem to follow the conventional concepts of the traditional pastoral poetry which has tended to be hypothetical and romanticized. Instead, the poem presents the reader with a common rural lifestyle as a prelude to the author's notion of the ideal pastoral poem. William Wordsworth deploys the third-person point of view to narrate the sequence of events that outline the extraordinary love that the protagonist - shepherd Michael - has for his family and his land. Through the narration and sequences of events, the readers are introduced to a novel style in the creation, interpretation, and understanding of tragic tales and poems.

The first part acts as the preamble of the poem where the poet figuratively introduces the readers to a new and realistic look at pastoral poetry. In such a way the author prepares the reader for an emotionally tumultuous reading. He advises the reader to muster enough courage in order to complete the experience. He alludes when he says, "...Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent, / The pastoral mountains front you, face to face, / But, courage! For around that boisterous brook..." (lines 4-6). In the stanza, the poet is also justifying his choice of the characters and the elderly age of the protagonist saying that he is writing this poem with his thoughts "...On man, the heart of man, and human life..." (line 33) and emphasizes that his tale is meant for the young poets who have the courage to embrace new schools of thought "...for the sake, / Of Youthful poets, who among these hills, / Will be my second self when I am gone..." (lines 37-39). This is a classic characteristic of *Lyrical Ballads* where the poet gives a brief description of what he or she is intending to achieve through their poem, therefore influencing the reader's interpretation.

The second part of the poem constitutes the actual sequences of events in the life of shepherd Michael. The poet sorts to present the extraordinary nature of the eighty-year-old father, his love for his family, and his love and attachment to his land. This is then followed by an outline of the conflict that arose between his love for his ancestral land and the love for his son, Luke. The narration ends with a summary of Luke's experiences and demise in the city and Michael eventually losing his property, his wife, and his life. At first glance, these sequences of events present the reader and critics with a naive shepherd who is confronted with external circumstances beyond his control. For instance, Michael's loss of his ancestral land can be attributed to the consequences of the industrial revolution which introduced new laws like the contract of guarantee that forced Michael to stand-in for his nephew who had defaulted on a loan. For this reason, Michael is portrayed as a victim of tragic circumstances that result from external forces rather than an internal tragic flaw in his character.

Michael as a Tragic Hero: A Shepherd's Tragedy

A phenomenological analysis of the text reveals a different type of tragic hero as represented by “Michael” the shepherd. The events in *Michael* reveal that the tragedy in this poem lies in the reaction of Michael to the conflicting situations that he is confronted with. Although external forces have played an integral part in the losses that Michael and his family experience, it is the poet’s intention to use these forces to highlight Michael’s internal flaws and conflicts that contributed to the collapse of his family and eventual loss of ancestral land. When Michael is faced with the possibility of losing his land as a result of an unpaid loan, he panics and decides to send his son away to the city to work and earn the money. In this context, the flaw is that his attachment to the land overrides his love for his son to a point where he is ready to send his son away to an unknown land in order to save his land. In other words, Michael is unable to distinguish between the value of life, happiness, and love for his son from loyalty to the land. Therefore, from this perspective, Michael fits the conventional description of a tragic hero since all the tragic events that befall his family and the ancestral land thereafter are as a result of this decision.

Michael’s passionate attachment to the land and his environment has repeatedly been emphasized by the poet throughout the poem and forms the main focus of the shepherd’s character definition and description. The reader is informed of an extraordinary relationship between the shepherd and his land which even surpasses the common standards in the community around him, “...And in his shepherd’s calling he was prompt...” (line 46). This attachment and persistent hard work elevate him to a role model status amongst his peers in the community, “...And watchful more than ordinary men...” (line 47).

Michael’s close and personal attachment to the land and nature in general, coupled with his unique ability to acknowledge and understand the ever-changing climatic elements becomes the distinguishing factor between him and other shepherds in the community, “...Hence, he learned the meaning of all winds. / Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes...” (lines 48-49). The ‘winds’ mentioned in the poem stand for the climatic changes which Michael is keenly aware of and listens to. It is apparent that the shepherd Michael lives a symbiotic life with his natural world which forms the basis for his existence. His daily routine involves working on the land which rewards him with food that sustains his existence. However, the poem does not explicitly paint his work as either positive or negative although line 122 in the poem “...living in eager industry...” is an indication that the work was voluntary and a natural part of Michael and his family’s lives. The work, however, was not a pleasant or easy one “...And left the couple neither gay perhaps/ Nor cheerful, yet with objects and hopes...” (lines 120-121). Thus, illustrating how his work on the land becomes an integral part of his life. For this reason, Michael’s relationship with the land becomes more than the normal functional connection of sustenance of life but represents the basis of his existence as illustrated in Line 65 “...with

cheerful spirits he had breathed...". Michael derives pleasure and happiness from his relationship with nature and his love for his land and this forms the basis of the poem's main point, "...which had impressed / So many incidents upon his mind / Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear" (lines 67-69). In fact, the poem constructs the character and identity of the Shepherd through his symbiotic relationship with his land.

In *Michael*, the poet employs a simple and natural language to narrate the unfolding events of the poem. This language mirrors the simple rural setting of the poem that Wordsworth employs in an attempt to relate with the common person.

The Shepherd's Attachment to the Family Institution

The poem also introduces the reader to another aspect of Michael's existence and experience which is based on his family. The introduction of his wife, Isabel and his son Luke as a part of Michael's existence is, however, done against the backdrop of an image of an unsociable man whose only companion is nature and his work. In the introduction, the poet's emphasis is on Michael's relationship with his son Luke as a preamble to the analysis of Michael's reactions when confronted with a conflict. Luke's character is gradually developed in *Michael* from his childhood as his father's helping hand through which companionship is created based on the father-son bond. The narration informs the reader that Luke is an only child whose birth came about when Michael realized that age is catching up with him, therefore, deciding to have a child who would eventually continue working on the land, "...old-in shepherd's phrase, / With one foot in the grave..." (lines 89-90). This alludes to the fact that Michael viewed Luke as a tool that would help him to do more work on the land even at his old age and beyond his death (Dempsey, 88). The narration describes how shepherd Michael makes use of Luke to increase the productivity of the land as he is involved in all aspects of the routine chores in the farm from herding sheep to, "...carding / Wool for the Housewife's spindle or repairing / Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe." (lines 106-108). The poem also alludes to the fact that Luke was introduced to these duties at an early age which reinforces Michael's zealous focus on labor and continuity of his investment in his property, "...to his office prematurely called" (line 187). Luke is said to be merely a boy at a tender age of five when he is prematurely admitted into his father's fascination with work on the land something that is narrated as being both a "hinderance and a help" (line 189).

In spite of all this, there exists a strong attachment between father and son. Luke and his father share a sense of mutual admiration, respect, and love for each other thereby forming an extraordinary attachment and companionship. Michael admires his son's determination, hard work, and enthusiasm to share in his love connection to nature. Although Michael's love for his son is inferred in the poem from his love of nature "...a pleasurable feeling of blind love, / The

pleasure that there is in life itself...” (lines 76-77). This means that Michael’s love for his son is necessitated by the fact that his son also shares his love for nature, failure to which we are not sure whether shepherd Michael would feel the same about his son. Although Michael explicitly expresses his love for his son in the poem, “...exceeding was the love he bares to him, / His heart and his heart’s joy!” (lines 151-152), this love was conditional or dependent on his son’s love for nature and the land. This means that in Michael’s mind there was a link between his love for Luke and his love for nature” ...but to Michael’s heart, / This son of his old age was yet more dear-/ Less from instinctive tenderness,” (lines 142-144) since Michael designates Luke as “..a child, more than all other gifts/ That earth can offer to declining man” (Lines 146-147) for that nature gift, Luke, brings hope with it and future aspirations. This is an illustration that the attachment Michael shares with his son is beyond the innate parent-child bond, rather, he views him as a reward from nature for the love he has shared with it over the years. Luke becomes a beacon of hope and a promise of continuity from nature even after his death, “...hope with it, and foreword looking thoughts...” (lines 148). Therefore, Michael’s love for his son, Luke, is an extension of his love for nature and his land. However, this does not mean that love is not genuine but is a foreshadow of an impending conflict in the narration.

On the other hand, the poem does not explicitly mention whether Luke shares his father’s opinion or feelings about nature nor does it mention whether Luke approves of his relationship with his father where his father considers him as an extension of nature’s love to Michael. According to Richard Clancey, Luke is not as enthusiastic about nature or the laborious work he does on the land as much as his father is. This is evidenced by the fact that Luke becomes very jovial when he is invited by a relative to go to London, “...heart ...has been beating fast / with many hopes...” (lines 408-409). These show that Luke was eager to leave his home. Luke is presented as a young man who is anxious to leave the rural setting he has grown up in and explore the world (Clancey 91). All in all, aside from these few instances, Luke’s opinions and views are generally and deliberately concealed in the poem, perhaps as a way of getting the reader to realize how little Michael knows of his son which also acts as a source of tension in the relationship between Michael and his son in the poem.

This tension comes to the surface when Michael is confronted with external conflicts in the form of a threat of losing his land because of an unpaid loan. The poem narrates that this took, “...More hope out of his life than he had supposed / That any old man ever could have lost” (lines 219-220). These lines negate Michael’s earlier assertions that Luke was the source of his, “...daily hope...” (line 206) as the prospect of losing his land robs him off of all hope for the future. In this context, therefore, Michael prefers losing his son rather than losing any piece of land. This is supported by the fact that Michael’s initial plan was to sell off half of his land to pay off the debt, however, with his son in the

picture he decides against it, instead sends his son off to the city to work for the money. In this regard, Luke is subordinate to the land in Michael's eyes.

Theological connotations to real life Experience in "Michael"

Since the phenomenological analysis of a text focuses on deriving meaning and interpretation from real-life experiences, Michael's act of sending his son away in an effort to save his ownership of the ancestral land brings to the surface the biblical narrative allusion that the poet aims at tapping into. In particular, the poet aims at invoking the readers' memory of the biblical narrative and events surrounding Abraham and his son Isaac. Wordsworth's use of biblical language and narrative in *Michael* was identified and proposed by Judith Page and Marjorie Levinson. Judith Page took a more spiritual approach to the matter, stating that the language used by Wordsworth in this poem evokes the events in King James Bible to produce an ageless language that elicits passion in the readers (630). On the other hand, Marjorie Levinson approached the subject from a Marxist point of view, purporting that just as the Isaac Sacrificial story in the Bible was meant to return Abraham's land back to its economic productive state, Wordsworth's poem discusses the notions of debt, securities, and collateral (Levinson 720-721).

The narration in *Michael* bears many similarities to the Biblical story of Abraham and his son Isaac. First of all, just as in the Bible, Michael and his wife Isabel are blessed with a son at an advanced age. Secondly, similar to Isaac, Luke is described as the beacon of hope and a sign of continuity for Michael and his lineage. Lastly, Michael is willing to sacrifice his son, Luke, when faced with a dilemma just as Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac as a demonstration of his faith to God. Although from this perspective, it is possible to exonerate Michael's decisions by equating his actions and decisions to those of Abraham, the interpretation of *Michael* should focus on the intentions of each of the actions. Therefore, unlike in the Biblical story where Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac was used figuratively with the intention of demonstrating his faith in God, in *Michael* both the willingness and actual action were used to develop Michael's character. This means that in *Michael*, Michael was willing to sacrifice his son and actually does it by sending him away to the city. Secondly, Michael makes a conscious decision on his own to sacrifice his son which is contrary to Abraham's decision which was inspired by God. Similarly, Michael's decision to sacrifice his son had no valid reason, or rather, the reason is not explicitly expressed in the poem which differs from the sacrifice of Isaac in the Bible, which was a means to demonstrate his faith and love for God. Further, as Charles J. Rzepka remarks, "Michael" reverses the progressive sacrificial logic of the Abraham and Isaac story by substituting a son for a sheep rather than a ram for a son" (209). In a nutshell, Michael's decision to sacrifice his son, that is, send him away, was an ill-advised decision that is

shrouded with selfish thinking and self-centeredness. On the contrary, Abraham’s actions in the Bible were meant to exemplify selflessness. Wordsworth’s incorporation of this technique of indirectly referencing biblical narrations in *Michael* heightens the focus on Michael’s decisions and actions setting the poem up as a tragic tale whose sequence of tragedies is set in motion by Michael’s own actions.

Following his decision to send his son to the city, Michael gives an emotionally charged speech to Luke. In the speech, Michael professes his love for Luke leaving the readers with mixed feelings of sympathy and anger. It is evident from the speech that Michael’s love for his son is sincere and genuine. This, however, does not eliminate the fact that the decision to send Luke to the city was ill-advised on his part. The speech also acts as an indication of Luke’s imminent demise which Michael seems to be aware of. In the speech, Michael seems as if regretting his decision to send Luke away in order to save his land. He states; “It looks as if [the land] never could endure / Another master. Heaven forgives me, Luke, / If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good / That thou should’st go...” (lines 379-382). He continues to say that, “Whatever fate / Befal thee, I shall love thee to the last, / And bear thy memory with me to the grave.” (lines 425-427). In spite of this looming disaster that he seems to be predicting, he proceeds to create a covenant with his son which stated that the two should finish building a sheepfold when Luke returns from the city.

Michael's Internal Conflict: Parental Love or Love for the Land?

As has already been stated, Michael seems to be aware of his son’s impending demise in the city but still goes on to create a covenant with Luke on the day of his departure. Armed with the knowledge of the dangers that await Luke in the city, Michael is silently aware that this covenant is bound to fail. Therefore, the covenant is not meant to be fulfilled but is a means through which the poet and Michael try to find solace and redemption for his character in the poem. Basically, the covenant is a display and an expression of love between the two individuals and is not really meant to be delivered upon. An analysis of the final passages of *Michael* reinforces that the covenant was not really meant to be fulfilled but an expression of love between father and son. The actions and words of the final passage in the poem paint a picture of a father desperately trying to console and find redemption for his decision of sending his son away instead of selling part of his land to settle the loan. This final passage portrays the image of Michael after the demise of his son, Luke, therefore a permanent exclusion from his family

There is a comfort in the strength of love:

Twill make a thing endurable, which else

Would overset the brain, or break the heart (lines 448-450).

According to the stanza, it is “the strength of love” (line 448) that makes life endurable for Michael after the loss of his son. This presupposes that Michael’s

love for his son transcends physical presence since it is the ‘presence’ of the love that makes life bearable for him. In this context, the love between father and son becomes the basis of Michael’s healing process. In essence, Michael did not sacrifice his son, since, with the presence of the omnipresent love that they share, Luke is not truly lost but is present through love. From this perspective, this final stanza can either be viewed as Michael’s redemption or his final conviction for his decision to choose land over his son. On the other hand, “there is a comfort in the strength of love” (line 448) – the statement is shrouded in ambiguity as to whom Michael is referring to when he speaks of a love that enables him to continue with his life. Based on the previously discussed description of Michael’s character which heavily relies on his connection with land and nature, the statement can be taken to be referring to the land/nature rather than referring to his son, Luke. This is evidenced by the fact that after the demise of his son, Michael is seen going back to his lifestyle before the birth of Luke, taking nature once again as his sole companion. Throughout the poem, nature has been seen as a permanent component of Michael’s existence and love, therefore, it is possible that the love being referred to in this final stanza is the love and attachment to nature from which Michael draws the strength to face the loss of his son. In general, Michael’s intention when establishing a covenant that is bound for failure with his son becomes an ambiguous endeavor that has no clear answer. Many critics condemn Michael for giving privilege to a crumbling stone pen rather over his own son.⁸ Yet, the protagonist in the poem *Michael* remains an enigmatic character who can neither be wholly condemned nor be absolutely absolved from blame for his love of nature over his son. Therefore, the analysis of the text must be based on his internal conflicts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a phenomenological reading of the poem shows that the poem portrays a tragedy that is mostly felt through Michael’s internal conflict between his love of the land as a shepherd and his duties and responsibilities as a father. The poet systematically and artistically brings out this conflict when Michael is confronted with the threat of losing his ancestral land. Through this situation, Michael is on the crossroads of whether to choose his land or his son. Michael’s decision to send his son into the city, instead of selling a piece of his land to settle a debt presents the reader with his tragic flaw. His inability to distinguish between the value of life, happiness, and love for his son from his loyalty to the land presents Michael with the tragic hero tagline.

As phenomenology posits meaning and interpretation that are derived from the experiences of an individual; therefore, *Michael* is an illustration of how this notion can be applied in a real-life situation. Michael’s attachment to his land forms the basis of existence. In other words, he interprets events based on his experiences with the land; thus, all his decisions are about the land. In the overall, *Michael* is a lyrical narrative aiming to influence its readers and to urge

them to reflect on the issue posed in the poem. It focuses on the connection that exists between human beings, their feelings and affections, and their daily struggles and experiences. First, the flaws that exist in Michael’s character are some of the inherent traits of all human beings. Second, Michael’s internal conflict illuminates his inability to distinguish his existence as a shepherd and his obligations and existence as a father. Third, the analysis of Michael’s complex decision-making process into acknowledging the complexities of nature of humans is revealing. Ultimately, *Michael* is an artistic masterpiece that realistically expresses and describes various aspects of human life.

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¹ Some critics question Heidegger's relationship to Husserl's phenomenology. In "Husserlian and Heideggerian Phenomenology", Richard Schacht argues that "Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian phenomenology are radically different, and have virtually nothing to do with each other. Heidegger does follow Husserl to the extent of restoring subjective experience to a position of prominence in philosophical inquiry, in opposition to the Hegelian tendency to depreciate the subjective in favor of the objective." (294). On the same topic, see also Seeburger's "Heidegger and the Phenomenological Reduction".

² Heidegger edited a series of Husserl's lectures under the title *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*.

³ In "Phenomenology of phenomenology", Eugene F. Bertol warns against a phenomenology that turns back on itself. Therefore, "What becomes apparent here is that phenomenology's self-reflection is necessary" (239).

⁴ "Michael: A Pastoral Poem" Was the last poem that Wordsworth added to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, to replace Coleridge's unfinished poem "Christabel. This suggests to Susan Eilenberg in "Michael/" "Christabel," and the *Poetry of Possession*" an intertextual relationship between the two poems.

⁵ Dufrenne, remarks that a Heideggerian reading of poetry might lead to one of two paths: either the metaphysical or the political.

⁶ For an explanation of the poem in the light of the 18th Century conflict between "refinement" and "rusticity" see Page's "A History / Homely and Rude": Genre

and Style in Wordsworth's "Michael", 622.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of the relation between "Michael" and the pastoral see Richard Lessa's "Wordsworth's Michael and the Pastoral Tradition"(1983).

⁸ See Mason 82.