

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.--Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beautiful forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
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:--feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:--that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,--
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

Notes

1] First published in 1798, as the concluding poem of *Lyrical Ballads*. Composed on July 13, 1798, while Wordsworth and his sister were returning by the valley of the Wye, in south Wales, to Bristol after a walking tour of several days. "Not a line of it was altered and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol." The poems planned for *Lyrical Ballads* were already in the hands of the printer in Bristol when *Tintern Abbey*, so different in theme and style, was added to the volume.

152] In a letter of 1815 to a friend, Wordsworth denied that he was "A worshipper of Nature." He blamed the misunderstanding on "A passionate expression, uttered incautiously in the poem upon the Wye...."

Cinco años han pasado; cinco veranos, con sus largos
Inviernos! Y de nuevo oigo
Estas aguas, brotando de manantiales silvestres
Con su suave murmullo interior. --Una vez más
Contemplo estos abruptos y elevados picos,
Que me sugieren en su yermo aislamiento
Pensamientos de mayor soledad; y encadenan
El paisaje con el silencio del cielo.
Ya llegó el día cuando de nuevo descanso
Aquí, bajo este oscuro sicómoro y observo
Estas parcelas de cabañas, estas matas de huerto,
Que en esta estación, de inmaduros frutos,
De tonos verdes arropados se pierden entre
Semi-bosquecillos y arboledas. Vuelvo a ver
Estas filas de setos, desdibujadas, líneas apenas
De silvestres y salvajes arbustos: estas granjas
pastorales verdes hasta la puerta; y coronas de humo
Elevándose en silencio de entre los árboles.
Cuál nota incierta, parecería,
De vagabundos en el despoblado monte,
Ó cueva de ermitaño, donde junto al fuego
Siéntase el ermitaño solitario

Estas formas preciosas,
Tras la larga ausencia, no han sido para mí
Sino cuál paisaje visto con ojos de ciego.
A menudo recreado, en habitaciones solitarias en el fragor
De ciudades; otorgándome
En horas de fatiga, dulces sensaciones,
experimentadas de la sangre al corazón;
Y pasando incluso al puro pensamiento,
Con tranquila renovación: -- sensaciones acaso
De olvidados goces: tal vez,
De leve o trivial influencia
En la mejor parte de la vida de un buen hombre.
Sus breves actos, sin nombre, olvidados, actos
De bondad y amor. Y también, confío
En deberles otro regalo,
De más sublime exposición; aquel bendito ánimo,
En el que la carga del misterio,
En el que el peso del abatido valor
Ante este mundo incomprensible,
Se aligera: -- y ese sereno y bendito ánimo
Con el que las emociones nos apoyan- suavemente -
Hasta, que el aliento de este corporal figura
E incluso el correr de nuestra humana sangre
Queda suspendido, y se nos duerme el cuerpo
y se convierte en un alma viviente;
Mientras que tranquilizados mediante el poder
De la armonía, y por el profundo poder de la alegría,
Vemos más allá de la vida mundana.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart--
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here 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. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.--I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, not any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.--That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.--And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Si esta

No es más que una vana creencia, pero ay! cuántas veces
En la oscuridad y entre las miserables formas
De la triste luz del día; cuando la terrible ansia
Avara y la fiebre de este mundo,
Han colgado sobre los latidos de mi corazón--
Cuántas veces, en alma, te he buscado,
O salvaje Wye! tú, errante entre los bosques
Cuántas veces mi alma volvió a ti!
Pero algo de una triste perplejidad,
La imagen de mi mente revive:
Mientras que aquí estoy,
No sólo con el sentido
Del placer actual, sino con agradables pensamientos
Que en este momento hay vida y alimento
Para los próximos años. Y así me atrevo a esperar,
Aunque he cambiado, sin duda, de lo que era la primera vez
que
Me mezclé entre estas colinas, cuando como un corzo
Brincaba por las montañas, por las orillas
De los caudalosos ríos y las solitarias corrientes,
Donde sea que la naturaleza te lleve: más que un hombre
Que volar es algo que teme, que uno
Que buscaba lo que amaba. Por la naturaleza, entonces
(Los bastos placeres de mi niñez,
Y sus gratos movimientos felinos, todos pasaron.)
Para mí lo era todo. -- No puedo ni pintar
Como era yo entonces. Esa ruidosa catarata
Me cazaba como la pasión misma: los aca
Sus colores y formas, eran entonces para mítilados,
Las montañas y el oscuro y tenebroso bosque,
Un apetito; un sentimiento y un amor
Que no pedía encanto ajeno alguno,
Ni en la mente, ni en nada en absoluto
Que del ojo no fuera.-- Ese tiempo paso
Y todos esos intensos goces
Y el mareo tan dulce de ensueño, ya no están. Más por esto
No muero yo, ni me lamento, ni murmuro, otros dones
Me han dado; por tal pérdida, creo,
Abundante recompensa. Pues he aprendido
Contemplar la naturaleza, no como
Ese joven atolondrado; sino a oyendo a ratos
La quieta y triste música humana,
Ni dura, ni grata o con amplia fuerza
Para escarmentar y someter. Y he sentido
Una presencia que me distrae con la dicha
De elevados sentimientos; sublimes sensaciones
De algo perteneciente a lo profundo
Y que habita en la luz de los ocasos
Y en el rondo océano y en el vivo aire,
Y en el azul cielo y en la mente de toda humanidad;
Un movimiento, una ánimo que empuja
A todo ser pensante, todo objeto del pensar
Y que en todo está. Por eso sigo siendo
Un amante de prados, bosques
Y montañas; y de todo lo que poseemos
En esta verde tierra; -- la mitad creada
Y la otra percibida; complacido de reconocer
En la naturaleza y en el lenguaje del sentido,
El ancla de mis puros pensamientos, la enfermera,
La guía, el guardián de mi corazón y alma
De todo mi ser moral.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance--
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence--wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather sa
With warmer love--oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

Incluso,
Si no hubiera aprendido así, más aún
Sufiría la ruina de mi espíritu:
Porque estás tú conmigo en la ladera
De este río; tú mi queridísima Amiga,
Mi más querida Amiga; y en tu voz percibo
La lengua de mi corazón y leo
Mis goces en las cegantes luces
De tus salvajes ojos. Ay! que pueda un rato más
En ti observar lo que antes fui,
Mi querida, querida Hermana! y este rezo que hago,
Sabiendo que la Naturaleza nunca engañó
Al corazón que la amó; suyo es el honor,
Por todos los años de nuestra vida, guiarnos
De dicha en dicha: para descubrirnos que
La mente que está con nosotros, tan llena
De calma y hermosura, y así nos alimenta
Con altaneros pensamientos, que ni las malas lenguas,
Ni los repentinos juicios, o el desdén de un hombre egoísta,
Ni las frías bienvenidas, ni todo
El monótono curso de una vida cotidiana
Nunca van a vencernos, o quebrantar
Nuestra elogiada fe, que vela que todo lo que veamos
Sea lleno de bendiciones. Por lo tanto deja que la luna
Brille para ti en tu solitario camino;
Y deja que la brisa del monte sea libre
De airearte a ti: y, después de unos años,
Cuando esas salvajes extásis madurarán
En un sobrio placer; cuando tu mente sea una mansión de
bellas formas,
Tu memoria sea una morada
Llena de dulces sonidos y armonías; ay! luego
Si la soledad, o el miedo, o la pena
Te ensombreciera, con cuántos plenos pensamientos
De tierno goce habrás de recordarme,
Con estas exaltaciones! -- Tampoco
Aunque he de estar donde oír
Tu voz no pueda, ni captar de tus salvajes ojos esos destellos
De existencias pasadas -- ¿quiarás, pues, olvidar
Que a orillas de este maravilloso río
Tan juntos estuvimos? y que yo,
Un devoto de la Naturaleza, tanto vine aquí
Incansable a tu servicio: di, mejor
Con el más tierno amor -- ay! con un profundo celo
De amor sagrado. Pues, ni entonces, olvidarás,
Que después de muchos viajes, muchos años
De ausencia, estos empinados bosques y nevadas colinas,
Y este verde paisaje pastoral, me fueron
Más amados, por ellos y por ti!

“Tintern Abbey” is composed in blank verse (unrhymed lines in iambic pentameter). Lines such as “Here, under this dark sycamore, and view” do not quite conform to the stress-patterns of the meter, but fit into it loosely, helping Wordsworth approximate the sounds of natural speech without grossly breaking his meter.

The subject of “Tintern Abbey” is memory—specifically, childhood memories of communion with natural beauty, a subject very important in Wordsworth’s work. The poem a monologue, imaginatively spoken by a single speaker to himself, referencing the specific objects of its imaginary scene-The language of the poem is striking for its simplicity.

This poem was written in July 1798. It was one of the nineteenth poems that Wordsworth contributed to Lyrical Ballads. The eighteenth century had been the advocate of reason and intellect. Romanticism emphasized on the feelings-the heart. Tintern Abbey possesses a special historical value as the first clear statement of the emotional change in poetry of which the Romantic Movement was the climax recognizing and defining the power of nature to quicken and sustain the imagination and creative faculty of man. Pantheism and Mysticism are almost interrelated factors in Nature poetry of the Romantic period. The basic feature of mysticism may be described as an attitude of mind founded upon an instinctive or experienced conviction of unity, of oneness, of likeness in all things.” The instinctive conviction in the case of the Romantic poets came mostly out of their communion with Nature. Wordsworth’s poetry illustrates his philosophical beliefs which are: the immanence of the universal spirit of God in all Nature making it alive, intercommunion between God’s soul in Nature and God’s spirit in Man and the chastening effect of this communion in tranquillising and elevating the human spirit and putting it in tune with the infinite. Mysticism in Wordsworth is inseparable from his pantheism. The cardinal doctrine is that a spiritual power lives and breathes through all the works of Nature, and the emotional intensity of the contemplator can alone reveal the presence of the spiritual beneath the material, concrete and outward appearances of this phenomenal world. Along with the interest in nature and the belief in a spiritual power in Nature came the deepening interest in the common folk, the rustics and the peasants.

The scene is in the narrow gorge of the river, Wye, somewhere between Tintern and Monmouth. Wordsworth had visited it in the summer 1793. In July, 1798, he again visited it with his sister, after five years of absence. The poem opens with the speaker’s declaration that five years have passed since he last visited this location. He describes the objects he sees again and their effect upon him. The speaker then describes his memories while he was away in crowded towns and cities, and how they provided “tranquil restoration” to his mind. Even in the present moment, the memory of his past experiences in these surroundings floats over his present view of them, and he feels bittersweet joy in reviving them. He thinks happily, too, that his present experience will provide many happy memories for future years. The speaker acknowledges that he is different now from how he was as a boy. And he can now sense the presence of something far more subtle, powerful, and fundamental in the light of the setting suns, the ocean, the air itself, and even in the mind of man; this energy seems to him “a motion and a spirit that impels / All thinking thoughts.... / And rolls through all things.” For that reason, he says, he still loves nature, still loves mountains and pastures and woods, for they anchor his purest thoughts and guard the heart and soul of his “moral being.” The speaker says that even if he did not feel this way or understand these things, he would still be in good spirits on this day, for he is in the company of his “dear, dear (d) Sister,” who is also his “dear, dear Friend,” and in whose voice and manner he observes his former self, and beholds “what I was once.” The speaker then encourages the moon to shine upon his sister, and the wind to blow against her, and he says to her that in later years, when she is sad or fearful, the memory of this experience will help to heal her.

First image is sound—“murmur” of water travelling from mountain to ocean. Then sight—“I behold” cliffs, which “impress” thoughts of seclusion. Impress, to print or stamp in the mind thoughts and feelings. The cliffs “connect” the landscape with the “quiet” of the sky, connect in his experiencing. Next section—reflection. He has “owed...sensations sweet” to the memories, flowing through body like liquid: blood>heart>mind (river Wye). Feelings of unremembered [=forgotten?] pleasure.” Next section—he doubts. Joyless daylight vs. “gleams of thought”: thoughts like firelight, dying light. The flashback: in the state of nature, he didn’t think—he just felt. The sounding cataract haunted me...” “Colors and forms”=“appetite & feeling.” No need of thought or “interest unborrowed” (cf. “owed” earlier—why the language of debt and interest? language of exchange and economy. The unity-all things are connected: setting suns (dying light), “round” ocean (implies perspective of subjective observer; not ‘really’ round), living air (invisible life), mind. From this comes moral sense as opposed to (e.g.) religion. The broken abbey as a presence in the background though not mentioned in the poem—from institution of church to the sacred in nature. Final section—the sister. Language is more religious here—from aesthetics of nature in section 1 to religion of nature. The “prayer” that “nature never did betray the heart that loved her.” Nature as a maternal figure, leading: she “informs” and “impresses” (same word as section 1). Described as a “cheerful faith.” Mind a mansion for “lovely forms.” Final lines—a sense of mortality. Desire not to be forgotten, remembered as a “worshipper” of nature. He passes his vision to her.