
From Eden to Eden Lost: Re-examining "The Prelude" in the Age of Environmental Crisis

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ABSTRACT

Complex environmental disaster is besetting our globe. Growing temperatures, more extreme weather events, and melting glaciers are all results of climate change, which is fueled by greenhouse gas emissions. Populations are displaced, food security is jeopardized, and ecosystems are upset. Our air, water, and land are choked with pollution from factories, cars, and waste. Specifically, plastic pollution damages marine life and makes its way into the food chain, devastating our oceans. Deforestation accelerates climate change by upsetting the natural carbon cycle and destroying wildlife habitats. The repercussions are severe. Coastal areas face a threat from rising sea levels. Wildfires, floods, and droughts are examples of extreme weather events that are becoming increasingly often and catastrophic. Ecosystems are weakened by biodiversity loss, endangering natural resources and food supply. We must reconsider our relationship with nature in light of the 21st century's growing environmental crisis. Our life support system is nature; it's more than just pretty landscape. Robust ecosystems are the source of clean air, fresh water, and productive land. Food, resources, and even our mental health are provided by nature. However, these fine balances have been upset by human acts.

It is crucial to restore a respectful relationship with the natural world. It is imperative to implement sustainable practices, save resources, and transition to renewable energy sources. The important thing is to appreciate nature for its own sake, not merely for its uses. We can make sure that the earth is healthier for present and future generations by encouraging awe and responsibility for it.

The present research posits that William Wordsworth's expansive autobiographical poem, "The Prelude," provides significant perspectives for maneuvering through this pivotal moment. "The Prelude" documents Wordsworth's lifelong relationship with the natural world and traces its significant influence on his emotional, intellectual, and artistic growth. It was written during the Romantic era, a time that celebrated nature's intrinsic force and spirituality. This work argues that despite the poem's idealistic depiction of nature becoming antiquated in light of environmental destruction, "The Prelude" is still incredibly relevant. Wordsworth's experiences teach us important lessons. The value we have placed and continue to place on the natural environment is starkly brought home by his deep reverence for it. Moreover, his focus on how one's early life experiences influence their connection with the natural world highlights the significance of raising the next generation of environmental conscious citizens.

The greatest nature poet of the Romantic era is William Wordsworth. Growing up surrounded by breathtaking surroundings, he considered nature to be a source of joy, moral wisdom, and spiritual comfort in addition to beautiful sight. His poetry, such as "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and "Tintern Abbey," eloquently convey the deep feelings that nature inspires,

including wonder, serenity, and a sense of being a part of something greater than ourselves. Wordsworth's simple language and faith in the healing power of nature have had a lasting impact on our understanding of the natural world. Originally meant to serve as the preface to another poem by William Wordsworth, "The Prelude" turned into a masterpiece unto itself. This large autobiographical work traces the poet's life journey, showing how his encounters with nature influenced his creativity, spiritual development, and, eventually, his evolution as a poet. It offers a fascinating look inside Wordsworth's head and demonstrates the influence of nature in his life.

The piece of writing suggests a critical reviewing of "The Prelude" that takes into account both its advantages and disadvantages. We can develop a greater appreciation for nature and spur action to address the environmental catastrophe by realizing the enduring power of nature in molding the human experience, as Wordsworth so effectively illustrates. One of the main pillars of Romantic poetry is William Wordsworth's "The Prelude" (1805). This long autobiographical poem documents the poet's development both intellectually and spiritually, greatly impacted by his encounters with nature. "The Prelude" shows glimmers of Wordsworth's developing ecological consciousness, despite the fact that Romanticism is typically connected to an idealized and subjective vision of nature. The foundation for ecocritical readings of Wordsworth's poem is laid by this article, which examines textual allusions that allude to his concern for the effects of human activity on the environment.

Wordsworth refers to himself in the first lines of Book VIII as a "discontented sojourner" (VIII.8) in the city. This unhappiness is a result of something missing rather than just urban life in general. The organic and nurturing strength of the natural world experienced earlier in the poem contrasts sharply with the busy city's artificiality and disconnection from nature. This dissatisfaction points to a foresight of the negative consequences that industrialization and urbanization will have on human welfare and the fragile balance of nature. Wordsworth is not just against city life; he is also concerned about the effects of humans. More specifically, "Simplon Pass," a shorter poem frequently associated with "The Prelude," offers an illustration. In the poem, an arid landscape with "immeasurable height / Of woods decaying, never to be decayed" is described (4-5). The picture is eerie. In "The Prelude," nature is usually a source of rebirth and regeneration, but just now it is deteriorating. "Never to be decayed" implies a perpetual state of destruction rather than a normal cycle of death and rebirth. This suggests that the natural order may have been disturbed by human activity, possibly by deforestation, resulting in a feeling of loss and discomfort.

"The Prelude" makes a strong connection between moral character development and spending time in nature. Nature teaches us about resilience, connectivity, and the amazing force of creation. It is more than just a setting for the human experience. Wordsworth develops a sense of duty and respect for the delicate ecosystem's equilibrium by immersing himself in the natural environment. An early kind of ecological consciousness, which recognizes nature's intrinsic value beyond its utility for human needs, is based on this understanding.

William Wordsworth's "The Prelude" depicts lovely vistas that are a far cry from the environmental realities of the twenty-first century. Pollution, deforestation, and climate change pose a hazard to human health and ecosystems. Examining "The Prelude" again in this context could come across as a wistful exercise in the past. But a closer examination exposes the poem's timeless significance. The transformational force of nature is Wordsworth's main theme. From his earliest recollections of the Lake District, where mountains are "apparelled in celestial

light" (Book I, 409), to his later experiences of the Alps' tremendous strength, nature emerges as a never-ending source of inspiration and astonishment. His moral compass is shaped by these experiences, which also help him to embrace his purpose as a poet. This emphasis on the transformational potential of nature is very relevant today. Research indicates that spending time in nature lowers stress, enhances mental health, and creates a feeling of community. Wordsworth's poetry reminds us of the healing power of nature, especially in this technologically advanced world. Nature may offer a vital haven and a source of strength in our modern life, just as it did for Wordsworth, who it sustained and inspired.

Many critics admire how the poem explores Wordsworth's connection with nature and how these experiences shaped him as a poet. Monique R. Morgan, for instance, argues that the poem demonstrates Wordsworth's "fitness to produce great poetry" through his interactions with nature [Source: Narrative Means to Lyric Ends in Wordsworth's Prelude]. Wordsworth's focus on common language, everyday experiences, and emotions is seen as a cornerstone of Romanticism. The poem's emphasis on imagination and the power of nature aligns with this literary movement. The poem's introspective nature is valued. Critics see it as a profound exploration of the development of the poet's mind and his philosophical views. The poem's sheer length (over 13,000 lines!) can be daunting for some readers. Critics might find it unfocused or even rambling at times.

Romanticism frequently embraced escapism because of its emphasis on the wild sublime. Wordsworth's apparent withdrawal from the realities of human contact with nature can be seen in certain passages. He seems to have ignored the human settlements and agricultural methods that most likely affected the environment, as seen by his celebration of the Wye River's "wild uncultured coast" (Line 586) in Book I. A critical reengagement is required in light of this escapist inclination. We must accept our part in the deterioration of nature while acknowledging its essential value. The main ideas of "The Prelude" are highlighted at the outset of the article. Wordsworth's depiction of nature as a source of inspiration, wonder, and moral stability is still relevant in modern environmental psychology. Research indicates that spending time in nature lowers stress, enhances mental health, and strengthens our sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves. "The Prelude" is a powerful reminder of nature's inherent worth, which is something that is sometimes lost in the Anthropogenic.

It is possible to reinterpret the poem's depiction of nature as an inspiration source to generate fresh ideas. In the same way that Wordsworth's experiences stimulated his creativity, getting back in touch with nature might lead to creative responses to the environmental problems we confront. The transformational influence of nature is one of "The Prelude"'s main themes. Nature becomes a continual source of amazement and inspiration, from his early memories of the Lake District, where mountains stand "apparelled in celestial light" (Book I, line 409) inspiring awe, to his later encounters with the magnificent majesty of the Alps. These encounters develop his creative spirit, mold his moral compass, and ultimately inspire him to accept his destiny as a poet. Wordsworth writes: "Such impulses me work'd, my mind turn'd to them; So deep a feeling had impressed itself;" (Book II, lines 398-399)

These natural "impulses" serve as the basis for who he is. There is a strong resonance between this close relationship to nature and modern environmental psychology. Research conducted by academics such as Louise Chawla demonstrates that spending time in nature lowers stress, enhances mental health, and creates a feeling of being a part of something greater than

ourselves. "The Prelude" is a powerful reminder of the healing potential of nature, especially in this technologically advanced world.

The Prelude introduces nature as a potent force influencing the speaker's awareness right away. He writes about "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" that resulted from coming into contact with "spots of time" during his early years (Book 1, lines 308, 309, 268). These "aha" moments, which are frequently brought on by scenes such as "a naked pool that glowed beneath the moon" (Book 1, line 392), sow the seeds for the speaker's enduring relationship with the natural world.

Wordsworth's nature is more than just attractive; it has a spiritual and moral component. He describes how the "huge and black and gloomy" mountain disturbs him after a stolen boat event in Book 2 (lines 399, 400). A sense of humility and reverence is instilled after experiencing the breathtaking grandeur of nature. According to Harold Bloom ([Bloom, Harold. *The Visionary Company*]), "The Prelude is... a poem about the mind's education by nature." As a teacher, nature molds the speaker's moral compass and cultivates awe at the vastness of the universe.

Wordsworth uses personification to give life to the natural world. The "spirit of the lake" whispers secrets in Book 1, and mountains "uphold their heads" (Book 6, line 569). This method goes beyond simple decoration. The speaker's strong emotional bond with nature is reflected in it, making it difficult to distinguish between the environment and oneself. Wordsworth's personifications, according to Marjorie Levinson ([Levinson, Marjorie. *The Romantic Imagination*]), "are not merely rhetorical devices but... expressions of a pantheistic vision." Wordsworth proposes a shared life force animating both the natural world and humans by attaching human attributes to it.

The complex interaction between the individual and the natural environment is the poem's main theme. Nature is more than just a background; it actively contributes to the speaker's growth. In Book 2, the speaker talks on how taking solo walks in nature provide "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" (line 308. According to Jerome McGann ([McGann, Jerome. *The Poetics of History*]), these encounters "[present] nature not simply as an object of perception, but as a force that actively shapes the perceiving mind" Nature is more than just a pretty picture; it stirs up feelings, alters perceptions, and finally forms the speaker's personality. But there is movement in this connection. His relationship with nature evolves as the speaker gets older. Wonder and amazement define early experiences, but a more sophisticated knowledge emerges with further encounters. He admits that "Nature then was everything to me" (lines 599, 600) as he muses over the "aching joys" of boyhood in Book 6. Nature continues to inspire him, but as he deals with societal problems and the complexity of people, the speaker admits that his perspective has changed.

Wordsworth frequently paints retroactive pictures of nature that are influenced by imagination and recollection. He goes back to previous interactions and incorporates them into the fabric of who he is now. According to M.H. Abrams ([Abrams, M.H. *Natural Supernaturalism*]), this process enables him to "rediscover a vital past in the tranquillity of nature, and to utilize this rediscovery as a source of imaginative renewal" (). Nature becomes a storehouse of life-changing encounters through recollection, enabling the speaker to draw from his creative wellspring and find comfort in the past.

The Prelude goes beyond what may be found in a conventional nature poetry. It uses personification, strong imagery, and a dynamic interplay between the self and environment to

examine how deeply nature has influenced human consciousness. Nature serves as a teacher, a healer, and a catalyst for self-discovery in addition to being an aesthetic delight.

"The Prelude" also highlights how our relationship with nature is shaped by our early experiences. Wordsworth describes in great detail his early experiences with storms, lakes, and mountains, emphasizing how these experiences gave him a deep sense of awe and a connection to something bigger than himself. His lifelong admiration of the natural world is based on this relationship.

Initiatives for environmental education today are in line with Wordsworth's emphasis on early experiences. We can create a generation of environmental stewards by introducing young people to the natural world and encouraging awe and admiration for it. Encouraging outdoor experiences and tying education to the environment are key components of educational programs that can do this. We can encourage the next generation of activists for environmental protection by helping our children develop a relationship with nature. "The Prelude" is not a perfect conservationist literature, but even so, it provides insightful guidance on how to deal with the environmental catastrophe of the twenty-first century. First, we can raise a generation of environmental stewards by encouraging the sense of awe and connection with nature that Wordsworth describes in his experiences. Secondly, the poem serves as a reminder of the significance of reestablishing a connection with nature and its healing potential. This reconnecting might encourage us to look for answers to the current situation and foster a greater appreciation for the environment.

Recognizing that "The Prelude" is a beginning rather than an end is crucial. There is no sense of urgency or call to action in the poem to address the particular problems the environment is experiencing now. In order to proceed, we need to incorporate Wordsworth's respect for nature with modern environmental consciousness, building on the foundation he laid. This can be accomplished by offering educational programs that teach kids about ecological issues and the value of conservation efforts in addition to cultivating an appreciation for nature. It's possible that "The Prelude" is not a clear call to action for environmental preservation. Nonetheless, the poem provides significant insights for the twenty-first century by emphasizing the transforming potential and inherent significance of nature. We can raise a generation of environmental stewards who are motivated to preserve the very landscapes that inspire and feed us by encouraging awe and reestablishing a connection with nature. Wordsworth's poem pushes us to go beyond escape and accept the duty of maintaining a healthy earth for future generations. It does this by serving as a potent reminder of the intimate link that exists between humans and the natural world.

Although "The Prelude" does not overtly promote environmental conservation measures, it does establish the framework for ecocritical interpretations. Wordsworth's poem provides a fertile ground for ecocriticism, a subfield of literary criticism that studies the relationship between literature and society. "The Prelude" highlights how nature and humanity are intertwined. Wordsworth's encounters in nature have a significant influence on his development as a moral and spiritual person. This points to an ecological consciousness that acknowledges the interconnectedness of the environment and human fate. In "The Prelude," nature is more than just a resource to be used. It has intrinsic worth regardless of how beneficial it is to people. Wordsworth's feelings of amazement and awe in nature point to an understanding of this inherent worth. It's clear that parts like the rotting forests of "Simplon Pass" give rise to concerns about how humans affect the environment. Though they are subtle, these warnings

point to the environmental issues of the present period.

Wordsworth's viewpoint needs to be understood in light of his historical setting. In his day, the environmental catastrophe had not yet reached its full blown state. Furthermore, it is possible to view his emphasis on the moral and spiritual lessons found in nature as anthropocentric, appreciating nature more for how it affects people than for its own sake. Even with these drawbacks, "The Prelude" is still a useful place to start when reading ecocritically. Wordsworth's profound affinity with nature is demonstrated in "The Prelude." The poem raises questions about human impact on the environment and suggests the inherent importance of nature, even though it does not explicitly advocate for environmental action. These themes open up interpretations that are ecocritical.

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