

Nature – In the hands of Wordsworth

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ABSTRACT

In this article I have analyzed Wordsworth as a Romantic poet, influenced by beauty of nature, and painting life through the colorful brushes of nature, using the hues of imagination. Many critics have judged him as a poet, dealing with inner feelings and healing nature. Actually Wordsworth is much more than this. He has been an ardent lover of nature, sensitive towards humanity, and the life around him. Here I will discuss different approaches of Wordsworth towards nature, He saw nature, felt nature, and wrote nature but we can see that nature in Wordsworth's hands is like a mirror, through which we can see life, is like a spring, through which all types of emotions flow and these emotions are so diverse that we never get bored. Nature – according to Wordsworth can be discussed under following headings.

1-Nature-A Thing of Beauty and Joy

Nature is beautiful, enjoyable and a source of pleasure for Wordsworth. He praises and appreciates it in different poems. As, in “Daffodils”, he is charmed by the beauty of flowers on a river bank.

*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.*

Again in another poem he loses himself in the fresh air and sings like this:

*OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
(The Prelude Book I)*

But, sitting and enjoying the nature is not over here. He has much more to contemplate and ponder. He goes beyond this and explores deeper meaning of nature.

2- Nature- A guide and a Friend

Nature guides him like a bosom friend and takes care of him on every step of his life. We realize after reading Wordsworth that nature shows him the suitable path to walk on and he admits it openly:

*What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me.*

He considers nature as a guiding star throughout his life and writes in the poem “**My Heart Leaps Up**”:

*My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.*

3- Nature – A Healing power

Being a romantic, Wordsworth believes that Mother Nature has soothing and healing properties and he mentions again and again that there is calmness and solace in the lap of nature. His miseries and agonies are lessened by caressing fingers of nature. This idea is fully expressed in all the books of Prelude, where he tells us, how he grew up playing, sharing and dwelling with Mother Nature.

*Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!*

(Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802)

In “**Calm is all Nature as a Resting Wheel**” he totally hands over himself to the loving nature. He is sure that nature will heal him from his negative feelings and provide him solace like a mother does to her child. Following lines are excellent example of this ideology of Wordsworth about nature.

*Calm is all nature as a resting wheel.
The kine are couched upon the dewy grass;
The horse alone, seen dimly as I pass,
Is cropping audibly his later meal:
Dark is the ground; a slumber seems to steal
O'er vale, and mountain, and the starless sky.
Now, in this blank of things, a harmony,
Home-felt, and home-created, comes to heal
That grief for which the senses still supply
Fresh food; for only then, when memory
Is hushed, am I at rest. My Friends! restrain
Those busy cares that would allay my pain;
Oh! leave me to myself, nor let me feel
The officious touch that makes me droop again.*

4- Nature- A source of all emotions

To Wordsworth, every emotion springs from nature. He praises a gorgeous girl (**Louisa: After accompanying her on a Mountain Excursion**), he hears the gurgling of fountain (**Fountain- A conversation**), he listens to the echoes of spring (**written in March**), he feels for the oak tree (**The Oak and the Broom**). All his emotions are related to nature. Nature provides him a food for thought. The night keeps him aware of the sleeping humans and the end of all businesses. This feeling is very unique in Wordsworth:

*I DROPPED my pen; and listened to the Wind
That sang of trees uptorn and vessels tost-
A midnight harmony; and wholly lost*

*To the general sense of men by chains confined
Of business, care, or pleasure; or resigned
To timely sleep.*
(Composed After A Journey Across The Hambleton Hills, Yorkshire)

The *glowworm* that he catches and takes to his beloveds' home, is an eternal pleasure for him, that her shares with her (**Among All Lovely Things My Love Had Been**).

Moon is a source of heartfelt emotions for **Lucy**, whom he loved passionately.

*Upon the moon I fix'd my eye
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.*

In "**The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale**", these emotions turned painful and nature again proved a soulful companion to him:

*Now farewell, old Adam! when low thou art laid,
May one blade of grass spring up over thy head;
And I hope that thy grave, wheresoever it be,
Will hear the wind sigh through the leaves of a tree.*

5- Nature- A Universal Phenomenon

Nature- as a universal phenomenon is very often found in Wordsworth's poems. He talks about global ups and downs conveniently through the language of nature. It's not true to say about Wordsworth that he only talks about his inner feelings and emotions and nothing else?

The reality is that he mirrors the world throughout his works.

He talks about the French Revolution(**French Revolution**), about Knights(**Indignation Of A High-Minded Spaniard**), about armies(**The Power Of Armies Is A Visible Thing**), about rulers(**The King of Sweden**), and about famous personalities in history(**I Grieved For Buonaparte**). Yes, he feels for all the happenings going on globally and shapes up these topics in his own way, combining nature and reality together. Wherever he goes, nature is with him, like he writes about his residence in France:

*France lured me forth; the realm that I had crossed
So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps.*
(**Book Ninth [residence In France]**)

It's Wordsworth's typical way of looking at the events and describing them in his own style. He describes the "**Lament of Mary Queen of Scot**" in this way:

*Hark! the death-note of the year
Sounded by the castle-clock!
From her sunk eyes a stagnant tear
Stole forth, unsettled by the shock;
But oft the woods renewed their green,
Ere the tired head of Scotland's Queen
Reposed upon the block!*

6- Nature- Leading to Love of Man

According to Wordsworth, man is also part of variegated nature. His poems are always talking about men in the frame of nature. He loves humanity as he loves nature. He talks about his old friend (**The Prelude Book II**), his young kid (**Anecdote for Fathers**), his love Lucy (**Lucy**), a vagrant girl (**The Female Vagrant**), a lamenting Queen (**Lament of Mary Queen of Scot**), a young girl talking to her lamb(**Pet-Lamb, The: A Pastoral Poem**), a mad girl deceived by her boyfriend (**Ruth**), a boy who played with him in his childhood (**The Prelude Book I**), a

Russian fugitive (*The Russian Fugitive*), the reaper girl (*The Solitary Reaper*) the sailor's mother (*The Sailor's Mother*), in the background of nature. His love for all these human characters is apparent in the above poems.

He writes for **Russian Fugitive** girl, considering her a part of nature but at the same time feeling sad for her plight:

*ENOUGH of rose-bud lips, and eyes
Like harebells bathed in dew,
Of cheek that with carnation vies,
And veins of violet hue;
Earth wants not beauty that may scorn
A likening to frail flowers;
Yea, to the stars, if they were born
For seasons and for hours.*

In “**The Two April Mornings**” he feels the pain of Mathew, who remembers his dead daughter Emma.

*Mathew is in his grave, yet now
Methinks I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand.*

Then in “**The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale**” he bids farewell to the old farmer in these words:

*Now farewell, old Adam! when low thou art laid,
May one blade of grass spring up over thy head;
And I hope that thy grave, wheresoever it be,
Will hear the wind sigh through the leaves of a tree.*

He gives this title to his long poem (**Book Eighth: Retrospect--Love Of Nature Leading To Love Of Man**), and gives the theme in the end of the poem that supports his title aptly:

*Thus from a very early age, O Friend!
My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn
To human-kind, and to the good and ill
Of human life: Nature had led me on;
And oft amid the 'busy hum' I seemed
To travel independent of her help,
As if I had forgotten her; but no,
The world of human-kind outweighed not hers
In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,
Though filling daily, still was light, compared
With that in which 'her' mighty objects lay.*

7- Nature- related to patriotism

Wordsworth had been to far off lands, journeyed a lot and loved the places he visited, but the pleasure of his own land had a unique expression. This patriotic emotion we find in Wordsworth in many of his verses. After his tour of France, when he landed back to his homeland, he is overjoyed and awestricken, composed these lines:

*HERE, on our native soil, we breathe once more.
The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
Of bells; those boys who in yon meadow-ground
In white-sleeved shirts are playing; and the roar
Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore;-
All, all are English.*

(Composed In The Valley Near Dover, On The Day Of Landing)

Again his love for his country is evident here. It's notable that the nature is everywhere for him but this special feeling (love of his country) is also portrayed in the frame of nature, or we can say that nature is there in the background. Nature exhibits itself in his passion for England.

*My Country! and 'tis joy enough and pride
For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass
Of England once again, and hear and see,
With such a dear Companion at my side.*

(Composed In The Valley Near Dover, On The Day Of Landing)

8- Nature leading to Love of God

Whatever Wordsworth sees around him, finds mental tranquility and admires to his heart's fill, he admits that God has bestowed all that upon him and all the mankind. He acknowledges that the fervor and zeal of brooks, tossing flowers, singing birds, rustling winds, summer and autumn hues, even his beautiful beloved, all are the gifts of God.

*Preserve, O Lord! within our hearts
The memory of thy favour,
That else insensibly departs,
And loses its sweet savour!
Lodge it within us!--as the power of light
Lives inexhaustibly in precious gems,
Fixed on the front of Eastern diadems,
So shine our thankfulness forever bright!
What offering, what transcendent monument
Shall our sincerity to Thee present?*

In "The Recluse" Book V, again he admires and thanks God's blessings:

*--Oh, if such silence be not thanks to
God For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then
Shall gratitude find rest?*

9- All tender feelings associated to Nature

*FROM Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:*

For Wordsworth, the fountain of every emotion is nature. His rejoicing with soft breeze and Daisy (**To Daisy**), his hunt for Cuckoo bird (**TO the Cuckoo**), his melancholic association with humans (**London-1802**), his brotherly longing for his sister (**To My Sister**), his childhood rush after the butterflies (**To A Butterfly**), his youthful beloved (**Lucy**), his keen insight into the worldly affairs (**French Revolution**), all these emotions have single origin and background i.e. Nature.

As we paint natural scenery on an aisle, then write the theme and experience on the same aisle, giving it an eternal touch, Wordsworth also uses nature as an aisle to paint every single emotion of life. Such tender emotions are seen for his sister in the poem "**To A Butterfly**":

*My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:---with leaps and spring
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her, feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.*

10- Appreciation of nature leading to sorrowful realities of life

Some critics say that Wordsworth hides himself under the green blanket of nature and forgets his fears and cares of life, but it's not true.

Throughout his poetic journey, there are many instances where we feel that he relates his sorrows and agonies under the umbrella of nature, and he doesn't close his eyes to the observed and experienced realities of life. Yes, he tries to find solace in nature when he is brimmed and tired of the restlessness inside and outside. He recalls a presently painful but happy memory of past, in these lines:

*Surprised by joy — impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport--Oh! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?*

The bitter reality of selfish and materialist nature of man is also not hidden from his eyes and he grieves in these words:

*To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.
(Lines Written In Early Spring)*

Wordsworth cries with the old man at the memory of his dead daughter (**The Two April Mornings**). His heart melts at the insisting young girl's approach in "**We are Seven**".

11- Nature- Continuously recollected as sweet dream or memory

That nature which, Wordsworth has adored, with which he has been dancing and singing, is a continuous memory and he recollects this memory more in his later years. We can feel an underlying pain and sweet love in these recollections. Some examples of these memories are here:

*Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind-
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss?—*

In "**Prelude**" **Book V** he recollects:

*I am sad
At thought of rapture now for ever flown;
Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad
To think of, to read over, many a page,
Poems withal of name, which at that time
Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre
Fresh emptied of spectators*

In "**To a Butterfly**" he recollects the sweet memory of chasing the butterflies with his sister:

*Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!*

He continues to recall the past memories and compares with his present mirth and grief. Nature is still beautiful but his sorrows are deeper and his experiences are sharper now. It's a real treat to read the following poem by Wordsworth and feel the same pain as he felt.

*There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
 The earth, and every common sight,
 To me did seem
 Apparelled in celestial light,
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.
 It is not now as it hath been of yore;
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,
 By night or day,
 The things which I have seen
 I now can see no more.
 Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound,
 To me alone there came a thought of grief:*

(Ode On Intimations Of Immortality From Recollections Of Early Childhood)

Conclusion

In the end I will conclude that nature for Wordsworth is a ruling force, shaping the life, purifying and correcting spirit, a soulful delight that is never ignored and this nature becomes an eternal companion to the readers also. If we ignore other elements in his poetry, only the love of nature makes him successful and a dignified poet. The following lines by Wordsworth very aptly conclude this article:

*Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
 That giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion! not in vain,
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human Soul,
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature, purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognize
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
 Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky
 And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
 And Souls of lonely places! can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when Ye employ'd
 Such ministry, when Ye through many a year
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impress'd upon all forms the characters
 Of danger or desire, and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth
 With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,
 Work like a sea? Not uselessly employ'd,
 I might pursue this theme through every change
 Of exercise and play, to which the year
 - The World's Poetry Archive
 Did summon us in its delightful round.
(Prelude Book I)*