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Nature as a sanctuary in selected poems of William Wordsworth

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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Příroda jako útočiště ve vybraných básních Williama Wordswotha

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem přírody jako útočiště ve vybraných básních Williama Wordswortha. Účelem této práce je prozkoumat takové aspekty Wordsworthových spisů, které zobrazují přírodu jako úkryt, do kterého lze uniknout z průmyslové urbanizované společnosti za účelem dosažení klidného stavu mysli a meditací a introspekci najít moudrost. Hlavní rysy Wordsworthovy interpretace útočiště, o kterých tato práce pojednává, jsou příroda jako zdroj klidu, příroda jako učitel a nadřazenost přírody nad městem.

Tato práce také poskytuje faktografický základ a vhled do života básníka s cílem prozkoumat motivaci pro volbu přírody jako hlavního námětu jeho tvorby.

Práce začíná představením romantického hnutí jako celku. V této části dokumentu bude romantismus představen a diskutován skrze komentování a kontrastování děl jiných autorů té doby s pracemi Williama Wordswortha s primárním zaměřením na téma přírody s cílem ustanovení postavení básníka v rámci hnutí. Teoretická část se zabývá dětstvím a adolescentním životem Wordswortha jako primárním motivátorem pro vykreslování výše zmíněných motivů v jeho poezii studiem *The Prelude* a biografií od jiných autorů.

Následující část dokumentu se bude zabývat jednotlivými vybranými básněmi z Wordsworthova repertoáru, které se zaměřují na téma přírody jako útočiště, a zároveň tato část mé práce představí každé dílo a pozadí jeho vzniku.

KEY WORDS

příroda, poezie, romantismus, escapismus, Jezerní oblast, jezerní básníci, průmyslová revoluce

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the theme of nature as a sanctuary in selected poems of William Wordsworth. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate such aspects of Wordsworth's writings that portray the outdoors as a shelter, where one can escape from the industrial, urbanised society in order to reach a tranquil state of mind and through meditation and introspection find wisdom. The main features of Wordsworth's interpretation of a sanctuary that this thesis discusses are nature as a source of serenity, nature as a teacher and the superiority of nature over the city.

This thesis also provides a factual background and insight into the life of the poet in order to investigate the motivations behind the choice of nature as the main subject in his writings.

The thesis begins with the introduction of the romantic movement as a whole. In this part of the document, romanticism will be introduced and discussed by commenting on and contrasting works of other writers of that era with the works of William Wordsworth with the primary focus being on the theme of nature in order to establish the poet's position within the movement. The theoretical part also deals with the childhood and adolescent life of Wordsworth as a primary motivator for portraying the topics mentioned above in his poetry through studying *The Prelude* as well as biographies by other authors.

The following part of the text discusses individual poems in Wordsworth's repertoire that focus on the theme of nature as shelter while also introducing and contextualising each work by the backgrounds of its origin.

KEYWORDS

nature, poetry, romanticism, escapism, lake district, lake poets, sanctuary, the industrial revolution

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Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the theme of nature serving as a refuge in the poetry of William Wordsworth. My aim is not to merely describe the individual poetic means used by the author but to further investigate the motivations for portraying the aforementioned topic in verse. In order to do so, I will examine the plausible causes and experiences that actuated the poet's search for solace in nature in his autobiographical poem *The Prelude* as well as in biographies by other authors to provide background as well as to support my argument. Moreover, I intend to demonstrate my findings in other of his well-known poems such as 'The World is Too Much With Us', and 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud', while also providing a framework by discussing the circumstances of the origins of the compositions to strengthen my argument further.

At the beginning of my work, I aspire to discuss the romantic movement as a whole to establish the foundation of my further investigation. I will provide a short introduction to the romantic era and then consider other significant writers of the movement that addressed similar issues. I would additionally like to examine the predecessors of romanticism and explore such tendencies in their writing that can be observed in the works of Wordsworth and that likewise explore the idea of nature as a sanctuary.

In the following part of my thesis, I will investigate the motivations to seek shelter in nature in Wordsworth's autobiographical piece *The Prelude* while simultaneously supporting my claims with Moorman's and Meyers' biographies of the poet. I want to explore the experiences in his childhood and adolescence that later motivated the poet to perceive nature as the only place where one can reach tranquillity. For Wordsworth, nature provided shelter from the hectic lifestyle of the city people. Moreover, he also viewed the countryside as the only place of learning where one can discover true wisdom, which is another aspect the Wordsworth's interpretation of a sanctuary that I strive to investigate.

After explaining the possible motivations for seeking shelter in nature through recounting the events of his youth, I will take individual works of Wordsworth and look for the themes of nature as a place for meditation, nature as a place of learning and nature as an antipode of the industrial city.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will be studying the theme of sanctuary in the poems and characterise it as a place of serenity, learning and as a source of bliss that allows for one's mind to immerse into one's thoughts and memories. I will be contrasting the sanctuary with metropolitan living and explore the poet's need to escape such an environment.

First, I will examine the issues as mentioned above in *Lyrical Ballads*, while also providing factual background. I will explore the topics in 'Tintern Abbey' as it presents both the themes of returning to nature from the city and emphasises the calming power of the natural world. Furthermore, I will explore the subject of attaining wisdom through recollection in tranquillity provided by the natural world in the poem 'The Tables Turned'.

In the next chapter of my thesis, I aim to study the subjects as specified above in his other well-known collection, *Poems, in Two Volumes*. I wish to present the theme of nature serving as a refuge while also contrasting Wordsworth's approach and attitude towards the issues in *Lyrical Ballads* and *Poems, in Two Volumes*.

For this purpose, I have chosen to examine his most memorable compositions 'I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud' and 'The World Is Too Much With Us'. I have selected the poem 'I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud' as it presents nature as a source of bliss and as a shelter found through recollection. The next poem 'The World Is Too Much With Us', I have chosen to support my claim that for the poet the natural world was superior to the industrial civilisation as this particular piece presents this argument in the possibly most straightforward fashion out of all of his writings.

1 Romanticism

Although the Romantic Era emerged from the Enlightenment, it presented a shift from the so-called Age of Reason. Romanticists focused on emotion and individualism as a reaction to the political and sociological background of the period. The romantic movement arose at the break of the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a response to the French Revolution and other conflicts of that time. It is often called the Age of Revolutions as it also reacts to the Industrial Revolution which the romanticists harshly criticised for the changes it presented in society shifting its focus from the natural world towards blind materialism. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

To give one clear definition of Romanticism would be impossible due to its immense diversity in themes portrayed, as every and each author experiences the changes in society differently and reacts to them in their own personal way, which brings us back to the emphasis on individualism. Arthur Lovejoy and René Wellek were amongst the most prominent scholars and literary critics who laboured to define Romanticism. In his article "*The Meaning of Romanticism for the Historian of Ideas*", Lovejoy states that the main issue with defining Romanticism is not that it lacks meaning, but that it has so many meanings the central concept is lost.

Wellek contradicts his theory by saying that the contradictions of definitions are only ostensible and that the problem in defining the movement is merely nominalistic. Wellek states that critics and scholars agree and understand what Romanticism is as a concept and that they only fail to find standard terms that would define it as one entity rather than a cluster of ideals. Wellek even proposes his own analysis of the movement and formulates three criteria for distinguishing literature as romantic. These three defining criteria are aspects a literary work ought to display in order to be perceived as romantic. These aspects are: "imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style" (Watson 4) These layers merge and overlap with one another and are only secluded for the sake of literary analysis.

The beginning of the British romantic movement is often thought to be the storming of Bastille in Paris in 1789 and the French Revolution that followed. The fall of the Bastille

was but a spark that inspired a change. The true beginning of Romanticism took place not in 1789, but nine years later with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which will be discussed thoroughly later in the thesis. *Lyrical Ballads* is a collection of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In the second publication of the book, in 1800, a preface was added that was later recognised as a manifesto of the Romantic movement. The Preface laid down principles for writing poetry.

The Preface initially served as a defence of Wordsworth's poetic style in reaction to the criticism received upon the publication of the ballads. It laid down principles for writing poetry and laboured to emphasise the poet's attitude towards literary criticism, noting that it was not the intention of the essay to force a dissatisfied reader into liking the poems. It instead gives a foundation for the whole movement and encourages those that find themselves connecting to Wordsworth's ideals to support his views and attitudes.

The Romantic movement fundamentally redefined how people perceived the world and themselves and served as a shift from the rigid age of reason towards emotion, intuition, and imagination and its influence still lingers in our modern way of thinking. Romanticism was above all a reaction. A reaction not only to the political changes but a reaction to the very core of society - its pragmatism, rules and traditions and the importance that was attributed to reason and logic.

Nature, imagination and individualism were three of the vital principles of the movement. In times where the welfare of society as a whole was put before the welfare of an individual, romantics sought individualism and favoured the freedom of action of each member of the society over rules and traditions. Romantics emphasised the uniqueness of an individual and praised the eccentric. Romantics formed their own archetype of a protagonist - the romantic hero. The romantic hero confronts the traditional perception of what is heroic and challenges established norms and conventions. The romantic hero is often an outcast rejected by society, which was a central theme in many works of romantic writers.

1.1 Depiction of nature in works by other romantic authors

Romantic literature is rich in the diversity of themes each work portrays. To characterise romantic literature as a whole, we must look into the works of its most significant authors because their understanding of the movement often differs and explores the literature of that time from a different perspective.

For the purpose of this thesis, we will look closely at the theme of the natural world serving as a shelter from the industrial society that not only poses as a calm and serene place for meditation and recollection but also as a place of learning. Before discussing Wordsworth in detail, it is vital to comment on other romantic writers in order to provide context and coherence. Even though many of the romantic writers addressed the topic of nature, Wordsworth's interpretation of the powers of the natural world is unique and to understand the individuality in his perception of the countryside as a sanctuary one must contrast it with the works of others.

Poetry was the leading literary genre of British romanticists. In Britain, we distinguish between two generations of romantic poets. The first generation is represented by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, followed by Robert Southey. The second generation is represented by George Gordon, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats.

Among the first authors to appreciate the attractions of the Lake District was Thomas Gray who visited the region in 1769. Gray's influence on Wordsworth is indisputable. Wordsworth even cited Gray's *Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West* from 1742 in *The Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, commenting on the composition of the poem.

"It will easily be perceived that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics: it is equally obvious, that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose." (Wordsworth, The Preface)

Gray sees nature as a divine power that sees no distinction between the common folk and the intellectual or affluent people and holds all people to the same standard. He addressed

these ideals in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. Unlike Wordsworth, he does not see nature as a source of bliss and wisdom, but as a sublime instrument of life and death. Gray uses the farmland to set the melancholic tone of the poem, whereas Wordsworth sees nature mostly as a healing force.

The author that influenced Wordsworth the most out of all his other contemporaries was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The two were close friends who inspired and criticised each other throughout their careers. However, their poetic style differs at first glance. Samuel Taylor Coleridge is associated with an interest in the exotic, the supernatural and the powers of the imagination. He is most known for his poem *Kubla Khan*, which is unique in many ways and which displays these characteristics. *Kubla Khan* is a fragment of a planned longer poem which explores the theme of the imagination. In the poem, Coleridge praises the mystical and mysterious while also discussing the relationship between man and nature.

The first generation wrote in the context of war. As time passed, Wordsworth, once a vocal Jacobin, became more and more conservative. Subsequently, a new generation of romantic poets arose circling George Gordon Byron, who in his *Don Juan* often criticised, among others, Wordsworth and his fellow 'Lakers'. Though stressing the individual, Byron was an advocate for devotion to humanity, sympathising with oppressed nations. He was radical in his dedication to fighting oppression and tyranny. Where Lake poets sought a refuge from the realities of their world, Byron fought for freedom and equality. Byron was an eccentric figure in his era and remains one of the most notorious personalities in literary history. His scandals and sexual exploits gained him a reputation best worded by his lover Lady Caroline Lamb who described him as "mad, bad and dangerous to know".

One of Byron's most significant contributions to literature was his invention of a Byronic hero, a protagonist which, to a certain extent, mirrors Byron's own persona. Pursued by women and envied by men, the Byronic hero is a passionate, eccentric individual living on the margins of society, excluding himself from rules and conventions. This is somewhat comparable to Wordsworth's ideology. Wordsworth also saw himself as a character misunderstood by the masses, but unlike Byron, Wordsworth praised tranquillity and calmness as well as solitude.

Byron's cult of personality attracted many like-minded authors. Percy Bysshe Shelley was one of these authors, nicknamed 'Mad Shelley'. Percy Bysshe Shelley was a promoter of atheism as portrayed in his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism*, a publication which led to his expulsion from Oxford. He shared his friend's Byron's notion that oppression and tyranny and other evils of society must be fought.

Nature was also a dominant theme in Shelley's work. He shared Wordsworth's admiration of nature and viewed it as a source of pure joy and happiness. He further believed that nature has the potential to invigorate people into shaping the world for the better.

Percy's second wife, Mary Shelley, born Mary Godwin, contributed to romanticism with the publication of her worldwide known Gothic novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*. Compared to the poetry of the movement, the gothic novel was much bleaker. Darker in theme, it dwelled in mystery and terror and is usually set in medieval ruins and castles. Mary Shelley also presents nature as a vital theme and strongly accentuates the battle between the individual and society. Mary Shelley contrasts the comforting and nurturing power of nature with its capability to destroy and spread terror once its laws are violated by society or in this case a scientist trying to twist nature to serve his own interest.

John Keats was the youngest of the second generation of romantic poets. His work was diverse in form although he did not publish a large volume of work, given that he died at only 25 years of age. A recurring theme in his poetry is beauty, whether it originates from the imagination or nature. He developed a theory he called "negative capability" which describes a writer's ability to perceive phenomena such as beauty or pain beyond logic or science, shredding their soul for their art without seeking a rational explanation which allows them to inspect such sensations as only an artist could.

Keats' approach is somewhat reminiscent of Wordsworth's understanding of wisdom. It is imperative to note the difference in the employment of introspection of the two consecutive thinkers. Where Wordsworth sought peace, serenity and solace in the arms of the natural world, Keats goes beyond the peaceful and tranquil and states that true beauty can be understood and perceived by dissecting one's soul and heart even if it leads to the writer's confusion and uncertainty.

2 William Wordsworth's life and *The Prelude*

In order to thoroughly investigate the motivations behind Wordsworth's choice of themes in his poetry, one must examine his childhood and the events that preceded his writings. It is no simple task to try to understand someone's interpretation of their life without their direct commentary. Fortunately, among many of Wordsworth's works, we can also find an autobiographical poem in which the poet takes the reader through his life and provides a unique insight into his personal life as well as his way of thinking.

Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind*, is a collection of fourteen books in which the author reveals his thoughts and life events. In the poem, the author comments on how his family matters, his attitude to education and his relationship with nature shaped his young mind. The poem begins with his earliest childhood memories and finishes at the point of his life where he has grown into a wise individual that is able to perceive the world around him with a unique perspective.

Wordsworth began composing *The Prelude* around the year 1798. He originally started writing *The Prelude* as an introduction to 'The Recluse' and as a means to test his poetic abilities. Writing of the poem engaged Wordsworth for forty years of his life, as is apparent from the many manuscript versions, and was published posthumously in 1850.

The Prelude portrays topics such as nature as a mother, nature as a teacher and nature as a source of bliss and tranquillity while explaining the events that led to the poet's understanding of the world. It explores the reasons why the countryside was so crucial for Wordsworth and what circumstances inspired the poet to see nature as a refuge.

2.1 Nature as mother

William Wordsworth's family background and his childhood are two very significant influences on his writing that helped shape his relationship with nature. In his early childhood, he first started to see the countryside as a refuge. His relationship with his loving mother and cold father had, among other things, a notable impact on his writing. It was through nature that he reunited with his mother even long after her passing. His family relations and his birthplace played an essential role in the poet's growth, and therefore in the shaping of his character and, subsequently, in his writing.

William Wordsworth was born on 7th of April 1770, in Cockermouth, England. Wordsworth was one of five children. He had a very close relationship with his sister Dorothy who was one year younger than him. He did not have much of a relationship with his father, who was a legal representative of James Lowther, 1st Earl of Lonsdale, and spent a large portion of William's childhood away from home on business. (Myers 3)

Thanks to his father's connections, the Wordsworths lived in a large estate in a small town. However, his father did not spend much time with the family, being away for business most of the year. William never reconciled with his father, and the two remained distant until his father's death. However, it was through his father that William was introduced to literature. His father encouraged him in reading and let him use his library, also forcing William to memorise passages from the works of Milton, Shakespeare and Spenser. Wordsworth never described his father personally in his poetry, which further indicates the lack of closeness between the two, given how much of his work he dedicated to his mother.

To William's heartbreak, his mother Ann died unexpectedly when he was only eight years old. His father passed away during the Christmas holidays of 1783, leaving William and his four siblings orphaned.

William had a profound, loving relationship with his mother. Ann treated her children with kindness and compassion and encouraged them to play outside and to explore the wonders of the world around them, unlike their father. The poet frequently compared his mother to mother nature itself. Saying that the loving and warm feeling he feels when surrounded by the scenery of the Lake district reminds him much of his beloved mother and the few years

they spent together. In his autobiographical poem *The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem* he describes his relationship with his mother, comparing her to a hen taking care of her chickens.

Behold the parent hen amid her brood,
Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
And she herself from the maternal bond
Still undischarged ; yet doth she little more
Than move with them in tenderness and love,
A centre to the circle which they make ;
And now and then, alike from need of theirs
And call of her own natural appetites,
She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food,
Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
My honored Mother, she who was the heart
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves :
She left us destitute, and, as we might,
Trooping together. Little suits it me

To break upon the sabbath of her rest
With any thought that looks at others' blame ;
Nor would I praise her but in perfect love. (The Prelude, Book Five 246-263)

It is evident that his mother was a fundamental reason why nature was so crucial for Wordsworth. He felt at peace around his mother, and they had spent a large portion of their time together outdoors, which is why Wordsworth felt throughout his life that only in the same scenery can he truly reach tranquillity and find refuge from society and from all that he perceived as unfavourable in the world.

His siblings also had a significant impact on the poet, not as crucial as his mother, but their misfortunes are one of the reasons why he was so close to his sister Dorothy, who influenced a large portion of his work.

We know very little about Wordsworth's younger brother John even though he spent a lot of his early years living with William and their sister Dorothy. John also had a great admiration for nature and poetry but never expressed it in verse, and there is not much written about him. Mary Moorman, British historian and biographer who dedicated a large portion of her life to research on Wordsworth, described in her publication *William Wordsworth: a biography* William's younger brother as a 'silent poet' (7). One who due to his immense shyness, never wrote about his passion for nature but rather enjoyed it through his siblings' talent. Unfortunately, young John was taken from William's life in 1805 when he died at sea.

As hardworking as William's father was, he did not leave his family in fortune after his death but in debt. William and his siblings spent a lot of their childhood in Penrith living with their grandparents. These were no happy years for Wordsworth. His grandparents and his uncle, who also lived there, disapproved of the 'aspirations of free-spirited children' (Moorman 13). William was often harshly punished for his disobedience. The hostility of the family members grew so intense that Wordsworth even contemplated suicide. In such times of despair, Wordsworth found solace in the moors surrounding Penrith, about which he reminisced in many of his writings.

It was at school in Penrith that Wordsworth met his future wife and lifelong friend Mary Hutchinson. In these early years, William grew closer to his sister Dorothy who became his most trusted companion in life and literature. After his mother's death, however, the two siblings got separated and were not reunited till 1787. After Dorothy has been taken away to Halifax, William's disagreements with his grandparents and uncle Kit worsened. Family played a vital role in Wordsworth's life. His relationship with his mother was a cardinal reason for the poet's need to seek refuge in nature. He felt that through nature, his connection with his mother lives on after her passing. It is clear from *The Prelude* that nature took on the role of his mother in his later life. He went to nature to contemplate about his struggles and saw the outdoors as a place of peace and safety.

2.2 Nature as teacher

The theme of Education is reoccurring throughout Wordsworth's literary work and was particularly prominent in the shaping of his bond with nature. Wordsworth saw in-class teaching as ineffective and incompetent. According to the poet, one can truly learn only when observing the outdoors. He felt that meditation and long walks were far more effective in the pursuit of knowledge.

William later in his life attended grammar school in Hawkshead, just like his brothers, from which he graduated in 1787. He was staying in the house of Ann Tyson with some of his school friends. At this time, he built many friendships and was able to live a somewhat happy life. The house of Ann Tyson provided him with much more freedom than the house of his grandparents in Penrith. Yet Wordsworth continued to wander in nature, this time not to escape, but purely for joy.

The school of Hawkshead had an outstanding reputation and was known for its excellent quality of education. It is no surprise that it was quite common for the students to continue their studies at the University of Cambridge. It was through the headmaster William Taylor that Wordsworth became acquainted with the poetry of Thomson, Gray, Collins and many others. The headmaster supplied Wordsworth with books he would not have otherwise been able to afford. Under Taylor, Wordsworth wrote his first poetry. The more gifted students, Wordsworth being one of them, were asked to write a few verses for a school celebration. Wordsworth wrote over a hundred lines in heroic couplets, in which the Spirit of Education, personified as a Goddess, addresses a schoolboy on the subject of modern learning (Moorman 56). These verses are the first writings of Wordsworth's poetry that survived.

In 1787 Dorothy and William were finally reunited when she returned to Penrith to live with the grandparents and uncle Kit. Dorothy shared William's hatred of them which only deepened when their reunion was cut short. Dorothy and William had spent only one summer together when Uncle Kit sent William away to Hawkshead even though he had already graduated. There he stayed for nine weeks before he departed for Cambridge. (Meyers 7)

On the 30th of October 1787, Wordsworth arrived at the college of The Evangelist St. John which had an excellent reputation among the Cambridge colleges at that time, despite the financial struggles of the Wordsworth children. He entered St. John's as a sizar, an undergraduate receiving financial aid from the college.

Owing to the high standard of education Wordsworth had received in Hawkshead, he found himself struggling to study hard. Severely lacking in motivation to study for his exams, his academic performance soon began to deteriorate. It was not for his lack of intellectual ability that Wordsworth started to fall behind his classmates. He continued to excel in literary studies but could not get a full evaluation because he chose not even to attend the examinations in other subjects such as mathematics.

For Wordsworth, indoor learning was not attractive; he desired to be in nature. In the third book of *The Prelude*, he describes his disappointment in university learning. At first, he was astonished by the architecture and history of Cambridge, but later he felt "as if with a rebound, my mind returned to its former self" (Moorman 103).

During his studies, Wordsworth did not produce any original verse. The first original lines of poetry since he entered St. John's he created while on vacation. After the end of the school year, Wordsworth had returned to the house of Ann Tyson where he started to compose a poem 'An Evening Walk' which he addressed to a young lady, presumably his sister Dorothy. 'An Evening walk' was published almost five years after its composition and was not yet a truly romantic piece. Written in heroic couplets, the poem is highly descriptive and does not attempt to express any deeper concerns than the sightings of the eye. 'An Evening Walk' possesses no themes of escapism into nature or one's imagination. (Moorman 63)

Despite the fact that the poem does not yet display any particular patterns of the romantic movement, it is worth noting because it was the poet's very first attempt to convey the message, in his writing, that he would rather spend time in the solace of nature than study in a conventional way.

Upon his return to college, Wordsworth went back to reading about poetry rather than composing it. He mostly kept to himself and continued to wander around outdoors. He finished writing 'An Evening Walk' the following summer.

Not much is recorded regarding Wordsworth's third year of study. But it was during that time, around Christmas, that he visited London for the first time most likely to spend some time with his brother John, who was to set sail in January.

During the last year of his studies, Wordsworth continued to fail to fulfil his academic responsibilities. Dorothy expressed anxiety over William's future in her letter to Jane Pollard in 1790.

I am very anxious about him just now, as he will shortly have to provide for himself. Next year he takes his degree. When he will go into Orders I do not know, nor how he will employ himself. He must, when he is three-and-twenty, either go into Orders or take pupils. He will be twenty in April. (Knight, Letters of the Wordsworth Family 11)

William himself was aware of the hardships that were to follow him after he left Cambridge. In fear of having to spend his future employed and tied to one place, he allowed himself to one last celebration of his freedom - a journey through the Alps.

It was during his school years that Wordsworth began to understand nature's position in his education. He turned his back on book knowledge and traditional learning and instead began his search for wisdom. He soon started to understand that the only place that has the power to guide him in his quest is nature because it offers serenity and solace needed for introspection and pondering.

2.3 Nature as a source of bliss

Apart from the Lake District, the importance of which is unmistakable for Wordsworth, another location was essential in the development of his writing - The Alps. Until then he sought the scenery of his home in search of refuge and the walks around his places of study proved insufficient. The Alps, however, astonished him with their magnificence and gave him a new understanding of the powers of nature.

On the 13th of July 1790, William Wordsworth set off for Switzerland accompanied by his friend Robert Jones, determined to undertake a pedestrian expedition through the Alps. By the end of the 18th century, the Alps were a popular destination of numerous artists who visited the mountains in search of inspiration and muse. It was on this trip that his poetic career began.

According to his letter to Dorothy, Wordsworth fell in love with the Alps right upon arrival.

Any description which I have room to give you must be altogether inadequate. (...) The impressions of three hours of our walk among these Alps will never be effaced. A more charming path was scarcely ever travelled over. (...) The lake is narrow, and the shadows of the mountains were early thrown across it. It was beautiful to watch them travelling up the side of the hills; for several hours to remark one half of a village covered with shade, and the other bright with the strongest sunshine. It was with regret that we passed every turn of this charming path, where every new picture was purchased by the loss of another which we should never have been tired of gazing upon. (Knight 13)

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth says that it was in the Alps where he first began to realize the impact the outdoors would have in his life. It was when walking through the magnificent mountains that he began to understand that the connection between him and nature is no ordinary pleasure. The poet heard nature speak to him, asking him to stay within her reach. Personified nature asked the poet to make her his temple, assuring him that no matter what awaits in life, he would always find shelter in her arms.

The frame of social being, which so long
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm.
" Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands ! " The voice
Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne ;
I heard it then and seem to hear it now
" Your impious work forbear : perish what may,
Let this one temple last, be to this one spot
Of earth devoted for eternity ! (The Prelude, Book Six 427-435)

Switzerland left a deep impression in Wordsworth's memory. The adventures he and his companion encountered along the way, together with the landscapes they viewed gave him fresh revelation in his seeing of nature. While admiring its beauty, he also began to see the dangers of the powers of nature. Many times, the two of them faced struggles and risks on their journey - from nearly drowning in a raging river to climbing steep hills.

2.4 Busy streets of London and remembrance of the Lakes (Nature over the city)

The poet's desire to seek shelter in nature substantially intensified when he moved to London and witnessed the industrial and hectic society of the city. Surrounded by arid buildings and frantic crowds, he attempted to explore parks and gardens in search of a quiet place where he could think but to no avail. Unable to physically go and find solace in nature, he returned to his beloved lakes and moors in recollection.

After taking his degree of Bachelor of Arts in January 1791, he moved to London where he lived in isolation and with minimal finances for four months. (Meyers 14) Moving to London was a significant change for him for he no longer could observe nature but instead viewed the busy streets. Such observations he described in the seventh book of *The Prelude* and later revisited in many of his poems such as 'The World Is Too Much With Us'.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
Of a too busy world ! Before me flow,
Thou endless stream of men and moving things ! (The Prelude, Book Seven 149-151)

Even in the city, Wordsworth kept on going on his walks. However, here he would do so at night-time and preferably when the weather was unpleasant in order to get the chance to wander the streets solitarily with as few encounters as possible.

Unfrequent as in deserts ; at late hours
Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
The feeble salutation from the voice
Of some unhappy woman, now and then
Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
Nothing is listened to. (The Prelude, Book Seven 662-668)

The theme of his poetry in *The Prelude*'s eighth book distinctly contrasts the themes of book seven, which was dedicated to London. Book eight, Retrospect — Love of Nature Leading

to Love of Mankind, takes us back from the unfamiliarity of the city into the natural world. The reminiscence of his beloved countryside stayed within him when in the commotion of the capital. In Book Eight, he takes us back to the scene of his childhood, back to the Lake District. Wordsworth states that in the "turbulent world of men and things" (71-72), he recognised that he owed a great deal to nature because it had opened his heart to the perception of beauty. Hence in the hustle of the city life, he retreated to the moorlands of his birthplace through recollection and sought peace in his own imagination.

Nearing the conclusion of the eighth book, Wordsworth takes us promptly back to London explaining that when he first boarded the London bus, he felt as though there was some weight pulling him down. He describes the "trivial forms" of the city, such as pavements and streets, as "mean shapes" (545-549). And in this time of despair, his mind and memory, which he labels as a thing divine, became his shelter.

2.5 Return to his roots after his residence in France

In the following books of *The Prelude*, book nine to eleven, the poet abandons the subject of escapism into nature again and instead describes his residence in France. The author uses natural themes at the very beginning of the book while reminiscing about his first trip to France, but even these in their narrative form are used scarcely throughout the poem. Book nine is rich in its political motives at the expense of natural ones. Wordsworth's distancing from nature is even more apparent from the fact that after leaving France he returned to "the vast city" of London instead of going back to the Lake District. He had spent several months in London.

Book Twelve, titled 'Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored' presents a return to nature. The author contrasts his recent trials, beset with pain and terror he observed during his stay in France during the revolution, with the gentle power of nature.

Through these distracted times ; in Nature still
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which when the spirit of evil reached its height
Maintained for me a secret happiness. (The Prelude, Book Twelve 40-44)

Wordsworth recalls his younger self that so easily found solace in the simplest instruments of nature. He compares his young open and observant mind with his intellectual and pensive self. The poet desires to revert to the vision of a peaceful natural world. He views his youthful self as strong, whereas his newfound intellectualism has made him feeble.

O Soul of Nature ! excellent and fair !
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear ; but never long without the heart
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect :

O Soul of Nature ! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth ! how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength ! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind, (The Prelude, Book Twelve 93-108)

The title of the poem itself carries great significance. Wordsworth feels as if his imagination has been impaired by the political events and the philosophies he adopted during his stay in France. Wordsworth mentions a girl - who could potentially be Mary Hutchinson, his childhood friend - and alludes to the fact that, unlike him, she was able to withstand the sufferings of life and remained delighted in her endeavours with the simplest attractions of nature.

Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense
Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds ;
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart
(...)
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And everything she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself (The Prelude, Book Twelve 148-170)

In order to restore his impaired imagination, Wordsworth returns to his childhood and remembers how when he was a child, he would often spend hours and hours in nature, and he would feel safe and peaceful. According to Wordsworth, the mind can be healed and the

imagination restored by returning to the time when he was "strong" and therefore, even if only in his memory, he tries to reconcile with nature, which once served as his shelter.

One such memory stands out for the poet. He writes about an incident that left a strong trace in his memory, and he talks about how pure and wild his imagination was at that time. He tells a story of how he once got lost on a horse ride and had to return home by himself. Wordsworth describes all the terrifying images his mind fabricated and paints quite an eerie scene. As distressing as the initial impression was for the poet, he soon would start going back to the place that once frightened him, and he would see how his young and inexperienced soul had made an otherwise dull occasion an adventure that would affect him even now at the time where he feels he has lost himself.

In book twelve also appears what is possibly the most famous passage from the whole composition, generally referred to as 'the spots of time'. These spots of time refer to essential accounts of the poet's youth that had a significant impact on the shaping of his mind and imagination. One such account would be the incident mentioned above in which Wordsworth got lost as a young boy. The poet indicates that there were many such occurrences that helped him grow.

and again

In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a creative soul.
There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue; (The Prelude, Book Twelve 205-210)

The thirteenth book concludes the preceding one. The author follows his previous ideas and builds on them. In search of his poetic genius, he looks to nature to restore his intellect. He states that only in nature can one find both tranquillity and deep emotional stimulation. He recognises nature as his tutor that is testing his understanding of right and wrong in order to revive his moral strength. The poet soon understands that only a person reliant on nature and feeling can enlarge the horizon of the mind and find wisdom.

Equipped with his newly gained wisdom, he attacks the ambitious and industrial society. He condemns the hectic and material life the statesmen enforce on the world in their aim to secure public welfare. He begins to investigate why rulers do not come from humble rural origins, and the poet concludes that the ordinary folk are too overwhelmed with working to satisfy their basic needs and provide for their families to be concerned with politics. He praises the ordinary people living a rural life and acknowledges their wisdom even though they are often viewed by society as lowly. He questions the quality of formal education, for only when roaming in nature on lonely roads can one, according to Wordsworth, find true wisdom. Wordsworth claims that what we can learn from books is limited and that books and their authors mislead us.

Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,

And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.
—Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other; above all,
How books mislead us, seeking their reward
From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
By artificial lights; how they debase
The Many for the pleasure of those Few; (The Prelude, Book thirteen 202-209)

Wordsworth also comments on the topic of love and how people from the cities tend to fall in love with the visual and do not stop to look inward to see the true essence of people and things.

The writer goes back to the beginning, to finding his poetic purpose. He states that it is his calling to dedicate his poetry to "the very heart of man", to ordinary people and the environment in which they live. His mission as a poet is not to entertain the educated and affluent but to articulate the wisdom of the country folk and to highlight the force and power of nature that he sees as sublime and the only means to reach tranquillity.

Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel, that protects
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
Of these, said I, shall be my song; (The Prelude, Book thirteen 230-233)

The return from France is a turning point for Wordsworth in many ways. His trip to France deepened his connection to the natural world. After his return, he spent much time pondering about his poetic abilities and the power of his imagination. He at this time of his life views himself as a wise individual who has enough insight to comment on the evils of society. This period of his life is a closing chapter of Wordsworth's growth, and now he is ready to spread his teaching on finding wisdom and shelter in the sanctuary of nature.

3 Lyrical ballads

This chapter deals with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*. This chapter explores the themes of nature as a sanctuary in selected poems of the collection while also providing background to the origins of the publication.

The first significant romantic work was a collection of poems by William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge called *Lyrical Ballads*, which marked the origin of the romantic style. William Wordsworth wrote most of the poems, Coleridge contributed with just one, though lengthy, poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. The poems, at first published anonymously, written in everyday language, were somewhat controversial and received mixed reviews. The collection did not gain much popularity until its second publication two years later, mostly due to the addition of a preface (Hudnall). It was in the aforementioned preface that Wordsworth voiced his ideal of what poetry is and how it should be written. The preface is now considered to be a manifesto of the whole movement.

3.1 Meeting Coleridge and the first publication of Lyrical Ballads

An essential shift in Wordsworth's life and writing came in 1795 when he made acquaintance with Samuel Taylor Coleridge while visiting Bristol. Immediately after they met, the two poets liked each other and became friends. Their friendship became crucial for both of their writing careers and personal life as well. They would often provide criticism to each other and inspire each other to write. Coleridge also introduced Wordsworth to Robert Southey, another well-known representative of the romantic movement.

Having reunited with Dorothy, the two moved together to Alfoxden House in 1797, to be near Coleridge. It was at this time that Wordsworth presumably started writing ballads with close collaboration with Coleridge that later would form their first significant work (Meyers 31). In 1798 the poets learned that they would soon need to leave Alfoxden House and they would agree on their journey to Germany. It is believed that the reason for the first publication of the ballads was to raise money for their travels to Germany.

Coleridge contacted Joseph Cottle, English publisher and his good friend. Cottle agreed on publishing the collection of Wordsworth's lyrical pieces together with Coleridge's long poem. Going against Cottle's suggestion, Wordsworth insisted on publishing the poems together with Coleridge's contribution, despite the differences in length and writing style, and demanded the collection to be published anonymously (Hudnall).

In an advertisement for the publication, Wordsworth states that these poems are to be regarded as experiments. The poet excuses the use of simple language and conversational tone and suggests that a knowledgeable reader might find the poems awkward and unappealing. He goes even further to inform such reader that instead of looking for their own gratification, they should question their personal pre-established principles of judgment.

3.2 Preface to Lyrical Ballads

The Preface to the second publication of Lyrical Ballads holds a vital role not only in Wordsworth's writing but also in the romantic movement as a whole. Upon its release, it served not only as a defence of Wordsworth's literary style but additionally has become a manifesto for the movement.

In the Preface, the poet justifies his use of simple language in his verse and contrasts the innocent and pure rural world with the overwhelming and complicated world and the poetry of neo-classicism.

For to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence, of which I believe it susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined, without pointing out, in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. (Wordsworth, Preface)

He further explains his portrayal of everyday life in a language of common men while also colouring it with imagination. He defends his use of nature as a central theme by saying that the outdoors is the best place for entertaining the passions of the heart and that only when examining the rural can a mind reach maturity. He praises the essential emotions manifested in the simplicity of rural living. Moreover, the natural world offers permanent beauty in its attractions that are not to be found in the hectic and ever-moving society of that time.

Low 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 co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions

of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. (Wordsworth, Preface)

Wordsworth suggests that it is inadequate for him to express himself poetically using the language of the upper-class that, according to the poet, is corrupted by social vanity. Wordsworth states that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and that these powerful feelings are most likely to be experienced in the tranquillity provided by nature. He says that only in tranquillity can we understand our own emotions for our emotions are initially corrupted by affect, but when we allow the serenity and calmness overflow to our thoughts, we will be able to distance ourselves from the material world and understand life and emotions with new insight.

I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. (...) Now, if Nature be thus cautious in preserving in a state of enjoyment a being thus employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson thus held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. (Wordsworth, Preface)

The *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* is a vital piece of text in the context of all of British literature. It is a direct commentary from Wordsworth on the importance of nature and on the aspects of nature that serve as a sanctuary for the poet. The poet stresses the importance of recollection in tranquillity as a prime source of emotional wisdom, and also comments on his attitude towards the industrial society.

3.3 Tintern Abbey

‘Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798’ is possibly one of the most memorable poems of *Lyrical Ballads* and holds a prime position within the whole of Wordsworth's writing. In the poem, Wordsworth addresses the topic of nature over the city. ‘Tintern Abbey’ is one of the first compositions by Wordsworth that deals with returning to the outdoors through recollection in order to escape the hardships of modern urbanised and industrial society.

At the beginning of the poem, Wordsworth expresses that returning to the landscape fills him with joy. He describes the beauties of the world surrounding him and paints a picturesque view. He further communicates that only in surroundings such as this one can he submerge into his mind and explore the otherwise 'secluded' thoughts.

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky. (LB, Tintern Abbey 1-8)

The green vicinity gives him a place where he can peacefully 'repose' in silence and solitude with nothing but trees around him, like a vagrant dweller or hermit.

With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone. (LB, Tintern Abbey 19-22)

While calmly lying in the still greenery, he reminisces about his life in the city. Even though he has been separated from nature for a long time, it still fills him with the same feeling of

tranquillity as it did before. He remembers his desire to return to the farmland while he was in the dwelling in the 'lonely rooms' of the city, feeling weary.

These beautiful forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet, (LB, Tintern Abbey 23-28)

Wordsworth here explains the sublime powers of nature and the influence it has on man's mind. The poet celebrates the natural world for guiding him through life and contrasts it with the industrial world that he perceives as unintelligible. He further praises the countryside for allowing him to withdraw from the material world and dive into his thoughts. It is a place for meditation and introspection.

To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. (LB, Tintern Abbey 37-50)

In the following verses, he notably emphasises the beforementioned belief. He describes the industrial world as 'fretful' and 'feverish' and stresses the importance of recollection of the countryside while the city life was harming his soul.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee! (LB, Tintern Abbey 51-59)

Later on, the poet acknowledges the fact that he is not the same person that he was when last he visited the Abbey. In doing so, Wordsworth admits that his return to the countryside was not motivated by searching for something beautiful but rather by fleeing from an unpleasant place.

And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. (LB, Tintern Abbey 67-74)

Afterwards, the poet comments on how, when he last visited the place, he did not realise he would feel the need to revisit it in his memory. When he last visited the abbey, he admired its beauty with a young naivety. He observed the place only visually. The poet states that those times have past and presently, upon his return, he understands the place differently. Now he recognises the complexity of nature's influence on his mind. He sees nature as a

sublime power that allows for all thoughts to flood his mind and fills him with such intellectual strength that would be incomprehensible for his younger self. Such learning and such wisdom are the reasons why the poet still returns to the countryside and why his connection with the outdoors is so profound.

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. (LB, Tintern Abbey 104-113)

In the next stanza, Wordsworth comments on the fact that had he not been so closely in touch with the natural world, his spirit would decay. He calls nature his friend in whose language he can understand his 'former heart' and former pleasures. Through nature, the poet can return to his youth and see its wonders with joy. Wordsworth then addresses his sister, explaining that he prays to nature because she never betrayed him or did him harm because he loved her.

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; (LB, Tintern Abbey 119-126)

Thanks to the powers of nature, the poet's life is filled with joy, and it impresses him with serenity and beauty. The joyous mood the poet receives from the natural world is so powerful that it cannot be spoiled by 'evil tongues', 'rash judgments', nor 'the sneers of selfish men'. Wordsworth acknowledges that these cheerful thoughts are thus immortal. The poet then speaks to his sister, urging her to allow herself to observe nature in the same way as he sees her. The poet explains that after such revelation, her mind will mature and she will be able to reach tranquillity and harmony that allows for the happiest thoughts to enter. When in despair, the poet assumes, the nature-worshiper's mind will also return to nature and find shelter, and at that very moment, the reader will remember Wordsworth and be grateful.

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me, (LB, Tintern Abbey 137-148)

Nearing the conclusion of the poem, Wordsworth talks to his sister, telling her that a time will come when he will no longer be alive, but through this poem, his ideals will live on in her heart, and she will cherish the memory of the two of them standing above Tintern Abbey. The poet calls himself a 'worshiper of nature' and excuses his absence in Dorothy's life, saying that he left her and wandered alone in nature for both of their sakes because now he can share his wisdom and teaching and guide others to tranquillity and to the shelter of the pastoral.

If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake! (LB, Tintern Abbey 150-162)

‘Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey’ holds a highly significant position in all of Wordsworth's writings. It is a perfect example of both searching for a refuge in nature as an opposition to the city and finding solace of mind in the green countryside that allows for meditation. Furthermore, the poem serves as an introduction to the topic for the reader, because through Wordsworth supporting his sister to open her heart to nature, the reader can be driven to do so as well. Wordsworth explains his relationship with nature to the reader and guides the reader to take the same approach so that he or she can also find peace and happiness.

3.4 The Tables Turned

Another poem that deals with nature as a sanctuary is the ballad 'The Tables Turned'. 'The Tables Turned' takes a different approach to the theme of nature as a sanctuary than 'Tintern Abbey', emphasising the teaching force of the natural world. The poem deals with the idea that the wisdom one can learn from the rural environment is superior to the knowledge one can receive from books and traditional school teaching methods.

The poet exhorts the reader to put aside books; furthermore, the poet brings attention to the fact that after long hours of sedentary learning, the reader would 'grow double'. Wordsworth asks the reader, his friend, why he chooses to sit indoors, studying hard while outside a beautiful world awaits. Afterwards, the poet continues to describe the charms of the outdoors.

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?
The sun above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow. (LB, The Tables Turned 1-8)

In the next stanza, the poet declares books a tedious and everlasting yet inconclusive struggle. He states that learning from books is inefficient, and there is much more to learn, even from the simplest forms of nature, such as a bird's song.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it. (LB, The Tables Turned 9-12)

The following stanza emphasises the ideas portrayed in the previous one, and it is in this stanza that one can find the possibly most essential verses in the whole poem. Wordsworth

appeals to the reader to step into the sunlight and let the powers of the outdoors enlighten his/her soul.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher. (LB, The Tables Turned 13-16)

Subsequently, the author starts explaining to the reader all the things that he can learn from nature. Wordsworth illustrates the idea that nature is a source of both bliss and wisdom. It can teach us the difference between good and evil and guide us better than any book or man.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.
One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.
Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect. (LB, The Tables Turned 17-28)

The poem concludes with the author explaining that one must open their heart to be able to perceive the world, which gives them an insight more valuable than the teaching of science and arts.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives. (LB, The Tables Turned 29-32)

In conclusion, 'The Tables Turned' displays Wordsworth's attitude towards education. Wisdom recollected in tranquillity and through the inspection of the rural environment is more efficient than books and traditional learning methods. In this sense, nature provides the shelter for one's mind and allows one's spirit to genuinely open to all forms of thought that otherwise would have been stunted by the biased and dogmatic opinions of teachers and books.

4 Poems, in Two Volumes

Poems, in Two Volumes is a second significant collection of poetry from Wordsworth's repertoire. The piece was, as apparent from the title, published into two volumes in 1807. The assemblage is more versatile in form and in the subject matter it portrays than *Lyrical Ballads*. Although some of the poems are similar in their style of direct narration to those in the *Lyrical Ballads*, most of them portray the matter in a more ingenious and vexed manner. Wordsworth here comments on his internal state of mind and his view of the world in a more expressive and sophisticated fashion. (Jones 7)

Wordsworth wrote most of the poems from this work between the years 1802 and 1807. This period is now by many considered to be the great decade of his writing career, because it was in this period that he wrote some of his most notable works, such as 'I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud' and 'The World Is Too Much With Us'.

Upon publication, the collection of poems received rather harsh criticism by many periodicals and was dismissed as childish and corrupted by a misleading simplicity. The works were interpreted as banal yet too affectionate. However, nowadays, some of the most notable poems of this collection are considered to be essential pieces of romantic poetry.

The poems from this collection are much shorter and more straightforward compared to the poems from *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth here uses very simple and easily understandable language to comment on the issues of society.

4.1 I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud', frequently nicknamed Daffodils, is, according to the BBC, Wordsworth's most well-known poem. It is rich in its descriptive and vivid imagery as well as in its commentary on the importance of the natural world to the poet in terms of serving as a shelter. In this particular poem, the countryside and its charms provide a refuge for the poet through recollection and revisitation. Its themes are similar to those of Tintern Abbey, but in this work, Wordsworth portrays his ideas more directly and expressively with the use of more straightforward language.

As the poem commences, the author illustrates a captivating landscape. The poet considers himself to be a solitary cloud travelling the sky and look down upon the stunning scenery of valleys and hills when a field of daffodils catches his eye. The theme of solitude is common for Wordsworth. The solitary cloud is untroubled by the struggles of daily life and does not concern himself with the judgements of society. The solitary cloud is a free entity, an elevated viewer that sees all forms of nature and has the insight to understand them, unlike the industrialism of the city that provides no comfort for Wordsworth.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. (PiTV, Daffodils 1-6)

The poet admires the flowers not just for their beauty but for their freedom. In his eyes, the daffodils are dancing in the wind, and their blooms cover the whole scene and spread wide as stars in the night's sky.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,

Tossing their heads in sprightly dance. (PiTV, Daffodils 7-12)

In the following stanza, Wordsworth says that the view of the daffodils dancing in their magnificence fills the poet with utter delight and the feeling of happiness. However, Wordsworth says that upon such visitation, he was not yet aware of the impact the spectacle would have on him in his later life for he did not thus far understand the importance of recollection of the serene yet lively nature in weary times.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought: (PiTV, Daffodils 13-18)

The last stanza concludes the poem with the author's revelation that in times of sadness and sorrow he returns through remembrance to the nature that provided him with bliss and in these reminiscences, he finds refuge from the society and its conflicts.

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils. (PiTV, Daffodils 19-24)

The last stanza carries great significance. It perfectly displays the idea that nature provided shelter for Wordsworth though not always present but in recollection.

Although the plot and deliverance of the lines are straightforward, it explores in-depth topics that frequent Wordsworth's writing. The poem depicts nature as a source of bliss and indicates its importance in the poet's life. It also comments on the power of remembrance of the beforementioned bliss in troubled times and the healing power of such recollections.

4.2 The World Is Too Much with Us

The sonnet 'The World Is Too Much with Us' is perhaps the most outspoken criticism of the first industrial revolution in all of Wordsworth's writings. In this poem, Wordsworth openly and blatantly opposes the urbanised society that is, according to him, so preoccupied with materialism that people turned a blind eye to how damaging it is to the natural world the poet worships. Though short in length, the poem declares Wordsworth's ideals in a complex and thorough manner.

In the first three verses, the poet comments on the fact that due to urbanisation, we are always surrounded by civilisation and its materialism. Wordsworth points out that the people those days were too focused on money and wealth that they turned their backs on nature and are no longer able to recognise its value. Wordsworth states that instead of seeking to understand the capabilities of newfound industries and the welfare that such advancements can provide to humanity, people only worry about becoming more prosperous and spending money for their own benefit.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours; (PiTV, The World Is Too Much With Us 1-3)

The poet continues with the accusation that we have lost ourselves and explicates his contempt. The poet affirms that even if the sea rises on the horizon and touches the moon, and even if all the winds would howl, we would still be oblivious to the spectacle like 'sleeping flowers'.

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers; (PiTV, The World Is Too Much With Us 4-7)

Wordsworth blames the industrialised society for losing its connection to nature and being 'out of tune'. Furthermore, he claims that the society does not even worry that it became this

way. The author exclaims that he would rather be a pagan living on the margins of society but connected to the natural world than to live in modern civilisation unaware of the sublimity of nature.

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn. (PiTV, The World Is Too Much With
Us 8-14)

Wordsworth asserts that he would rather live as a pagan if that meant that he would be able to comprehend the importance of the spirituality of the natural world. He would abandon Christianity and instead breathe as one with nature that would in his pagan eyes manifest itself as ancient gods.

This short poem clearly explains Wordsworth's attitude towards the first industrial revolution. He is frustrated with what civilisation has become, and vigorously asserts that, rejecting the general opinion of the masses, seeking refuge in the outdoors displays spiritual superiority over aristocratic and wealth-obsessed society.

Conclusion

The Romantics wrote on the background of the difficulties of their time. Where some of them strove to fight the injustices of their era, others sought an escape from their hardships. William Wordsworth was among those that dedicated their lives to meditation and a search for wisdom in the sanctuary of nature.

He viewed the countryside as a peaceful place, as a teacher and as a source of bliss. He turned to nature to find solace in solitude. For Wordsworth, nature was a sanctuary, a shelter where he could hide from the difficulties of his time as well as immerse himself in his thoughts in peace and quietude. It was a place where he could ponder and reflect on the society with a unique insight.

For Wordsworth, the intellectual powers of an individual were only accessible in serenity. He saw nature as a provider of wisdom through recollection in tranquillity. For the poet, nature had a sublime power that allowed the mind to immerse into the deepest of thoughts. Only when surrounded by the natural world, could he feel safe enough to indulge in thoughts completely, which gave him a unique understanding of the essence of all being. Wordsworth saw himself as an enlightened, wise individual capable of perceiving the world through feeling and not through reason or book knowledge as apparent from his poem 'The Tables Turned' among many others. His understanding of sagacity contradicted the perspicacity of the thinkers of the Enlightenment movement that put reason above sensibility.

In many of his poems, such as 'The World Is Too Much With Us', he criticises the industrial society and regards the people of the cities as vain and thoughtless. Wordsworth criticised materialism and urbanism and pointed out the harmful effects industrialisation had on nature. He praised the rural folk and their knowledgeability. To escape from the vanity of the city people, he turned to the countryside for shelter in solitude.

In defence of his attitudes, he wrote the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and in doing so started the Romantic movement in Britain and inspired thinkers and writers of his time to reject the rigidness of the Age of Reason and to explore the value of emotion and introspection. By doing so, he made history as one of the most revolutionary poets in all English literature.

Abbreviations used

Daffodils – I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

Kubla Khan – Kubla Khan, Or, A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment

Lakers – The lake poets – the first generation of romantic poets (William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey)

LB – Lyrical Ballads

PiTV – Poems, in Two Volumes

The Preface – The Preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads

The Prelude – The Prelude or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem

Tintern Abbey – Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798

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