

THE INFLUENCE OF NATURE IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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Abstract:

This study explores the multifaceted influence of nature in the poetry of William Wordsworth, a foundational figure in the Romantic literary movement. Wordsworth's deep connection with the natural world profoundly shaped his poetic philosophy and style, giving rise to themes of pantheism, nature as a teacher, emotional connection, the sublime and the beautiful, simplicity, and his enduring influence on Romanticism and beyond. Wordsworth's pantheistic view of nature is a central theme in his poetry. He believed that nature was imbued with divinity, and this perspective is evident in works like "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," where he describes a divine presence in the natural world, fostering a sense of wonder and reverence. Nature, for Wordsworth, was not merely a backdrop but a teacher. His poetry conveys the idea that the natural world imparts moral and spiritual lessons, often surpassing the wisdom of books and philosophers. Nature's influence on morality and the human condition is a recurring motif in his work. Emotional connection forms another crucial facet of Wordsworth's poetry. He sought to capture not only the visual beauty of nature but also the emotional and sensory experiences it evoked. His verses evoke feelings of joy, awe, and tranquility, allowing readers to share in his profound emotional responses to the natural world. Wordsworth explored both the sublime and the beautiful aspects of nature, adding depth to his poetry. His poems often describe the awe-inspiring, even terrifying, elements of nature alongside the picturesque beauty of landscapes. This duality underscores the range of emotions and experiences that the natural world can evoke. Wordsworth celebrated simplicity and the commonplace, highlighting the profundity to be found in everyday life. His focus on rural scenes and the lives of common people departed from prevailing literary conventions, emphasizing the authentic and unadorned. The study concludes that, the influence of nature in Wordsworth's poetry is a pervasive and defining theme that reverberates through his works. His deep connection with nature, pantheistic beliefs, and exploration of its moral, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions collectively form a poetic vision that has left an indelible mark on literature and continues to inspire readers and poets alike.

Keywords: Influence, Nature, Poetry, William Wordsworth etc.

INTRODUCTION:

William Wordsworth, a luminary of English Romanticism, is hailed as one of the most influential poets in the annals of English literature. Born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England, Wordsworth's life and work have left an indelible mark on the world of poetry and literary thought. His enduring legacy is defined by a deep, almost spiritual, connection with nature, a profound exploration of human emotions, and a poetic vision that celebrates simplicity and the everyday. Wordsworth's formative years were marked by personal trials and tribulations, including the loss of his parents at a young age and the

challenges of a tumultuous era marked by political upheaval and social change. However, these experiences would become the crucible in which his poetic sensibilities were forged. His collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge on the seminal work "Lyrical Ballads" (1798) marked a watershed moment in the Romantic literary movement. This collection of poems, including Wordsworth's famous "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," introduced revolutionary ideas into English poetry. Rejecting the ornate and artificial language of the 18th century, Wordsworth and Coleridge championed a new, unadorned style that celebrated the beauty of the natural world, the depths of human emotions, and the authenticity of everyday life.

Wordsworth's poems often portray nature as a living entity, suffused with divine presence, and capable of imparting moral and spiritual lessons. His reverence for nature and the emotional connection he forged with it became hallmarks of his oeuvre. Wordsworth's influence extended beyond his contemporaries, leaving an indelible mark on subsequent generations of poets and environmentalists.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This study explores the multifaceted influence of nature in the poetry of William Wordsworth

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on secondary sources of data such as articles, books, journals, research papers, websites and other sources.

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William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is often celebrated as one of the quintessential poets of the Romantic era, and his poetry is characterized by a profound and enduring relationship with the natural world. Nature, in Wordsworth's poetry, is not merely a backdrop or a setting; it is a living, breathing presence that influences his thoughts, emotions, and philosophy. This study explores the multifaceted ways in which nature influenced Wordsworth's poetry, delving into themes such as his pantheistic view of nature, the role of nature as a teacher and source of inspiration, the emotional connection he forged with the natural world, his exploration of the sublime and the beautiful, his celebration of simplicity and everyday life, and his broader influence on the Romantic literary movement.

Nature as Divine: Pantheism and Wordsworth's Spiritual Connection

One of the most striking features of Wordsworth's poetry is his pantheistic view of nature. He believed that divinity was not separate from the natural world but immanent within it. For Wordsworth, nature was not a mere collection of objects; it was a living, interconnected, and divine entity. This pantheistic perspective is evident in poems like "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798), where he describes the "one Life" that pervades all things: "By which in their dark hiding-places—/Are stirred, where'er they be,

/Kindled or quenched in common; till /A flame, all form, all feature, cease /To be the outward shows of sense, /An independent heart may dwell /In things that are not." This view of nature as a unifying and divine force deeply influenced Wordsworth's poetry, infusing it with a sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world. His pantheistic beliefs are also reflected in his poem "Lines Written in Early Spring" (1798), where he marvels at the "presence that disturbs me with the joy /Of elevated thoughts" he finds in the beauty of nature.

Nature as a Teacher: Moral and Spiritual Lessons

Wordsworth believed that nature could serve as a powerful teacher, imparting both moral and spiritual lessons to humanity. In his poem "The Tables Turned" (1798), he argues that books, though valuable, cannot replace the direct experience of nature as a source of wisdom: "One impulse from a vernal wood /May teach you more of man, /Of moral evil and of good, /Than all the sages can."

Here, Wordsworth suggests that nature can provide a deeper understanding of human nature and morality than even the most learned philosophers. Furthermore, in "Lines Written in Early Spring," he acknowledges that nature can teach us about the interconnectedness of all living things and the moral consequences of our actions:

"Through primrose tufts, in that green bower, /The periwinkle trailed its wreaths; /And 'tis my faith that every flower /Enjoys the air it breathes."

Wordsworth's poems often convey a sense of moral responsibility and a call to live in harmony with nature, reflecting his belief that nature's lessons extended beyond the aesthetic and into the ethical realm.

Emotional Connection: The Poetry of Sensation and Feeling

Wordsworth's poetry is distinguished by its deep emotional connection to the natural world. He sought to capture not only the visual beauty of nature but also the emotional and sensory experiences it evoked. His poetry often describes the profound emotional responses he had to nature, ranging from joy and wonder to melancholy and solitude. In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807), commonly known as "Daffodils," Wordsworth vividly depicts the sight of a field of daffodils dancing in the breeze, which later lifts his spirits when he recalls the scene in his memory:

"For oft, when on 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."

This poem exemplifies Wordsworth's ability to convey the emotional impact of nature and how it continues to affect the human spirit long after the initial encounter. In "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," he reflects on the power of nature to soothe and console the human heart, even in times of solitude and melancholy. He describes the calming influence of nature on his emotions and how it provides a sense of continuity and solace:

"While here I stand, not only with the sense /Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts /That in this moment there is life and food /For future years."

Wordsworth's emphasis on the emotional and sensory aspects of nature contributes to the vividness and relatability of his poetry.

The Sublime and the Beautiful: Nature's Dual Nature

Wordsworth's engagement with nature in his poetry encompasses both the sublime and the beautiful aspects of the natural world. While he celebrated the picturesque beauty of landscapes and the tranquil scenes of rural life, he also explored the awe-inspiring and sometimes even terrifying aspects of nature. In "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," he grapples with the sublime, describing the "steep and lofty cliffs" and the "dark sycamore" trees that evoke both awe and fear. He acknowledges that such scenes have the power to "subdue /Our human mind," reminding us of our smallness in the face of nature's grandeur. The tension between the beautiful and the sublime is also evident in Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey," where he reflects on the changes in his perception of nature over time. While he finds solace and beauty in the natural surroundings, he also confronts the sublime aspects of nature, which inspire both wonder and trepidation. Wordsworth's exploration of the dual nature of nature adds complexity and depth to his poetry, highlighting the range of emotions and experiences that the natural world can elicit.

Simplicity and Everyday Life: The Poetics of the Commonplace

One of Wordsworth's most enduring contributions to literature is his celebration of simplicity and everyday life. He believed that profound experiences and insights could be found in ordinary, rustic scenes and the lives of common people. This celebration of the commonplace is evident in poems such as "Michael" (1800), which tells the story of a humble shepherd and his family, and "The Tables Turned," where he extols the virtues of spontaneous, unstructured interaction with nature. In "Lines Written in Early Spring," he observes the simplicity of nature's cycles and contrasts them with the complexities of human society:

"Through primrose tufts, in that green bower, /The periwinkle trailed its wreaths; /And 'tis my faith that every flower /Enjoys the air it breathes."

Wordsworth's focus on the ordinary and his belief in the capacity of the natural world to offer solace and inspiration to all, regardless of social status, was a departure from the prevailing literary conventions of his time.

Influence on Romanticism and Beyond: Wordsworth's Legacy

William Wordsworth's profound connection with nature and his innovative approach to poetry had a lasting impact on the Romantic literary movement and subsequent generations of poets. His influence extended beyond his contemporaries and significantly shaped the course of English literature. Here, we explore how Wordsworth's legacy influenced Romanticism and beyond:

Influence on the Romantic Movement:

Wordsworth's poetry laid the foundation for the Romantic literary movement. Alongside Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he co-authored the groundbreaking collection "Lyrical Ballads" (1798), which is often considered the manifesto of Romantic poetry. In this collection, Wordsworth's poems, such as "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" and "We Are Seven," exemplify his themes of nature, emotional expression, and the ordinary. Wordsworth's emphasis on individual experience, the sublime in nature, and the expression of emotion greatly influenced fellow Romantic poets. Coleridge, for instance, drew inspiration from Wordsworth's nature-centered themes and expanded on them in his own works. The natural world became a prominent subject for Romantic poets like John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley, who explored the beauty, mystery, and symbolism of nature in their poetry.

Environmental Awareness:

Wordsworth's poetry also had a lasting impact on the environmental consciousness of subsequent generations. His advocacy for a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature resonated with the emerging environmental movement of the 19th and 20th centuries. His writings contributed to the perception of nature as something to be cherished, preserved, and protected.

The Influence of Wordsworth on Later Poets:

Wordsworth's legacy extended well beyond the Romantic era. Many poets, particularly those engaged with the natural world and the human experience, continued to be influenced by his work. For instance: John Clare, known as the "peasant poet," drew from Wordsworth's celebration of rural life and the natural world in his own poems.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, though a Victorian poet, incorporated elements of Romanticism into his work, emphasizing the spiritual connection between nature and the human soul, akin to Wordsworth's themes.

Robert Frost, an American poet, echoed Wordsworth's appreciation of rural landscapes and the contemplative aspect of nature in his verses.

Modern Literature and Environmental Thought:

Wordsworth's ideas about nature and his commitment to preserving the environment have persisted into contemporary literature and environmental thought. His influence can be seen in the works of writers and poets who address environmental issues, ecological consciousness, and the impact of human activities on the natural world.

CONCLUSION:

The poetry of William Wordsworth stands as a testament to the profound influence of nature on the human spirit. Through his verses, Wordsworth invites readers to embark on a journey of discovery and contemplation, where the natural world is not merely a backdrop but a vibrant, living entity teeming with divinity, wisdom, and emotional resonance. Wordsworth's pantheistic view of nature, evident in his belief that every facet of the natural world contains a spark of the divine, challenges the conventional separation between humanity and the environment. This perspective, eloquently expressed in poems like "Tintern Abbey," fosters a deep sense of wonder and reverence for the world around us. Moreover, Wordsworth's portrayal of nature as a teacher, imparting moral and spiritual lessons, speaks to the enduring wisdom that can be gleaned from our surroundings. His poems like "Lines Written in Early Spring" and "The Tables Turned" urge us to embrace the profound simplicity of nature's teachings, surpassing the knowledge found in books and institutions. The emotional connection that permeates Wordsworth's poetry allows readers to share in his awe, joy, and solace in the presence of nature. His verses, whether describing a field of daffodils or the rugged grandeur of the natural landscape, evoke a sense of universal human experience and resonate across time and culture. As Wordsworth explores the sublime and the beautiful, the ordinary and the extraordinary, he imparts a sense of the transcendent power of nature, inviting us to contemplate our place within the grand tapestry of creation. Wordsworth's enduring influence on the Romantic literary movement, subsequent generations of poets, and the environmental consciousness of modern society attests to the enduring relevance of his poetry. His words continue to inspire, reminding us of the inexhaustible wellspring of beauty, wisdom, and solace that can be found in the natural world, should we choose to seek it. In the realm of literature and the human heart, William Wordsworth's legacy endures as a testament to the timeless bond between humanity and the sublime beauty of the natural world.

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