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Time and the Sublime in William Wordsworth's Poetry

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Abstract

This paper examines the portrayal of Nature as a divine essence in Wordsworth's work, exploring its relationship with humanity and the intricate connections between time, consciousness, and the sublime as depicted in select poems. Wordsworth's poetic output consistently reveals his acute awareness of the passage of time and his recognition of the sublime qualities inherently present in the natural world. He perceives time as the catalyst for consciousness, positioning nature as the essential link in this dynamic relationship. Through his poetry, Wordsworth articulates how the flow of time heightens human self-awareness and appreciation of nature's sublimity, ultimately making Nature the linchpin that unites time and consciousness.

William Wordsworth is widely celebrated as the quintessential figure of English Romanticism, especially within the Radical Romantic movement. Spanning from the late eighteenth century, beginning in 1787, through to the mid-nineteenth century, Wordsworth consistently distinguished himself as the moral touchstone of English poetry. His verse is deeply rooted in personal feelings and lived experiences, yet it resonates on a universal level, mirroring the emotions and aspirations common to all humanity.Wordsworth's poetry elevated him to the role of a compassionate voice for his era. He gave eloquent expression not only to the everyday routines and struggles of ordinary people but also to the silent passions experienced by both the privileged and the humble. Through his unique perspective on Nature, Wordsworth discovered the essence of human existence and recognized the intrinsic equality that unites individuals across all social classes. His inner vision enabled him to perceive the timeless splendor of the natural world, while his profound consciousness grasped humanity's ongoing quest for inner tranquility.In his most significant works, Wordsworth masterfully explores the themes of the sublime, time, and consciousness. These poems reveal a refined yet approachable understanding of nature, positioning it as a vital source of healing for the human spirit. His "Lines" invite readers to contemplate their own relationship with the natural world, encouraging a deeper awareness of the connections that bind time, memory, and the sublime qualities of existence. The concept of time has been integral to human history, as illustrated in the biblical Book of Genesis, which outlines the chronological sequence of God's creation. This creation is framed within temporal and conscious boundaries, forming a foundational element of Judeo-Christian belief. The notion of finitude, endorsed by the promise of paradisal reward in the apocalypse and final judgement, suggests an ultimate, timeless transcendence into Elysium. Wordsworth's poetry reflects these biblical sequences, imparting a sense of enduring permanence to his work.

During the Romantic period, nature was often regarded as possessing a divine quality, characterized by an all-

encompassing awareness. It was viewed as a tangible manifestation of universal consciousness, establishing a direct linkage between the human soul and the essence of nature itself. Individuals were perceived as integrated within the invisible and unspoken intellect of the natural world. Although nature may appear silent outwardly, it is deeply significant on a spiritual level, functioning as the moral compass of the world and resonating both temporally and philosophically with humanity's core existence. Wordsworth explores this concept extensively in his poetry, underscoring the critical role of association and the inherent interconnectedness of human destinies. According to Wordsworth, distancing oneself from nature is a form of self-destruction. The enduring bond between humanity and the environment is subject to temporal influences that shape our perception of nature's grandeur. Works such as "Tintern Abbey" and "Ode on Immortality" exemplify how Wordsworth articulates the relationship between time and the appreciation of nature's sublime qualities. Through his poetry, he demonstrates that regardless of the temporal direction, the intrinsic connection between human life and the larger framework of the natural world remains constant and inevitable. According to James Chandler, Wordsworth's poetry conveys "a power of healing that comes of a certain kind of feeling" (161). This central theme within Wordsworth's body of work regards nature as a spiritual force with the potential to heal, provided humanity aligns itself harmoniously with it.

Wordsworth's "Lines," identified by Stephen Gill as his first "unquestionably great poem" (158), presents a refined depiction of the poetic persona's conscious emotions across time, reflecting on the restorative influence of the River Wye on both mind and spirit. In his comprehensive biography of Wordsworth, Gill notes that the poet employs factual elements "to forge a poetic fiction" through which he communicates an "essential truth" (159). As Gill argues, the central focus is not on Tintern Abbey or the River Wye, but rather on Wordsworth himself. The poem reflects his own search for inner tranquility. In her analysis, Sara L. Pearson asserts that the work transcends a simple admiration of the Tintern Abbey landscape; instead, its language subtly conveys complex emotions and the deep pain of unfulfilled romantic desires. Pearson references Wordsworth's relationship with Annette Vallon—believed to be the mother of his child—and draws insightful comparisons to the biblical *Song of Songs*. Through this approach, she illuminates the poem's underlying theme of unattainable love and perhaps Wordsworth's feelings of regret at being absent from both Annette Vallon and their child. This perspective aligns with Michael Vander Weele's assertion that Wordsworth was more self-critical in this poem than Harold Bloom considered. His argument that Wordsworth meets himself "as both constructed and constructing" (20) was rooted in the memory traditions of those days.[1]

The speaker's presence at the banks of the Wye serves as a tribute to the cherished moments that define his connection with and his unrequited love for nature. It is an expression of the duty to memory that the speaker owes to this beauteous pastoral landscape. And Time is fundamentally crucial in the poet's engagement with nature. The opening lines emphasize the notion of time and set the tone for the nexus between time, the emotions the speaker feels and the sublime consciousness of its eternal presence. "Five years have past; five summers, with the length/ Of five long winters!" (p.103 L.1-2). Wordsworth's deliberate repetition of the number "five" serves as a powerful literary device, encapsulating the psychological effects of time's passage. By frequently invoking "five," the poet reinforces the persistent awareness of time moving forward and the inevitable feeling of loss that accompanies this progression. This motif echoes throughout his work, illustrating how the passage of time leaves an indelible mark on the human psyche. The recurring reference to "five" becomes a symbol of the cycle of memory and nostalgia, highlighting the inescapable sense of longing for what has been lost and the bittersweet nature of remembering moments that can never be reclaimed.

[1] See Mary Caruthers.*The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge;Cambridge University Press,1990)

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Upon his return to the banks of the River Wye, the speaker experiences "thoughts of more deep seclusion," marking a profound shift in his perception. No longer merely an observer, he becomes deeply attuned to the tranquil beauty that surrounds him. This seclusion allows him to recognize and contemplate the sublime bond between the landscape and the "quiet of the sky." The harmony he perceives between the earth and the heavens is both meditative and elevating, illustrating how the natural world inspires a heightened state of awareness. Through this moment of introspection, the speaker is able to appreciate the unity and serenity inherent in nature, reinforcing the central Romantic theme that meaningful connections with the environment lead to deeper understanding and spiritual fulfillment. Wordsworth's poetic journey leads the speaker to an acute awareness of the sublime qualities inherent in nature, highlighting the profound connection between time and the cultivation of understanding. This realization is not merely intellectual, but spiritual and transformative, suggesting that the passage of time deepens the individual's capacity to perceive and appreciate the grandeur of the natural world. In the poem, the speaker draws a parallel between himself and a hermit sitting by a fireside. This comparison serves to illustrate his retreat into solitude, where, through contemplation and introspection, he attains a wisdom that transcends ordinary experience. The fireside imagery evokes warmth and reflection, emphasizing that the speaker's immersion in the sublime consciousness of nature is both comforting and enlightening. Ultimately, this process elevates the speaker to a state of supernatural insight—a wisdom that emerges directly from his intimate engagement with nature's sublime presence.

The poet finds himself profoundly affected by the lasting emotional impressions these "beauteous forms"(P.104.1.24) have left on his mind. The memories of the landscape do not merely linger on the surface of his thoughts; instead, they are deeply etched into his consciousness, shaping his very sense of self and emotional state. This overwhelming response underscores how natural scenery has become an inseparable part of his inner life, providing comfort and inspiration that endure well beyond the immediate experience. The enduring presence of these images in his memory illustrates Wordsworth's belief in the transformative and healing power of nature, as the beauty he once witnessed continues to influence his emotions and reflections long after he has departed from the physical scene. His absence has not diminished his enduring affection for the landscape, which held great significance for him during his youth. He has seen and felt "In hours of weariness, sensations sweet, /Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart" (p.104 l.28-29) the sweetness of times past. Wordsworth acknowledges the profound debt he owes to nature, recognizing its sublime qualities and its essential role in alleviating the burdens of earthly existence. For him, nature is not merely a physical environment, but a spiritual force that offers relief, comfort, and inspiration. The poet's awareness of nature's grandeur is rooted in his personal experiences, through which he perceives its ability to lighten the challenges of human life. Wordsworth's appreciation of the sublime is evident in his poetry, where the beauty and majesty of the natural world serve as sources of healing and tranquility. By expressing gratitude for the ways in which nature has eased his struggles, Wordsworth underscores its transformative power and its enduring significance in shaping his outlook and artistic vision.

He owes his sense of elevation to the spiritual essence of the natural environment in which he grew. Memories of those good times remind him of that "serene and blessed mood" and the "deep power of joy" that makes it possible for us to see "into the life of things". In a way, the poet pays tribute to memory and to consciousness. In challenging times, he has drawn inspiration from a serene state of mind that provides deep understanding of the fundamental spiritual essence of nature. The "sylvan Wye" is a substitute for God. By personifying the Wye, the poet ascribes it with elevated significance and aligns his own experiences to it. His consciousness therefore becomes the consciousness of the Wye, a suggestion of the oneness of feeling and purpose. This fusion is the direct recognition of the interconnection of man and nature, a philosophy which is the hallmark of romantic poetry, but especially of Wordsworth's.

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The River Wye doesn't only capture the poet's past and present feelings; it is relevant to the future because in "this moment there is life and food /For future years." It represents life's continuity and a promise of hope for the future, with the poet connecting the past, present, and future, thereby expressing hope in the permanence of the River Wye. He talks of "half-extinguished thought", "dim and faint" recollections of "present pleasure" (p.105.l.58-59) but also of "pleasing thoughts" that there is "life and food/For future years" (p.105, l.63). Nature serves as a record of time, and it is in the passage of time that the speaker understands its importance as a source of hope and spiritual replenishment. Additionally, the appreciation for the sublime, the overarching spirit, and the quiet voice that suggests immortality is more thoroughly understood. The meaning of nature emerges only through its connection to our own experience of time and the awareness we bring to its sublime qualities. Nature is not simply an external reality; it becomes significant when it is situated within the framework of our personal, existential timeline. This relationship is shaped by our conscious perception—how we understand and appreciate the sublime aspects of nature that exist within our mindset. The interplay between nature, time, and consciousness is therefore central: nature resonates and acquires meaning as we relate it to the moments and memories in our lives, and as we attune ourselves to its grandeur and transformative presence. In this way, our appreciation of nature is inseparable from our sense of self, memory, and the passage of time, revealing the deep connections that bind human experience to the natural world. It is to this end that Karen Hadley argues that the poem's "politics of time" rather reflects his "historiographic consciousness", but also his "engagement with modernity" (694). In a study that borrows extensively from scholarship on the issue[2] Hadley views time as commodified in the context of the social character of the time the poet lived and wrote. Leaning more on Boyd and Boyd's[3] study of the poet's use of tenses to represent loss and redemption, Hadley agrees on the centrality of Wordsworth's grammar in exposing the loss and redemption equation in understanding the meaning of time.

Wordsworth effectively encapsulates Nature's role as the preserver of time when he refers to "The still, sad music of humanity". The speaker also feels a "presence" that "disturbs" him with the "joy/Of elevated thoughts" (p.106 l.91,94…), and a "sense sublime/Of something far more deeply interfused" all of this locked in the "mind of man" (p.106 l.95-96).The poet is fascinated by the grandeur "In nature and the language of the sense,/The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,/The guide, the guardians of my heart, and soul/Of all my moral being" (p.106.l.108-111).Wordsworth's hyperbole defines the very essence of the pedestal on which nature is built in his hierarchy of factors that give meaning to his life. The sense sublime takes a primordial position in the poet's attempt to create awareness about and the indispensability of the duty to memory. The poet's ability to humanize nature is rooted less in the immediate physical presence of the landscape and more in his sustained consciousness of time. This awareness of time, with its cycles of memory and nostalgia, infuses nature with a deeply personal significance. Through the interplay of recollection and longing, the poet creates a bond with nature that transcends mere observation; it becomes a relationship shaped by the passage of years and the emotional resonance of remembered moments. The consciousness of time allows the poet to perceive nature not simply as a physical environment, but as a living presence intertwined with his own experiences and feelings. This approach is central to the Romantic tradition, where the enduring impact of the past and the transformative power of memory serve to elevate nature to a realm of sublime meaning and spiritual connection. The poet is portrayed as a devoted "worshipper of Nature," whose connection to the natural world is not fleeting, but enduring and

[2] See Marjorie Levinson, "Insight and Oversight: Reading 'Tintern Abbey'," in *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP,1986) pp.14-57. And Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, 2nd edition. (Stanford: Stanford Unity Press, 1995)

[3] Julian Boyd and Zelda Boyd, "The Perfect of Experience." SIR 16,1 (Winter 1977): 3-13

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profound. His reverence for nature is expressed through a determined resolve to preserve its memory within himself, allowing it to shape his thoughts, emotions, and sense of self. This relationship is more than simple admiration; it reflects a spiritual devotion in which the poet seeks to sustain the impact of nature's beauty and sublimity long after the physical experience has passed. By immersing himself in the memory of nature, the poetic persona demonstrates how the landscape becomes a lasting source of inspiration and comfort, reinforcing Wordsworth's belief in the transformative power of nature and its ability to provide solace across time.

Nature possesses a transcendental quality, encompassing memories of the past and reflecting the speaker's conviction that their presence will endure within the consciousness of nature itself, persisting long after their passing. This enduring presence establishes nature as more than a mere backdrop to human experience—it becomes a living repository of memory, holding within itself the echoes of past moments and the spirit of those who have admired it. The poet's desire to be remembered is twofold: it arises not only from his affinity for nature, but also from his wish to be recalled by his sister, with whom he once visited the River Wye. Through this connection, nature is elevated to a sublime status, serving as an eternal companion and a bridge between the spiritual world and humanity. By perceiving nature as a lasting force that preserves memory and fosters harmony, the poet reveals his understanding of the profound relationship between mankind and the world of nature, underscoring the significance of nature as an essential part of human consciousness and emotional continuity. He underscores the importance of remembering both their presence at the banks of the river and the historical importance in assuming that "Thy memory be as a dwelling-place/For all sweet sounds and harmonies" (p.107 l.141-142).

To Wordsworth, "Nature never did betray/The heart that loved her…" because it simply leads humankind from "joy to joy" (p.107.l.125). Nature, Wordsworth believes, leaves an imprint on the mind of "quietness and beauty" (p.107 l.128). The poet encourages his sister to allow nature to guide her, believing that through embracing the natural world, she will be able to hold onto memories of him in the future. By yielding herself to the rhythms and influences of nature, she becomes a vessel for their shared experiences, a living sanctuary where the recollections of their time together are preserved. In this way, the speaker envisions that his presence will endure within her memory, granting him a kind of immortality through the continued remembrance of their bond. Nature, therefore, is portrayed not just as a source of tranquility, but as the landscape in which cherished memories are safeguarded, ensuring that the past remains alive and accessible through the connection they share.In "Tintern Abbey", the speaker's sister is one with nature, symbolizing a mystical union between object and subject. Geoffrey Durrant's book length study of Wordsworth and the great natural system, investigates the mystical relationship of humans and nature. Durant's work shows how Wordsworth's poetry beautifully captures this sublime sense. He argues that the mystical sense in the poem is only to the "extent that it brings a serenity of being and a sense of sharpened insight which are not common in any life, but which most people must from time-to-time experience" (91).

Wordsworth describes his relationship to nature as a "holier love," indicating his reverence for nature and suggesting its elevated importance. Nature serves as the elevated platform for the poetic persona, and its sublimity forms the foundation where time and consciousness converge to create enduring memories of the connection between the speaker's soul and the greater soul, symbolized by nature. "Tintern Abbey", one of Wordsworth's finest poems, serves as a recollection of the sweet memories that arise from experiencing the sublime beauty of Nature. Through his verses, Wordsworth explores how the tranquil landscape and its grandeur soothe and uplift the human mind. The poem emphasizes that it is only through the passage of time that the speaker truly understands and comes to terms with the profound and transformative power of the natural environment he was immersed in during his youth. This realization unfolds as the speaker reflects on his childhood experiences and recognizes nature's enduring influence on his spiritual and

emotional well-being.Over time, he fully appreciates the beauty of the Wye and engages with it in a deeply affectionate and personal manner.

In referencing the poem as such, Wordsworth shows the importance of cosmic fusion and paints a picture of the beauty of transcending time through memory. The chirruping of birds, the chiming of trees and the burbles of streams all fuse to create a cosmic unity which is the hallmark of Wordsworthian mysticism. Wordsworth's main thrust is that it is only in time that our consciousness of lived experiences is properly defined and understood and stays in our collective and spiritual memory. Wordsworth reiterates the central role of memory in shaping human experience in his renowned poem, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Just as in "Tintern Abbey," he explores how recollections of earlier moments and past glories continue to resonate throughout a person's lifetime. These memories do not merely linger; they become timeless echoes that bridge different stages of life, providing a foundation for understanding both youth and age. The poet argues that the enduring presence of these memories grants meaning to the passage of time, affirming the value of experiences from youth as one grows older. Through this sustained reflection, Wordsworth demonstrates that memory serves as a vital link, justifying and connecting the experiences of both the young and the old, and ensuring that the beauty and significance of earlier times are preserved within consciousness across the years. In both poems, the poet is fascinated by the passage of time and assumes that it is in hindsight that we come to grips with our greatest impression on the fallibility of human effort and the pertinence of human consciousness.

In both "Tintern Abbey" and "Ode", the poet begins by announcing the passage of time and by implication the effect of that on his consciousness. In opening the poem with the verse "There was such a time…" (P.541 L1), the poet sets the tone for recollections. He evidences his sympathy for things and times past and in so doing already foreshadows the emotions that come with loss. Gill relates this sense of loss to the transition from his youth to adulthood, where he perceives nature with a contemplative and thoughtful mindset. His memory recollects when the natural environment was "Apparelled in celestial light/The glory and the freshness of a dream" (p.541 l.4-5) and regret that, whatever he does, cannot be retrieved. The last verse of the first stanza directly appeals to the speaker's sense of loss when he recognizes that "The things which I have seen I now can see no more' (p.541 l.9). He regrets the apparent loss of the glorious moments of his youth as proof of times' inevitability dawns on him. In this light, Philip Shaw contends that 'Tintern Abbey' "points to an abiding concern with the relations between 'thoughts' and 'things' and with the genesis of self-consciousness" (285). And it is in this regard that he justifies his conception of the sublime as the "'awful power' of the imagination" (285), which is in my view rooted in the passage of time.

Loss and the passage of time are ineluctable in humankind's progress; they create both a feeling of emptiness and a consciousness of superior power, which in Wordsworth's poetry is the quintessence of the marriage between man and nature. In the second stanza of the poem the speaker expresses his inability to accept the loss of his past youthful glory, acknowledging the nostalgic feeling that comes with reminiscing a glorious past. Change is the law of life, yet the recognition of that principle does not assuage the emotional pain that the poetic persona suffers in the recognition that he has lost something valuable on this earth. His present dispensation will not obfuscate the sadness of lost joy, neither will it reconstitute the once gleeful moments of his youth, as "…there hath past away a glory from the earth". The bitterness of loss can only be compensated by re-living the past in his imagination. The thought of grief is compensated by a "timely utterance" that gives him a thought of relief "And I again am strong" (p.541 l.24). The past and the present are fused in the consciousness of the present as the speaker hears "The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;" (p.541 l.25).

Throughout the opening stanzas of the poem, the speaker confronts a series of emotions tied to the passage of time and the loss of experiences that can no longer be physically revisited. As he moves through the landscapes of his memory, he oscillates between

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feelings of loss and deprivation, as well as longing for the fulfillment of past joys. This internal struggle is marked by a deep sense of regret for what has been left behind, yet the speaker finds comfort in the act of recollection. It is through memory that the poetic persona seeks to reconcile the pain of loss and the absence of former pleasures. By reflecting on earlier experiences, he is able to navigate the contours of his mind, balancing between the sorrow of what is gone and the enduring desire to reclaim those moments. Ultimately, memory becomes a source of solace, providing the speaker with a means to cope with the inevitable changes wrought by time. It is only the fusion of the past and the present that makes the speaker's present pleasure possible and makes the winds come to him "from the fields of sleep" (p.542 l.29). It is not his physical ear that now hears "the Echoes through the mountains throng" (p.542 l.27) but the ears of his mind. It is what Rowan Boyson in her *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment Idea of Pleasure calls* "existential delight" which according to him, "have their own ethical possibilities and are not merely bland, politically passive modes of being; they illuminate the meanings of pleasure for modernity." **(**187). That Wordsworthian poetic sensuousness remains a fundamental modern perception of the joy that his poetry elicits.

"Ode" is a masterpiece of feelings where the poet probably exaggerates his sensations but in so doing re-echoes the vitality of his mind. The rhetoric "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? /Where is it now, the glory and the dream" (p.542 l.57-58) augurs the pain of loss and the need for rebirth. The fourth stanza is a cocktail of passionate emotions, intense recollections, and desire to subsume himself into nature. The appreciation of nature's beauty and its calming effects invigorates the speaker's mind and enhances his perception, allowing him to see with greater clarity.

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;

My heart is at your festival,

My head hath its coronal,

The fulness of your bliss, I feel- I feel it all. (p.542 l.39-42)

It is a cocktail of joy and avid desire; a revelation that memory is eternal, and it is the link between the past, the present and the future.

The fifth stanza of the "Ode" is the ultimate point of the marriage between the past, the present and the future. At this critical juncture, the speaker arrives at a profound realization regarding the essential role of time in shaping our understanding of the feelings inspired by nature. The passage of time becomes not merely a force of loss or separation, but a necessary condition for truly grasping the depth and richness of sensory experiences. Through the process of reflection, the speaker recognizes that it is only by moving through different stages of life—and by looking back upon moments that can no longer be physically relived—that one comes to appreciate the unique sensations that nature once awakened. This awareness allows the speaker to embrace the interplay between memory and the present, acknowledging that a full comprehension of nature's gifts is inextricably linked to the temporal journey everyone undertakes. The ultimate sense of sensuous fulfilment and satisfaction results from the speaker coming to terms with the past, the present and the future, each carrying its own baggage.

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing Boy,

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy;

The Youth, who daily farther from the east

Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,

And by the vision splendid

Is on his way attended;

At length, the Man perceives it die away,

And fade into the light of common day. (p.543 l.67-77)

The above describes the human stages of growth related to the stages of perceiving the beauty and grandeur of Nature. An infant retains traces of their past life, which they occasionally recognize. During youth, remnants of these recollections persist continuing into adulthood until memory starts to fade.

From verse six to eight the poet glorifies youthfulness and infancy and the joy that comes with it. In so doing, he decries the adverse effects of time as if to say time should stop its trajectory and allow the infant to be static and enjoy the innocence that comes with his status. Nature takes control and affords its own pleasures to the growing child and causes him to forget the pleasures of his erstwhile gleaming life. The present moment provides the child with an opportunity to transition into adulthood, assuming new responsibilities within the complex interplay of emotions and the everyday demands of life.

The poet decries the possibility and inevitability of age. The transition from childhood to adulthood is an inevitable process, which, according to the speaker, represents a crucial phase in the development of an individual. The speaker knows that Time eventually imposes its presence. In wondering why the child who is " 'glorious in the might/Of heaven-born freedom" (p.544 l.122-123) will want to "…provoke/ The years to bring the inevitable yoke" (p.544 l.124-125) whose finality will be depression and sadness "Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight, /And custom lie upon thee with a weight, /Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!" (p.544 l.127-129). The above reflections are a statement on the beauty of nature in contrast to the cares of adult life. The poet celebrates Nature as "Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!" (p.544 l.115).

The Ode addresses two significant themes: time and nature. Nature is a seer, a prophet and philosopher. These themes come repeatedly, and they fill the emotional space of the "Ode". They represent the mainstream thought of his poetry and the essence of his idea of feeling. The internal joy brought by memories of the romance between nature and man is supreme in the echelons of the poet's quest for happiness. There is the joy sublime, unqualified and undefined. The poet continues to show fascination with the undefiled beauty of youth characterized by perpetual "Delight and liberty" (p.545 l.138) which inhabits the individual whether he is at rest or busy. The outside turmoil is nothing compared to the internal bliss that animates the young child. His current unequivocal love for nature is driven by these desires and the belief that the external turmoil of human life can be mitigated by his internal harmony. It is the insight into the grandeur of Man's heart that he gives unalloyed concern to intercourse with nature. The sense sublime is the ultimate because it defines our internal peace and makes "Our noisy years seem moments in the being/Of the eternal silence: truths that wake/To perish never" (p.545 l.155-157). An individual, during silent contemplation, can envision the future while appreciating the present. In other words, Wordsworth celebrates the eternity of the mind, its ability to capture future reality when it is in its tranquil moments. He celebrates innocence and childhood because of the "shadowy recollections" which are the "fountain light of all our day" (p.545 l.150,152).

The abundance of joy reminiscent of the poet's love for innocence trickles down to the last but one stanza of the poem when in profound emotion he says, "Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song" (p.546 l.169). The alliteration in that line effectively conveys the speaker's intense joy. This stanza is reminiscent of John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" whose still creatures emit everlasting joy and peace even when they are deprived of physical motion. Keats confesses that he cannot join the bird in its singing yet urges it to sing. He is determined to find strength in the glory of the unfading past.

The thought continues in the last stanza in his request for the "fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves" not to "Forebode" any "severing of our loves" because in his heart he still feels their "might". (p.546.l.188-189). The major idea in "ode" is the celebration of the intuitive grandeur of the human heart and its innocence.

Thanks to the Human heart by which we live,

Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. (p.547 l.201-204)

The poem concludes with a sense of serenity, positioning nature as the fundamental element in the hierarchy of existence. He commences and concludes the poem with an ode to Nature. In the middle of the poem, the poet celebrates Youth and the glory that

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comes with it. The fundamental crisis in the 'Ode' is the loss of youth which deprives the speaker of his reverent and blissful past. Peter J. Manning argues that, this loss of youthful vision is compensated by an "act of memory" (531) which can be seen in the poet's struggle to come to terms with the title of the poem[4].The shift, Manning believes, is a symbol of growing up and an assertion of "the possibilities of immortality" (540), all of this rendered in such poetic eloquence.

The "ode" is a profound articulation of self-renunciation and the ambition to confront and revisit significant memories from the past. In his discussion of the uncanny in the "ode," Daniel W. Ross makes the case that "memory cannot be the solution to the problem of the poem; memory is part of the problem itself." (630). The poet's inability to reconcile to his present self is the source of his fear about and anxiety of the present. The same attempts to deny the inevitability of death are projected in his obsession with immortality as Ross insists. The poem will therefore become according to Ross a signpost of a project for Wordsworth's "self-healing" (639).

Nature is still at the center of Wordsworth's imagination as he captures its sublime beauty in "Expostulation and Reply". The exhortation to abandon books in favour of nature has difficulty of gaining traction within the timeframe of the argument. The speaker insists to his friend, William, the necessity to read books because there is the "light bequeathed/To Beings else forlon and blind!" (p.81 St.2 l.5-6). Matthew implores William to recognize the importance of his duty to honour the memory of those who preceded him and whose contributions are recorded in books for future generations to understand the reality of life. Compelling as the addressee is, he is not lost to the importance of books but recalls the ultimate virtue of communion with nature.

William responds to his friend's remarks by recognizing the intrinsic beauty of nature and its self-sufficiency. The knowledge that nature gives is sublime and true:

Nor less I deem that there are powers

Which of themselves our minds impress;

That we can feed this mind of ours

In a wise passiveness. (p.82. St.6 l.21-24)

This is the justification for him foregoing books and listening to nature's heartbeat which harbours truth. He is "Conversing" with nature as he sits "Upon this old grey stone" and "dream[s] his time away" (p.82. st.8 l.30-32). In "The Tables Turned", the speaker comes to terms with the fact that reading makes the individual "grow double" (p.82.st.1, l.2) and therefore takes on the option of associating himself with nature. Wordsworth's sense of nature goes beyond physical portrayal of natural forms to include a variety of "human distinctions" as defined by Scott Hess which includes "specific models of class, gender, ethnicity, race and national or imperial identity" (209). These issues subtly appear in the overall scheme of the poet's work.

The speaker begins to enjoy the beauty of nature when he talks of "A freshening lustre mellow/through all the long green fields has spread, /His first sweet evening yellow" (P.83 St.2 L.6-8). The lush of nature is captured in "…how blithe the throstle sings!" (p.83 St.4 L.13) and the "sweet" music of the woodland linnet which has "more of wisdom in it" (P.83 st.3 l.12). The woodland linnet and the throstle both have wisdom. "The Tables Turn" is an exhortation to learn from nature's wisdom. The throstle and the Linnet emit a certain kind of wisdom not found in books. Their presence is entrenched in the mystical conception of nature as a source of spiritual upliftment.

She has a world of ready wealth,

Our minds and hearts to bless-

Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,

[4] Manning has argued that the original intention of the poet in beginning the ode in 1802 is not the outcome when the poet finally settled on the final title of the poem in 1815.

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Truth breathed by cheerfulness. (p.83 st.5 l.17-20)

In the above lines, the poet captures nature's resplendence and its embedded beauty. Nature has the capacity to teach mankind about "moral evil and of good". It is formatted to upset our "meddling intellect" which according to the poetic personae "Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:", reason why we must "murder to dissect" and in that way always violate the simple laws of nature (P.83 St.8 L26-28).The conclusion of the poem is an explicit statement on the passage of time and its effect on the thought process of human beings, but perhaps more especially, it is the hallmark of the inert wisdom inherent in the bowels of nature;

Enough of Science and Art;

Close up those barren leaves;

Come forth, and bring with you a heart

That watches and receives. (p.83 st.8 l.29-32)

The two-part poem evolves on the premise of the impact of silent time on the human mind. The two speakers in the poem understand each other only in terms of the evolution of time. Matthew's ultimate decision to cease reading books is the direct consequence of the interplay between time and profound appreciation. The poem highlights both the aesthetic qualities and the intrinsic spiritual wisdom inherent in the mind. Mario L. D'Avanzo has found parallels between this poem and the gospel of Matthew where he indicates Matthew's rationalistic orientation towards the moral essence of books[5]. He however, denotes the spirituality of Nature and views it as a "mute gospel mysteriously speaking to eye and ear and not primarily to reason" (39). Wordsworth's major preoccupation is that of nature as being "Sacramental" (40), revealing a new creed built on the spiritual essence of Nature and not on rational rhetoric.

The above theme is carried further in "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free". The title of the poem reveals the excessive sense of freedom inherent in the human spirit. The poet revels in the "holy time" which is "quiet as a Nun/Breathless with adoration" (p.475. l.4/5). The poem is an epitome of the ultimate sublimity of nature, and the choice of words is telling. The feeling of the sinking sun in "tranquility", the "gentleness of heaven" that "broods" over the sea. He communicates a deep insight and a subtle understanding that can be recognized by those knowledgeable about nature. The presence of the child is evocative of the divine presence that inhabits nature. The child is the epitome of innocence indicated in the understanding that God is "with thee when we know it not". The poem is an ode to tranquility, the sublime sense, inner beauty, and childlike divinity.

One of Wordsworth's finest poems is "Lines Written in Early Spring". At the core of the poem is the celebration of Nature's bounty reflected in the blossoming of nature in early spring. It is a photographic representation of Nature's own self-rejuvenation. In the silence of his mind, the speaker can hear the "blended notes" of Nature but also the beautiful sight it captures.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,

The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;

And 't is my faith that every flower

Enjoys the air it breathes. (p.79 st.2 l.12)

He is fascinated by the gesticulation of birds that hop and play around in immeasurable pleasure. The "budding twigs spread out their fan,/To catch the breezy air;"(p.79 st.3 l.17-18). The speaker concludes that this must be "Nature's holy plan" which unfortunately does not make sense in the world of men. The world of nature is an alternative world beaming in truth and sincerity. Spring is a time within a general time frame; it is in time that the speaker understands man's own cruelty to man as opposed to the serenity of nature. The poet's romantic imagination is compounded by a consciousness of a holy union between the mind of man and the unspoken and unseen consciousness of the universe. "Early spring" captures this succinctly. It breaks even the cycle of time passing, revealing the poet's fascination with progress and nature's ability to repair itself.

Norman Lacey characterized Wordsworth's view of Nature, the foundation of his poetry and ideas. For

[5] See the gospel of Matthew 8:14-16.

Lacey, Wordsworth saw Nature thus, "The universe is interfused throughout by an eternal creative spirit. It is a spirit of love which he sometimes speaks of as God, but frequently as Nature. The physical universe is the pure signature of the Creator-the forms of Nature are "types and symbols of eternity." (73). He intimates in his study that Nature is the unifying bridge between the past and the present and is the "spiritual capital of the past" (126) upon which human society depends.

Wordsworth's poetry betrays little of the anger and frustration captured by Shelley or Byron, his contemporaries. Nicholas Roe in his well-documented *Wordsworth and Coleridge: A life,* chronicles Wordsworth's political involvements during the French revolution and demonstrates how he tried to bring that spirit into Britain. Perhaps, therefore, it was his disappointment[6] in this that led him to find refuge and calm in the harmless embrace of nature. Wordsworth was not apolitical. He nonetheless effectively separated politics from the beauty of nature, creating a poetic realm that honours inner peace and sublime sensations.

The poems under study celebrate Nature, and the effect of Time on sublime consciousness. They acknowledge Youth as a symbol of spiritual growth, a source of joy, the pinnacle of internal contentment, and the fundamental aspect of happiness. The poet expresses regret that Youth inevitably transition to adulthood, where it becomes encumbered by societal responsibilities. Time is the connection between consciousness and the sublime. It is in Time that the individual comes to terms with the consciousness of his Youth and the understanding of the eternity of the blessed mood. Nature's birth marks in the human mind are consciousness and the sublime and they are the direct result of the negotiation of Time and memory which are the hallmarks of sublime pleasure. Time often serves as an essential element shaping emotional depth within Romantic poetry, particularly in Wordsworth's work, where it intensifies both pleasure and the profound experience of loss.

[6] He was disappointed by the way the French revolution, originally a symbol of hope turned into gratuitous bloodbath.

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