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[Environment](#), [Nature](#)



Kevin Thomas Poetry 4, March, 2013 Nature: Our Second Mother The poetry of the English Romantic period often contained many descriptions and ideas of nature, not found in most writing. The Romantic poets shared several characteristics in common, certainly one of the most significant of these is their respective views on nature, which seems to range from a more spiritual, if not pantheistic view, as seen in the works of William Wordsworth as well as Emily Dickinson. The two have quite similar approaches to the theme of nature in their poetry. Both Dickinson and Wordsworth view nature as an extremely positive force. This force, they believe, is imperative to one's growth and development of mind, body, and soul. William Wordsworth is known as one of the most prominent poets of the nineteenth century. Wordsworth was born in England on April seventh, 1770. At the mere age of eight years old, Wordsworth faced severe adversity when his mother passed away. Only a few years later, Wordsworth's father also passed. At this point, him and his four other siblings were left as orphans. These struggles early on in his lifetime are huge factors that contributed to his poetic works. As he spent much time alone throughout his childhood, Wordsworth turned to nature for support. He saw nature as somewhat of a safe haven to him. He believed that nature was, in a sense his guardian. This is why we see nature as the main theme of his works. He almost couldn't help but write about Nature - it was in his very being right from the start. Speaking on Wordsworth, poet Matthew Arnold stated, " Nature not only gave him the matter, but wrote his poems for him. " (Arnold 237) Wordsworth was in a true sense was the most romantic and the purest soul of nature, for it provided him true inspiration. Wordsworth's view on nature is an extremely

spiritual one. He is considered as being a worshipper of nature, some even referred to him as " The High Priest of Nature. " His love of nature is clearer and more pure than any other English poet at the time, and even to date.

One of Wordsworth's goals was to elaborate on the presence of God throughout all of nature. We see this in an excerpt from his poem " The Excursion: Book Nine, " in which Wordsworth states: In all things, in all natures; in the stars Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds, In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks, The moving waters, and the invisible air. Whate'er exists hath properties that spread Beyond itself, communicating good A simple blessing, or with evil mixed; Spirit that knows no insulated spot, No chasm, no solitude; from link to link It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds. (Wordsworth lines 5-15)

Through these words, Wordsworth tells us of the divinity of nature. God's presence within it is much do to with his creating it. Everything we see around us is only here because of the creator, which is why Wordsworth finds God in all aspects of nature. It is only when in nature that Wordsworth can find peace with God. He believes that one's relationship with nature is parallel to his or her relationship with God. Therefore, the closer one is to nature, the closer one is to God. Throughout Wordsworth's work, nature provides the ultimate good influence on an individual's mind. Wordsworth repeatedly emphasizes the importance of nature to an individual's moral development. He maintains that, " One impulse from a vernal wood/ May teach you more of man/ Of moral evil and of good/ Than all the sages can. " (Wordsworth 21-24) Wordsworth explains that there are many things that cannot be found in books. For one to learn about the world, one must delve

into it without hesitation, for sages learn nothing of the real world and living in it while they are pondering the great meaning of life. In his works, he reveals the inner soul of nature as a great teacher, or sculptor of intellectuality. These ideas are depicted vividly in Wordsworth's poem, *The Tables Have Turned; An Evening Scene on the Same Subject*. In this poem, Wordsworth explains the lessons one will learn from nature, lessons that cannot be learned in a classroom, or even from the most distinguished of professors. The speaker begins by telling his friend to stop reading books because he will become fat from being inactive. The speaker then asks why he chooses to be so serious while outside there is a beautiful evening scene: Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books; Or surely you'll grow double: Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks, Why all this toil and trouble? The sun above the mountain's head, A freshening lustre mellow Through all the long green fields has spread, His first sweet evening yellow. (Wordsworth 1-8) The speaker continues, he tells his friend that books are boring and dull. Instead of reading, he should take his lazy-self outside to where the linnet and the throstle are singing beautiful music containing more wisdom than any book ever could. The two lines that follow are probably the most important in the poem: " Come forth into the light of things / Let Nature be your teacher." (Wordsworth 15-16) The speaker is telling his friend that Nature has more to teach than books, and that he should go outside rather than spend all day engulfed in stale pages. This poem helps to solidify Wordsworth's belief that nature contains more knowledge than any book or any professor. It is only within nature that we can learn the lessons we need to grow as individuals. Another world-renown poet who constantly used the theme of nature is Emily

Dickinson. Dickinson was born in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts. During her youth, she had a short stint at Holyoke Women's Seminary. She left after only a year due to severe home-sickness. At home, she lived a very reclusive life. She rarely ever left her family's home, and seldom had any house guests, she was even once quoted, " My friends are my estate. " Her introverted life style is seen as a major factor in her love of nature, for in her seclusion, she was able to truly appreciate the wonders of nature.

Dickinson's poetry invokes in the reader the sense that nature is actually alive, and all around her. She viewed nature as her protector, as a force there to take care of her mentally, physically, and spiritually. Like Wordsworth, she felt that nature possessed something that cannot be found in the material world that we know, but something required for one's health. Nature is seen as being a necessity in Emily Dickinson's poem " Nature, the Gentlest Mother, " where she compares nature, to a child's mother. In the first stanza, Dickinson describes how nature is loving, kind, and patient. " Nature, the gentlest mother/ Impatient of no child / The feeblest or the waywardest/-Her admonition mild. " (Dickinson 1-4) She tells how nature does nothing but given to us, even though we don't always treat her the way we know we should. No matter how we offend her, she is waiting with open arms to forgive. Nature lives its own life freely and without any barriers while at the same time any pain you give to her hurts her quite deeply. In the third stanza, Dickinson describes the justness of nature. " How fair her conversation/ A summer afternoon/ Her household, her assembly; / And when the sun goes down"(Dickinson 9-12) In these lines, she tells us how whatever nature does, it is always fair to everybody, not just to one part of

nature but also to all the others. It is something that one could call balance in nature. If there is anything wrong with her " children" she balances. Throughout this piece, Dickinson is trying to get a major idea across to the reader. Nature is a necessity for one's growth as an individual. Just as a baby needs its mother to feed and nurture it, we need nature to do the same. Dickinson had religious views that differed strongly from those of William Wordsworth. Dickinson's struggles with faith and doubt reflect her society's diverse perceptions of God, nature, and humankind. " Emily alone among the five never could bring herself to make a formal confession of faith, and her inability to do so gave her for many years a distressing sense of inadequacy. " (Johnson 7) Dickinson's struggle with faith led her to have a very unique view on death; one of the most fundamental parts of nature. Throughout Dickinson's works, death is one of her major touchstones. The subject of death is a reoccurring theme within her poems and letters. Although some find her fascination with death to be morbid, hers was not an unusual mindset at this time. Dickinson viewed death as a necessity. For death brings new life. By using death in her poetry, Dickinson shows how death, as part of nature, is required for growth. Although there are many slight differences present, William Wordsworth and Emily Dickinson had reasonably similar views on nature. When speaking on Dickinson, poet John Crowe Ransom commented, " She always had quick and warm affections for people, and she loved nature spontaneously with what Wordsworth might have called a passion. " (Ransom 30) Throughout childhood, and the early years, both Dickinson and Wordsworth led very isolated lifestyles. These introverted lifestyles were a catalyst that led these two to slip quietly into the warm and

comforting arms of Mother Nature. The vulnerable stages that each of them were in at the time made it quite easy for them to be enveloped by nature. Nature became not only a comforting surrounding for these two, but more of a friend and even mentor. Both Emily Dickinson and William Wordsworth believed that a good relationship with nature will help an individual connect to both the spiritual and the social worlds. Although their ideas were separate and had unique, they contained the same basic message: There are many lessons that one must learn that cannot be found in books, or the minds of any sage or scholar. There is but one place you will find this knowledge; you will find it in the grass, the trees, the birds, the bees, and all else that is nature.

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