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The Poems of William Wordsworth - The Vision and the Reality of Nature

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Abstract

William Wordsworth, a central figure in the Romantic Movement, deeply interweaves nature in his poetry as a vital force that connects the human soul with divine and moral realities. The following paper discusses Wordsworth's poetic imagination of nature as commonly idealized as harmonious, spiritual, and redemptive against the harsh realities of nature as a source of comfort amidst industrial and social revolutions. Based on analyses of major poems like Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud, and The Prelude, the study examines how Wordsworth's idea developed from sensory pleasure to deep spiritual connection, influenced both by romantic idealism and pragmatic ecological awareness. Reconciliation emphasizes nature's double character as imaginative creation and a concrete force for human regeneration. In

all his works, Wordsworth highlights the profound emotional connection nature elicits, demonstrating how the natural world is more than just the background of human activity but also an active character in seeking meaning and transcendence. His works speak to people in that they make visible man's complicated relationship with the world around him and challenge understandings of nature's healing capacities in the midst of the turbulence of modernity. Wordsworth's vision of nature is not sentimental; it is deeply philosophical and contemplative. Throughout his work, he invites the reader to accept the quietness and beauty of nature through his writings, promoting a harmonious way of life that reconciles the exigencies of human existence with a reverence for the earth's beauty. Through this complex intersection of ideas, Wordsworth's poetry continues to be a living testament to the critical imperative for reclaiming its relation to nature, providing a vision that sustains ecological sensitivity and spiritual development in equal balance.

Key Words

Poems, Vision, Nature, William Wordsworth, Romantic.

Introduction

Wordsworth's idea of nature goes beyond simple physical description, for he depicts it as a supernatural, feeling presence that actively fosters human morality and spirituality. Wordsworth sees nature as the embodiment of God, achieving a deep symbiotic relationship in which man and nature live in coexistent harmony. This

pantheism, which is grounded in his early life and the more general Romantic focus on emotion as over reason, places nature as a presence not only outside of humanity, but as mother, teacher, and friend to all of humankind.

For instance, in the poet's imagination, nature contains within it the image of perfect humanity, especially in rural landscapes untouched by the degrading influences of the city. These picturesque settings are sanctuaries where people discover both sense and emotional equilibrium in the midst of the turmoil of contemporary living. The peaceful scenery of the countryside, with its gentle hills and winding streams, becomes an abyss of comfort and intelligibility, enabling people to connect once more with the inner world and with the moral realities that define their lives. From this perspective, nature is a directive force that reminds humans of their inherent place in the larger universe and the ethical responsibilities born out of this connection.

Scholars note that Wordsworth's harmonious vision stems from the belief in the interconnectedness of all living things, where nature imparts lessons in resilience and compassion. This deep-seated reverence for the natural world reflects a philosophical underpinning that suggests not only unity among all creatures but also a profound moral responsibility towards the environment and one another. However, this idealization sometimes overlooks socio-economic realities, as critiqued by historicalist perspectives, which argue that Wordsworth's idyllic portrayals can obscure the harsh truths faced by individuals in a rapidly industrialized society. The pastoral scenes he evokes, while beautiful and inspiring, risk romanticizing a reality where industrial progress often leads to the exploitation of both land and labor, creating a dissonance between his poetic vision and the lived experiences of many during his time.

In reality, nature serves as an escape from industrial progress, offering spiritual redemption and criticizing human exploitation. Wordsworth's poetry, with its lush imagery and emotional depths, invites readers to seek solace in the natural world, suggesting that it holds the keys to authentic human experience and moral clarity. This interplay between nature and humanity is particularly evident in his reflections on the changing landscape, which mirror the transformations in society and serve as a commentary on the loss of connection to the earth. Wordsworth's evolving relationship with nature from youthful physical pleasures to mature spiritual interpretation underscores its role as a moral guide superior to intellectual pursuits. His early works celebrate the sensory joys of nature, capturing the exuberance of life found in the beauty of flowers, streams, and trees, while his later writings delve into more philosophical contemplation, recognizing nature as a source of wisdom that transcends mere aesthetic appreciation.

Through this journey, Wordsworth articulates a vision where nature is not just a backdrop for human activity but an active participant in the moral and spiritual development of individuals. He posits that true understanding and enlightenment come from immersing oneself in the natural world, suggesting that it is within the quiet contemplation of a mountainside or the gentle rustling of leaves that one can discover profound truths about existence and the human condition. This perspective invites readers to reconsider their own relationship with nature, urging a return to simplicity and authenticity in a world increasingly dominated by material concerns. Ultimately, Wordsworth's work serves not only as an artistic expression but also as a call to action, encouraging a deeper engagement with the environment that fosters empathy, respect, and a renewed appreciation for the interconnectedness of life.

William Wordsworth: A Life and Work of the Poet

William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumbria's Lake District, a magical northwest corner of England. He lost his mother at a very early age of eight, which was a major incident that shaped much of his later work. The early years of his life were spent at Hawkshead Grammar School in Newcastle, where he had a strong love of poetry, and where his first poems may have been written. After the death of his mother in 1778, he was taken to a boarding school while Dorothy remained with relatives. He later moved to a school in Penrith, which educated children of the upper classes, where he met Mary Hutchinson, who would become his wife. During the time when Wordsworth was studying at Hawkshead, he lost the

father who raised him and his four siblings, meaning they were orphans. In 1787, he made his literary debut when one of his sonnets was published in *The European Magazine*. During the same year, he started studying at St John's College, Cambridge, graduating with a B.A. in 1791. It was in November of 1791 that Wordsworth traveled to revolutionary France and was impressed by the Republican cause. He fell in love while in France with a lady called Annette Vallon, who had their daughter, Caroline, born in 1792, even though he had already been back in England before that. He was financially troubled and came back alone, but he tried to maintain Annette and their child as far as he could. Wordsworth subsequently received honorary degrees from Durham and Oxford Universities and ultimately was appointed Poet Laureate, whom is esteemed as one of England's great authors. During his lifetime, he had five children with Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend who became his wife in 1802.

In 1812, he went back to France with his sister on a four-week visit to see Caroline. The two children they raised, Catherine and John, died later that year of illnesses while they were on a walking tour of Europe, an experience that would profoundly impact both his poetry and prose works for the rest of his life. This experience, along with later time spent living in France, introduced Wordsworth's interest and sympathy in the life, struggles, and speech of the "common man." These problems were of the greatest significance to Wordsworth's writing. Wordsworth's first poems were released in 1793 in the volumes *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. Wordsworth's experience as a poet basically began in 1795 when he encountered the poets Samuel Taylor and Coleridge for the first time. During 1798, Wordsworth collaborated with Coleridge to release the popular *Lyrical Ballads* (J. & A. Arch) that has become incredibly popular.

Though the poems themselves are among the most influential in Western literature, it is the preface to the second edition that is perhaps still the most significant witness to a poet's opinions on both his work and his position in society. In the preface Wordsworth discusses the necessity for "common speech" within poems and protests against the hierarchy of the time that ranked the epic over the lyric. Many people consider Wordsworth's best poem of all time, *The Prelude* (Edward Moxon, 1850), to be the finest work of English Romanticism that ever existed.

This poem, which was revised many times, tells of the poet's spiritual outlook and the emergence of a new form of poetry as a result of his efforts. The poem was published after Wordsworth's death despite him working on it his entire life. Wordsworth spent the last years of his life living comfortably at Rydal Mount in England, taking trips, and carrying out his outdoor activities. Heartbroken by the loss of his daughter, Dora, in 1847, Wordsworth seemed to lose his desire to write poetry. *The Prelude* was first published by Mary Wordsworth three months after her husband's death, on April 23, 1850, at the age of 80. He left behind him his wife, who died three months later.*

Key Poems and the Vision of Nature

Wordsworth's poems vividly illustrate his visionary portrayal of nature as a source of joy, introspection, and divine insight. In his classic work, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* (1798), William Wordsworth meditates on nature's grand presence and puts forth profound thoughts that touch the reader: "And I have felt / A presence that disturbs me with the joy / Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused." This specific passage summarizes Wordsworth's conviction that nature is not just a stage upon which human life is played out but an active assistant in the formation of consciousness and emotional states. Here, Wordsworth asks us to examine the complex interdependence of human and natural environments and experiences that it provokes a sense beyond normal perception. Through his discussion of the "sublime," he identifies an affective condition beyond simple pleasure, one that inspires awe and respect for the power and beauty of nature. Wordsworth's thoughts show how experiences with nature can create increased consciousness, and how these experiences provoke an intimate, nearly spiritual interaction with the environment. Additionally, the term "something far more deeply interfused" indicates a connectedness that

exists beyond the physical; it indicates that nature has inherent wisdom or energy that pervades the human experience. This is something that is both consistent with Romantic ideals that celebrate emotional depth and the need for intuition in comprehending the world and is consistent with Wordsworth's perspective in that it suggests that through the perspective of nature, one can gain access to a more expansive sense of existence, one that includes intellectual as well as emotional facets.

As the poem progresses, it is evident that Wordsworth's musings are also highly personal, based on his own recollections and experiences of nature. He remembers the life-changing influence that the natural scenery had on his mind, showing how the peacefulness and loveliness of the scene act as a catalyst for contemplation and self-improvement. This personal connection with the natural world highlights the idea that nature can be a kind of mirror, presenting back to the viewer the inner emotional lives of the observer and leading the observer towards increased self-knowledge. Finally, Wordsworth's reflection on nature in "Tintern Abbey" is a compelling reminder of the serious influence that the natural world can exert on human consciousness. With the use of poetic language and descriptive imagery, he forces readers to realize the significance of tending to this connection, charging them to find comfort and inspiration in the beauty that exists around them. By doing so, he reaffirms the premise that nature is not a mere static entity but a vibrant force that affects our thoughts, emotions, and our very perception of our place in the cosmos.

Here, nature is envisioned as a unifying force that transcends the mundane, leading from joy to joy and imbuing the mind with a sense of quietness and beauty. Wordsworth masterfully navigates through various stages of sensory, imaginative, and spiritual engagement with the natural world. Initially, he invites the reader to experience nature through the senses its sights, sounds, and textures creating a vibrant tableau that awakens the spirit. As he moves deeper into his meditative reflection, the poem shifts towards a more imaginative engagement, where the beauty of the landscape sparks elevated thoughts and profound insights about existence and the human experience. The progression culminates in a spiritual awakening, where the speaker not only appreciates nature's aesthetic qualities but also recognizes its capacity to connect the human soul to a greater, transcendent reality. This transformative relationship with nature suggests that the natural world serves as a conduit for divine inspiration, allowing individuals to tap into deeper truths about themselves and their place in the universe.

Wordsworth's exploration of nature in this poem, therefore, becomes a multifaceted journeyone that emphasizes the importance of the natural environment in nurturing the human spirit. It challenges readers to embrace a holistic understanding of their surroundings, encouraging a harmonious relationship with nature that fosters personal growth and spiritual enlightenment. Through his eloquent verses, Wordsworth invites us to ponder the intricate interplay between nature and humanity, ultimately reinforcing the idea that the essence of life can be found not only in lofty thoughts and profound insights but also in the simple yet profound beauty of the world around us.

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud (1807), better referred to as *Daffodils*, commemorates nature's power to dispel loneliness: "They flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude; / And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the daffodils." In this much-admired poem, the daffodils, dancing around a lake, are a strong symbol of divine providence and order, describing how passing moments in nature can bring deeply emotional reactions. Wordsworth uses rich imagery and poetic rhythm with great effect to describe the redemptive influence of the natural world, to the point that meeting beauty can obliterate the common experience of isolation. The image that he creates is not just a series of words about flowers; it is an appeal for the reader to consider the possibility that nature has a natural capacity for healing and elevating the human soul.

The daffodils, in their bright colors and enthusiastic movements, represent abundance and joy and thus stand in stark contrast to the poet's initial feeling of being alone. The contrast between the two is used to

emphasize the reviving power of nature, as the simple act of watching the flowers “flash” before his inner eye then becomes a source of joy, a source of joy that fills his heart with joy. The communion he has with nature has changed his isolation into a celebration of life, demonstrating how poetry can transform the personal experience of an individual into something universal through the use of poetic imagination. Further, Wordsworth’s musings propose a more profound philosophical exploration of how human beings co-exist with nature.

The poem suggests that, by accepting and enjoying the beauty that is present around us, we may gain comfort and companionship even in our most isolated moments. The daffodils’ dance is not just a bodily movement, but also a metaphorical dance; it is the very essence of life itself, where happiness is found in the simplest of meetings. In this way, the poem is a classic reminder of how one must identify with nature, for it presents the heart as a refuge in the midst of the turmoil of everyday existence. Thus, the poem transcends its immediate context, inviting readers of all generations to reflect on their own experiences with nature and the profound impact it can have on their emotional well-being.

In *The Prelude* (1850), Wordsworth remembers early experiences where nature is a source of humility and awe, e.g., the “huge peak, black and huge” in a boat-riding mishap, revealing its “quickenning soul” and ontological depth. This autobiographical epic swings between nature as an independent cosmological entity and a mind projection conformable to a panpsychist worldview where nature is alive. Wordsworth’s dense imagery and reflective tone invite the reader to consider the intricate interdependence between man and nature and that the mountains and rivers are not mere static backdrops to the human experience but dynamic forces in the construction of one’s self and emotional geography. As he travels along with the waters, the poet reflects on the profound effect of the landscape on his mind, narrating how the towering figure of the summit evokes not just fear but also a lasting respect for nature’s all-encompassing power.

This contrast is intended to highlight the conflict between man’s fleeting existence and the enduring, almost living nature of the environment surrounding him. Wordsworth’s exploration of such issues finds a philosophical undertone that overthrows Enlightenment rationality, rather than proposing that the integrity of nature is intertwined with human awareness so that the sharp contrast between self and world is lost. The “huge peak” here oversteps geographical meaning; it is the prominent ability of nature to evoke spiritual awareness and mental reflection.

In this context, Wordsworth’s writing can be regarded as a forerunner of ecological thinking today, in which the interconnectedness of all things is given and celebrated. The acknowledgment of nature’s “quickenning soul” by the poet is an appeal to readers to connect with their environment in a deeper, more empathetic way, instilling a sense of accountability to the environment. Lastly, *The Prelude* is a testament to the enduring strength of Romanticism, where the richness and beauty of nature are not just cherished for their beauty but also for how they stir deeply in the human heart, to provoke reflection on the very nature of being itself.

Other works such as *The Tables Turned* exhort: “Come forth into the light of things, / Let nature be your teacher” placing nature on a higher plane than books, implying that authentic knowledge and awareness are not learned from the pages of textbooks or the walls of classrooms, but from direct exposure to nature itself. This view recalls the Romantic ideals of the day, wherein nature’s beauty and wisdom are held in esteem, and people are encouraged to interact with their environment in order to derive insight and understanding. Conversely, Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” mourns the passing of childhood’s heavenly vision, sustaining a deep sense of sorrow and regret for the innocence and clearness of perception that frequently slip away as one ages. A line in “There was a time when meadows, groves, and streams, / The earth, and everything common to life, / To me did seem / Appeared in celestial light,” creates an image of a world filled with magic, where the ordinary becomes the extra-ordinary when seen through the eyes of young minds and pure perception. This contrast emphasizes a fundamental tension in Wordsworth’s poetry: the desire to recapture that lost vision of joy and purity in nature, coupled with the ineluctable passage of time that

blunts the senses and obscures the spirit. Therefore, the two poems are an expression of profound philosophical curiosity regarding the potential of humanity and the natural world to interrelate, compelling readers to consider their own situations and the wisdom that can be extracted from the rich, yet frequently unattended tapestry of life around them. Thus, Wordsworth asks us to see not only the passing beauty of nature, but also its sustained capacity to instruct, to heal, to inspire, as a reminder eternal of the deep affinity between our lives within and lives without.

The Reality of Nature: Harmony, Solitude, and Societal Critique

While Wordsworth's vision idealizes nature as harmonious and divine, its reality in his poetry addresses human disconnection and environmental exploitation. Amid the Industrial Revolution, nature became a refuge from societal decay, as in "London, 1802," where he contrasts urban corruption with nature's renewal. In this poem, the poet regrets the fall in the moral standards of society, hoping to see the dawn of a more righteous era that he identifies with a tighter rapport with nature. His call to figures such as Milton is a reminder of the dignity that can be gained through an intense connection to nature, and it implies that the disarray of the industrial era is a regression from a brighter existence.

Furthermore, in poems such as *Michael* and *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, Wordsworth introduces rural characters who are not merely coexistent with nature but also reflect its toughness and innocence. The figure of Michael, a shepherd, signifies indomitable resolve and the deep affinity between man and nature, demonstrating how individual suffering can symbolize collective unity. With Michael's ordeal, Wordsworth satirizes the city vices born of industrialization, poverty and alienation, and at the same time praises the dignity of rural existence. This confrontation is used to emphasize the difference between nature's moral simplicity and the blurred ethics of city life.

In *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, Wordsworth continues to develop the idea of the subject's relationship with nature, and the beggar is presented as a person of wisdom and experience. The beggar, wandering across the land, is representative of the unbreakable human spirit despite the cruel realities of social abandonment. His presence in silence among the hills and valleys speaks of a harmony that contrasts sharply with the chaos of city life. Wordsworth's description of these country characters not only satirizes the changing moral values of his age but also emphasizes the significance of nature as a source of motivation, comfort, and moral rectitude.

In his poetry, Wordsworth asks readers to consider the impact of industrialization, calling for a return to a more conciliatory relationship with nature. His idealization of the natural world is not a flight of fancy but rather a strong call to remember what is lost when human beings become disconnected from the natural world. The raw contrasts he draws between city corruption and rural innocence underscore the necessity of a more profound understanding of our connection to the earth, for the sake of a rediscovery that respects both human dignity and the sacredness of nature. Against this backdrop, Wordsworth's work is a biting critique of the direction of modern society, with a characteristic sense of urgency that continues to echo in contemporary discourses on environmental sustainability and the search for a harmonious coexistence with nature.

Solitude in nature allows for reflection and restoration, as in *The Solitary Reaper*; in which a rural girl's identification with the world requires simplicity and largesse. The poem suspends a moment of profound stillness, emphasizing the girl's identification with the world around her, upon which breaks her song—a hymn expressive of the sentiments of solitude and the dignity of the everyday. This dialogue illustrates how nature can be a mirror to our inner psyche, with potential for deeper self-knowledge amidst prevailing strife. In addition, reality as a moral teacher is presented in *Hart-Leep Well* and *Lines Written in Early Spring*, in which the poet sympathizes with the responses to human conduct disrupting natural order.

The poet in these poems indicates a yearning to restore innocence to nature, lamenting perversion due to industrialization and man's greed. There is a strong line in the poem, "And it is my faith that every flower / Enjoys the air that breathes," which expresses a belief in the inherent value of nature's existence and that every

element of the world deserves its own place, independent of human interference. Such faith in nature's autonomy gives a sense of responsibility, forcing mankind to question its place in the world. Finally, the interdependency of solitude, nature, and ethical thinking forces readers to consider how they fit within the world itself. It encourages an exploration of how time in nature can give us insight into kindness, simplicity, and ethical requirements that arise out of our common humanity with all living things. Thus the literary works not only praise the beauty of nature but are also an invitation to action that reminds us to leave undestroyed the purity of our environment for posterity to enjoy.

This duality vision as imaginative elevation versus reality as practical solace anticipates ecocriticism, urging a return to nature for spiritual and ethical balance. Wordsworth's work critiques mechanistic views, advocating for nature's aesthetic and moral values in a bifurcated world. By juxtaposing the romantic ideal of nature as a source of inspiration and transcendence against the harsh realities of industrialization and urbanization, Wordsworth illuminates the tension that exists between human aspirations and environmental degradation. He posits that while the imagination can elevate our understanding and appreciation of the natural world, it is equally essential to ground ourselves in the tangible, often challenging realities of existence.

This perspective not only reflects a profound respect for the natural environment but also serves as a poignant commentary on the socio-economic shifts of his time, which favored mechanization over the organic. Through his poetry, Wordsworth invites readers to reconsider their relationship with nature, suggesting that a harmonious coexistence with the earth is necessary for achieving personal fulfillment and societal well-being. In this light, the act of reconciling the imaginative with the practical becomes a vital endeavor, one that encourages a holistic understanding of life where ecological awareness and ethical responsibility are paramount.

Wordsworth's advocacy for nature transcends mere aesthetic appreciation; it embodies a call to action, urging society to recognize the inherent value of the natural world not only as a backdrop for human experience but as an essential component of moral and spiritual integrity. Thus, his work resonates with contemporary discussions on ecocriticism, which emphasize the importance of nurturing our connection to the environment as a means of fostering a sustainable future, highlighting the urgent need for a collective shift away from exploitative practices towards more regenerative and respectful interactions with the earth. This intricate dance between imagination and reality, as articulated through his verses, remains a crucial framework for understanding the enduring relevance of nature in an increasingly mechanized world.

Conclusion

Wordsworth's poetry skillfully interweaves the visionary glory of nature and its concrete realities, presenting it as a divine power that heals, instructs, and unites. In poems such as *Tintern Abbey* and *The Prelude*, he portrays nature's ability to transcend human conflict, creating harmony and solitude. In *Tintern Abbey*, for instance, the speaker considers the transformative power of returning to a cherished landscape, demonstrating how nature is both a refuge and a source of knowledge. There is no doubt that the serene allure of the Wye Valley emerges as a distinct personality, offering solace amid the chaos of industrial growth and internal strife that has been unfolding in the area recently. This perspective is, however, deeply entwined with the social changes of the period, as the late 18th and early 19th centuries were marked by rapid industrialization, resulting in a growing alienation from the natural world, which exacerbated the effects of industrialization. Wordsworth's poetry is itself a lament for these changes, so his work is not merely an appreciation of nature, but rather an appeal to ecological and spiritual rediscovery.

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth explores more deeply the relationship between the individual and nature, employing autobiographical content to describe his own spiritual process and the development of his relationship with nature. He describes nature as alive, and one that affects human feelings and evokes deep philosophical musings. The poet's investigation of early life experiences in the harsh landscapes of the Lake District shows the ways in which early experiences with nature influence one's sense of identity and ethical outlook. Wordsworth

argues that through a profound involvement with nature, one can gain clarity and direction, thereby stressing his belief in its healing properties.

A major part of Wordsworth's lasting legacy is his conviction that nature, when creatively engaged, heals the soul and challenges modernity, a timeless perspective on human-nature interactions that will endure for centuries to come. His writings compel readers to rethink their place in the world, encouraging a more symbiotic relationship with the environment that respects the inherent value of nature. During a time when the consequences of human activity on the ecosystem are becoming increasingly dire, Wordsworth's poetry remains not only relevant, but also an extremely powerful reminder of the need for a return to a more meaningful relationship with nature in an increasingly dangerous world. With a sense of awe and belonging, his poems lead us to consider our position in the big picture of life and to see the beauty and wisdom in the natural world.

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