

Eco-poetic Ethics in *Tintern Abbey*: Nature as an Eco-ethical Remedy for Modern Alienation

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ABSTRACT

Eco-poetic ethics in Wordsworth's works is a reflection of healing of nature in the context of the current industrialization. This paper examines how Wordsworth uses the theme of nature as more than a picturesque backdrop but a moral and spiritual cure to the alienation, and discomfort especially in Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey. It is caused by the contemporary disease of industrialization. The present paper examines the nature-human interaction as vividly portrayed in Wordsworth's poetry. It contends that nature to Wordsworth was an escape against the dehumanizing forces of urbanization, industrialization as well as moral decay. With eco-poetic ethics, the poet proposes that returning to nature helps to heal the emotions and morals of the people and help them get back to their natural sense of innocence, purity, and spirituality. The paper examines significant features of eco-poems such as representation of nature as a teacher, imagination and recall as a means of shaping human resilience. In this respect, the Wordsworth is not only a reflection of the mechanized world, but also of nature as a healing force, able to restore balance to the individual soul, and thereby to the whole society. It shows that the eco-poetic ethics of Wordsworth is relevant in modernist times because of the criticism of environmental degradation and the psychological toll of the modern life.

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1. Introduction

The dialogue between human beings and nature has always been a primary concern of literature, especially before the era of social change and ecological awareness. The modern world's deteriorating environment, the rise of industrialization, and technology have exacerbated the need to worry about the disconnection between humanity and nature (Yaumi et al., 2023; Al-Obaydi et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2025). These developments have not only been linked to ecological crisis but also have had psychological side effects like alienation, anxiety and loss of belonging. There has been a growing interest in the literature to begin to rethink and recover the connection between humans and their surroundings through eco-poetry. According to Okon et al. (2025), "Eco-poetry is a form of poetry that addresses ecological concerns and environmental issues, often using the reader's individual interpretations to bring awareness to these issues." While modern Ecopoetics explore the reciprocal relationship between literature and ecology, the works of William Wordsworth is especially notable for his strong focus on nature as a healing, renewing, and moral potency in his poetic works especially Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey.

Wordsworth was one of the greatest poets of Romanticism in English, a period defined by a social and cultural shift prompted by the Industrial Revolution. Romantic writers reacted against the mechanistic view of the enlightenment and advocated imagination, emotion, and the healing properties of the natural world. As Musawar et al. (2025) observe, "The Romantic Movement began at the end of the eighteenth century as a reaction against the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution." In the context of an expanding industry and urbanization, Wordsworth saw nature as a cure for the lack of humanity in the modern world. He did not see nature as a facade or backdrop for the artwork; instead he saw it as a living reality which could raise consciousness, develop moral awareness, and give psychological balance to people. His poetry always depicts nature as a vital strength both nurturing the mind and offering a sanctuary from the pressures of a more industrialized society. In this regard, Naem, Adil, et al. (2025) argue that "Wordsworth illustrates a close relationship between individuals and their environment, depicting nature as a source of healing, reflection, and ethical understanding."

New scholarship in ecocriticism has also sparked renewed interest in Wordsworth's eco-visions. Ecocriticism takes as its focus the depiction of nature in literary works and its role in raising awareness and environmental consciousness. In this context the notion of eco-poetic ethics focuses on the ethical values that are incorporated in the poetic representations of nature and also underscores the interconnectedness between people and the nonhuman world (Nahdhiyah et al., 2023; Junaid & Andini, 2025; Lanta et al., 2022). The idea of eco-poetic ethics is that literature has the potential to foster ecological awareness by raising awareness with regard to the responsibilities of readers toward the environment and all life forms. As a result, Wordsworth's poetry has become more relevant today in the debates about environmental sustainability, ecological responsibility, and the psychological impact of people's alienation from nature.

Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey (1798) is one of the most poignant statements of Wordsworth's ecological ethos. The poem was written during a time of great change in social and industrial society, and it exhibits the speaker's changing attitude toward nature and the role that nature plays in the reader's emotional, moral, and spiritual development. Wordsworth introduces the reader to a view of nature as a healing force that can repair the emotional scars of modern life, conjured up in a state of memory, imagination, and contemplation of the natural world. As Abiraami (2025) notes, "Wordsworth expresses an ecological consciousness through his profound reverence for nature and his belief in its power to shape moral and spiritual well-being." Similarly, Arazak et al. (2026) maintain that "This poem describes nature not only as a beautiful landscape, but also as a means for spiritual reflection and inner growth." These ideas highlight the role that nature plays in the poem as a teacher, guide, and source of sustenance, allowing people to overcome a sense of isolation and deepen their connection with a greater sense of harmony.

This paper explores the eco-poetic ethics that can be found in *Tintern Abbey*, and how Wordsworth uses nature as an eco-ethical cure for the alienation of modern man. It places an ethical vision at the center of the poem, one that insists on the interdependence of human beings and nature, a vision of nature that are at odds with the ethos of industrialization and that suggests nature as a place of emotional, moral and spiritual renewal. Thus, this study examines how Wordsworth's concepts of memory, imagination, interconnectedness, and ethical awareness are treated in the poem and how these ideas are still relevant to current problems of ecological destruction and the psychological burden of modern life.

There are many articles in which the scholars explore Wordsworth poetry especially *Tintern Abbey*, adopting ecocritical approaches. This recent scholarly exploration connects to Romantic ecology with contemporary environmental humanities, climate discourse, and ecological education. A researcher like Catherine Engh (2023) states that Wordsworth's poetry still has the relevance to ecological thinking in the era of global warming. Observing the present ecological situation, Little (2023) examines the connection between human and nonhuman forms of existence regarding Wordsworth poetic ecological reflection. A recent ecocritical study by Arazak et al. (2026) argues that the poem portrays nature as a medium for spiritual reflection, ethical awareness, and personal transformation. Drawing upon Lawrence Buell's ecocritical framework, the authors contend that Wordsworth constructs a reciprocal relationship between humanity and nature in which moral development emerges through ecological engagement. Their findings reinforce the view that *Tintern Abbey* extends beyond Romantic aesthetics to offer an ethical model of human-environment interaction.

Similarly, Özbilen (2026) interprets *Tintern Abbey* through the lens of deep ecology, emphasizing Wordsworth's challenge to anthropocentric assumptions and his recognition of the intrinsic value of nonhuman life. Furthermore, recent ecolinguistic approaches have shifted attention from thematic representations of nature to the language through which ecological consciousness is constructed. Ullah, Imran, and Rahman (2026) argue that Wordsworth's ecological imagination is embedded in linguistic structures that express interdependence, environmental sensitivity, and ethical engagement with the natural world.

Despite the fact that these valuable works have been produced, these studies still highlight the separateness of ecocriticism, deep ecology, ecological consciousness, natural education or spiritual self-reflection as issues. Little work, in particular, has been done of incorporating these qualities into a single model of eco-poetic ethics that embraces nature as moral compass and healing force, as well as an alternative to the alienating conditions of the modern world. The present study has been designed to fill this gap by exploring the eco-poetic ethic in Wordsworth's poem *Tintern Abbey* which offers an ecological and ethical solution to the modern alienation to nature, thus demonstrating Wordsworth's environmental philosophy in the context of the contemporary discussion of ecology and psychology

2. Methodology

This study employs qualitative and analytical methods for eco-poetic analysis of the particular poem. From William Wordsworth's poetic oeuvre, *Tintern Abbey* is selected as a primary source. To analyze the poem, this paper uses ecocriticism as a lens for finding an eco-ethical remedy for modern alienation. As in "*Lines Composed a Few Miles Above*

Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth expresses an ecological consciousness through his profound reverence for nature and his belief in its power to shape moral and spiritual well-being" (Abiraami, 2025). To find the healing power of nature, we use eco-critical theory or ecocriticism as a methodological approach.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Findings

The study finds that the selected poem presents nature as an eco-ethical remedy for modern alienation. In place of a beautiful landscape, nature becomes a healing mechanism to restore the estranged subject to the self, the environment, and a meaningful life. The poem implies that continuous interactions with nature can help to overcome psychological disconnection, moral breakdown, and spiritual vacuum, which makes nature a vital ingredient of a harmonious and peaceful human life.

First, nature has the potential to heal psychological alienation. The speaker is not physically present in the Wye Valley, but is sustained by "sensations sweet" and "tranquil restoration" in the form of memories of natural scenes. Nature is thus an emotional power source other than the actual experience. The poem implies that a sense of connection to nature can help to lessen feelings of alienation.

Secondly, nature serves as a moral and spiritual guide. Wordsworth calls nature "the nurse", "the guardian" of his "moral being". It has an impact that transcends the psychological comfort to the formation of moral character and renewal of the spirit. Humility, reflection and a sense of belonging are learned by the person through nature.

Thirdly, memory and imagination hold onto the healing power of nature. The previous experiences with nature become ongoing sources of inner strength when remembered. The human–nature relation is not limited to the physical, and can be a permanent part of consciousness.

Fourth, nature sets a vision for life that is inter-connected. The "motion and a spirit" which "rolls through all things" brings together humanity and nature not as fundamentally distinct but as interconnected. This relational vision will disrupt anthropocentric attitudes and enhance the eco-ethical value of the poem.

Lastly, the poem suggests a need for a renewed commingling of human beings and nature for a peaceful humanity to live out. It offers an alternative response to modernity's alienating forces: not material progress, but re-connection with nature, with the self, and with a broader moral and spiritual sense. Wordsworth does not provide environmentalism as a programme, but the connection between people and environment is evident in *Tintern Abbey*.

3.2 Discussion

William Wordsworth's (1798) *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* is a response to modern spiritual complexities particularly modern alienation. With the growing industrialization, people began to live apart from the countryside, more and more, and closer to the growing centers of urbanization, modern life became connected with noise, materialism, competition and psychological unrest. As Yadagiri (2022) observes, "the poem is explicitly structured around absence and return: the speaker has spent five years away from the Wye Valley, years during which he confesses to enduring the fever of the world, a phrase that gathers together the noise, distraction, and moral compromise of city life." Wordsworth uses phrases like "fretful stir" and "dreary intercourse of daily life" (lines 53–54) to capture this barren state. His answer, however, is not just rejection of society or an idealization of wilderness. Rather, *Tintern Abbey* engenders an eco-poetic ethic in which nature is a lively agent of psychological healing, moral development and human relations. Nature is not only an object of beauty, but also a living thing. The alienation gains meaning through becoming a living object that provides inward calm and restores the person to a meaningful relationship with the external world. As Soni et al. (2024) summarizes the main theme as "'Tintern Abbey' is the idea of nature as a source of spiritual renewal. Wordsworth's portrayal of nature as a "nurse," "guide," and "guardian" underscores its nurturing and protective qualities." In a very similar tone Newlyn (2020) reflects, "By retreating into nature, Wordsworth finds a sanctuary where he can reconnect with his true self and attain a deeper understanding of the universe." So, it is true that the nature has the ability to purify your heart from materialistic approach of modern life especially from modern alienation.

Now, it is very pessimistic to consider ecocriticism as a logical approach to work on modern alienation. Abbas et al. (2025) observes, "Ecocriticism has increasingly broadened its scope to explore the intersection of urbanization, environmental degradation, and social alienation." In the lens of ecocriticism, *Tintern Abbey* is not just a poetic work about landscape but a work that explores the ethical and psychological connection between man and nature. According to Acharya's (2025) observation, the term ecocriticism is connected to the concept of nature and its interaction with human

life, and about "literature's relationship to the physical world." There the author emphasizes the interdependence of humans and nature that humans rely on nature to meet their needs and therefore humans have a responsibility to preserve the environment upon which they rely. This eco-ethical principle is inherent in Wordsworth's poem, as nature serves as the physical environment, as well as an emotional anchor, a source of learning and knowledge, and a source of spiritual sustenance.

Wordsworth's reaction against the industrial modernity is particularly relevant because he is aware of the harmful influence of urban and material life on the human spirit. According to Wei (2011) Wordsworth's idea of nature is an expression of his "disgust with modern industrial civilization" and his "discontent with the marketization and vulgarity of urban life." The poet's return to the natural world thus transcends the city escape. It can be a change from a culture of over-indulgent materialism to a way of living that is focused on contemplation, simplicity and belonging in relation. As Jordan (2022) observes, "Wordsworth's ethical vision of a harmonious relationship between humans and nature aligns with contemporary environmental movements that advocate for sustainable living and conservation." In this way, nature acts as a corrective to the alienation of modern times. Wordsworth finds a new rhythm in the natural world, and a new feeling in his life, one that is apart from the frenetic pulse of industrial society and the emptiness of a life that is made up of things. The first description of the Wye Valley sets up this connection between peoples' places and the more-than-human world. Wordsworth observes: "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 ..." (lines 14–17). McKusick (2000) summarizes these lines as a reflection of Wordsworth's "peaceful coexistence of human habitation and wildness in the same place." It is not a totally wilderness environment, nor is it a totally anthropomorphic one. Rather, Wordsworth presents a space in which cultivation and wildness coexist. Such a balance has eco-ethical significance as it implies that man's life need not be at odds with nature. The pastoral farms and "sportive wood" are a type of cohabitation in which human habitation is linked to the natural environment. Wordsworth's dream, then, anticipates an ecological ethic based on accommodation, not domination.

The healing power of nature is even more apparent, when Wordsworth remembers the influence of the landscape on his mind. He speaks of the attitude 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" (lines 38–42). The "heavy and weary weight" of the world implies a psychological weight that is similar to the sense of modern alienation. Nature creates a "serene and blessed mood" against this burden. These lines are also interpreted by Arazak et al. (2026) as a proof of the ability of nature to warm the human heart, alleviate the burden of life, and offer solace and healing. However, nature is not just a remedy; it is an eco-ethical remedy, because it changes the person's relationship to the difficulties. The turbulence of the mind can be transformed into a still mind that can reflect, balance and perceive.

Wordsworth's conception of nature is therefore dynamic not static. It's not just scenery to be looked at, but it has an animating and formative power. In this conception of nature—a power is something that animates and molds with plastic might the physical furnishings of the universe. Bradley (1965) remarks further supports this intellectual aspect of Wordsworth's poetry: "Wordsworth was first and foremost a philosophical thinker, a man whose intention and purpose it was to think out for himself, faithfully and seriously, the questions concerning man and nature and human life." *Tintern Abbey*, in turn, learns from nature as the philosophical and ethical teacher. The poet is not just enjoying the beauty of nature, but he is thinking about man, death, society and the conditions for inner harmony.

It is the philosophical process and can be explained by the three stages of the mental growth of Wordsworth. The poet's relationships with nature are shifting and transitioning from childhood to youth and then to maturity are explained by Bazregarzadeh (2017). In childhood, nature is perceived in an intuitive and almost automatic way, as it is in the case of animals. The experience of nature in youth is more emotional and sensory, with instant bodily and psychological excitement. However, at maturity nature is a subject of contemplation and reflection. Wordsworth's sense of beauty is essential for his eco-poetic ethics; it is the ability of nature to influence human consciousness that is important, and not just its beauty.

Ting (2024) states that humans cannot live without nature, for nature is not only their physical dwelling place, but also a "home for people's spirit", nourishing life and developing the human soul. This argument is very similar to that of the grown-up Wordsworth at *Tintern Abbey*. The significance of nature grows as the poet gets older and it becomes his "guide," "nurse," and "guardian." Wordsworth's pre-adult memories of nature are that nature was "all in all" to him in his "boyish days" (lines 73–76). But that time is gone now: "That time is past, / And all its aching joys are no more" (lines 84–85). He has not lost his connection to nature, just that he is no longer experiencing the ecstasy of youth. Instead it is a movement from sensuality to awareness.

Actually, Wordsworth's knowledge of nature and mankind becomes more complex in his maturity. He learns to see and feel things "not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth," but while "hearing the still, sad music of humanity" (lines 89-91). Here, nature and human experience intertwine. It is the mature poet who can no longer run from the people by going back to nature; it is the mature poet who can go back to nature and learn about humanity better. Because of his vision of the scenery, he sees a spirit that "disturbs me with the joy / Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime" (lines 94-95). Nature then becomes a vehicle for the person to transcend a small consciousness into a great consciousness. It counteracts alienation and brings back that sense of connection; between the self, other humans and the greater natural world.

This same development accounts for Wordsworth's ambivalent view on nature as he is no longer as young as he used to be to experience it as he once did. His persisting love is important because it is a sign that nature is a part of his internal course of life. It is enjoyable; it is a place of recollection, imagination and moral reflection. The remembered landscape has a certain psychological presence when the poet is physically away, and memory is a key part of this is important. Nature is thus seen not just as an object but as a subject of internalization. Its physical nature transforms into a real mental and emotional asset to combat the stress of everyday life. Wordsworth personifies the natural world in this close connection: "The tongue of my old heart, and read/ My past enjoyments in the shooting lights/ Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while" (117-119). Arazak et al. (2026) analyzes these lines to mean that Wordsworth's experiences and feelings from his past have become a "soul" that now "speaks" back to Wordsworth and allows him to find happiness in his memory. The landscape consequently acts as a medium of psychological continuity. That which is lost from the outside world remains in the mind as memory. Memory morphs nature into a reservoir of emotional stamina. The alienated person can break the cycle of isolation not by having nature but by having its healing presence within him or her.

There is also an ethical dimension to this "naturistisation". The closer the poet gets to the nature, the more he finds out about the human being. Garrard (2004) note that the logic of the poem is Love of nature leads to love of man, not Love of man leads to love of nature. This is particularly helpful for grasping the eco-ethical aspect of *Tintern Abbey*. Wordsworth's connection with nature is not an isolated contemplation. Rather, the serenity and understanding that nature brings out are diffused outward to human relationships. A form of more compassionate moral consciousness emerges from nature. Love can only become an issue of 'commoditization and materialization', but a non-commercial relationship, based on care, sympathy and mutual dependence, can withstand the alienating values of modern society.

Similarly, when man leaves the nature and enters into the increasingly artificial social environment, the mind is easily prone to anxiety, unease and loneliness (Ting, 2024). There is a imbalance between "self" and nature, which creates psychological disorder, particularly in the "anti-natural city life." Wordsworth's return to nature can, therefore, be interpreted as a move toward re-establishing this lost balance. The poet sees that in nature, he has found freedom, kindness, sincerity and hope to the future, and he hopes that in time a code of good and healthy living might bring about a change in the social evil and hypocrisy. Nature then not only has healing powers, but it also imparts values that can change society. Finally, the image of the nurturing and protective elements of nature comes to mind as Wordsworth remembers how it nourishes the mind: "Be still and beautiful, and so feed/ With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,/ Nor the prejudice of selfish men,..." (127-129). Arazak et al. (2026) interprets this saying as a manifestation of the divine providence of nature with respect to the human heart, for it secures the heart from the perils of life and helps it to be calm and strong. The word "feed" is key because it indicates that nature feeds the mind and morals. Nature replenishes what industrial society exhausts and nature calms what social conflict disturbs. The natural environment then is an internal barrier to judgment, selfishness, hostility, and emotional division.

Wordsworth's ecological awareness is therefore integral with the knowledge of human psychology. The poem proposes that the alienated modern subject is affected by a weak bond between humankind and nature, and a strong bond—oneness—between humankind and nature is the way to find emotional balance and moral awareness. In the view of Acharya (2025), *Tintern Abbey* "celebrates nature" as a symbol of peace and the divine which can create meditation in the human mind. But the value of nature is not solely for personal comfort. Its deeper implication is transformative: it makes the person learn to go from restless consumption to contemplation, from isolation to belonging, from self-centredness to sympathy.

The ethos of the natural poetry of *Tintern Abbey* can now be summarised with respect to interdependence. Morning, evening, night, and all the day, nature feeds the body, quiets the mind, refreshes the memory, quickens the intellect, and expands the moral nature. Human beings are in turn called to maintain a more respectful and sustainable relationship with the environment. The phrase "co-exist with nature" is suitable to serve as an ethical guideline when discussing Wordsworth's poetic vision. Nature is not nature as a commodity nor is it nature as a background to human life. It makes nature part of human life and a prerequisite for the psychological and moral health.

So the poem *Tintern Abbey* can be interpreted as an early eco-poetic criticism of contemporary alienation. Wordsworth replies to the 'fretful stir' of modernity by reclaiming a way of being in the world that is based on memory, contemplation, living together and moral sympathy. As McGann (1985) argues, "Wordsworth's insights offer valuable lessons for fostering a deeper connection with nature and for nurturing a sustainable future." Observing Wordsworth poetic refection and vision through *Tintern Abbey*, Cook (2021) states, "This vision of interconnectedness is at the heart of Wordsworth's poetic legacy, offering a timeless reminder of the enduring bond between humanity and the natural world." Such relation offers modern society to embrace nature as their spiritual strength and a place of escaping from suffocation of modern alienation. There, nature turns into at the same time a healer and acts like a teacher, a guardian, and a moral guide. This is the relationship that makes the isolated self-aware of his or her past, other human beings, and the vast living world. Finally, the poem may be seen as a call to restore a conscious and ethical relationship with nature as a way to heal the alienation of modernity. In Wordsworth's vision, going back to nature isn't just about getting away from modernity; it is about getting back to a state of humaneness within modernity.

4. Conclusion

Drawing a beautiful landscape, this poem shows a deep reaction to the loneliness and restlessness of modern life. Wordsworth compares the "fretful stir" and "dreary intercourse" of society with nature. This comparison presents nature as a healing force, a source of peace, memory and meaning. Nature is not something to shun, it is a return to life, a new way of reorganize the life. The poem also shows Wordsworth's growing appreciation for nature as he grows older. When a child is young they are happy, a young person is passionate, and a mature person reflects. Even if nature is not physically present, it is alive in the mind through memory and co-existence. Most significantly, when one loves nature one will love humanity and thus love to contribute to the ethical responsibilities which are ecological awareness. So, *Tintern Abbey* offers nature as a healer and an educator. It brings us to the soft reminder that where man is detached from the nature, his intellect gets restless and his soul grows empty. The answer is simple and profound: We must heal ourselves by reconnecting with nature. In that respect the poem is a continuing eco-ethical reaction to the alienation of modern life.

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