

Review Article

## Recollection as the Principle of William Wordsworth's Poetic Process

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**Abstract:** This article aims at shedding light on the practice of recollection of memories in the poems of William Wordsworth. A close observation of Wordsworth's masterpieces demonstrates that Wordsworth, 'the high priest of nature', tries to recapture and reconstruct for his readers the feelings he has derived from various sources. No other poets could exhibit such expertise in the field of workings and significations of recalling in the creative process, whereas, Wordsworth is not in the habit of making 'a present joy the matter of a song' (The Prelude, Book-I, Line-47). In fact, writing poems on past memories is a very dominant fact in his creative faculty. Therefore, his experience is not lost, rather revived when the poet's mind is in need of it. His imaginative mind makes the emotions once again 'flash upon that inward eye', reconstructs the previous thought and feeling and delights the readers by giving permanent life to his past experience. Wordsworth recaptures in his poems his experiences regarding his family; people encountered by chance, his old friends and his own childhood moments. The poet, in fact, focuses through his verses, the power of past scenes, and incidents over our mind when they are recollected and combined with present thoughts. He holds the notion that incidents, objects, or situations taking place around the natural surroundings get installed in the memory of the poet according to the human feeling of joy, sorrow, fear, or mystery. These experiences themselves possess a power to provoke powerful emotions which thereafter reflect on a tranquil mind of the poet. Then contemplation revives and recreates greater emotion and finally with the colorful threads of imagination the poet knits unique verses. Wordsworth's best-known poems exemplify his association with past events, how they serve the basis of his creative process, and what influences those memories have in his personal life.

**Keywords:** Recollection, Past Incidents, Memory, Feeling, Childhood, Spiritual, Nature, Imagination.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), a bright star of the Romantic Age, brought a new trend in the European literary field. He has a long poetic career which has a span of more than sixty years. He is one of the most prolific poets whose poems take the readers to a world which is free from artificiality, a world where emotion gets proper soil for flourishing and blooming and where individuals feel like flying with the colorful wings of imagination. Yet his poems are contemplative and philosophical, carrying a deep meaning, a spiritual truth. His language is simple but musical and spontaneous. His choice of words, and figurative languages e.g. simile, metaphor, imagery, hyperbole, and personifications charm the readers and critics ages after ages and lead them to dive deep into a peaceful world. His intense attachment to nature reflected through the lens of

recollection is his signature trait which has made him different from the other Romantic poets.

Wordsworth was inspired by Alexander Pope, a prominent poet of the 18th century. At the very early stage when the poet was a student of Hawkshed Grammar School, he composed some poems like 'An Evening Walk' and 'Descriptive Sketches'. Later on, the renowned writers like Virgil, John Milton, William Shakespeare, Jean-Jacques Rousseau became his prime inspiration for composing verses. However, his intimacy with his sister Dorothy and S.T. Coleridge, another prominent poet of the Romantic Period, was the strongest source of poetic creation for him. This relation stimulated him greatly for enhancing and reshaping his creative capabilities. Gradually, he published his major works like Lyrical Ballads, with Other Poems (1800),

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Poems, in *Two Volumes* (1807), *The Excursion* (1814), and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822) and *The Prelude* (1850, published posthumously). Most importantly, his groundbreaking publication *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* in 1798 in association with S.T. Coleridge has started the Romantic Movement in English poetry. The first edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads' contains twenty-three poems where Wordsworth composes nineteenth poems and the remaining four are composed by Coleridge. The publication of this little volume of poems demonstrates a clean departure from the old, artificial, and conventional style of writing poetry of the Neoclassical Period. The second edition of 'The Lyrical Ballads' published in 1800, has an elaborate preface which is further modified and added to the next edition in 1802. In fact, 'The Preface', known as the manifesto of Romanticism, includes all the suggestions for the new kind of poetry. Here Wordsworth has presented his opinion about the subject, language, and style of poetry emphasizing the importance of spontaneity, feeling, imagination, and simplicity. In 'The Preface', Wordsworth defines poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. He intends to express that poetry comes out naturally and smoothly from the heart overflowing with feelings. This is how he presents his views in 'The Preface': "I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility 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." He also mentions "our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men." From these statements it is evident that, according to Wordsworth, poetic creation is a process that follows certain phases. The first stage is the sensory experience of the poet who is 'endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm, and tenderness. If the poet is marveled at the sight of something, he does not pour out his emotion through his verses immediately. His creative mind stores all these emotions, for future expression. Next comes recollection where the sensitive mind of the poet remembers his past experiences in a tranquil state of mind. The upcoming phase is contemplation where the poet loves to immerse in his recollected emotion and this kind of reflection stirs up his feelings associated with his past experiences. Finally, with the tint of imagination, the poet's earlier excitement revives and glitters in new forms. Wordsworth thinks 'in this mood successful composition generally begins'.

Herbert Read expresses the same opinion saying: "That good poetry is never an immediate reaction to the provoking cause; that our sensations must be allowed time to sink back into the common fund of our experience, there to find their level and due proportion.

That level is found for them by the mind in the act of contemplation, and then in the process of contemplation the sensation revives, and out of the union of contemplating mind and the receiving sensibility, raises that unique mode of expression which we call poetry." Wordsworth follows this identical process of poetic creation in constructing his poems. In fact, he is quite competent in this field as he is gifted by nature with a staggering memory and a contemplative mind which made him visualize the past with an extraordinary vividness.

## 2. Analysis

This paper will endeavor to scrutinize the importance of Wordsworth's act of reminiscence in the creative process. In fact, he is so structured in his dealing with past experiences that he is often branded as a poet of the past. Since he is 'the worshipper of nature', his poems display his passion for beautiful objects of nature, peaceful landscapes and simple and ordinary men who have close attachment to nature but he depicts all these from the recollection of his memory. The benefits he has gained from his recollection figure out the importance he attached to memory. His use of memory revives all his past experiences and makes him nostalgic. The exercise of memory sometimes provides the poet with the materials of his poems. At some other times, memories of the beautiful objects of nature help him forget all types of anxieties of the contemporary world. Again, past experiences remove his loneliness and bring him comfort and solace. Apart from these, recollection of certain past experiences gives him determination and strength of mind. Finally, through the act of remembering, Wordsworth presents the growth of a poet's mind and we understand the changing pattern of Wordsworth's attitude towards nature. Though he has frequently taken resort to memory he does not thoroughly repeat his past incidents rather reconstructed those experiences emphasizing his present consciousness. The following poems, from the above mentioned publications epitomizing his use of recollection, have been critically analyzed for this comprehensive study.

Wordsworth's idea of 'emotion recollected in tranquility' is clearly revealed in the poem 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' (*Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807). This is a wonderful lyric with its typical Wordsworthian simplicity, rich imagery and spontaneity of style and diction. It presents Wordsworth's experience of coming across a long stretch of mesmerizing daffodils while walking, along with his sister Dorothy Wordsworth, near Ullswater Lake in the Lake District in 1802. His sister records the fact (in her journal) which clarifies much about his poetic method.

"When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park, we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up..... I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the

mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them.” (The Grasmere Journals, 15th April 1802).

The poet was very impressed at the sight of daffodils, but his emotion was not ephemeral. This sight once again revives in his solitude, when he is ‘in vacant or pensive mood’. Then solitary contemplation arouses his ‘inward eye’ meaning his creative imagination which is profoundly rooted in the poet. Thus, he composed this poem in 1804 out of ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity’ and it was then published in 1807. However, he brought a few changes from what we find in Dorothy’s detail. For instance, he treated himself alone on the scene, omitting Dorothy. He invites those changes willingly to express his own reaction to the inner reality of the daffodils beside their external appearance. In the poem, Wordsworth is found recalling a visual experience.

“... I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.” (Lines 3-6)

He compares the flowers to the ‘stars that shine / And twinkle on the milky way’ (L. 7-8). He gets so much pleasure at the sight of the field of daffodils that he ‘gazed – and gazed – but little thought’ (L. 17) what they meant to him. He discovers the importance of this scene years after through recollection and says that this scene has brought him permanent ‘wealth’. The memory of this scene has been ‘the bliss of solitude’ (L. 22) to him and it offers him joy and makes his heart once again dance with the daffodils even when he is depressed.

“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.” (Lines 19-24)

Thus, through the recollected memories Wordsworth has presented a very inspiring and nourishing power of nature. In addition, the image of the daffodils, providing comfort and lasting joy, paves the way to provoke a feeling of unity between human beings and the natural world. To manifest this happy interaction, the poet has used several figures of speech, perfect diction and suitable rhyme scheme. His simile, personification, hyperbole, imagery, alliteration and assonance portray a vivid picture of nature and clarify much about the emotional spontaneity and intensity of the poet. Spontaneity is also achieved in its rhyme scheme. Each stanza has six lines rhyming ababcc. The poet’s choice of words like ‘sprightly’, ‘sparkling’, ‘jocund’, ‘fluttering’, ‘dancing’, ‘gay’, ‘glee’ and so on creates a very joyous atmosphere. Besides, his imageries

of ‘golden daffodils’, ‘lake’, ‘trees’, ‘sparkling waves’ enhance the pictorial aspect of the poem. Personifications used in the poem present a very lifelike picture of daffodils that are capable of dancing, hosting, tossing, and giving company like living beings. Consequently, the daffodils representing nature can also create a bond with human beings. Therefore, the words, the figures, the meters and the rhyme scheme together constitute a joyous tone, befitting to the happy communication.

Similarly, the concluding poem of *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems* (1798) ‘Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798’ also vivifies Wordsworth’s theory of poetic creation and the role of memory. From the title, the words ‘revisiting the banks of the Wye’ indicate that this composition relies on the memory of the poet’s first visit. Afterwards his imaginative and contemplative mind combines his present visit with his past experiences and thus, a spontaneous overflow of feelings is created. Spontaneity is observed in his style as well. He rejects gaudy, ornamented language and chooses simple, common language through which feelings can be expressed without any restraint. His use of blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) prompts his expression to be more natural. He has applied personification, simile, metaphor and lifelike imageries which portray a sensuous picture of nature and simultaneously presents a crystal clear idea of various roles played by nature in human life. Again, His wise selection of words like ‘lofty’, ‘sublime,’ ‘seclusion’, ‘elevated thoughts’, ‘spirit’ and the like add to the intensity of its subject, a spiritual truth behind its sensuous manifestation.

Wordsworth first visited the river Wye and the ruins of Tintern Abbey, in Monmouthshire in August 1793. Five years later in July 1798, Wordsworth went to Bristol to supervise the printing of *Lyrical Ballads* in the Bristol Press. On his way to Bristol, he revisited Tintern, along with his sister Dorothy. Wordsworth himself noted: “No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol.”

At the very beginning of the poem Wordsworth is describing a revisited landscape where he came five years ago. On his second tour, he recollected his first experiences when he was very young. He ‘bounded o’er the mountains, by the sides / Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams’ (L.70-71). Nature was a source of ‘coarser pleasures’ to him, the pleasure where there was no conscious awareness of the natural world. He expresses his sensuous love for nature in the following lines:

“... The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colors and their forms were then to me  
An appetite.” (Lines 78-82)

Thus, in youth he was attracted only by the physical aspects of nature. Those days have all gone as the poet grows up. However, this absence of long five years has not erased his memory of this beautiful scene; rather, this memory revives and becomes available to comfort his troubled mind.

“But oft, in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet.  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration.” (Lines 26-31)

Again, his remembrance of the Wye valley has a positive influence on his moral growth since it prompts him to do little acts of ‘kindness and of love’. Most importantly this sweet memory leads the poet to ‘see into the life of things’ by equipping him with a ‘serene and blessed mood’. Besides, the memory of the Wye has its healing power as well. To forget ‘the fretful stir/ Unprofitable, and the fever of the world’, (L.54-55), the poet often takes resort to the ever-sustaining memory of the beautiful river Wye.

“How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! Thou wandered thro’ the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!” (Lines 57-59)

Wordsworth, then, expresses that the memory of this scene that has given him much pleasure, has been revived by the second visit, will also provide the same source of pleasure and strength in his future life:

“While where 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.” (Lines 64-67)

Now as the poet steps into manhood, he has developed a contemplative mind which he calls ‘abundant recompense’. Now he hears echoes of human miseries in the objects of nature. With the words of Stephen Gill, it can be said “The ‘aching joys’ and ‘dizzy raptures’ of 1793, the poet declares, have continued in memory to feed, restore, and influence him, so that now they act in conjunction with the power of experience which has taught him

To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity.” (Lines 91-93)

Thus, the former feeling and his present realization have created in him a mood that is favorable to profound thought. It paves the way to develop a philosophical mind to feel the presence of a divine and an all -pervading spirit in all the objects of nature as well

as in the mind of man. Consequently, he senses a feeling of interaction between man and nature since the same spirit permeates the entire universe. Hence, in his mature age, his attitude towards nature is pantheistic.

Therefore, ‘Tintern Abbey’, presents Wordsworth's memories and using memories finally illustrates his doctrine of nature, his mystic vision. In this regard the remark of James Benziger is worth mentionable: “Perhaps Tintern Abbey is pronounced unsound because it expresses an almost monistic view of human nature: the poet's sensation, feeling, thought, moral awareness, and mystical insight seem to have developed one into the other without a struggle; the lower faculties are not sternly kept in their place by the higher; all commingle almost as equals in the powerful solvent of Wordsworth’s memory.”

Furthermore, ‘Resolution and Independence’ (‘Poems in Two Volumes’, 1807) exhibits how recollection of an individual can be a source of determination. Wordsworth has taken a very challenging step for making a man like a leech-gatherer as the central character of his poem. Keeping this man as the focus of attention; the poet has actually commented on his own life. Geoffrey Durrant addresses this as “...just as the daffodils themselves are not the real subject of ‘I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’, so the real subject of ‘Resolution and Independence’ is not the leech-gatherer himself, but the poet and his fate.” The poem is written on remembering the poet’s meeting a leech-gatherer. We know the fact from Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal that the brother and sister met a leech-gatherer on the road to Grasmere.

“...we met an old man almost double..... His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose.....He had had a wife ‘and a good woman and it pleased God to bless us with ten children.’ All these were dead but one of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging and was making his way to Carlisle where he should buy a few godly books to sell....” (The Grasmere Journals, Oct 3, 1800)

Wordsworth wrote this poem eighteen months after this event. (The Grasmere Journals, May 4 and 7, 1802) but he reconstructed what is found in Dorothy’s journal. Since the poet is gifted with an extraordinary power of imagination, he has presented the leech-gatherer as somebody who is struggling hard even in his old age for collecting leeches and leading an honest life, whereas, the leech-gatherer whom they met used to live by begging as leeches were getting scarce and he lacked enough strength for collecting leeches to earn his livelihood. Besides, the poet has placed the leech-gatherer to a vast desolate moor, changing his exact setting. He believes that this imagined land (moor) would suit his purpose of presenting the leech-gatherer as a

symbol of resilience, courage and dignity. What Salvador De Madariaga (Spanish writer, historian and diplomat) said about recollection and reconstruction of this past incident is stated below:

“It should be noticed, moreover, that in this poem Wordsworth deliberately distorts reality in order to adjust it to his preconceived plan. We know through Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal that the meeting with the old man took place on the road to Grasmere, not ‘on the lonely moor’.... the poem differs from the facts in one essential respect, namely, that the ‘resolution and independence’ of which Wordsworth made the substance of his poem only existed in his imagination.”

In the poem the leech-gatherer was found ‘beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven’ (L.54). He was ‘in his extreme old age’(L.65) and on account of this, his body was bent to a great extent. Even at this stage of his life, he gathered leeches to earn his livelihood. Collecting leeches was a very tiresome work and not a profitable one but he earned in an honest way moving from ‘pond to pond’ and ‘moor to moor’(L.102). The way the man had to strive to earn his honest living, in spite of his old age and scarcity of leeches, amazed the poet and filled his heart with great appreciation for him. The man answered cheerfully:

“Once I could meet with them on every side;  
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;  
Yet still, I persevere and find them where I may.” (Lines 124-126)

The poet himself was very much troubled at heart but the inner strength of the leech-gatherer moved him deeply. He believed that in future the memory of this old man would soothe him and he would become an everlasting source of inspiration because of his determination, courage, resolution, and independence. The poet says:

“God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure;  
I’ll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!” (Lines 139-140)

The style of the poem is also most suited to its theme. His coinage of words beside his simile, metaphor, imagery all are the emblem of spontaneous emotion of a powerful feeling. The setting ‘moor’, with sunrise and the roar of woods and waters, suggests the poet’s visionary power creating the exact atmosphere to show the internal struggle of the poet. His similes like ‘huge stone’, ‘sea beast’, and ‘cloud’ suggest the old man’s firm, continuous strength of mind. His movement of the verse expresses his profound emotional state. His use of long syllables shows weary but continuous persistence of the old man.

The poem *Solitary Reaper*, published in 1807 (‘Poems in Two Volumes’), is inspired by the poet’s trip to Scotland and by the description of a solitary reaper as

found in Thomas Wilkinson’s ‘Tour in Scotland’. Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy stayed at the village of Strathyre in Scotland in September 1803. During their stay, they saw many such reapers working in remote parts of the highlands of Scotland. The reapers used to sing while reaping corn in the field. However, what inspired the poet greatly for composing this wonderful lyric is a beautiful passage written by Thomas Wilkinson. Dorothy wrote in her “Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland in A.D. 1803: “It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly (might I be allowed to say pensively?) enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a *single* person so employed. The following poem was suggested to Wm. by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson’s *Tour in Scotland*.” Thomas Wilkinson, one of Wordsworth’s friends had written ‘Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more.’ Thus, the account of the traveler reminded the poet of his experiences. Then contemplation at a tranquil state of mind created a spontaneous feeling in him. Finally, the poet’s highly imaginative mind portrays the specific image of the reaper at her task.

In the poem a reaper was seen ‘reaping and singing by herself’ (L.3) in solitary natural surroundings. She was working alone but her song created a bond with the natural surroundings:

“O listen! For the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.” (Lines 7-8)

The poet listened to the song ‘motionless and still’. It mesmerized the poet though the meaning of the song was unknown to him. As a result, even though he left the valley, the music was inscribed in his heart.

“The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.” (Lines 31-32)

Therefore, through the reaper’s song, the poet expresses the unity between human beings and the unity between man and the natural world.

Thus, recollection has a separate or independent status in the creation of this poem. According to Manning, (1990) “To the degree that the shift from the present -tense imperatives of the first stanza of *The Solitary Reaper* (‘Behold.... Stop...Listen!’) to the past tense of the last has been seen as the paradigm of ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’, the sitting of the poet affects our entire sense of Wordsworth’s poetry.”

Likewise, the poem ‘Elegiac Stanzas’(‘Poems in Two Volumes’, 1807) which is fully titled as “Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont” presents Wordsworth’s past impression of nature and later on his current views of the world and thus, it figures out the

change in Wordsworth's perception of life. Here Wordsworth exposes his personal experience centering the Peele castle which is on a small island in Lancashire. Wordsworth stayed there for a few weeks in 1794. Twelve years later, he saw a painting of Peele Castle in the storm by Sir George Beaumont, one of Wordsworth's friends. That painting moved him deeply then contemplation created spontaneous overflow of feelings in the poet's mind.

At the very beginning of the poem, Wordsworth declares that he used to see the castle every day when the image of the castle was seen reflected on the smooth surface of the sea.

I was thy neighbor once, thou rugged Pile!  
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :(  
(Lines 1-2).

The sea was permanently calm then, and it was 'the gentlest of all gentle things' (L. 12). However, John's (Wordsworth's sailor brother) death at sea in 1805 later changes his perception of the sea and makes him praise Beaumont's painting. He realizes that Beaumont's painting of the castle with its ruined towers against a sky split by lightning, the 'sea in anger', the 'dismal shore' (L.44), and the ship pitching and rolling in the sea in storm illustrates more authenticity than the picture of gentle seas. It shows a strong spirit as the castle faces the storm with extraordinary courage, and thus, stands upright. Consequently, the poet understands beside the peaceful aspects of life, it has its unpleasant sides as well and draws the conclusion that we need fortitude, patience, and strength of mind to forget loss and suffering. This is how he reveals in this poem:

But welcome, fortitude, and patient cheer,  
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!  
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here---  
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.  
(Lines 57-60)

Apart from these, Wordsworth's childhood and boyhood experiences prove to be a resourceful store for providing materials for his poetry. The poem 'Nutting' (Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems, 1800) is a wonderful outcome of this effort since it is based on the memory of Wordsworth's own boyhood expeditions to gather hazelnuts near Esthwaite Lake. The boy's experience of collecting nuts incites a feeling of pleasure, rage, and finally his sense of guilt which is exquisitely interwoven throughout the verses by the expert hand of the 'high priest of nature'.

In 1843, Wordsworth expressed to Isabella Fenwick that he composed these lines during his stay in Germany in 1798. They were intended to be included as part of his long poem, 'The Prelude', (1850) but were "struck out as not being wanted there. These verses arose out of the remembrance of feelings I had often had when a boy, and particularly in the extensive woods that still

stretch from the side of Esthwaite Lake towards Graythwaite."

The boy in the poem started for his destination to an 'unvisited' spot in a 'far-distant wood' in search of hazelnuts. After reaching there he was extremely delighted in gazing upon the scene. Soon he was getting impatient to collect nuts and savagely attacked the trees, leaving the branch and bough 'deformed and sullied'. However, when he left the place with nuts being 'rich beyond the wealth of kings' (L. 51), he felt 'a sense of pain' for what he had done and realized that there was something spiritual in the woods.

Presenting the memory of this simple event, the poet very remarkably portrays a graphic illustration of the silent power of nature upon the growth of a child's consciousness. The boy's sensual attitude towards nature changes after his savage attack on the trees and he feels regret. He realizes that something has been destroyed by this act which the poet has deliberately given the quality of a rape suggested by the words like, 'patiently gave up', 'virgin scene', and the like. Finally, the boy feels that there is a spirit in nature and this realization later forms the core of Wordsworth's mysticism.

Likewise, in the poem *To the Cuckoo* (1802), the call of cuckoo jerks the poet's wonderful memories of his childhood days when he used to listen to the call of this elusive bird. This song reminds him of 'a tale of visionary hours'. Geoffrey Durrant addresses "The cuckoo's song is the voice of the poet's own boyhood; it is a link with a time of youthful eagerness and hope..... a reminder of the visionary hours of childhood, and a promise of the recovery of the paradisaic state." Though he has 'never seen' this bird in his childhood, now in his adult life he still desires to see it and hopes to get back that 'golden time' again. Actually, the call of cuckoo evokes the poet's imagination and he presents this common thing in nature as something very special by making the bird 'blessed'. His readers also feel like listening to the magical song of cuckoo. His imaginative mind has created a world of delight, a world where there is a spiritual truth beyond its external reality.

Another poem 'There was a Boy' is not an exception. The poem first appeared in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and then it was incorporated into his autobiographical work 'The Prelude' (1850). This piece of poetry is a beautiful representation of the magic and wonder of childhood, the sparkling effect of nature to induce imagination and finally loss of childhood innocence and purity. In fact, Wordsworth loves to go back to his childhood days. Alan Gardiner's remark echoes the same tone when he says, "The ability to recover and re-experience the child's vision of nature gives Wordsworth intense pleasure....."

The poem 'We are Seven', published in 'Lyrical Ballads' in 1798 is another example of how successfully

Wordsworth could recreate for his readers his own experience. This poem is based upon a conversation between the poet and a little girl whom he met in the West Country in 1793. Wordsworth himself noted: "Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798, under circumstances somewhat remarkable. The little girl who is the heroine, I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793". (Wordsworth's note) The interesting matter is that Wordsworth composed the last line of the poem at first and then Coleridge assisted him writing the introductory stanza. Coleridge composed the first four lines where Wordsworth later on brought a few changes.

Here we find an adult narrator and a very simple 'cottage girl' of 'eight years old' (L.5, 6). When the narrator asks her how many brothers and sisters she has, she answers that she has seven. As the conversation continues, it becomes obvious to the narrator that two of them are dead, but the girl repeatedly replies, 'We are seven'. She believes that her siblings are alive, pass time with her and she talks about them with great confidence. In fact, her childhood innocence does not allow her to know the grim reality of death.

The poem 'The Simplicon Pass' is drawn out from 'The Prelude' (1850), Book VI, and was published separately as well in 1845. This poem is the outcome of the poet's experience of visiting the Alps at the Simplicon Pass on 17th August, 1790. On that day, Wordsworth and his friend, Robert Jones, departed with others from Brig, Switzerland to cross the Alps but after having lunch, at the Old Stockalper Spittal, they got separated from the other members. Then they started for their destination themselves asking a peasant for directions. However, they could not make sense of his words. Later, they understood that without realizing it they had, in fact, crossed the Alps. In 1804, Wordsworth wrote this poem recollecting his experience of this journey. This journey and the feeling stimulated by the mountain, sky, and waterfalls kindle his imagination which ultimately finds expression through his verses.

Here the poet has presented a very vivid picture of the contradictory forces of nature. The destructive and peaceful aspects are manifested through the beautiful imagery of high rocks, the 'decaying' forests, the tumultuous stream, the noise of wind, 'the clear blue sky' with its 'unfettered clouds' and bright light, the beautiful flowers and so on. By observing both forces simultaneously the poet, with his visionary power, has realized the 'Presence' of a mysterious power or a Spirit in nature. That all pervasive spirit harmonizes both the convulsive and the tranquil into a unified whole without any end.

".... workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end."  
(Lines- 571-575)

Hence this poem emphasizes on Wordsworth's mystic vision and recollection plays an active role in its creative process.

In fact, no discussion will be complete without certain records of Wordsworth's masterpiece 'The Prelude', written during the period from 1799 to 1805 and was published after the poet's death in 1850. Wordsworth himself calls it: 'A poem on the growth of my own mind.' Through the recollection of old memories, it records the growth and development of the power of imagination of a poet. In fact, 'The Prelude' shows the detail of what Wordsworth has expressed in the poem 'Tintern Abbey' in short. However, it is difficult to talk about 'The Prelude' in short so in this paper I will mainly focus on some significant passages of Book I and Book II of this long poem.

Wordsworth's theory of poetry – "emotion recollected in tranquility", serves as the basis of this epoch-making creation, *The Prelude*. This is not a chronological arrangement of incidents of his life; rather a record of his act of reminiscence and reflection upon some 'unfading recollections' having emotional and psychological effects. Regarding 'The Prelude', Helen Darbishire has rightly commented "... but he deliberately cultivated memory, he could live intensely in the past, he could revive and recreate; and the chief part of his purpose in *The Prelude* is to recall and quicken into permanent life those pregnant moments." Towards the ending of Book-I, Wordsworth himself discloses the benefits of his recollected memories. He addresses S.T. Coleridge and expresses his earnest hope that recollection of his childhood days may refresh his thoughts and 'fix the wavering balance' (L. 622) of his mind.

Book I and II, center round Wordsworth's recollection of his childhood and boyhood experiences in a bewildering natural atmosphere in the Lake District. The poet's boyhood engagement in various exciting sports and pastimes like bathing, basking, kite sailing, and skating was a source of unmixed delight which influenced the growth of his mind. Regarding the importance of Book I and II, Graham Hough's remark is cited here: "It is no accident that the most beautiful and most spontaneous passages in 'The Prelude' occur chiefly in the first two books, 'Childhood and Schooltime', for the impressions of his early years formed the deepest and most significant layer of Wordsworth's later thought". In Book I Wordsworth recalled several unforgettable experiences of his childhood days and showed their significance in forming and developing his imaginative and visionary power. Sometimes he would move swiftly through sandy fields leaping 'through flowery groves/ Of yellow ragwort' (L. 293-294). At some other times, he would stand alone beneath the sky bathed in the brilliant rays of the sun like 'a naked savage' Red Indian boy. However, in this early

stage of life the forces of nature taught him the discipline of joy and fear and molded his mind:

“Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up  
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.” (Lines 301-302)

Wordsworth demonstrates how the simple enjoyment of nature changes and is progressively reconstituted by a conscious and spiritual response to the natural world. He starts to be aware of hidden forces at work within nature.

The bird-nesting and stolen boat episodes, very artistically illustrate his experiences evoking the emotions of pleasure and fear, are worth mentioning. After the unfair deed of catching hold of a bird ‘which was the captive of another’s toil’ (L. 320), nature’s intervention created a feeling of fear in him. He felt in nature a spiritual presence that was following him and expressed his disapproval of this mischief.

“I heard among the solitary hills  
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds  
Of indistinguishable motion, steps  
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.” (Lines 322-325)

Then comes the boat stealing episode which ‘was an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure’ (L. 361-362). After stealing the boat, a huge peak of hills appeared before him like a living being, rearing its head from behind the uneven range of hills. To the poet it seemed to be an awful and a strange living creature following him with regular steps:

“I struck and struck again,  
And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me.” (Lines 380-385)

Thus, through these common sports and pastimes amid the lovely surroundings of nature what he experienced was evidently close to mystical experience and, no doubt, Wordsworth’s most remarkable creations revolve round such experience. In the second book, his recollection portrays a gradual change over his attitude towards nature as he grows up. Then he derived pleasure only from those sports and pastimes that were ‘collaterally attached’ to the pleasing objects of nature. He started to love nature ‘for her own sake’ and this love was no more sensuous love only. In his communion with nature he sensed a sacred quietness, a mystic experience when ‘bodily eyes / Were utterly forgotten’ (L. 349-350) and whatever was visible seemed to be something within himself and could be seen only with the mind’s eye. He felt some visionary power or creative sensibility within himself and he had a realization of the unity and harmony underlying all the objects of nature. A light or visionary power originated from his mind and added a ‘new splendor’ to all the ordinary things.

“An auxiliary light  
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun  
Bestowed new splendor; the melodious birds,  
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on  
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed  
A like dominion and the midnight storm  
Grew darker in the presence of my eye.” (Lines 368-374)

Therefore, nature filled his mind with sensations and impressions, and these developed into passions of youth and finally ideas of maturity in later years. Consequently, ‘The Prelude’ records the inner growth of the poet and shows how senses become a gateway to the imaginative mind. Herbert Read rightly considered ‘The Prelude’ as the greatest poem of Wordsworth. He expressed that this long poem could depict the various stages of Wordsworth’s poetic career. It started with the recollections of the poet’s early childhood, ended with his distinct philosophy of nature and God and assimilates the total doctrine of Wordsworthism.

Wordsworth’s recollection of the French Revolution is evident in Book IX and X. Here we find his complex emotional experience – his passion, enthusiasm, and finally his disillusionment – caused by the revolution. In Book-XI, Wordsworth expresses his purpose of recollection. Here he mentions his concept of ‘spots of time’ which means certain key experiences which revive us when we are depressed by ‘false opinion and contentious thought’ (L. 261). He says,

“A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced  
That penetrates, enables us to mouth  
When high, more high, and lifts us up when  
fallen.” (Lines 266-268)

He thinks that these spots of time which are ‘worthy of all gratitude/ Are scattered everywhere’ (L. 274-275) but mainly to be experienced in childhood. He mentions two incidents, when he was five years old (L. 280-325) and thirteen years old (L. 345-390), which are specifically characterized by him as spots of time. However, this term ‘spots of time’ is also applicable for the above mentioned episodes as well. Wordsworth wants to record such experiences from the past to make them a permanent source for regeneration. This is how he expresses his desire:

“...I would give  
While yet we may, as far as words can give,  
A substance and a life to what I feel:  
I would enshrine the spirit of the past  
For future restoration.” (Lines 340-344)

### 3. Critics’ Opinions

However, critics are divided in their opinions regarding Wordsworth’s notion of recollection. T. S. Eliot, a great poet and a prominent critic, in his famous essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919), opposes Wordsworth’s definition of poetry having “its



origin in emotions recollected in tranquility". He terms it as 'an inexact formula' and says, "it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor without distortion of meaning, tranquility". In the poetic process, there is "concentration and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation. These experiences are not 'recollected', and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is 'tranquil' only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate..... Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion: it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."

About Wordsworth's idea of tranquility, Thomas Love Peacock (1785 – 1866), a poet, essayist and satiric novelist, mentions, "He lives in the days that are past..... The philosophic mental tranquility which looks round with an equal eye on all external things, collects a store of ideas, discriminates their relative value, assigns to all their proper place, and from the materials of useful knowledge thus collected, appreciated, and arranged, forms new combinations that impress the stamp of their power and utility on the real business of life, is diametrically the reverse of that frame of mind which poetry inspires, or from which poetry can emanate".

On the other hand, R. O. C. Winkler in his writing 'Wordsworth's Poetry' commented on Wordsworth's practice of recollection saying, "For every poet his own experience is, of course, the raw material of the creative process. But in Wordsworth's case, it was something more than this: it was his characteristic subject-matter, so that much of his best verse, even outside *The Prelude*, constitutes a kind of diary; and when his verse is least effective, it will often be found that he has, in some way, withdrawn to a distance from his experience, that the immediacy of the personal record is absent."

Last but not the least, how John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), a Philosopher and economist, expresses his appreciation for Wordsworth's idea of tranquil restoration is worth mentionable. According to him: "What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought colored by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings..... I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation".

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In fine, it is transparent that William Wordsworth approaches with a distinct identity not only defining poetry but also explaining the process involved in the creation of poetry. He has brought a new taste for his readers with his principles of poetic creation, coming far away from the eighteenth Century writing style. Being an ardent lover of nature, he is not concerned with the sensuous presentation of the natural objects, rather falls in love with the manifestation of the spiritual truth that the objects represent. The poet with his far reaching and penetrating eye, unlike other romantic poets, presents nature as a friend, a healer, a moral teacher, a guide, a guardian and above all an abode of Divine Spirit. Hence, for achieving this purpose, Wordsworth has recollected and reconstructed his past memories and summons the readers, with his alluring signals of imagination, to enjoy those early experiences and emotions on which he molds the world of some of his most celebrated poems. His poems where he puts forth his emotion through simple language easily connect the readers. The same flow of enjoyment, strength, happiness and melancholy waves readers' minds and makes them sometimes nostalgic. The mighty verses from his magical pen have intense potency to refine our feeling, generate a spirit of endurance, inspire simplicity and plainness of living, and evoke lofty thoughts in our mind. For the poet, in fact, recollection has been a stimulating spirit that provides him a lucid and powerful expression in the creation and evolution of his poetry. The recollected memories of his poems display a clear picture of his childhood and boyhood experiences, his changing political notions, the growth of his imagination, and finally his deep attachment to the natural world.

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