



# **ANYIGBA** **JOURNAL OF ARTS** **& HUMANITIES**

ISSN:1595-9589

**Volume 14, Number 1, 2020**  
**(SPECIAL EDITION: 2019 FACULTY**  
**NATIONAL CONFERENCE)**

**A Publication Of The Faculty Of Arts & Humanities**  
**Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria.**

## NATURE AS MOTIF OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND IDEALOGY: A STUDY OF WILLIAM WORTHSWORD'S POETRY

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore language, literature and cultural ideas in social setting based on the theory of nature. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, many linguists, literary writers (ie Romantics poets), and cultural idealists made use of imagination in their writings/postulations. Among the poets, Wordsworth is worth considering because he not only used imagination to express his opinion of time but also discussed nature and culture in special ways and styles. The argument of this paper is that there exist an opposition of culture and nature in Wordsworth's poetry. First part discusses his ideas about the ordinary man; second part highlights how he (Wordsworth) discussed theme of Nature in his writings (ie poetry).

**Key words:** Nature. Language. Literature. Ideology.

### Introduction

Romanticism is a style of art, music and literature that was common in Europe in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Romanticism is the reason why British literature appears striking and attractive; it describes the beauty of nature, importance of human emotions, vivid imagination, and the rebellion against authority. The first generation of poets includes Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. Wordsworth, born in 1770 and died in 1850, began his journey of Romantic age with his thought provoking ideas. The whole of his writing career is associated with the use of common language and love for nature. This paper reveals the existence of an opposition in culture and nature in Wordsworth's poetry. There exist a plethora of evidences from Wordsworth's poetry to prove this fact as can be seen in 'Snaring', 'Table Turned', 'Rob Roy's Grave', 'ODE: Intimidation of Immortality', 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', 'the World is too much with us', 'Reverend od Poor Susan', 'Michael', 'Lucy poems', 'Tintern Abbey' among others. Before proceeding one must know how Wordsworth opposes culture

and nature. It is true as Huntington in 'The Romantic Triumph' says about Wordsworth. "His early love for simplicity hardened into a rigid opposition not only to the materialistic modern industrial system but to all change ... the form of education, and in general all progressive political and social movement." Beside his opposition of culture, the way he opposes nature is not his rejection to it, but rather a changing attitude of man towards nature. For Wordsworth, nature is his 'moral teacher' in which he sensed a 'divine spirit'.

### Opposition of Culture

Wordsworth opposes the education system by giving priority to nature over the knowledge of books. First, according to him, 'nature is a moral and spiritual teacher of a child' (48). It is true, as Graham Hough in his book on the Romantic poet discusses that there is a social and religious presence in Wordsworth's poetry (67). According to him, just like 'human teacher' nature shapes the mind of a child. Although this is done secretly and sincerely. For example, in the poem 'Snaring' Wordsworth says when he was alone on the hill at night and busy in catching birds, he fell in 'boyish temptation' while taking birds from another net. Even then also the observer was alert over such a mistake; which can easily be forgiven (29).

After that mistake Wordsworth says:

I heard among the solitary hills  
Low breathing coming after me, and sounds  
Of understanding motion, steps  
Almost as silent as the turf they trod. (25-28)

Secondly, nature provides better knowledge than books. As H.M. Margoliouth in his critical and biographical study also accepts that Wordsworth refuses the knowledge of books for two reasons which include, 'immediate' influences of desires, and for beautiful natural human environment. Hence, for him living on the right kind of life and submitting ourselves to the right influences can teach better than books... (39). For instance, Wordsworth gives priority to nature as he clearly states in 'Table turned':

Books! A dull and endless strife  
Come, here the woodland linnet,  
How sweet hos music: on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it (9-12).  
One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all sages can (21-24).

Furthermore, in 'Rob Roy's grave' Roy wants to destroy books because they work against society:

Said generous Rob, what needs of books?  
Burn all the statues and their shelves  
They stir us up against our kind;  
And worst, against ourselves (21-24)

In one of his songs Wordsworth believes that poor man who is closer to Nature "his Daily teachers are woods and rills..." (166). Thus, it is evident from Wordsworth's poetry that nature is a moral and spiritual teacher that provides better knowledge than books. It is not necessary that knowledge can only be acquired from adults because sometimes children have the ability better than adults. In fact, it is true as John Purkis in 'Preface to Wordsworth' says "Children being nearer to nature, might 'know' more than adults, who had been mis-educated" (73).

For instance, in 'ODE: Intimation of Immortality' Wordsworth presents a picture

where 'adults are learning from children:

Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep  
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
That, deaf and silent, reads' the eternal deep  
Haunted forever by the eternal mind,  
Mighty prophets see blest!  
On whom those truths rest,  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find.

In 'Anecdote for fathers' Wordsworth conveys the message that 'adults learn more from children as "...could I but teach the hundredth part of what from thee I learn ..." (166). Hence, it is right to say that children are closer to nature and become the real source of knowledge than adults and therefore the eighteenth century education system is opposed by Wordsworth. Industrial Revolution has disconnected people from nature and has forced them to live in city. Consequently, instead of nature, people are now admirers of machines and inventions. It is true that Wordsworth opposes the Revolution in 'The world is too much with us' by advising people that living in a society where there is no religion is better than living in a society where there is religion. For instance, it is clear when Wordsworth says that "...little we see in nature that is ours; we have given our hearts a sordid boon..." (3-4). Again, beside its progress it also forces people to live an artificial life of a city. This is the reason that Wordsworth highly condemned the city life. Geoffrey is therefore right in the 'Outward', 'the law courts', and 'the pulpits', where the 'Comely bachelor' gives voice to fondness and folly (136). According to him, This city life is:

Folly vice,  
Extravagance in Gesture, Mien and dress  
And all the strife of singularity  
Lies to the Ear and lies to every sense (578-8).

Wordsworth rejects the system which Promotes forceful city life in his Reverend of poor Susan. 'I agree with Carlos Baker in 'Sensation and in Words worth' writes:

"The film of memory still holds the impression of rural scene, the 'green pastures' when she happily spent the season of her Childhood... Then the vision fades and more the prison house of the city closes round her" (107).

or Susan ... "the colors have all passed away from her eyes." Thus, the industrial revolution provides a great change by forcing people to live in the city and therefore, has disconnected them from nature. Wordsworth also criticizes the economic system of society. Firstly, the economic system has suppressed the poor people. In fact, from Purkis point, one can agree with Wordsworth's opposition can be seen in his poem 'The Old Cumberland' which is a 'sermon' addressed against those 'political economist' who think that people who show earnings are beneficial. In addition, those who are impoverished or sick should be pushed away as they are of no use to society.

For example, Wordsworth criticizes the economist as:

Deem not this man useless-statesman ye!  
Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye  
Who have a broom still ready in your hands?  
To rid the world of nuisances... (67-70).

Wordsworth opposes the system where city life is adopted for economic growth and breaks the family relationship. It is evident from what Durrant says that Michael overlooks the danger of 'disposing of his portion of ancestral fields.' He finds the solution that the wastage of land will be reduced by being disloyal in occupation as sending his son to work for tribesman in the mountains. Michael had an idea that by not accepting the laws he will collapse the family. Therefore, his wife insists her son must not go to the city:

Thou must go  
We have no other child but thee to lose.  
None to remember. Do not go away,  
For if thou leave thy father he will die (295-8).

Wordsworth highly disregards the materialistic industrial system, because this system has always suppressed the weaker one and the poor. Secondly, because when city life is imposed upon people it breaks the bond between parents and children.

As expressed by Wordsworth

Wordsworth describes nature by given two stages of life. At first stage of childhood: a child is innocent and beautiful therefore, he is closer to nature. It is as expressed by Loggins and Cazamians in 'History of English literature' point out that Wordsworth speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of its early years ...

(1010). This is a time of childhood when 'sunshine is a glorious birth' and where 'common light' is 'Appareled in celestial light' and during this period a child wishes his days to be 'bound to each by natural piety'. Wordsworth may be right in his belief that Lucy being an innocent child doesn't 'fail to see' the beauty of nature:

The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her, for her the willow bends  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motions of storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form  
By silent sympathy (19-24).

Furthermore, in 'she dwelt among the untrodden ways' Durrant says that Lucy is believed to be a flower 'A violet by a mossy stone' (70). It is right to say that Wordsworth opposes the people who see the beauty and ignore it. In other words, Wordsworth believes that no one is there to praise the beauty as he says:

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Beside the spring of Dove,  
A man whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love (1-4).

Furthermore, in 'Two April morning' Wordsworth mentions the beauty of a child who is closer to nature thus:

A basket on her head she bare;  
Her brow was smooth and white:  
To see a child so very fair,  
It was a pure delight!

In adulthood the glory of nature is either stored in memory or is completely lost with the 'loss of childhood'. As the child grows up into adulthood the glory of nature remains in memory, though adults have distanced themselves from nature. As Wordsworth in his poem 'Tintern Abbey' says:

These beauteous 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 amid the din,  
Of town and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet... (22-27).

In addition to the above, Wordsworth profusely discusses the importance of nature in his poem 'Loss of glory'. Also, in 'ODE: Intimation of immortality' he states:

The glory and the freshness of a dream  
It is not now as it hath been of yore,  
Turn whereso'er I may,  
By things, which I have seen I now can see no more:

This Loss according to Durrant 'cannot be forgotten' and for Wordsworth it

becomes a disturbing question as he says: "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / ...Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" (16). Thus, Wordsworth believes that in childhood, man is closer to nature and therefore, can enjoy its glory. On other hand in adulthood, man is not closer to nature because he has other 'responsibilities' to fulfill. Also the stage of adulthood indicates loss of glory.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, language of poetry is a creative power that can play a vital role in two ways. First, it civilizes people. Second, it develops their attitude towards culture and nature. In eighteenth century, Wordsworth has conveyed his powerful messages through simple language. He opposes the culture that is in the education system, city life and the materialism of modern industrial system. It is not wrong to say that it is an opposition to materialism modern industrial system. Also Wordsworth never opposes Nature by rejecting it. He actually opposes the people whose attitude towards nature changes with the passage of time. It is true that Wordsworth has mostly emphasized upon nature. It is true as Durrant Says, "He has looked deep into the life of man." Wordsworth's poetry include almost all features of Romanticism. In short, poetry of Wordsworth affirms the social setting and cultural beliefs of time. A further question can be investigated that how much the Element of nothingness is found in Wordsworth's poetry?

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**Printed @ Oludav Printing Press 08069592517**