

# INTERSECTIONS OF GENRE AND MODE: AUTHENTICITY, FRAGILITY, AND IDENTIFICATION IN WORDSWORTH'S LYRICAL BALLADS (1800)

Melanie Pavao

Dr. Noah Heringman, Thesis Adviser

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which Wordsworth's poems in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* draw upon elements of the ballad and pastoral traditions. By drawing upon these elements, in addition to employing the "language of men" and "low and rustic life", Wordsworth reveals the fragility of a common way of life, and mourns its loss. Furthermore, the language of men attempts to make this fragility a problem with which all readers can identify.

In each chapter, I describe the genre and modal influences reflected in the poems chosen for examination. In the first chapter, I discuss poems primarily viewed as ballads in the collection, specifically "Poor Susan" and "The Idiot Boy". In the second chapter, I discuss poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* that have been traditionally viewed as pastorals, namely "Michael" and "The Brothers". First, I discuss "Michael" in its earliest form, as a "pastoral ballad", and demonstrate the ways in which the ballad influenced the final poem even though it ultimately took the form of blank verse. Then, I discuss "The Brothers", and demonstrate the ways in which both the ballad and pastoral influenced the poem. Finally, in the third chapter I analyze a sequence of poems in the collection. This methodology attempts to do justice to the collection's order, as the poems are set in a specific order for a specific reason. I look at the influences upon the sequence of ballads ("The Two Thieves, or the last Stage of Avarice", "A whirl-blast from behind the hill", "Song for the Wandering Jew", "Ruth"), and argue that they all reveal fragility and uncertainty about the future of their way of life, parallel to the fragility of oral tradition.