

## نحن أقل تعايشاً مع الطبيعة وأكثر تعايشاً مع العالم: دراسة نقدية - بيئية لقصيدة الشاعر وردزورث الموسومة: العالم الذي لم نعد نطيقه أو الذي ضقنا ذرعاً به

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### الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة الترابط بين الرومانتيكية، والسياسة البيئية والتصنيع في ضوء التحليل الشامل لقصيدة الشاعر وليم وردزورث المسماة: "العالم الذي ضقنا ذرعاً به". أن أهمية النقد البيئي في القصيدة تستند الى تقييم الشاعر الذي يصور فيه تداعيات ابتعاد البشرية عن الطبيعة. لم يقتصر البحث على هذا الامر فحسب، بل تناول أموراً أخرى مثل جمالية القصيدة وموضوعاتها وتقنياتها الادبية المتضمنة استخدامها للغة، والصور الشعرية والرمزية. كما تناول البحث أيضاً ملخصاً لردود الفعل المغرضة أو المعيبة للقصيدة من حيث التحقق من قبولها واندماجها وتفسيرها عبر الزمن علاوة على إظهار التباين في وجهات النظر البحثية بشأنها من حيث معناها ومحتواها. كما وتناول البحث الصلة المستمرة لشعر وردزورث وأثره في المناقشات ذات الصلة بالبيئة والمتضمنة النقد والنشاط البيئي في ضوء قصيدته التي هي موضوع بحثنا هذا. ومن المواضيع التي تناولها البحث أيضاً موضوع التصنيع من حيث خلفيته التاريخية في العصر الفيكتوري والمتضمن التقدم المتسارع له من حيث الزيادة في عدد المصانع، والتمدن والتطورات التقنية التي غيرت البيئة والمجتمع. كما وحاول البحث أيضاً تصوير التأثير السوداوي للتصنيع على المجتمع فضلاً عن ابراز قضية استغلال الطبيعة بحجة النمو المتطور. كما وأبرز البحث ضمور الارتباط بالطبيعة وفحص نتائج الميول نحو الاستهلاكية والمادية وأثرها على قرب الانسان من الطبيعة. علاوة على ما تقدم، صور لنا البحث موضوع التصنيع في الفن والادب والذي جاء مصاحباً لردود وإجابات الشعراء الرومانتيكيين بشأن المناظر الطبيعية الجميلة التي تدفعها البشرية للتقدم الصناعي. كما تناول البحث الرؤية الشعرية للأثار السلبية للتصنيع والمتمثلة في اثاره التعسفية والمشينة كما توضحه القصيدة في ظل المنهجية التاريخية ومنهجية النقد البيئي اللتان تبناهما البحث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علم البيئة، الشعر، الثورة الصناعية، الرومانتيكية، البشرية، الطبيعة

## Introduction

Ecocriticism has been defined in various ways. Erin James asserts that ecocriticism is associated with the type of writing which has connection with nature (63). Pippa Marland clearly describes history of ecocriticism stating that ecocriticism has evolved in the past two decades from a largely under-theorized protect for ecological writing supporters to a complex array of 'earth-centred' approaches to cultural criticism that mobilise and reframe theories drawn from a variety of fields like 'ecology, philosophy, sociology, and biology' (846). The breadth of ecocriticism expands beyond literary media to include, film, television, electronic media, and music, as well as a focus on city portrayals.

Ecocriticism at its core is about the certainty that humans are residing in an ecological crisis that requires humanity to reassess their modes of being in the globe urgently, and that society's views of 'nature' and 'human,' as well as the connection that exists between both of them, are to a great extent responsible for these damaging modes of being. Its duty is to question and criticise these preconceptions, in addition to environmental consciousness, with some ecological critics being dedicated to investigating other ways of conceptualising our relationship with the non-human world (846).

The word 'ecocriticism' was introduced by William Ruekert (1978) in "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", which was widely regarded as a watershed moment in the exploration of literature from an ecological perspective. While environmental themes in literary works and literary theories had been "marginalised" for decades, worries about the environment began to emerge among literary scholars in the 1980s (Buell et al 419).

The impact of Romanticism was significant in various fields, including literature, music, art, and philosophy. In literature, Romanticism marked a shift towards a more subjective and introspective approach, with a focus on the individual experience and emotions. As Isaiah Berlin stated in *The Roots of Romanticism* "The essence of Romanticism is in its elevation of feeling over reason, the individual over society, and the imaginative over the empirical" (22).

In fact, Romanticism had a profound impact on the way people thought about politics and society. Romanticism brought a new focus on the inner life and emotional experience of the individual. It encouraged people to explore their own feelings and to express themselves freely in art, literature, and music. As Ann Brooks noted in *The Routledge Companion to Romanticism*, "Romanticism challenged the social and political structures of the day, emphasizing the importance of personal freedom and individual rights. It was a movement that sought to empower the individual and to create a more just and equitable society" (Brooks). The Movement also had a conspicuous influence on religious thought, encouraging a more emotional and experiential approach to spirituality, and a greater appreciation for the natural world as a source of spiritual inspiration. As William Wordsworth noted in *The Prelude*, "The Romantic view of religion was characterised by a sense of awe and wonder at the beauty and complexity of the natural world" (63).

The poem has been seen as an important statement of romantic environmentalism, a critique of industrialization and consumerism, an expression of Wordsworth's religious and philosophical views, and as a reflection of his personal despair. Adam Potkay points out in *Wordsworth's Ethics* that "the poem has been viewed as an expression of Wordsworth's religious and philosophical views, his belief in the intrinsic value of nature and the spiritual sustenance it provides" (100). The emotional and spiritual aspects of human existence also had a prominent place in Romantic poetry, which ads a profound impact on religious thought,

leading to a greater appreciation of the mystical and transcendent. Samuel Taylor Coleridge points out in *Biographia Literaria* the supremacy and significance of religion that:

The religious principle, the power of re-conceiving the infinite and eternal, as contained within the finite and temporal, the idea of a creation, as the ground of all existence, and the sense of a continuous presence, under whose orderings, the fluctuations of finite good and evil are but as the undulations of a troubled sea, having no proper or inherent power to alter the true being of that which is, in whom they have their being: this is the living fountain, the life within the life, which alone can effectually spring up into 'a well of water, springing up into everlasting life (Chapter XIII, 250).

Imagination, nature, the sublime, individualism, and criticism of industrialization were the main themes of romantic poetry. Romantics saw imagination as a faculty that could unlock the secrets of the cosmos and become more spiritual and even closer to the divine. Andrew Ashfield sheds light on the connection between imagination and uncovering the secrets of the sublime in *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* saying: "The imagination is the key to understanding the mysterious and ineffable qualities of the sublime" (62). Ashfield also stresses that "the Romantic poets believed that the imagination was a source of inspiration and creativity, and it was through the imagination that they could explore the mysteries of the universe" (82).

Celebrating the unique individuality of the person was at the peak of expressing human potential. According to McGann, the Romantics believed that the individual could access the divine through imagination, and that poetry was the means by which this connection could be established (81). Furthermore, poetry was urging of the subjective consciousness of the agent. McGann notes that "Romantic poetry is above all a poetry of the self, the individual, the subjective consciousness" (116).

The Romantic poets believed that nature was a source of beauty, truth, and spiritual renewal, which they sought to capture its essence in their poetry. The poet says, "The world is too much with us; late and soon, / Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers: / Little we see in Nature that is ours" (Wordsworth 75). As society was industrializing, the poets sought poetry to express their escapism from the narrow confines of an industrialized society into nature, since they saw nature as the solace for their undesirable status quo. Jerome J. McGann observes in his book *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* that "The poet was to be a witness to nature's power, beauty, and sublimity and was to express that experience in language that conveyed both the objective reality of nature and the subjective feelings it evoked" (16). Some of the poets gave nature a status akin to Godhood since it became the object of veneration and the source of awe. Anne K. Mellor, in her work "Romanticism and Gender," says, "Nature, to the Romantic, was the repository of all that was mysterious and powerful" (5).

They deemed industrialization as a destroyer of the environment in general and nature in particular, and it worked as a catalyst for people's dehumanisation and alienation. Jerome J. McGann and Anne K. Mellor point out in their book *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* that "Romantics rejected the alienating effects of industrialization and sought to restore the connection between human beings and the natural world" (McGann 22).

They also expressed their great resentment of the commodifying effects of industrialization, that robbed the people from their individual and human integrity as Paul Hamilton in *The Romantic Movement* observes "The Romantics saw industrialization as a process of commodification that reduced everything to a mere object of exchange" (31).

One of the most prominent figures of this era was William Wordsworth, who is known for his poetry that celebrates nature and the beauty of the natural world. Michael Meyer in *Bedford Introduction to Literature: Reading, Thinking, Writing* points out that, William Wordsworth

is often regarded as the quintessential Romantic poet, known for his poetry that celebrates the beauty of nature and the power of imagination. His poetry reflects a deep appreciation for the natural world and the ways in which it can inspire us and connect us to the larger universe." (987).

William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge played a crucial role in the poetry revival. Patrick Cheney in *The Sonnet in England and America: A Bibliography of Criticism* states: Wordsworth and Coleridge played a crucial role in the sonnet revival and highlights that their sonnets were marked by a return to simplicity and a focus on the natural world. Their poems emphasized the beauty of everyday experiences and sought to capture the essence of the human condition (33).

The early reception of the poem suggests that Wordsworth's contemporaries considered the poem as a lament for a destroyed world, or as an elegy for an earlier age of innocence that had been destroyed by industrialization and the advance of modernity. Alan Grob points out in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Making of the Major Lyrics*, that "The World is Too Much with Us" has often been interpreted as a lament for the loss of innocence and the destruction of the natural world, caused by the advance of industrialization and modernity"(45). Early critical responses to the poem tended to emphasize its religious and spiritual themes, with some critics seeing it as a call for a return to Christianity and others viewing it as a more general critique of materialism and worldly distractions. Critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries praised Wordsworth's environmentalism and his critique of modernity, which they saw as anticipating the ecological movement of the twentieth century.

Contemporary critics have also emphasised the political dimension of Wordsworth's poetry, exploring how his representations of nature and the individual are shaped by his political beliefs and his vision of a more just society. Jonathan Bate points out in *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, that "Wordsworth's poetry reflects his belief that nature and the individual are interconnected and that a harmonious relationship between them is essential for human well-being. This belief is rooted in his political vision of a more just society, in which the natural world is valued and protected "(23).

As the critical responses to "The World is Too Much with Us" demonstrate, the meaning of a poem is always shaped by the historical and cultural context in which it is read, and by the evolving critical discourses that surround it. In other words, the meaning of the poem is not inherent or universal, but rather changes over time as the cultural and historical circumstances in which it is read and analyzed change. Nicholas Ha points out in *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism* that "The critical reception of "The World is Too Much with Us" over the years has shown that the meaning of the poem is always shaped by the historical and cultural context in which it is read, and by the evolving critical discourses that surround it"(481).

## **Industrialization**

The era of the Industrial Revolution was marked by significant changes, as novel technologies and fresh modes of work caused a revolution in the world we inhabit. Industrialization involved more than just substituting manual labour with machines; it was a process that profoundly altered society.

The Industrial Revolution was a time of immense potential and risk, as the innovative technologies and work methodologies introduced unprecedented economic expansion and societal transformation. Yet, it also fostered novel types of exploitation and inequality. One of the characteristics of industrialization was its multi-facetedness. The process of industrialization was intricate and versatile, and its effects reached deep into all aspects of society, including the economy, politics, culture, and social interactions.

Industrialization resulted in rapid economic growth as well as a wide gamut of social and cultural transformations, including the growth of cities, the inception of new styles of leisure, and the appearance of the middle class. It was the propelling force that led to the eventual growth of capitalism, urbanisation, globalisation, and even the emergence of the modern world. Interestingly enough, there is a tight relationship between industrialization and globalisation, that mutually support each other for its function. David Held and Anthony McGrew point out in *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies* that "Industrialization and globalisation are inextricably linked, with industrialization providing the foundation for globalisation and globalisation driving the expansion and intensification of industrialization." (129). Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* states that "Factories and mills were concentrated in cities, while the growing workforce required more housing and services, leading to the expansion and densification of urban areas" (101). The intertwined effect of industrialization and urbanisation was not only of geographical significance but a whole lot more that included a metamorphosis in the social fabric of society. William H. McNeill in his book *The Industrial Revolution* says, "The growth of industrialization and urbanisation in the 19th century transformed the social and economic fabric of society, creating new forms of labour, consumption, and social stratification. Cities became centres of innovation and economic activity, but also of poverty, disease, and social unrest" (468).

The industrial revolution was a time of tremendous societal upheaval, as the old way of things were washed away by novel economic and technological forces, resulting in deep changes in the way people lived and worked. Industrialization combined with the Industrial Revolution was a significant period in human history that brought about unprecedented economic expansion and societal transformation. It was a multifaceted process that altered society in its entirety and impacted all aspects of society, including the economy, politics, culture, religion, literature and social interactions.

### **The Negative Impact of Industrialization on Society and the Environment**

The rapid growth of industrialization in the 18th and 19th centuries had significant negative effects on society and the environment. One of the most salient ramifications of the Industrial revolution was the exploitation of workers, who were often subjected to gruelling and dangerous working conditions. Additionally, the social disruption caused by the displacement of traditional agricultural communities and the environmental impact of industrialization also cannot be understated, including pollution and deforestation. The environmental damage caused by industrial processes had long-lasting effects on the natural world, and these effects are still being felt today. Pertaining to the negative effects of industrialization regarding the environment in her book, *The Dark Side of the Industrial Revolution*, Laura Bounds says:

The new factories and industries of the Industrial Revolution brought significant environmental degradation. The air was filled with smoke and other pollutants, and rivers and streams were contaminated with industrial waste. The growth of the coal and iron industries in particular led to widespread deforestation and soil erosion. Many people became ill from the pollution, and there were even cases of mass poisonings from contaminated water sources (25).

Deforestation particularly became a major concern for Romantic thinkers as they construed it as an act of reckless and irresponsible exploitation in the harmonic relationship between humans and nature. In *The Romantic Machine: Utopian Science and Technology after Napoleon* we learn that "The destruction of forests was seen as a threat to the ecological balance of the world, and the Romantics saw the preservation of forests as a crucial step

towards creating a more sustainable and harmonious relationship between humanity and nature" (Trench 62). As a result of industrialization people were looked at as objects with little consideration of their God given worth as Carolyn Tuttle says in *The Dark Side of the Industrial Revolution*, "Workers were treated as commodities, often forced to work in harsh conditions for low wages, and children were frequently employed in dangerous factory work" (10).

Industrialisation had an effective impact on agriculture during the Romantic era. The shift heavily changed not only how people made ends meet and made livelihood but also people's way of life and connection with the world and nature shifted and spoiled. Louv in *Last Child in the Woods* says "The era of industrialization brought about a fundamental shift in our relationship to the land. We came to see nature as something to be conquered and exploited, rather than something to be nurtured and respected" (10). For the people living in the Romantic era agriculture was the enterprise that connected man to nature in a spiritual manner. The author of *The Romantic Machine: Utopian Science and Technology after Napoleon* depicts the status of agriculture in the collective consciousness of the people: "For the Romantics, agriculture was not just a means of producing food; it was a way of life, a way of being in the world, and a source of spiritual nourishment" (Tresch 62). In "The World Is Too Much with Us," William Wordsworth laments the spiritual emptiness of modern life and yearns for a return to a more harmonious and spiritually connected existence. This can be connected to the Industrial Revolution, which radically transformed material production, eradicating traditional ways of life and ushering in a new era of civilization. Wordsworth's critique of materialism and the loss of spiritual connection can be seen as a response to the profound societal changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

The emergence of the industrial revolution led to a significant change in a society centred around traditional craft and methods to one focused on mass production and automation. According to the Romantics, this transition resulted in a diminished sense of significance and direction in human life. Pertaining to the negative effects of industrialization some Romantic writers responded against the degradation of human relations in the factory system, and against the misuse of the destitute and the working class.

Looking at the human race as mere numbers was a salient reality accompanying industrialization, besides giving quantity priority over quality in the human relations could be traced to the birth of industrialization. "For the Romantics, industrialization represented the triumph of quantity over quality, of the machine over the human, of the external over the internal, of uniformity over diversity" (Löwy, 14).

Furthermore, the capitalist system which grew out of industrialization came under heavy criticism for it was the cause of the destruction of the organic unity in society which shrunk everything into mere commodities. The Romantics were generally fed up with industrialization. They penetrated into the effects of industrialization and concluded that it is an emblem of the mechanisation of life as well as a dire threat to individuality. Beauty and mystery of the natural world were the two main things the Romantics felt were under and inevitable loss and withering. David Korten said "the industrial economy had reduced everything to a commodity, including human labour and the natural world. It had stripped away the mystery and beauty of life, leaving only the cold calculations of profit and loss." - (74). Or as Richard Louv aptly described it in his book, *Last Child in the Woods* ". "The old way of life was vanishing, and with it the beauty and mystery of the world. In its place stood a cold, rational system that valued efficiency above all else (8).

Some Romantic writers like Stuart Curran also believe that the traditional values and ways of life were under the threat of abandonment due to industrialization: "The industrial revolution

challenged traditional beliefs about the relationship between human beings and the natural world, leading to a crisis of faith and a search for new spiritual values" (156).

As a reaction against the tide of industrialization the Romantic poets also responded by emphasising the importance of imagination and creativity. Curran also says "The Romantic poets responded to the social upheavals of industrialization by emphasising the importance of imagination and creativity in a world dominated by the rationalism of the market" (Curran 104). One other discovery that the Romantic writers realised was that the industrial revolution would lead to a new kind of the pursuit of selfish individualism and self-interest and the sense of social responsibility would diminish drastically (67).

The Romantics were also critical and perceptive of the fact that people were losing the sense of identity mainly because of the commodification of human labour and the objectification of human worth and human nature. They were deeply troubled by industrialization and were motivated to respond by attempting to help individuals restore a sense of identity and purpose in a world that had lost its direction. Michail Löwy says "The industrial revolution created a society where human beings were reduced to the status of objects, leading to a loss of identity and a sense of personal worth" (Löwy 83). And elsewhere he says "The growth of industrial capitalism created a society where individuals were defined by their economic function, leading to a loss of personal identity and a sense of purpose" (Löwy 115).

### **The Evolution of Critical Responses to “The World is Too Much with Us”**

In the context of the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, 'The World is Too Much with Us' was rediscovered as a powerful critique of the destructive impact of modern civilization on the natural world. As James Chandler points out in *Wordsworth and the Writing of the Nation* "Wordsworth's poem has been widely celebrated as a prophetic statement about the dangers of environmental degradation, and it has been rediscovered by successive generations as a powerful critique of the destructive impact of modern civilization on the natural world" (36).

The poem has been admired for its language and its lyricism, its sensitivity to nature and its social critique, its emotional intensity and its intellectual depth. Stephen Gill points out in *William Wordsworth: The Major Works* that "the poem has been widely admired for its exquisite language and lyrical beauty, as well as its penetrating critique of the materialism and greed of modern society" (97). From its initial publication, the poem was regarded as a critique of contemporary culture's alienation from nature. While critics initially dismissed Wordsworth's poetry as overly sentimental and simplistic, his work was later appreciated for its more nuanced portrayal of the relationship between humans and nature. Stephen Gill also highlighted in *A Life* that "from its first publication, 'The World is Too Much with Us' was seen as a critique of modern society's alienation from nature" (194). In the late twentieth century, the poem was once again interpreted in light of the environmental movement, this time as a warning against the consequences of ignoring the interconnectedness of human and natural systems.

### **The Eco-critical Significance of “The World is Too Much with Us.”**

Wordsworth's environmental concern was part of a larger cultural movement that began to emerge in the late 18th and early 19th century, known as Romanticism. The movement emphasised nature's importance and the need for a constant connection with it. In "The World is Too Much with Us," Wordsworth laments the disconnection from nature and its potential danger for leading humans towards alienation with themselves and nature as seen in the

opening line “The world is too much with us; late and soon”. The sonnet highlights what it means to be human in an age of environmental crisis. Jonathan Bate notes in *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, the sonnet offers an alternative vision of what it means to be human, one that recognizes the interdependence of all life and finds meaning and fulfilment through our relationship with nature (79).

Furthermore, the poem illustrates the interdependence of everything in nature, suggesting that any harm or exploitation of it leads to the loss of harmony with nature as seen in the poem “For this, for everything, we are out of tune”. Bate observes in this regard, “The poem speaks to the need for us to find a new way of living in the world, one that recognizes the interdependence of all life and seeks to live in harmony with nature rather than exploiting it for our own ends” (82). Wordsworth urges us to recognize the interconnectedness of humans with nature and vice versa. Bate says in *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* that the poem can be seen as an expression of Wordsworth's ecological consciousness, his belief in the interconnectedness of all life and the need for us to live in a way that recognizes and respects this interconnectedness (84). Examining his poetry shows that the poet was concerned about the negative impact of consumerism on humanity's relationship with nature and their own souls that led to a materialistic attitude towards everything as Stephen Gill in *William Wordsworth: A Life* points out that “in “The world is too much with us,” he [Wordsworth] saw people as having given themselves up to 'getting and spending,' and he feared the loss of contact with nature and the growth of materialism, two aspects of the same problem” (420).

Timothy Clark states that humanity's dissolved bond with the natural world is one of the basic themes in Wordsworth's poetry: “an excerpt from the book, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* when he says, “In ‘The World is Too Much with Us,’ Wordsworth's speaker laments the loss of a connection with nature, noting that ‘We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!’” (Line 4). Through employing the phrase a “sordid boon,” the poet suggests that people have given away their heart to an unworthy and cheap gift. In other words, humanity has sacrificed something invaluable from their soul in the exchange of something material and lowly.

Wordsworth's poetry is generally deemed as an early instance of environmentalism for he was of the foremost writers who focused on the war, which is one of humans' main actions that damages nature. The poem is a potent and forceful instantiation and representation of the state of the affairs he was trying to warn us about as Jonathan Bate in his book *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* states ““The World is Too Much with Us” can be seen as a powerful expression of this environmental concern, as it highlights the ways in which human beings have become disconnected from the natural world, and the dangers that this poses to both human society and the natural environment.” (82).

It generally rejected the physicalistic, materialistic presuppositions of the Enlightenment that resulted in a shift in the attention of human consciousness into indifference and losing a sense of reverence and respect for the natural world. The poem urges humans to have a close and intimate connection with nature that is of the kind fraught with the senses of mystery, awe, wonder and reverence when he mentions the two Greek Gods of the sea, Proteus and Triton, in the final six lines of the sonnet:

It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,



Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn (Lines 9-14).

The line “Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn” tells us how the poet’s conception of happiness is predicated on the vital connection with the natural order of things.

The poet warns and laments two irrevocable costs and ramifications at the hands of modernity with the twin offspring of industrialization and capitalism, which have negative effects on the life of people both spiritually and environmentally. Some critics trace the ecological crisis that we faced its claws depicting it to be a spiritual defeat on our side. For example, Onno Oerlemans in *Romanticism and the Environmental Crisis* states that “the ecological crisis is fundamentally a spiritual crisis, rooted in a disconnection between humanity and the natural world. In ‘The World is Too Much with Us,’ the speaker expresses frustration at the fact that humans have lost their sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world and have become preoccupied with material possessions” (34).

When the human self loses contact with itself, it eventually loses contact with everything around it, which indicates that the self should strive to achieve self-consciousness, an awareness of itself otherwise it loses the proper connection with anything that gives meaning to its life.

Kierkegaard, the great Danish Romantic theologian remarks on the relational nature of the self, saying in order to be functional and to be, it must relate to itself as in “The Sickness unto Death” he states “the self is the relation’s relating to itself” (56). In other words, humans, in order to live meaningfully, must relate to the outer world in a meaningful way, for according to Kierkegaard, the nature of the self and its possible evolution must lie in the proper relation to itself and the outer world and the self for him is a relational entity. Humans did not relate to the natural world in a healthy way because they did not, in spirit, relate to themselves. Thus, spiritually, they were desperately lost.

Finally, the poem urges us not to sit only in indifference but to take action in reestablishing a warm and spiritual connection with nature, as Jonathan Bate observes, “The poem can be seen as an expression of Wordsworth’s ecological consciousness”, as well as the poet’s notion in the interrelation of all lifespan and the necessity for humans to inhabit in a method that identifies and compliments this interconnection (84).

### **The Use of Language and Imagery in “The World is Too Much with Us”**

The poem delves into the notion that individuals are out of touch with nature as a result of the materialistic and consumer-driven society during that era. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* contends that the language and its effect on the reader of “The poem as a whole is a powerful indictment of a world that has turned away from the spiritual and moral values that, in Wordsworth’s view, should govern human life” (320).

The use of language and imagery in “The World is Too Much with Us” mirror the poet’s effective critique of modernity and its impact on humanity and nature (Ferber 60).

The language in the sonnet is characterised by its lucidness, simplicity, and directness without losing depth and profundity. It is impassioned and sensitive, mirroring exasperation experienced by the speaker as he sees humanity, at their own peril, has turned their back to the natural world. These lines reflect the language of anger against humanity’s turning its back to nature:

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! (Lines 3-5).

The language of vexation in conveying the poet's anger and dissatisfaction against humanity's reckless disregard of nature is evinced in the mind of the reader in those lines. The phrase "lay waste" implies destruction and extravagance, while the phrase "We have given our hearts away" shows his desperate disillusionment at the low state humanity has reached. Michael Ferber in *Romanticism: A short Introduction* says, "Wordsworth uses vivid and evocative language to depict the beauty of nature, but he also employs the same language to express the way that modern society has become disconnected from it" (92). And Abrams contends "Wordsworth's language in the poem is both simple and powerful. He uses concrete, sensory images to convey complex emotions and ideas about the impact of modernity on nature and humanity. The sea, in particular, serves as a powerful symbol of the natural world that has been lost to modernity (492).

The use of the 'sea' in the poem is a compelling symbol when looked at from the lens Harold Bloom talks about in *The Romantic Poets*: "Wordsworth's use of the image of the sea in "The World is Too Much with Us" is particularly powerful, as it represents both the vastness and power of nature and the sense of distance and separation between humanity and the natural world." "Proteus rising from the sea" and "old Triton blowing his wreathèd horn" evince images of the majestic forces of nature, particularly the sea, which in Romantic poetry often symbolises the sublime and the infinite. Furthermore, Ferber describes the use of language in the sonnet, in these words: "Wordsworth uses the language of commerce and materialism to describe the natural world, suggesting that our modern obsession with acquisition and possession has led us to view nature as a commodity to be exploited rather than as a source of wonder and inspiration (F 58).

Line 3 of the poem "Little we see in Nature that is ours;" shows the poet's use of the language of commerce and materialism to emphasise humans' obsession of viewing nature as a commodity when he says "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers." The phrase "getting and spending" is a clear reference to materialism and consumerism, which suggests that the speaker views modern society as being overly obsessed with acquiring wealth and possessions at the expense of more meaningful pursuits. The phrase "lay waste our powers" implies that this focus on materialism has led us to waste our natural gifts and abilities.

The poet uses metaphor, personification, paradox, allusion, and hyperbole to convey his message regarding his dissatisfaction with humans' disregard of nature. For instance, the first line of the poem is a metaphor "The world is too much with us" (Line 1), it suggests that human beings are too busy with the materialistic world and Humans' exploitation of nature. The winds are personified as howling in the second line "the winds that will be howling at all hours". The paradox used in line 5 "We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!" Where the word 'sordid' means morally corrupt, whereas one's heart is usually supposed to be associated with love and passion. The Hyperbole used in line 12 "Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn", suggests that a glimpse of nature would have a huge effect both on the reader and the speaker.

In lines 12-13, the speaker references Proteus, a Greek mythological figure known for his shape-changing abilities, expressing a longing for the natural world and its mysterious forces. Triton: In the above-mentioned lines, the speaker also mentions "old Triton blows his wreathèd horn." The reference to Triton reinforces the idea of the sea as a symbol of the sublime and infinite in Romantic poetry.

The argument that Wordsworth contrasts the natural world with the man-made world in the poem is evident. He laments the materialism and consumerism of his society, asserting that people have become disconnected from nature, its beauty and its spiritual significance. This is reflected in lines like "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" and "For this, for

everything, we are out of tune." The sensory descriptions of the sea and the imagery of ancient, powerful forces in nature, including "Proteus rising from the sea," emphasize the vitality and timelessness of the natural world. In contrast, modern society is portrayed as "getting and spending," indicating its dullness and lifelessness. This supports the argument that Wordsworth's imagery in the poem underscores the powerful contrast between nature's vibrancy and the emptiness of the man-made world (Ferber 59).

Furthermore, Stephen Gill in *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth* states that "'The World is Too Much with Us' " opens with the most powerful image of the sonnet that of the world being out of joint with itself." (95), and that "Wordsworth's use of synecdoche here, where the world stands for its inhabitants, exemplifies his subtle use of figurative language" (97).

The imagery and symbols used by Wordsworth invite us to visualise a world that has turned upside down as Mark Lussier in *Wordsworth and the Adequacy of Landscape* notes: "The power of Wordsworth's sonnet lies in the clear deployment of images and symbols that invite us to picture the world turned upside down" (120). Abrams tells us that through imagery Wordsworth conveys the spiritual vacuum of men during his era when he wrote in William Wordsworth's poem "The World Is Too Much with Us," imagery vividly portrays his concerns about the spiritual and emotional emptiness of modern life and his longing for a return to a more harmonious and spiritual way of existence. Through images of the "sea" and "Proteus rising from the sea," he emphasizes the enduring power and beauty of nature, contrasting it with the spiritually void pursuit of "getting and spending." This imagery underscores his plea for a reconnection with nature and a more meaningful, harmonious life (492).

### **Industrialization in "The World is Too Much with Us"**

"The World is too much with us" is a compelling criticism of the dark impact of industrialization on society. The poem mirrors the increasing worry amongst Romantic poets regarding the devastating outcomes of industrialization on the natural world and human society. Stuart Curran, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, notes that "in "The World is too much with us," Wordsworth critiques industrialization and consumerism, which he sees them as factors for destroying the natural world and separating people from their environment (70).

One of the chief themes of the poem is the disengagement between people and nature. Wordsworth contends that industrialization has led people to become too obsessed with mundane possessions and affluence, which inevitably results in a loss of connectedness with the natural world. For example, he bewails that "we have given our hearts away, a sordid boon" (Line 4) to materialism and that "getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" (Line 2).

In the poem, Wordsworth nostalgically wants to return to a stage of the past where people were connected with nature when he says:

Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn (Lines 9-14).

In these lines, he expresses his desire to be a pagan who could treasure the aesthetic experience of nature one can go through had it not been ruined by industrialization. As mentioned above, he depicts that people are too obsessed with money and material possessions that they no longer can appreciate and treasure natural beauty, which is so fundamental to the flourishing of our soul.

The poet depicts how the world lost its harmony and order, and in its place, a chaotic world was gifted by industrialization when he wrote:

The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune (Lines 5 - 8).

Another by-product of industrialization is spiritual poverty. In the ninth line of the poem, which reads: "We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!" Here "a sordid boon" suggests that Wordsworth views this as a daunting development, as the chase of material pursuits has resulted in spiritual destitution.

As Susan Wolfson notes in *Romanticism: A Critical Reader*, the poem is a critique of the "soul-destroying effects of modernity, with its consumerism, its materialism, its urbanisation, and its loss of connection to the natural world". The spiritual vacuum that industrialization has given to society and the individuals is noted in the poem Wordsworth in the poem is very critical of the human pursuit of material goods and riches, which has led to a loss of spiritual values (132).

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, this research has inspected the manifold and connection between Romanticism, ecocriticism, and industrialization with an emphasis on William Wordsworth's poem "The World is Too Much with Us" in the Romantic period. The paper has examined various facets of the issue, ranging from the historical and cultural ambience of the Victorian Era, the ubiquitous effects of Romanticism in different aspects of life, and the gravity and significance of Romantic poetry as an echo of societal, environmental, and spiritual concerns. The literature review has afforded a rather extensive analysis of the ecocritical significance of Wordsworth's poem, in conjunction with the use of language and imagery, the evolution of critical responses, and the ongoing relevance and impact of Wordsworth's poetry in addressing ecological issues. The study has also stressed the pertinence of "The World is Too Much with Us" in the context of industrialization and its adverse influence on society, along with its portrayal and depiction in art and literature during the Romantic Era.

This research adds to a better grasp of the intricate relationship between Romanticism, industrialization, and ecocriticism, elucidating the important role of literature, particularly Wordsworth's poetry, in mirroring and addressing the ecological challenges of the Romantic period. Overall, this paper argues and productively contributes to the discourse on the meshing of literature, culture, and the environment, extending further understanding into abiding relevance of Wordsworth's poetry and its critical merit in the modern period.

It was discovered that the poet intends to remind people that they are important but their importance must not allow them to destroy or ignore nature as humans are part of nature - they must not a part from it. From the ecological point of view, it becomes crystal clear that the poet's main concern is about the protection of nature from the advert influence of the industrialization as the survival of humans are bound to the survival of nature and the earth

as the latter is the house-hold to humanity. Through "The World is Too Much with us" Wordsworth advises people to care about nature not the world of industry.

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## **We Are Too Little with Nature, But Too Much with the World: An Eco-Critical Study of William Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much with Us"**

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### **Abstract**

This research examines the intersection of Romanticism, ecocriticism, and industrialization through a succinctly comprehensive analysis of William Wordsworth's poem "The World is Too Much with Us" in the Romantic Period.

The ecocritical significance of the poem is examined through evaluating how Wordsworth portrays humanity's schism from nature and its ramifications, and studying the poem's motifs, themes, and literary techniques, including its use of language, imagery, and symbolism.

Furthermore, it gives a synopsis of the captious reactions to the poem, investigating its acceptance, incorporation and interpretation over time, and accentuating the heterogeneity of scholarly points of view on its meaning and centrality. The ongoing relevance and impact of Wordsworth's poetry in present-day environmental discussions, including ecocriticism, and environmental activism, in the light of "The World is Too Much with Us" is examined.

The theme of industrialization in the poem is discussed. The research presents a diligent evaluation of the historical background of industrialization during the Victorian Period, including the accelerated advance of factories, urbanization, and technological progressions that altered society and the environment. The research also attempts to explore how the poem mirrors the gloomy influence of industrialization on society, it highlights the exploitation of

the natural world in the guise of growth, the disappearance of connectivity with the natural world, and examines the results of consumerism and materialism on humans' closeness to nature. The study further studies the depiction of industrialization in art and literature of the period, along with the Romantic poets' rejoinder to the developing landscape and the human cost of industrial advancement. By using ecocritical and historical approaches, the study examines the poetic prediction of the oppressing and abusing effects of industrialization demonstrated in the poem.