

# A white shingled house and "steep and lofty cliffs"

Business



" I have owed to them,/In hours of weariness, sensations sweet/felt in the blood, and felt along the heart" (26-28) The house on the hill overlooked a wide, scraggly field laced with sunflowers and black eyed susans. The shrubs and weeds were sliced by the bike paths I traversed every morning. They led to a road that divided a marshy section of the Long Island Sound from the field. We ate family dinners on a rusty glass table on the porch, overlooking the long stretch of water. When the tide was low during a full moon, we could just barely smell the earthy mud beneath the surface. I spent hours swinging softly on the hammock while reading or talking to my sister.

When I was very little, I rode a small bike around and around the peeling white porch. Some days we decorated the house with flowers and interesting rocks from the beach, and on others my sister and I played soccer in the backyard. In the evenings, I painted or drew under the shade of towering trees in the front of the house and walked through the majestic forest behind our property. As the summers drifted by, I watched the flowers and the long grass of the field grow and die. In William Wordsworth's " Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour," the speaker explains how the memories of the environment in which he spent his childhood have comforted him in times of solitude. His perception of the environment and natural world, in which he spent his younger years, is strongly connected to who he currently is, both physically and emotionally.

Memories are not always completely accurate, yet the nature featured in them provides solace and comfort later in life. In both my experience and the speaker's, joyful memories from our childhood have led to a glorification of

the setting in which they occurred, the imagery of which has been a source of emotional and physical strength in the present. The speaker uses specific imagery to demonstrate the healing and enduring power of nature. The memories of the “beauteous forms” of the “steep and lofty cliffs” and the “waters, rolling from their mountain-springs” have eased the pain of solitude and more urban life in recent years (lines 22, 5, and 3). He describes and remembers the beauty of the landscape vividly, but only because of the events that took place there.

He personifies the images of the landscape: he physically “owed to them” happiness and strength, as if they are people (line 26). His memory of the scenery might be slightly inaccurate, but, for him, they are representative of joyful and youthful times. These “plots of cottage ground, these orchard tufts” have affected who he has grown to be (line 11). They are “felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,” and therefore visceral to all aspects of his life (line 28). The intertwinement of the speaker’s bodies, emotions, and the memories of the hills is further emphasized when Wordsworth describes how the hills comfort him in “hours of weariness” (line 27).

Wordsworth suggests that, when the speaker is physically tired and weak, the hills provide brief “sensations sweet” (line 27). The contrast in time between “sensations” and “hours” demonstrate the healing and calming ability of these particular aspects of nature: long periods of solitude are cured by only brief moments of remembering the environment of his memories. As the speaker matures, these images of nature from his childhood calm him and remind him of what he remembers as a better time. However, now he looks upon the landscape and notices “the still, sad music  
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of humanity" (line 91). He realizes that the environment is different from the way he remembered and, perhaps, glorified it. He notices the way humans have changed the land.

But he decides to "still be a lover of the meadows and the woods" and continue to cherish the glorified version of them from his memory (line 268). Wordsworth uses the word "still" both to describe the enduring effect of human intervention on the land and to demonstrate the speaker's enduring love for the land. Three years have passed since I last traversed the winding bike paths leading up to our white shingled house. My tires trampled the grass in the field, and I rode up the once challenging hill with surprising ease. As I reached the front yard, I noticed how fragile the house appeared. The creamy paint on the porch was peeling, and the rusting hammock squeaked as it swung in the breeze.

The trees that used to tower over me as I read in their shade greeted me warmly, and I could reach up to touch their highest branches. I was faintly aware of the fact that I, technically, was trespassing. The house always seemed to belong to us, it was hard for me to forget how much I loved, and still do, the wraparound porch and broken screen windows. I spent many nights dreaming of the seemingly expansive meadow and the table where my family, as the four of us, ate dinner. Remembering the feel of the coarse sunflowers always comforted me, but the scene also always saddened me.

As I idolized the house, I also imagined an impossibly cheerful childhood of summers there. As my parents divorced, I clung on to these somewhat inaccurate images in the hope of mending my family. The speaker and I

returned to a place glorified because of the time we spent there when we were younger, but we both found those places to be different from the way we remembered them. Just as the speaker recalled long streams, cliffs, and pastures to comfort him when he is lonely, I remember a white shingled house. But these familiar aspects of nature may not only provide solace and comfort.

Perhaps idolizing physical images of the past can lead to a blind nostalgia about the events that occurred then and impractical expectations for the present and future.