# Echoes of Nature in William Wordsworth's Poetry: An Ecocritical Reading

# Ecos da Natureza na Poesia de William Wordsworth: Uma Leitura Ecocrítica

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**Resumo:** A Natureza figura como a força central na poesia de William Wordsworth. Ele a concebe a Natureza não apenas como uma paisagem percebida, mas como um poder ativo que molda os sentimentos humanos, a capacidade imaginativa e o crescimento espiritual. Wordsworth interessa-se não somente pelo mundo natural, mas também pela relação entre a Natureza e a consciência humana. Por meio de seu rico imaginário, sua poesia oferece aos leitores uma representação genuína da complexa interação entre o Homem e a Natureza. A profunda consciência "ecológica" de Wordsworth incentivou-me a (re)ler sua poesia, tanto individualmente quanto em sala de aula, sob uma perspectiva ecocrítica à luz da crise ambiental contemporânea. Assim, adotando tanto a análise textual detalhada (*close reading*) quanto a interpretação crítica, o presente artigo aplica a ecocrítica à poesia Romântica de Wordsworth, analisando uma seleção de seus poemas a partir dos encontros entre o ser humano e a Natureza e enfatizando sua crítica à indiferença humana quanto à preservação ambiental. Este trabalho também chama a atenção para as implicações ambientais das representações da Natureza na poesia de Wordsworth e para a maior conscientização sobre o mundo natural que ela promoveu.
**Palavras-chave: Wordsworth, Romantismo, Natureza, Consciência Ecológica, Ecocrítica.**

**Abstract:** Nature lies as the central force in the poetry of William Wordsworth. He regards Nature[2] not only as a perceived landscape but rather as an active power that frames human feelings, imaginative power and spiritual growth. Wordsworth is not only interested in the natural world but also in the relationship between Nature and human consciousness. Through its rich imagery, his poetry offers readers a genuine depiction of the complex interaction between Man and Nature. Wordsworth's profound "ecological" consciousness encouraged me to (re)read his poetry on my own and in the classroom from an ecocritical perspective in light of the contemporary environmental crisis. Hence, adopting both close textual analysis and critical interpretation, the present paper applies ecocriticism to Wordsworth's Romantic[3] poetry by reading a selection of his poems within the human-Nature encounters and by emphasizing his critique of the human indifference to preserving Nature. This paper also draws attention to the environmental implications of Nature representations in Wordsworth's poetry, and to the heightened awareness of the natural world it has created.
**Keywords: Wordsworth, Romanticism, Nature, Ecological Consciousness, Ecocriticism.**

## Introduction

[2] Nature is often capitalized in Wordsworth's poetry. I retain his capitalization throughout.
[3] Romanticism and Romantic, referring to the literary trend and its practitioners, are systematically capitalized in this paper.

Wordsworth's poetry illuminates his faith in Nature and its inspiring presence in his life and poetry. William Wordsworth, the most celebrated and lastingly influential of the English Romantic poets, extolled the beauties of Nature, as mentioned in the Introduction to *Lyrical Ballads* (marking the beginning of the Romantic movement and representing a break with the Neoclassical tradition), thanks to his active imaginative response to "the beautiful and permanent forms of nature" (7). He believes that poetry is a rather self-expression, a release of personal emotions. His poetry does not offer basic pictures of Nature, but rather observations of the intricate contact between Man and Nature and the affect (emotions, thoughts, impressions, responses) it engenders. To read Wordsworth's Romantic poetry as a personal choice that led to the creation of my undergraduates' poetry curriculum, from the lens of ecocriticism or ecological literary criticism, makes perfect sense in the age of the Anthropocene. From a contemporary ecocritical perspective, one may perceive Wordsworth's poetry as embedded with implications of ecological degradation. While highlighting Wordsworth's Romantic spirit and his faith in Nature, this paper intends to examine how Nature is ecologically represented in his poetry, to realize the inherent connections between humans and the natural world, and to revise the selected poems from an ecocritical lens. Indeed, the growing awareness of environmental issues offers a fresh way of looking at Nature in the poetry of William Wordsworth by adopting an ecocritical reading rooted in the heart of the current ecological concerns.

## 1- Romanticism versus Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a literary approach that brings ecological consciousness to the practice of literary criticism. Ecocriticism provides an ecological interpretation of literary texts. "Simply put," Cheryll Glotfelty writes in the Introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). She elaborates that "all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world (the human and the non-human), that is the basis of ecocriticism, affecting it and is

affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature" (xix). The first wave emerged in the 1980s, the second in the 1990s. In relation to this, Slovic Scott et al. write in the Introduction to *Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication*, "The environmental approach to literature […] began to receive widespread public attention in North America, Western Europe, and East Asia in the mid-1990s, coinciding with the publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, in 1996" (3). It is the interdisciplinary study of literature and ecology that explores the importance of Nature and the environment in literature. Hence, it found inspiration in the poetry of English Romantics involved in environmentalism before the launching of environmental studies. Abolfazl Ramazani and Elmira Bazregarzadeh enunciate:

> Romantic poetry, in general, and William Wordsworth, in particular, became the key icons of ecocritical studies. Wordsworth was a major English Romantic poet who has been considered as a forerunner of English Romanticism. His views towards Nature and man's treatment of Nature have supported his position as an important icon of ecocritical studies. His fame lies in the general belief that he has been viewed as a Nature poet who viewed Nature superior to humans. In other words, his views about Nature and his poems seek to heal the long-forgotten wounds of Nature in the hope of reaching unification between man and Nature. (1)

While Greg Garrard contends that "Wordsworth's enthusiasm for 'nature' does not correspond to modern ecological concern" and that "Wordsworth is, on the whole, far more interested in the relationship of non-human nature to the human mind than he is in nature in and for itself" (43), I would argue that in Wordsworth's poetry lie certain seeds of ecological knowledge and literacy.

I would also claim that the selected poems promote an early ecological mindfulness at the outbreak of the nineteenth century, a period noticeable for the booming Industrial Revolution and the accompanying pollution. Asma Dhouioui argues that Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and William Blake "anticipated the dangers of pollution and industrialization in the city of London in the 1800s (to be called the age the Anthropocene later) and found refuge in Mother Nature, in the purity

of the mountains and the simplicity of countryside life and people" (77). The 1800s marked the beginning of the "Anthropocene", the most recent phase in the Earth's history, when human activities, geologists believe, have serious consequences on Earth and climate. Dhouioui expounds that the term "Anthropocene" was coined by meteorologist and atmospheric chemist, Paul J. Crutzen, in the 1980s "to define the present ecological era of global climate change caused by human activity including industrialization, environmental pollution […] and extreme exploitation of natural resources since the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century" (76). Likewise, Alexander M. Stoner and Andony Melathopoulos claim that the Anthropocene "demarcates the period from the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century to the present as capturing a change in the history of the planet" (19). In a similar vein, Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg contend that:

> According to the standard Anthropocene narrative, the Industrial Revolution marks the onset of large-scale human modification of the Earth System, primarily in the form of climate change, the most salient and perilous transgression of Holocene parameters. More precisely, in his 2002 piece, Crutzen suggested that James Watt's invention of the steam-engine inaugurated the new epoch. (2)

Relatedly, Sabine Wilke argues that the word "Anthropocene" masks "the fact that a small part of the world's population is single-handedly responsible for depositing that thin carbon layer in the Earth's crust around 1800" (70). In sum, the scholars and writers mentioned above share the fact that the Anthropocene epoch began in the 1800s, when Romantics had been composing poems that warned against the threats of industry and pollution on Nature and humans.

Romanticism, then, may be regarded as a pioneer of ecological consciousness. In this respect, Nicholas Roe notes that, "Contemporary fears of environmental crisis are encouraging reassessments of nature in Romantic poetry, a nature no longer seen as the escapist resort of Romantic ideology but as the precursor of modern ecological thought" (11). Ecocriticism explores the relationship between humans and the environment in the times of climate change, as both Man and Nature suffer environmental degradation, and

focuses on the literary and artistic works that examine these relationships. Further, ecocriticism is the study of literature and ecology where the scholars of environmental humanities investigate texts that portray environmental issues and the ensuing eco-anxiety. Ecocritics not only examine environmental concerns but also seek to raise awareness of current ecological disasters, and call for resolving ecological problems through preserving the landscape, sustainability, environmental activism, and others, in order to save humans. In the same vein, Scott et al. indicate that ecocriticism "often emphasiz[es] aesthetic, ethical, and activist traditions in various societies around the world" (3). In doing so, ecocritics intentionally express their cultural and literary critiques from an environmentally political perspective.

Ecocriticism developed within literary studies and establishes itself as an essential part of environmental humanities thanks to "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (1978), a paper "about literature and the biosphere" (Rueckert 74) by William Rueckert, the American literary critic, who coined the term "ecocriticism". He elucidates that ecocriticism applies ecology to the study of (environmental) literature. On this point, he says:

> I am going to experiment with the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, a discipline, as the basis for a human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live in of anything that I have studied in recent years. (73)

In the same article, he enunciates, "I could say that I am going to try to discover something about the ecology of literature, or try to develop an ecological poetics by applying ecological concepts to the reading, teaching, and writing about literature" (73). What he calls "ecological poetics" may be expounded as charging literature with "ecological purpose" (84) in addition to studying the works of poets and ecologists together.

In *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991), a ground laying book in ecocriticism as a literary theory, practice, and an academic field of study, British scholar Jonathan Bate, passionate for the natural environment himself, contends that Wordsworth must be reinterpreted as one of the foremost ecological poets in English literature. He strongly believes that Wordsworth established an

environmental imagination that would influence ecological thinking. He insists that "Wordsworth by no means initiated [the tradition of environmental consciousness], but he has been a vital influence upon it" (9). A leading example of a "classic" text that transcends its historical context, according to Bate, is Wordsworth's poetry. In the Introduction to his book, Bate reveals:

> A green reading of Wordsworth […] has strong historical force, for if one historicizes the idea of an ecological viewpoint – a respect for the earth and a scepticism as to the orthodoxy that economic growth and material production are the be-all and end-all of human society – one finds oneself squarely in the Romantic tradition; and it has strong contemporary force in that it brings Romanticism to bear on what are likely to be some of the most pressing political issues of the coming decade: the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer, the destruction of the tropical rainforest, acid rain, [and] the pollution of the sea. (9)

Clearly, Bate links Romantic poetry with the current environmental issues. Wordsworth's ever-living poetry is a case in point.

## 2- Nature and Poetry

Wordsworth's poetry is quite idiosyncratic; it illustrates his inner growth. His autobiographical poem *The Prelude; Or, the Growth of a Poet's Mind* in blank verse, begun in Germany in 1798 and finished at Dove Cottage in Grasmere in 1805, was unpublished in his lifetime. It was rather published posthumously in 1850. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth traces the process of self-exploration, offered thanks to his contact with Nature and with the self, and his own development as a poet. In his reflections on poetry, he ensures that the imaginative power, which grows in the poet's mind, is critical for him to reach knowledge and to interact with the world. Besides, he lays a particular emphasis on the active role of Nature in shaping his poetic imagination. In this book, Nature holds a new role, a spiritual one guiding the poet away from sensual impressions collected in the intimate moments in and with Nature.

In depicting the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of Nature, Wordsworth offers a positive view of the landscape and makes us settle on an optimistic reading of the poems and a positive view of life. Nature has the therapeutic power to heal the mind from the strain of the world, and to provide an alternative space away from the overpopulated, industrialized and polluted city of London. His poetry celebrates the healing influence of Nature on the human spirit. John Williams indicates that the Victorian critic Matthew Arnold "claimed that the spiritual intensity with which Wordsworth's finest poetry celebrated nature was capable of consoling and reassuring a readership beset by social and religious upheaval" (1). This is linked to the spiritual quality of nature. According to David Wright, "Nature is seen by Romantics to be consoling or morally uplifting; a kind of spiritual healer" (xv). He claims, "The point is that with the Romantics nature is for the first time no longer taken for granted: it is valued, as we always value something we realize we might lose" (xvii). In this regard, one may link the healing power of Nature to ecocriticism, quite thoughtful of the role of environment in shaping the character of individuals. Composing poems becomes even therapeutic. For instance, in "To a Skylark" (1805)[4], a lyrical poem, an apostrophe expressive of the speaker's emotions, Wordsworth thinks that Nature is a reflection of God on Earth and emphasizes the spiritual aspects of Nature revealing his own belief in God. In a content and passionate tone, he attests that the human being mediates between God and Nature and that there is unity in the universe. The skylark symbolizes superiority, elevation and spirituality; and this is noticeable in the poetic diction used, for instance, "up" (repeated throughout the poem), "clouds", "lift", "sky" "wings" "fly" "high" and "joy divine" (42-3). The poem reveals the persona of the speaker who worships both God and Nature. The poem's form if perceived on its side reflects the movement of the birds' wings replicating the liberty of the bird in contact with Nature. Liberty will also be enjoyed by the speaker as he is in contact with Nature.

Nature plays a quintessential role in Wordsworth's poetry. His poetic identity is fashioned thanks to his much-aspired encounter with Nature. In "the presence of nature", Maurice Bowra writes, Wordsworth's "feelings were set free, and he felt no

[4] In *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth. Vol. III*, edited by William Knight, 1896.

shyness afterwards in writing of them. In him nature awoke especially those emotions of sympathy and affection which he felt for his sister and his wife and a few chosen friends" (101). The Romantics in general, and Wordsworth in particular, believe that nature inspires the poet who must be born not made. Wordsworth would compose his poems sometime after the experience that inspired him, for instance, wandering, an excursion, a walk in the unpolluted countryside, a travel to the Alps, and others. After reveries, delightful meditations, introspection and some reflection, his recollection of the perceived external reality elicits his poetic writing and heals his mind from the strain of the world. For Wordsworth, known as the "Poet of Nature", Nature is a percept typically providing the raw material for poetry composition. His poetic composition is simply a reaction to natural appeal. In one of his letters to his sister Dorothy in 1790, Wordsworth, a skilled walker, wrote about his walking tour in Europe: "I am a perfect enthusiast in my admiration of Nature in all her various forms" (Hill 4). In the same letter, he told her about the pleasure he felt as he perceived attractive natural scenery and he regretted his inability to remember how impressive natural objects were upon him. In brief, the poet's relation to Nature is so special; he prefers to retreat regularly into its kingdom to get both charm and continuous inspiration. John Williams refers to "the idea of Wordsworth as a poet who drew uniquely on nature to achieve a power and intensity of inspiration" (3). This explicates Wordsworth's persistent "anxiety about his relations with nature" (Bowra 82). Despite this doubtful moment about the likelihood of losing his inspiration from Nature in 1802, "his trust in nature as a source of moral strength" and support (Bowra 82) persists. So "the moral inspiration" (82) could replace the emotional motivation of Nature.

In "The Fountain: A Conversation"[5], a poem of eighteen quatrains, Wordsworth lyrically brings about a genuine dialogue between a young speaker and Matthew, his much older friend. John Danby maintains that the poem studies "Matthew's psychological mechanisms and his dialogue with the young narrator" (71). The speaker affectionately talks about his love to Nature. The natural setting is splendid: spring, sunshine, sky, flowers, bush, tree, and woods. He says in the second quatrain:

[5] In *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems,* William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2003.

"We lay beneath a spreading oak,
Beside a mossy seat;
And from the turf a fountain broke
And gurgled at our feet" (L 5-8, 139).

He also enjoys "[t]his water's pleasant tune" (L 10) in the summer noon. The fountain displays the purity of water and its "gurgle" (L 8) as it flows quickly. This endows the stanza or the poem with both visual and auditory imagery. In the silence, both friends enjoy their encounter with Nature. The elated old Matthew exposes his delight in Nature. He is conceivably the poet himself in old age as he remains excited in the company of nature; he feels "beautiful and free" (L 44, 140). Rhythm is outstanding; alternate rhymes (abab pattern) amplify the listener's pleasure and magnify his/her emotional response. Reflecting the simplicity of nature, the poetic diction is remarkably simple and positive. Henceforth, the tone is mostly happy and optimistic. The depiction of the geographical space, a space marked by vitality and freedom, shared with the birds calls attention to the importance of protecting the environmental space. The centrality of Nature in the text, its prodigious impact on humans, and the experience of Matthew as told to the boy, are not only inspiring but also empowering.

Wordsworth was one the "Lake Poets", a small literary circle of three poets who inhabited the English Lake District, Westmorland: Wordsworth, Coleridge and Robert Southey. In 1799, he moved to his homeland in Grasmere to live with Dorothy among country people and in the midst of sublime Nature: the pristine lake, meadows, the happy dales, the mountains, forests, birds, and others. His choice to live in his native Lake District of Northern England could be explained by the powerful sense of place. Frances Ferguson describes "the process of being received into the steady bosom of the lake. It is the process of becoming a part of nature's production of variety" (144). On this, Alan G. Hill states, "The world of Nature to which he retired was springboard from which he could recapture Man's true source of happiness, his sense of sharing in the total harmony of things" (xxv-xxvi). In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1804)[6], Wordsworth, the wanderer, observes the region's magnificence and says using personification:

[6] In *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems,* William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2003.

[...] I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. (L 3-6, 188)

These lines may enlighten Wordsworth's durable ties with the natural space and sustain a justification for his "ecological position". The speaker's delight at fresh air and the dancing daffodils stimulates his sensory response and displays his infinite admiration of the whole scene. "We can already see the daffodils as a host," A. F. Scott avows, "by the water-side, underneath the trees. This presents the unforgettable picture of the 'long belt' of them along the shore" (62). With a keen eye for detail, the poet, perceives the grandeur of Nature and fruitfully responds to it both instantaneously and belatedly thanks to what could be called "ecological" memory in modern times. Indeed, this "delightful lyric" (63), to borrow Scott's words again, celebrates Nature as the beautiful and the sublime and transforms positive feelings to the readers.

In "To The Daisy"[7], Wordsworth equally portrays a pleasant representation of Nature and stresses the symbolic significance of the daisy as an element of rustic living, worthy of admiration and rejecting all the temptations of the material world. This explains the use of the positive poetic diction. Employing apostrophe to rejoice the daisy, he utters, "Sweet Daisy!" (L 3, 341), "Sweet Flower!" (L 33), "Sweet silent Creature!" (L 36) and its lively impact on him, "My heart with gladness, and a share/ Of thy meek nature!" (L 39-40). "The final effect" of a Wordsworthian Nature poem, Scott remarks "is one of joyful motion which can fill the heart with pleasure" (63). Wordsworth is not only interested in the natural world but also in the relationship between Nature and the individual. His poetry, therefore, offers a detailed account of the complex relations between Man and Nature. "The Poet", Wordsworth makes clear in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800/ 1802), "considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature" (16). His responsiveness to Nature fosters a strong sense of belonging to it and optimistically invites the reader to embrace life.

[7] *Poems Volume II* (1815), William Wordsworth.

One of the clearest statements of Wordsworth's attitude is to be found in "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798"[8]. Wordsworth's return to the Wye Valley in Scotland five years later stirred him to write the poem in order to express his love to Nature and his ideas about inspiration and the human soul. Nature is identified as the source of inspiration, the anchor providing him with stability, the mentor and the shield:

"The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being." (L 110-112, 93)

His faith in Nature is never to be shaken. He feels safe as he confirms, "Knowing that Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege" (L 123-4). Likewise, in "To the Same Flower" (1803)[9], the setting has a great impact on the poetic speaker. He describes his feeling about the change of the season from winter to spring. It is pure happiness; he utters, "Pleasures newly found are sweet" (L 1, 35). In *The Romantic Imagination*, Maurice Bowra ensures, "Nor need we doubt that much of Wordsworth's happiness came from living close to nature. In it he found a calm and a contentment" (101).

In "Lines Written in Early Spring" (1789)[10], a lyrical Romantic poem of six quatrains with alternate rhymes, Wordsworth depicts an aesthetic experience: the pleasure offered by close contact with Nature, and transmissible to readers, including the students of Romantic verse. This positive experience may be reflected on the environment. Rueckert suggests "how reading, teaching and writing about literature might function creatively in the biosphere, to the ends of biospheric purgation, redemption from human intrusions, and health" (77). Wordsworth brings to the fore his glee in connection with flowers, birds, "breezy air" (L 18, 51) of the spring season as the title suggests. His joy is evoked by the birdsongs; hence the first stanza reads:

"I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,

[8] Ibid.
[9] In *Wordsworth Poems in Two Volumes 1807*, Helen Darbishire, (ed.) 1952.
[10] In *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2003.

In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind". (L 1-4, 51)

The use of hyperbole in "a thousand blended notes" (L 1) emphasizes the speaker's exciting aural pleasure. The auditory imagery reflects the allure of the whole setting in spring time; thus, the poetic diction is positive thanks to words like "sweet" and "pleasant"; the tone is happy and optimistic mirroring "Nature's holy plan" (L 22) and adding a spiritual aspect to Nature. Besides, cheerfulness is transferable; the speaker is pleased thanks to the movement of the lively birds. In the fourth quatrain, the speaker returns to the impressive stir of the joyful birds hopping around him. "It seemed a thrill of pleasure" (L 16). The stanza form itself gives prominence to the dialogue or call and response between the speaker and these creatures. Hence, the poem's title fits well its content: a joyful individual in the company of elated birds in spring.

Read ecocritically, the transformative power of Nature might move from the birds to the poet, then to the reader. In that way, Rueckert conveys that:

> Energy flows from the poet's language centers and creative imagination into the poem and thence, from the poem (which converts and stores this energy) into the reader. Reading is clearly an energy transfer as the energy stored in the poem is released and flows back into the language centers and creative imaginations of the readers. (75)

He expands, "Properly understood, poems can be studied as models for energy flow, community building and ecosystems" (75). Accordingly, reading, teaching, and writing about Wordsworth's poetry does not only consist in sharing a pleasurable experience; more than that it is a stream of energy that builds ecological communities committed in generating respect toward Nature and protecting ecological systems. Therefore, I refute Garrard's claim that "the 'nature' that Wordsworth valorises is not the nature that contemporary environmentalists seek to protect. Romantic nature is never seriously endangered, and may in its normal state be poor in biological diversity; rather, it is loved for its vastness, beauty and endurance" (43). Back to the poem, the speaker contrasts Nature's great work with Man's misuse of the environment in the second quatrain. Here the tone becomes critical:

"To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man". (L 5-8, 51)

In the last stanza, the speaker retreats to a critique of human nature that culminates in a rhetorical question recalling the last line in the second quatrain and underlining the shift of tone to despair and anger. He pronounces, "What man has made of man?" (L 24). The speaker even laments the egoistic deeds of human beings against each other. So, the fluctuating changes in the poem's tone reflect contradictions in human nature and conflicts in society.

One of the clearest statements of Wordsworth's poetic vision is to be found in the Preface to *The Excursion* (1814), a long and philosophical poem I specially cherished with my students, as their approving eyes would confirm. In the following extract in the Preface, he lucidly presents his statement of his poetics:

*On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,*
*Musing in solitude, I oft perceive*
*Fair trains of imagery before me rise,*
*Accompanied by feelings of delight*
*Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;*
*And I am conscious of affecting thoughts*
*And hear remembrances, whose presence soothes*
*Or elevates the Mind […]*
*– To these emotions […]*
*I would give utterance in numerous verse.* (L 1-13, xi-xii, emphasis in the original)[11]

The above lyrical passage (italicized in whole), that proved convenient for me as a reader and teacher of Romantic poetry, presents Wordsworth's Romantic poetic values. The poem can be read as a metapoem where he defines his own poetic voice based on his own concerns. "Man", "Nature" and "Human Life" (all capitalized) are the core

[11] *The Excursion: A Poem,* William Wordsworth, edited by Edward Moxon, 1836.

topics of his poetry. On this very excerpt, David Daiches writes, "Nature, the individual, and the human life in general are related" (880).

The elements required for writing his verse are: the muse, solitude (the positive loneliness preferred by Wordsworth who escapes from his fellows to find Man through Nature), perception, imagery, imagination, "feelings of delight", thought, remembrance, emotion, "outward circumstance" and the "Soul". Thus, Marilyn Butler claims that *The Excursion* "is designedly topical: it is pointedly polemical and controversial" (140). The speaker implies the need for a freer, more subjective expression of passion, pathos and personal feelings. Essentially, Wordsworth portrays the impressiveness of Nature in fruitful imagery. If one links the first line of the passage to the last, one would have a straightforward idea of the prerequisites of verbal art. In brief, poetry is written out of the human mind and emotions in solitude (the Romantic poet is even presented as a solitary dreamer), thanks to the muse and imagination following a contact with nature. According to Wordsworth, imagination is the supreme poetic quality and a creative power that makes poets different or superior individuals. In this respect, Bowra asserts that Wordsworth "built his poetry on nature. It was the source of his creative strength and imagination. It was therefore a matter of anxious concern when he realized that this source was in some ways drying up" (83). Likewise, Rueckert accentuates the importance of imagination; in "literature, all energy comes from the creative imagination" (75). Besides, like any other work of creative imagination, a poem is "stored energy" (Rueckert 75). To sum up, the metapoetic statements expressed in this excerpt elaborate the poet's vision about the basics of poetry composition and the meaning of Nature and its correlation with humans.

### 3- The "Lucy Poems": Close Textual Analysis and Ecocritical Insights

The "Lucy Poems": "Strange Fits of Passion have I known", "She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways", "I Travelled Among unknown Men", "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower", and "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" are short lyrical narratives from

*Lyrical Ballads*[12] considered as mysterious pieces of writing. Like most Romantic poetry, these poems reveal a creative concern with poetic form. Although marked by direct language, enjoyable refrain, repetitions rather than figurative language, they share a philosophical reading of Nature, Man's interaction with Nature, and death. The Romantic poets were generally attracted to the ballad which deliberately imitates the form and spirit of a folk ballad. Wordsworth and Coleridge, for instance, turned to the ancient and popular oral form of the ballad and adapted it to a literary context. In a ballad, the narrative focuses on action that is frequently moved by dialogue; the stanza is usually defined as a quatrain, which offers musicality and distinguished rhyme schemes. The quatrain is the favorite stanza form for Romantic poets especially for Romantics of the first generation, i. e., Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge. The poem is written in an unequivocal, clear, colloquial style; it is written by a "man speaking to men" (13), to borrow Wordsworth's words in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. He argues that poetry should be written in the natural language of common speech, rather than in the elaborate dictions that were then considered poetic. Wordsworth "never adopts a superior tone, but writes (in his own words) as 'a man speaking to men'" (Hill xviii). Indeed, the directness and distinctive simplicity of his undecorated style replicate his openness to Nature. To enhance this simple style, he uses his well-loved ballad form, with its explicit subject matter, incidents from common life in vernacular speech, and connotations of folk songs.

In "Three Years She Grew" (1798), the first of the "Lucy Poems" and one of the "Poems of the Imagination" in *Lyrical Ballads*, Nature is revealed as a protective mother and a good teacher; and Lucy, who enjoys beauty, calm and loftiness, proves a good daughter and disciple. The poem is made of seven sestets that have an aabccb rhyme scheme with mostly iambic tetrameter lines. Lucy is a common girl who belongs to Nature and not to the London society of sophisticated manners. Her modesty is suggested through the use of unadorned poetic diction and natural imagery that make the poem more appealing to the reader: "up the mountain springs" (L 15, 143), "The stars of midnight" (L 25) and "rivulets danc[ing] their wayward round" (L 28). One

[12] In *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems,* William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2003.

follows Lucy's natural growth from a "Child" to a "Girl" to a "Maiden" to "My Lucy" and then to a dead young woman. Through an antithetical pattern suggesting that the intricate course of organic growth entails an interaction of opposing forces, Wordsworth portrays Nature, albeit with an emphasis on solar energy, in all of its states: Sun and shower— law and impulse— rock and plain— earth and heaven— glade and bower— over and above the life and death enfolding antithesis employed to identify the complex process of natural organic growth and to form a balanced contrast of ideas. According to Rueckert, "all energy in nature comes, ultimately, from the sun, and life in the biosphere depends upon a continuous flow of sunlight" (74). Additionally, Rueckert professes, "We need to make some connections between literature and the sun, between teaching literature and the health of the biosphere" (75). He even compares poets to "suns" and poems to "green plants […] that help to create creativity and community" (75). But Lucy, whose metaphorical "race" (L 38, 144) is so short, leaves for the speaker the most precious inheritance: Nature, Silence and Memory, all that he needs to write poetry. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling point out that "Wordsworthian Nature, with all her representatives – Lucy, Margaret, the image of the child – is the most complex and positive of these temptations" (4). Nature worship, for Wordsworth, can be reflected in human (the rustic women) and non-human characters exposed in his poems, including the poem under study.

Nature is the main speaker of the text. Nature thinks that Lucy is the most beautiful creature on earth. "A lovelier flower/ On earth was never sown" (L 2-3, 143), and promises to take care of her to make "A lady of [her] own" (L 6). Nature decides to adopt Lucy, for she is the loveliest flower on earth. So, the poem begins with the personified Nature, first seeing the three-year-old Lucy. Nature takes an interesting role in this poem; 'she' is attractive and generous; and yet eventually speculates the circumstances of Lucy's death. The first speaker leaves the ground for the second, Nature, for six whole ballad stanzas to declare her interest in Lucy and to fulfill her promises. While this poem traces Lucy's growth under the protection and power of Mother Nature, it alludes to a hidden rivalry between Nature and the speaker. The symbolical number "Three" in the title embraces Lucy, Nature and the poet (who is

himself part of Nature). According to Spencer Hall, "The cleavage between human lover and nature dilates in 'Three Years She Grew,' the speaker and nature becoming, in effect, rivals for Lucy's love" (166). The suggestive power of Wordsworth's lines evokes that Man and Nature are inseparable, albeit a secret conflict may arise between them. Nevertheless, Man does not exist outside the natural world but rather at its heart. Henceforth, the imagery of Nature is quite rich in the poem; for instance, visual imagery as in the sight of the stars, and auditory imagery as in the music of the stream/ the "murmuring sound" of the rivulets (L 28, 143). Indeed, there are so many natural objects like lawn, stars and earth. Lucy is the pupil of Mother Nature; hence, she is in harmony with all natural elements and seasons.

The effect of description lies in bringing attractive images to the reader's mind. In addition to the sweeping metaphor of Nature, there is simile; Lucy will be as playful as a fawn (young deer) which moves across fields and climbs mountains. The instance of personification in "where rivulets dance" (L 28, 143) reflects the metaphorical happiness of natural elements and evokes the beautiful natural scenery of the English lakes. Images about the picturesqueness of Nature recall impressions from the reader's own experience. Maurice Cranston confirms that "Wordsworth was close to Rousseau in his love to the visible world as God had created it, and in his dislike of industrial arts and empirical sciences" (59). In this poem, Wordsworth responds not only to the nice scenery but also to the aural attractiveness of Nature; so that we move from the lovely silence dominating the natural setting to the positive impact of sounds in "the beauty born of murmuring sound" (L 29). Therefore, thanks to imagery (both pictorial and auditory) and to figurative language (although his poetry is not remarkable for it), the reader comes to terms with the fact that Wordsworth has a deep sensitivity about Nature. His images tend to be sensitive descriptions of actual experience, ways that convey ideas and feelings. His poetry is a combination of remembered observations (from perception to recollection) or pleasant, beautiful memories of nature and philosophical responses to them. Thus, one may say that poetry is a genre that combines images, ideas and sounds to produce an effect in the reader's imagination, and that the purity of Nature can be reflected in the purity of statement. In this case, the style

becomes aesthetic and moral at once, for the study of a variety of poetic images expressive of the poet's emotions suggests additional ethical meanings.

Moreover, the plethora of sound devices spotlights the poem's lyrical musicality and underlines Nature's contentment and the first speaker's lamentation. This explains the change in the tone from joyful throughout the poem to tragic in the last two stanzas. Instances of alliteration run throughout the text, for instance, in the third stanza, "shall be the breathing balm" (L 16, 143), to add harmony and to reflect Nature's prediction that Lucy will find peace of mind or whatever can soothe her mind only in nature. The second instance lies in the fourth stanza, "silent sympathy" (L 24), where the alliterative effect of the sibilant /s/ creates an auditory image of silence or whispering. This produces harmony in the line of verse and shows harmony between Nature and Lucy. Equally, consonance is employed in the sixth stanza, "vital feelings of delight" (L 31) to add a musical aspect to the line of verse and to display the great promises of Nature in case Lucy lives with her "in this happy dell" (L 36, 144). Moreover, two instances of consonance are depicted in the seventh stanza, "How soon my Lucy's race was run" (L 38) to emphasize the transience of Lucy's life and the speaker's grief over her death. This particular line declares the end of Nature's speech and the return of the first speaker who announces Lucy's early death. "The lover's lone claim to possession, 'How soon *my* Lucy's race was run' (italics mine), strikes the ear with pathetic futility, a futility heightened by the double meaning of 'of my own' in stanza one" (Hall 167). Hence, the poem can be identified as an elegy for a maid who died and who was admired by the speaker not only for her loveliness and spontaneity, but for her bond with Nature. The last stanza translates the state of denial he suffers after Lucy's death, "And never more will be" (L 42). But when Lucy died, she left a valuable heritage to the first speaker, a wealth: Nature, Tranquility, and Memory. Memory is central to preserving ties with Nature and the writing of poetry for Wordsworth, who believes that images retained in memory and recollected in tranquility are a source of emotion, poetic inspiration, and future healing.

The lesson to be learnt from the poem is the following: one has to keep in touch with Nature in order to be glad. In an ecocritical reading, the poem serves as a plea;

attachment to Nature provides humans with growth, energy, balance, and sustainability. Nature then expounds on what it means to be Nature's Lady for several stanzas. Nature promises to make Lucy part of herself, part of the rocks, the earth, the heaven, the glades, the mountain springs, the clouds, the trees, and the storms. In addition, Lucy will fully enjoy Nature and understand it. It will be as if they were in constant communication, "Myself will to my darling be" (L 7, 143). In the seventh and last stanza, autonomous Nature declares that "her" "work was done" (L37, 144); "she" has fulfilled her promise to Lucy, letting her grow into a mature woman (as promised in the sixth stanza). Therefore, Nature is capable of endowing humans with tranquility, peace, and lessons. Ecocriticism scrutinizes the ties between human beings and the natural environment and examines how literature epitomizes Nature as a living entity as in Wordsworth's poetry. For ecocritics, Nature is an entity in itself. Human beings are part of this entity. According to Daiches, "The poet 'considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature'" (880). The poem follows the development of Lucy from an infant to a young girl, to a dead person mirroring the cycle of nature. She is called "Child", then "Girl", later "Maiden", finally "My Lucy". Definitely, the poet's use of capital letters in these names stresses some of his intentions. One of them might be glorifying this enigmatic character possessed by Nature.

"Strange Fits of Passion" is the second of the five short lyrics known as the "Lucy Poems" Wordsworth wrote between 1799 and 1801. It is a ballad first published in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1802). Each of the poem's seven stanzas is a quatrain that has a rhyming scheme abab (alternate rhymes). The poem is written in iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter respectively. In this lyrical poem, the speaker depicts his trip to his beloved's cottage, and expresses his thoughts and feelings on the way. Like a storyteller, he builds suspense leading up to the climax of his poem. Besides, his strong connection to Lucy is drawn through the use of enjambment and inversion. Inversion is employed to stress the priority of Lucy, as in "When she I loved" (L 5, 130); she precedes him in importance. As for figures of speech, simile in the second stanza, "Fresh as a rose in June" (L 6), mirrors the girl's youth, loveliness, and spontaneity. Personification ensues to describe the natural paths leading to her, "Those paths so dear

to me" (L 12), and to her cottage affectionately named "cot" (L 15). But the reader could never be sure whether Lucy has ever existed; she is likely only a creation of the poet's imagination. In any case, her identity is left mysterious throughout the five lyrics. Hence, Antonia Till argues that the "Lucy Poems" "so apparently simple, are Wordsworth's most enigmatic statements" (viii).

Through the use of run-on lines and musical sound devices, the poet succeeds in drawing an image in which natural objects and human beings are interconnected according to the laws of ecology. Here Nature is represented as "Kind" (L 18) and as the "Gentlest boon" (L 18), the moon and the horse as sympathizers with the lover. The moon, most likely a metaphor for Lucy, comes once literally (the real moon), once metaphorically (the beloved) and once symbolically (Nature as a whole). The moon, which appears for five times in this lyric and in different states, helps the speaker reach Lucy's cottage and participates in the action and dialogue of the ballad with the lover and his horse going on a moonlight trip to his beloved Lucy's cottage in the countryside. The horse, as well, seems to identify with the speaker during the ride and to quicken its pace towards "Lucy's cot" (L 15). The speaker even feels united with the horse that stands for a human companion, "we climbed the hill" (L 14). Bowra underlines Wordsworth's "companionship with nature […] His feeling for the fellowship of natural things was so instinctive and so powerful that he was almost at home with them than with human beings" (100). In the penultimate stanza, albeit quite rhythmical, the mood has changed to foreshadow the tragedy to befall, "My **h**orse moved on; **h***oo*f after **h***oo*f" (L 21). Moreover, the alliterative /h/ sound is quite central to the poem's music; and apart from its rhythmical effect, it mirrors the affliction of the speaker who begins to worry about Lucy. The consonance using the /f/ sound in "hoo**f**" and "hoo**f**" underlines the same effect, i. e., gloomy prophecy. The assonance resulting from the repetition of /u:/ in "h**oo**f" and the second "h**oo**f" also reflects the shift in tone and the growing sympathy of the horse that moves fast and never stops until reaching Lucy's cottage which is no longer "cot". The cottage has, then, lost its emotional value; for Lucy is no longer there. In all that, Nature is represented as a compassionate character, once in the form of the moon, and once in the form of the horse. From an ecocritical approach,

Nature itself is a central character in this momentous interaction between the poet and the natural space.

In this poem which evokes both the natural world and the mind of the poet, different poetic devices and figures of speech are used to highlight the speaker's love to Lucy who represents Nature. The poetic diction employed in the text is articulate[131], pleasant and mostly related to nature and sentiment. It is first working for the zealous and thrilling trip to Lucy's cottage as it is obvious in nouns like "passion", "lover", "dreams", and "boon". But later, it is working for the gloomy change in tone as it is plain in the use of positive adjectives like "dear", "sweet", "gentlest", "bright" but finally the negative "dead", and in the movement of (activity) verbs (by the speaker, the moon, and the horse) such as "dare", "tell", "loved", "looked", "bent", "fixed", "reached", "climbed", "kept", "moved", "dropped", but at last "cried". Besides, both the lyrical, subjective "I" and the perceptive, Romantic "eye"—as in "I fixed my eye" (l. 9) and "my eyes I kept" (l. 19)—express the speaker's intense emotions and convey his meditative perception, whether mediated through the senses or the mind. As he closely approaches the cottage, the moon vanishes from sight behind the roof. Apparently, the coming of the night comes in a Romantic fashion: a "descending moon" (L 20) toward his beloved whose name is passionately introduced. In the last stanza, his panic is enormous as he calls himself "Lover" and utters his fears openly in the last line: "If Lucy should be dead" (L 28). Therefore, he urgently calls for mercy: "O **m**ercy! To **m**yself I cried" (L 27). In this line, alliteration fuses with consonance (the text is particularly rich in sound devices) to call attention to his unfathomable woe. On this, Hall writes, "Lucy's death is a psychological drama enacted wholly in the lover's mind" (169). Ultimately, the poem encloses a memorable quality with its exceptional images, rhythmic characteristics, and predicting mortality.

"She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways", the third "Lucy Poem", is a short lyric of three quatrains with alternate rhymes; most words are monosyllabic. The poem is an elegy lamenting a girl who lives unknown and who dies unknown. The solitary speaker

[131] In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, Wordsworth declares that he had attempted to imitate the "language really used by men" (5).

is certain that the difference of whether she is alive or dead is only to him. However, aesthetic distance, or the degree of emotional involvement in a work of art, engages the reader emotionally and makes him identify with the desperate speaker whose sense of loss is quite tremendous. The "recognition of loss marks the concluding lines of 'She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways' and 'Three Years She Grew'" (Hall 166). In "She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways", several natural elements exist: "untrodden ways" (L 1, 131), dove springs, violet, moss, star and sky. It is Nature that makes the poem more appealing to the reader. All these elements depict the simplicity of Lucy's life, her purity and elevation. Introducing her, the speaker uses "she", then "A Maid", finally "Lucy". Through metaphor, Lucy is implicitly compared to a violet but whose surroundings (like "a mossy stone" (L 5)) are not fit for her prettiness; and through simile, her fairness is likened to that of a star (L 7), hyperbolically of the only star "shining in the sky" (L 8). Indeed, the countryside is the symbol of freedom and pastoral life. Wordsworth values the countryside and its humble people who live and work in harmony with the natural environment. "[A]mong human beings", Wordsworth "preferred on the whole those who were closest to nature" (Bowra, 100). Like of most of his other characters, Lucy belongs to the countryside, which clearly reflects the poet's interest in idyllic incidents and ordinary country people, because their way of life has not been corrupted by the artificialities of city life.

In "I Travelled Among Unknown Men" (1801), another "Lucy Poem" of four quatrains and alternate rhymes (abab), Wordsworth employs apostrophe to address England and express his intense patriotic feelings. Mountains, some of the attractions of Nature, embody a recurrent symbol of superiority in Wordsworth and of mysterious beauty in Romantic verse. They signify his own nationalism and the greatness of his country and its countryside where Lucy lived and its "green field[s]" (L 15, 167) where she used to play. Out of memory and belated appreciation, he writes such a poem, that in spite of illustrating the theme of death, it does not lose its bright atmosphere. Cranston claims that "memory furnishes the images for Wordsworth" (59). At first glance, the poem seems pretty revelatory of his patriotic love. A worthy secondary remark underlines his fondness of Nature and his pleasure of recalling the beautiful

natural surroundings, the site of Lucy's delightful sport. In an impressive sincerity, the speaker links his beloved woman to his beloved country as if Lucy became his motherland, his nation, and his country. The speaker, then, gives the character of Lucy larger dimensions. Although the poem focuses on death by depicting his lamentation over Lucy's loss, it is, as well, a poem that illustrates the speaker's love for England and its Nature. Hence the tone is enthusiastic and highly nostalgic in the beginning but sad and pessimistic in the end. The poetic diction is basically simple, related to Nature, and expressive of patriotic and sentimental love. Albeit transparent, this diction serves to reflect the profundity of the speaker's feelings. The poem, an open address to England, is but a declaration of the speaker's grief over Lucy's death. Even Nature has joined in mourning her. Apart from offering rhythm, the assonance in "bes**i**de… f**i**re" (L 12) makes the line foreshadow the sorrow to come in the last stanza. Nonetheless, this poem "represents, rather, a new departure; more precisely, it represents an attempt to transmute the nascently tragic perceptions of the first four poems into a new and affirmative form" (Hall 174).

To contextualize this poem, it is useful to talk about Wordsworth's travel to America with his sister Dorothy and his friend Coleridge, then his travel to the Azores (Portugal), then to Germany in 1789-99 with Dorothy and Coleridge in addition to the five years he spent in France at the time of the French Revolution. (Untouched) Nature immediately appeals to the poet and he transfers this appeal to the reader. Travelling to other countries is beneficial for discovery and knowledge, but it is also important in recognizing the value of one's own country and in nurturing feelings of patriotism. In the first stanza, the significance of the speaker's travels is clearly stated. These travels make him appreciate his country much more fully than he had before. Thus, travelling abroad helps him learn not only about foreign lands but also about his own feelings; he realizes how much he loves his country. Using negation to exhibit positive meanings, the speaker expresses a strong sense of belonging and praises England because he is acquainted with other nations. Then, he promises not to leave the country anymore. One hits upon oxymoron in "melancholy dream" (L 5); travelling, which is a dream for any person, has become a melancholy, a deep sadness or depression for the poet away from his beloved England. The alliterative repetition of the "s" sound in "A **s**econd time; for

still I seem" (L 7) and of the "m" sound in "more and more" (L 8) creates a musical harmony in the second stanza and lays emphasis on the poet's incomparable love for his country. The reader is, at that point, invited to cherish the poem's prevailing sentiment.

The poet emphasizes his contact with people from a variety of nationalities in places distant from his own country. The word "unknown" (L 1) describes foreign people who are unfamiliar and who speak different languages and belong to different cultures. But "unknown" can also describe the depth of the speaker's genuine feelings towards his beloved, something he finally realizes. In the third stanza, he uses inversion in "She I cherished" (L 11) to underline her utmost significance for him. He also demonstrates how Lucy, who is pertaining to the English landscape, lives in harmony midst the natural surroundings. She is part and parcel of Nature that provides him with the physical and emotional blessings. The place where Lucy used to live and delightfully play is unchanged; therefore, memory about her never fades. Hence, the images of "mornings", "nights", "bowers", "green field", "lands", "sea", "shore" and principally "mountains" are typically linked to the natural world even if they address patriotism and loss.

"A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" (1799) is the last and the shortest of the "Lucy Poems". It is a lyric of two quatrains with alternate rhymes. The opening line – and title – set the tone for the entire poem. Most words in this poem are monosyllabic because life has almost stopped for the speaker who is now certain about Lucy's death. It is for this reason he uses several negations in this text: Lucy now has "no motion", "no force" (L 5, 131); "She neither hears nor sees" (L 6). Her demise may even denote ecocide or ecological destruction. But she is still part of Nature, now she is part of the earth; she ultimately returns to the womb of Mother Nature where there are "rocks" and "stones" (L 8) to reflect the hardness of life and the cruelty of fate, but also "trees" (L 8) to say that life is still possible after Lucy's death thanks to her memory and the heritage she left: Nature. Accordingly, the initial allusion to death in "slumber" (L 1) stands as a paradox to the last word of the poem "trees" (L 8) symbolizing potential life. The speaker depicts the bright "earth's diurnal course" (L 7); for Lucy is part of his daily life, and for her energy lies in offering him hope even after her death. Daiches indicates

"[t]he sheer purity of statement, in a style both natural and lapidary, is related to the mystical element in Wordsworth's faith. Here his mystical sense of the relation between life, death, and natural objects gives the poem its quite intensity" (888). The cycle of Nature seems to begin with death and to move towards life. Here, one may highlight the blurred lines between existence and non-existence, human and non-human, life and death, making use of Timothy Morton's "Ambient Poetics" (56). The implicit antithesis between death and life is consistent with all "Lucy Poems", their mysteries, and with the contradictions in Nature, human nature and society.

Lucy is, then, an unforgettable creature who still owns the speaker's heart and possesses his thoughts. She is simply exceptional and inspiring on earth or still so under the earth. In both cases, she is part of his beloved Nature. She stands for that romanticized, idealized, aestheticized Nature figure: beautiful, silent, and ultimately absorbed into "rocks, and stones, and trees" at her death. While Morton refutes the romanticized versions of Nature that invite poets and people in general to appreciate and contemplate Nature, Garrard thinks that cultural tropes like pastoral nostalgia or apocalypse construct our environmental thinking. Besides, alienation from the Earth is entirely irrelevant to Romantic thought. Ferguson considers "the process of becoming so particular and particularized that one becomes as typical as it is possible for a human to be—by dying into nature" (144). Yet, Morton's "Ambient Poetics" would disregard the desolation of the moment of burying Lucy and stress the significance of her dissolution into soil, or, what Butler calls a likely "communion with nature" (67). Thus, this lyric, in particular, refers to an earth-centered approach in poetic composition; therefore, it implies an ecocentric perspective.

Therefore, the mourning in the "Lucy Poems" does not denote the very distancing that Morton critiques, but rather Lucy's dissolution into the nonhuman at the moment of her death annihilating that distance and creating a genuine entanglement between the human and the Natural. Indeed, Morton's theory of "Ambient Poetics" challenges the way Nature is perceived as a separate object in the background. Instead, it argues for a more engaging relation to the environment surrounding and affecting humans. In other words, the environment is not an object or a place out there to be distantly admired but rather as a surrounding presence that determines human experience. Nature should be

regarded as an enveloping existence rather than an isolated subject for observation or romanticizing as in Romantic poetry. Holding Nature as a distant and pure entity for contemplation and not as an object the speaker is involved with might challenge ecological thought. The attempt at preserving and idealizing Nature paradoxically drives humans away from ecological truths and may bring about the objectification of Nature. By the word "ambience" (52) in the context of his analysis of British Romanticism, including the poetry of William Wordsworth, Morton means the blurry line separating the human being and the natural world whereas humans are already inside the system. He defines "ambience" as "a poetic enactment of a state of nondual awareness that collapses the subject-object division upon which depends the aggressive territorialization that precipitates ecological destruction" (52). He wonders, "what if people were more like environments?" (54). For him, the problem lies in separating humans from their environment. Furthermore, he suggests a more intricate relationship between humans and Nature, "perhaps one might deconstruct personhood into ambience, atmosphere, surroundings, dwelling, environment" (54). "Ambient Poetics" makes the environmental involvement distinguishable for the poet, and examines how the poem makes the reader experience the lived environment and be affected by it. Thus, Morton believes that ecological awareness means acknowledging our already intertwined bonds with the environment.

**Conclusion**

The textual analysis of the selected poems accentuated the inspirational and spiritual aspects of Nature. The simplicity of language used in these texts reflects the purity of Nature and characters connected with it. Indeed, Wordsworth's poetic vision is illuminated in the Preface to *The Excursion* where he enumerates the prerequisites for writing this poetry, i. e., perception, imagery, imagination, emotion, memory, the muse, and solitude. In the enigmatic "Lucy Poems", Nature is exposed as a defensive mother and a good instructor to Lucy, an uncorrupted ordinary country girl. One may consider Wordsworth's "Lucy Poems" "ecopoems", or ecologically-aware poetic texts, part of

what is known today as "ecopoetics", a creative practice of poetry writing engrained with green consciousness and a study of how language interacts with ecology. In these elegiac poems, grief does not designate the very estrangement that Morton refutes but rather Lucy's entanglement with Nature.

This paper focused on echoes of Nature in Wordsworth's Nature poems and his personae's emotional, spiritual and "ecological" responses to it. The natural world proves not only an alternative world for Wordsworth, the individual and the poet, but also an alternative site for the reader in a period of ecological crises. While Wordsworth's strong bond with Nature validates his "ecological position", ecocriticism examines this bond and highlights Nature as a living entity with healing and transformative powers. Thanks to a close reading of a selection of Wordsworth's poems, and to pure images from Nature, I noticed that he follows a specific strategy: most parts of the text are explicitly designated to the celebration of Nature and a tiny part to an obvious warning about what may happen to Nature if neglected, abused, or damaged by humans. This is exactly what Jonathan Bate (1991) calls "Romantic ecology", or Romantic poetry embedded in ecological consciousness. Thus, developing an ecocritical attitude is fairly appropriate to the reading of Romantic poetry that is, alternately, highly valuable for environmental studies in general. Ultimately, I believe that the ecological function of poetry lies in reminding humanity of its responsibility toward Nature and the Earth. In the classroom, it is of quintessential importance to raise ecological awareness (through the interpretation of poems, critics, and literary theories) in young learners, to sensitize them to environmental threats, and to cultivate ecological ethics in new generations.

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